

Planning Development Management Committee

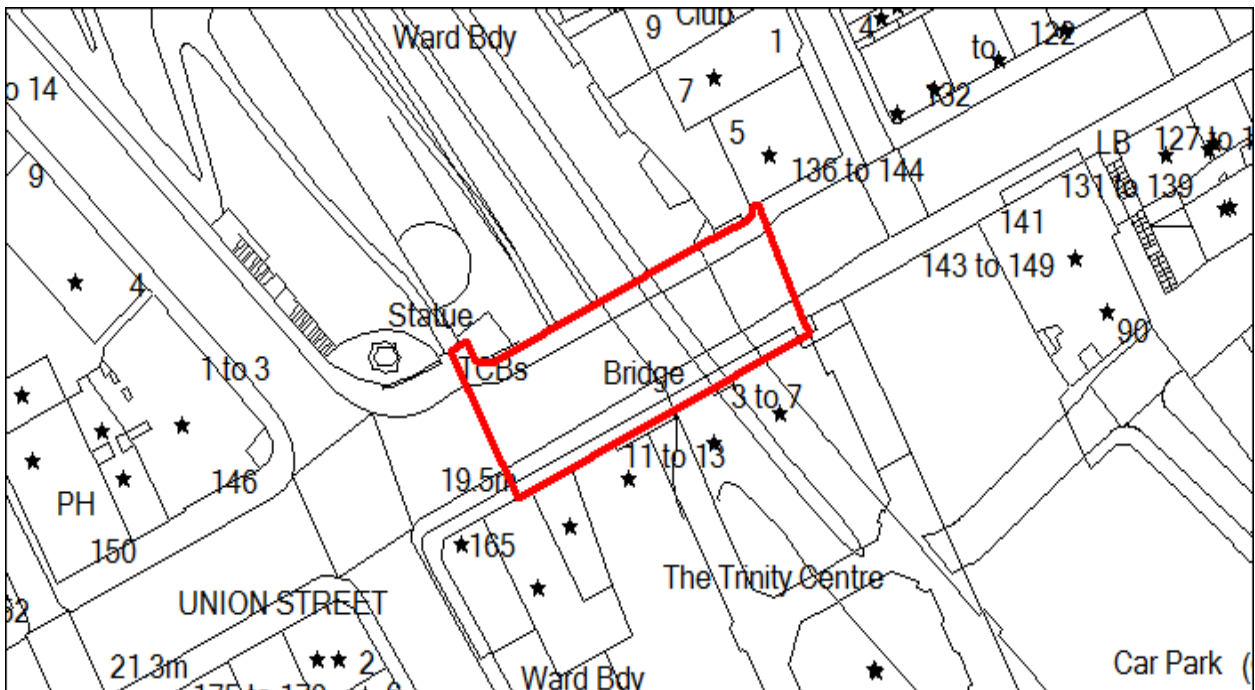
1 UNION BRIDGE, UNION STREET

PROPOSED WORKS TO BRIDGE TO PROVIDE SAFETY BARRIER, WITH ASSOCIATED LIGHTING AND WORKS

For: Aberdeen City Council (Asset Management & Operations E,P&I)

Application Type : Listed Building Consent
Application Ref. : P131829
Application Date: 17/12/2013
Officer: Lucy Greene
Ward : George Street/Harbour (A May/J Morrison/N Morrison)

Advert : Listed Building
Advertised on: 15/01/2014
Committee Date: 12 February 2015
Community Council : objection



RECOMMENDATION:

Willingness to approve; Refer to Historic Scotland for determination

DESCRIPTION

The application site consists of the Category B listed Union Bridge on Union Street, the largest single span granite bridge in the world, at 40m.

The bridge was built from 1801 to 1805 and spans the Denburn Valley, with two transport routes running underneath – a dual carriageway and rail track heading north from the city.

The bridge was widened in 1908 with steel side spans introduced and these supported the existing pavements. At this time the black cast iron leopards by William Kelly, were introduced.

The bridge has been altered several times, including notably, the erection of the Trinity Shopping Centre, which resulted in the closing off of the southern aspect.

The supporting statement notes the details of the bridge design and the existing parapet arrangement, with cast iron columns and decorative infill panels across the central span of the bridge. To each end are lengths of curved masonry with replacement cast iron lanterns.

RELEVANT HISTORY

None

PROPOSAL

Following consideration of various options, the proposal is for the fixing of a free standing stainless steel bridge parapet arrangement. This would perform the role of providing lighting and protection in the form of horizontal wires supported on lampposts and vertical posts, all in stainless steel. The horizontal wire protection would be above the existing cast iron parapet, the latter being between approximately 1.1m and 1.4m above pavement level.

The proposed parapet structure would consist of:

- Stainless steel lampposts of 4.5m – 4.85m in height (above pavement level) at approximately 6m spacing to coincide with existing vertical cast iron columns. The base of the lampposts would sit within the pavement and the upper section of the lamppost would curve over the pavement in order to provide better quality of lighting. The height variation in lamp posts being to take account of the change in the pavement level between the two ends of the bridge;
- Between the lampposts would be located intermediate vertical posts, these would be circular in section and stainless steel. These would support:
- Horizontal wires supported on a curved structure that would be cantilevered back off the lampposts and intermediate vertical posts, so that the lower wires would be located outside the existing cast iron parapet.

The proposed parapet structure would not directly obstruct views of the Kelly Cats, and the vertical posts and lampposts would be located to coincide with those cast iron columns that do not feature Kelly Cats (ie every other column).

The submissions include a supporting statement. This includes:

- The report to Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee containing the options for the works to the bridge. It is the Options A and B to which the Community Council referred, in its objection;
- Letter from Police Scotland recommending the measures;
- Letter from a mental health charity, supporting the measures;
- Letter from Scotrail supporting the proposals
- Design Appraisal and statement;
- A study commissioned to look at similar measures, useful as background information;
- A report making the economic case for mental illness prevention;
- A report by Suicide Prevention Lifeline on the use of 'bridge phones'

Supporting Documents

All drawings and the supporting documents listed below relating to this application can be viewed on the Council's website at

<http://planning.aberdeencity.gov.uk/PlanningDetail.asp?ref=131829>

On accepting the disclaimer enter the application reference quoted on the first page of this report.

Proposed Union Bridge Parapet Increase – supporting report

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application has been referred to the Planning Development Management Committee because there was an objection from the Community Council. Accordingly, the application falls outwith the scope of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

CONSULTATIONS

Roads Projects Team – No observations

Environmental Health – No observations

Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure (Flooding) - No observations

Historic Scotland – In response to informal consultation, Historic Scotland recognises the need for the proposed safety barrier, for which statements of support and justification have been received from the Police and other specialists.

Historic Scotland agrees with the proposed solution, to provide a clear distinction between the existing bridge and the proposed barrier, and this is provided by the contemporary design. This allows for the existing parapet and the 'Kelly Cats' to remain visible.

Historic Scotland expresses agreement with the amendments to the proposal, namely to delete the originally proposed steel balustrades above the granite ends of the bridge parapet, as it is considered that this would significantly reduce the visual impact of the proposals on the listed bridge.

Community Council – Objected to the planning application 131833, this was an application for a safety barrier, lighting and associated works and was the same proposal that is the subject of this listed building consent application. The planning application was withdrawn as there was a change in legislation that resulted in planning permission no longer being required.

It should also be noted that the proposal has been amended since submission.

The Community Council made the following comments:

- The preferred option is not as sympathetic to the historic bridge
- The preferred option is more expensive
- Preferred option does not cover the entire length of the wall and will not be as effective
- There is no mention of maintenance costs

More work seems to have been put into Option A.

The Community Council objects, based on the preferred option, and urges the Council to go with the alternative option.

Note: The alternative option referred to, was one that involved a more ornate, traditional type railing, and was not the subject of any application.

REPRESENTATIONS

One letters of representation has been received. The objections raised relate to the following matters –

- Object on the basis of the design of the proposal; the ‘industrial’ style design is not sympathetic with the gothic nature of the listed Union Bridge; the lighting and wires are without precedent in Union Street;
- The horizontal cables are likely to sag in the summer; and,
- The curved barriers are crude looking on the curved parts of the bridge.

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) in paragraphs 135 – 137 recognises the importance of the historic environment. Change should be sensitively managed. SPP refers to the documents described below:

Scottish Historic Environment Policy

Paragraph 3.43 deals with situations where significant interventions are proposed and where the effects are adverse. Evidence should be provided that other options have been considered and that there would be significant benefits to the wider community. A statement of justification should be provided.

Managing Change in the Historic Environment – External Fixtures

New external fixtures should be sited to maintain and minimise the impact on the special architectural or historic interest, integrity and fabric of the building.

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan

Quality of the Environment Objective: To make sure new development maintains and improves the region's important built, natural and cultural assets.

Aberdeen Local Development Plan

Policy D5 – Built Heritage:

Proposals affecting listed buildings will only be permitted if they comply with SPP.

Policy C1 – City Centre Development – Regional Centre:

Development within the City Centre must contribute towards the delivery of the vision for the City Centre.

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

The policies are very similar to those within the adopted local development plan.

EVALUATION

Where a proposal affects a listed building Sections 14(2) and 59(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 places a duty on planning authorities in determining an application for listed building consent to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This is the primary consideration in the determination of applications for listed building consent.

The issues for consideration are the impact of the proposal on the character and fabric of the Category B listed Union Bridge.

The proposed structure would be fixed into the pavement with the cabled protective barrier being fixed between the upright lighting columns and supporting uprights. There would therefore be no fixings into the historic structure.

The structure would be contemporary in design and as such would contrast with the heavier, traditional, cast iron parapet. Historic Scotland are supportive of this approach, which allows for the existing parapet and the Kelly's cats finials to remain visible. There would be an impact: the oblique view along the adjacent pavement would be interrupted by the regular uprights of the lights and support columns, however, the visual impact has been minimised by the design.

Viewing the bridge from the street below, or from longer range views – Union Terrace or Denburn Bridge, the safety measures would be much less obvious in the view. Street lights are part of the usual street environment and the cables and associated supports are designed to be 'light'.

The proposal has been amended to remove the more awkward railings that had been proposed at either end of the bridge, including the adjacent to Jamieson and Carry.

A detailed supporting structure has been provided and includes a letter from the Police and references to studies that have been carried out and demonstrate why these sorts of measures are of benefit to the community. The committee report by Alan Robertson to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee (included in submissions) also describes other measures that would accompany the physical barrier, as part of a co-ordinated approach.

In terms of the SHEP and guidance note, it considered that the impact of the safety measures is justified by the benefits. It is further considered that the proposal has been designed and amended to minimise the impact of the measures on the character and setting of the listed bridge.

The relevant planning concerns raised by the objector and Community Council in relation to design, have been dealt with above. The proposed cables have been used elsewhere and there is no evidence that they would sag. The proposal would be maintained by the Council, which would mean that materials could be replaced if not performing.

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

The Proposed ALDP was approved at the meeting of the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee of 28 October 2014. It constitutes the Council's settled view as to what should be the content of the final adopted ALDP and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, along with the adopted ALDP. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the Proposed ALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on whether:

- these matters have been subject to public consultation through the Main Issues Report; and
- the level of objection raised in relation these matters as part of the Main Issues Report; and
- the relevance of these matters to the application under consideration

The foregoing can only be assessed on a case by case basis. In relation to this particular application the policies are not materially different to those in the adopted local development plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Willingness to approve; refer to Historic Scotland for determination

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

It is considered that the design minimises the impact on the character and setting of the listed Union Bridge. The impact of the safety measures is justified by the benefits to the community, as evidenced by the submissions from Police Scotland and other specialists.

The proposal therefore complies with Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), the guidance in Managing Change – External Fixtures and thereby with development plan policies and Scottish Planning Policy.

Conditions:

1. That development shall not take place unless further details, including large scale detailed plans showing the lampposts, safety barrier and joints, have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the planning authority – in the interests of the character and setting of the listed building.
2. that no development shall take place unless a scheme detailing all external finishing materials to the development hereby approved has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the planning authority and thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the details so agreed - in the interests of the listed building.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.