

Shepway District Council

Conservation Consultancy Advice:

139	Case ref. no:	Y16/1233/SH
Property Address:	Viaduct and Swing bridge Folkestone Harbour, Folkestone	
Proposals:	Listed Building Consent for the demolition of two concrete infill supports to railway arches	
Application Type	Listed Building Consent	
Agent:	Martello	
General Comments Operative Conditions?		
Listing / C/A?	Grade II, part within Conservation Area	
Date Consult Received:	07/11/2016	
Date Comments Sent:		

Comments:

General Description:

The disused railway viaduct descends sharply from the North running alongside The Tram Road before crossing the approach into the old harbour (The Stade) on a series of low brick arches and then crossing the harbour basin dividing into an inner and outer harbour. At the southern end there is a substantial iron swing bridge (now disused), and beyond this, the disused Folkestone Harbour Station which curves around and contains a large area used for car parking.

Historic Building Description and Significance:

The present day Folkestone Harbour was constructed by Thomas Telford in 1809. The railway arrived in 1843 with arches constructed across the harbour to provide a level standing for trains. It was taken to the South Quay in 1849 with the construction of the swing bridge (not the current one). The original Harbour Station stood close by the South Quay but rails were extending southwards after 1876, with the harbour arm extended in two stages during 1881-1883 and 1897-1904.

The harbour played a significant role during WWI and was a major embarkation point – 10 million men and 1 million tonnes of freight passed through the harbour during the Great war. Continental rail services declined in the 1970s and finally closed in 1984, although a roll on roll off terminal was constructed in 1972. This continued until 1991 but the port continued after that as a hovercraft and then a Seacat terminal until 2000. Since then the harbour has only been used for small boats and the viaduct and harbour station have become disused and derelict.

Development Proposals:

Demolish two concrete infill supports to the railway arches

Relevant Documents

Martello Drawings:

- 2358/101 – Elevations A and B
- 2358/102 – Elevations C and D

Harbour Viaduct Assessment Statement

Photos

Comments:

The structures in question are, in each place, essentially a pair of in-situ concrete walls constructed across and blocking the original arched openings in the viaduct in two places (span 9 and span11).

The walls are inset from the face of the arches and between them is a void area with an access doorway (no door) set down at the mud level within the harbour basin on the land side of the viaduct. The outer wall, on the east side, is completely plain. There is no roof to the void and the walls stop at the springing level of the viaduct arches. The suggestion is made that they were built during the war as defensive structures or pill boxes

However, a number of facts suggest that this cannot be the case. Because the entry door is down at the mud level in the harbour, this means that the door and the space between the walls is flooded twice a day at high tide and the space within could not be used as a defensive position as the 'defenders' would be flooded out on a regular basis! The exterior wall is also completely plain and were this to be a defensive structure, then one would expect openings on the outer side for observation and to enable shooting out into the outer harbour which is where the likely threat would come from.

The photos do show the existence of iron tie plates – 4 on each side on the face of the piers in the arches to either side of the blocked arch. These are the visible ends of tie rods that span across the blocked arches, Two, one each side at high level just below the springing points of the arches and two more about halfway down the pier. The concrete walls are in line with these rods and I would suggest the walls were built to incorporate the tie rods to protect them from the sea and from boats that might otherwise attempt to go through the arches.

My conclusion is that the walls are a part of work of strengthening the viaduct arcade and that they could not be of any practical defensive purpose. The doorway seems to be there simply to allow access to the void between the walls for maintenance purposes and to allow it to drain away at low tide.

The concrete structures are in themselves unsightly additions to the form of the viaduct and my view is that their removal represents a positive intervention to the structure. Indeed, I consider it would have been desirable to also remove the infill from span11 next to the harbour wall but the Engineers have been cautious here, concerned about the possibility of the infill here acting as a buttress to the harbour side. The other infill (span 3) is the abutment to the swing bridge which was a 1930s replacement and here it is plainly obvious that there is a need to tie the arch together here.

The applicant's Engineers) seem to have re-assured themselves that the concrete infills are now structurally redundant and can be safely removed without leaving the structure of the viaduct in an inadequate state.

Recommendations:

Grant