
Wateringbury Wateringbury	569164 152850	10.10.2005	TM/05/03128/LB
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Proposal:	Listed Building Application: A) Remove redundant semaphore and banner, B) install new aspect signal, install new equipment case and remove another and to install a telephone
Location:	Wateringbury Station Bow Road Wateringbury Maidstone Kent ME18 5EA
Applicant:	Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd

1. Description:

- 1.1 This proposal is for the removal of semaphore signals and their mountings from the railway platforms and for the retention of new colour signals. The works are part of improvements to Wateringbury Railway Station. The new colour signals are in situ, whilst the proposed removal of the redundant signals has yet to take place. A semaphore signal located adjacent to the signal box on the southern (westbound) platform, and banner signal located on the eastern end of the southern platform are proposed to be removed. Listed Building consent is sought for their removal along with the retention of the new colour signals. A colour light signal has been installed adjacent to the northeast corner of the signal box, a new equipment case has been installed on the southern platform, adjacent to two existing cases. A new banner repeater signal has also been installed to the east of the southern platform but this did not require Listed Building Consent as it is not attached to the Listed Building.
- 1.2 The new signals form part of the Automatic Warning System for the Medway Valley Line and are now operational.
- 1.3 The applicant has also submitted supporting statements setting out their reasons for removing the semaphore signs following the introduction of the new colour lights signals. The reasons are briefly as follows:
 - To minimise any possible risk of driver confusion between new and old signals, and to minimise general distractions;
 - Temporary coverings and white crosses are flimsy;
 - Decommissioned signals have been found to be a target for vandals and for railway enthusiasts;
 - Permanent covers or shrouding would be undesirable;
 - A white cross welded to the semaphore signals is completely unacceptable as a long term solution, as the screening of the signals is absolutely necessary to avoid any possibility of driver confusion, and raises the question as to the value of retaining them line side;

- Refers to the Health & Safety Executive's document: Railway Safety Principles and Guidance: Guidance on Signalling, which is a good practice guide;
- In particular, this guidance states that mixing of signal types should be avoided;
- While none of the new signals are physically obscured by the old signals, the redundant signals will become clutter in the station environment and thus could be distracting to drivers. Network Rail is keen to minimise driver confusion by ensuring that only the new signals can be viewed;
- We are keen to remove the risk of Signal Passed At Danger to the lowest levels possible by enhancing the clarity of meaning and viewing of signalling systems. Removing the redundant signals reduces the risk of driver distraction and obscuration of the new signalling and provides a consistent signalling system.

2. The Site:

- 2.1 The application site lies to the southwest of Bow Road, directly east of the level crossing. The application site lies within the Metropolitan Greenbelt and a Conservation Area. Wateringbury Station is a Grade II Listed building and all curtilage buildings, foot bridge, the platforms and any equipment affixed to those platforms are regarded as curtilage listed structures.

3. Planning History (most relevant):

- 3.1 TM/99/02153/LB Approved 17.12.1999
Listed Building Application: Installation of replacement lighting columns and fittings.
- 3.2 TM/98/01402/LB Refused 04.02.1999
Listed Building Application: replacement of existing platform and approach road lighting.
- 3.3 TM/89/1430 Approved 28.02.1990
Conversion of station buildings commercial office use.
- 3.4 TM/89/1431LB Approved 27.02.1990
Conversion of station buildings to commercial office use including replacement windows.

4. Consultees:

- 4.1 PC: The Parish Council strongly objects to the removal of the semaphore signal. This unit comprises part of the Listed Building area and forms a necessary complimentary functional part of this area with the signal box which is manned.

Whilst we have no objection to the new signs being installed we would like the semaphore maintained, or if not possible, we would like this donated to the village as part of our heritage for almost 150 years.

4.2 Private Reps: 4/0X/0S/1R. One letter received objecting on the following grounds:

- The Medway Valley is an unique line;
- The safety systems will tear away our heritage;
- The new lights have been installed;
- The semaphore signs should remain for posterity, however, the better option is that they are used and incorporated into the new system.

4.3 CPRE Historic Buildings Committee: CPRE Historic Buildings Committee: Since all Network Rail semaphore signals are being superseded by coloured lights, we suggest that removal to other locations is not a realistic option, but in any case your Council is we suppose unlikely to endorse the removal of historic features from listed buildings on the grounds that they can be used on other property owned by the applicants or sold on the open market.

4.3.1 Of the applicants' contentions: a) *driver confusion* – can surely be eliminated by instruction and by clear signage (not something so *flimsy* that it can *be torn away in adverse weather*); b) the risk of vandals and thieves is surely no greater with railway signals than any other important visual feature of any listed building; c) shrouding would of course be equally unacceptable because the whole point of these historic features is that they should be seen.

4.4 Press and site notices: No response

4.5 HM Inspector of Railways: Where there is a potential for redundant signals to cause confusion to a train driver, or to interfere with sighting of any new equipment by the driver, it is our expectation under health and safety legislation that the redundant signals should be removed at the earliest opportunity. In situations where the signals cannot be removed at the time the new equipment is commissioned, they can be covered over to indicate that they are out of use until such time as they can be removed. In these circumstances we would expect there to be a timebound plan in place for the removal.

4.6 Should there be circumstances in which redundant signals can remain in place without causing confusion and risk to the operation of the railway, there would need to be a maintenance programme in place to ensure that they do not become unsafe structures and present a risk to the operation of the railway, or to the persons required to maintain them.

5. Determining Issues:

- 5.1 The main issue to be considered is whether the proposal will harm the character and integrity of the Listed Buildings and whether there are other factors that should be taken into account.
- 5.2 **The Removal of the existing signals:** These semaphore signals are not listed in their own right, but are listed by virtue of being within the curtilage of, or physically attached to, the listed building.
- 5.3 Policy P4/1 of the TMBLP 1998 has a presumption in favour of the retention of Listed Buildings. The policy states "*proposals involving the total or substantial demolition of a Listed Building will be considered in light of the architectural or historic merit of the building, the cost of repair in relation to the importance of the building, the setting of the building and its contribution to the local environment, and the merits of alternative proposals for the site (including whether there are substantial community benefits which decisively outweigh the loss of building). Proposals must also provide clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to retain the building in use.*"
- 5.4 These semaphore signals form an important part of the historic nature of the listed railway station, such as the station building, signal box, footbridge and platform. The removal of the semaphore signals will detract from the historic context and setting of the station and its listed buildings and structures. These are important industrial architectural structures, which enhance the setting of this listed station.
- 5.5 Network Rail has raised a number of issues surrounding the safety implications of retaining the semaphore signals. These matters are material planning considerations. I recognise that covering the semaphore signals with a black bag with a white cross can be used as a temporary measure, but clearly this is not an acceptable way of preserving the semaphore signal as they will no longer be visible. The only permanent solution stated by Network Rail under their Code of Practice would be for the arms and spectacle plates to be removed and the remaining structure covered in a box. Such works would clearly change the character of the signals and would lose any significant visual amenity or historic importance. Therefore, the possible alternative works to retain any redundant signals would be equally as harmful as complete removal in terms of the historic setting. Network Rail claims that there is a significant matter of driver confusion and distraction through the retention of the existing signals in combination with the new signals. I would wish to validate this assessment with an external independent source. To this end I consulted with HM Railways Inspectorate. HMRI (which is part of HSE) states that where there is potential for redundant signals to cause confusion to a train driver it is their expectation under health and safety legislation that the redundant signals should be removed at the earliest opportunity. HMRI has not commented on the specific nature of this proposal but it is quite clear, by implication, that they would wish to see a permanent solution to avoid conflict for

drivers. This is as far as it has been possible to obtain some independent advice. In the circumstances of this case I do not see any alternative. I believe on this basis there is a case for the removal of the signal arms on safety grounds, which does amount to sufficient reason to offset the historic building implications.

- 5.6 Therefore, given the public safety considerations of this particular proposal, I am satisfied that, on balance, that safeguarding public safety through the removal of the redundant semaphore signals outweighs the historic importance of retaining these curtilage listed structures.
- 5.7 **New colour light signal and ancillary equipment case.** A new colour light signal has been installed on the southern platform along with ancillary equipment case and telephone. The new installations are a significant distance from the main Railway Building, however are located in close proximity to the Signal Box which is also curtilage listed. The new signal is in my opinion a prominent new feature in the locality especially when viewed from the southern platform. In my opinion the new signal does not preserve or enhance the setting of the Listed Building as required by policy P4/1 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan. However, the harm caused by retention of the new signals to the setting of the Listed Building and wider Conservation Area must be weighed against the need for a safe and operational railway line. The Automatic Warning System and its roll out across the Medway Valley Line has been supported by the HMRI and accordingly, on balance, the new colour signal is considered acceptable in this instance.
- 5.8 The new equipment case and telephone are located within close proximity to existing similar structures. Accordingly, I do not consider that their retention would result in additional undue harm to the setting of the Listed Building.
- 5.9 Bearing in mind what I indicated above with regard to the removal of the historic signals, together with the acceptability of the new signals, I am now satisfied that in overall terms and bearing in mind the background to this specific case that I am able to recommend approval.

6. Recommendation:

- 6.1 **Grant Listed Building Consent**, as detailed in letters dated 04.04.2006 and 07.10.2005, site plan and supplementary information date stamped 10.10.2005, drawing number NR/BC17/WB1, WB2(SB), Photographs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4, Plan NR/BC17/WB3Aspect, WB4C and email received on 22.12.05, subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development and works to which this consent relates shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Informative:

- 1 The applicant is asked to discuss with other railway undertakings or relevant preservation societies whether the equipment to be removed could be re-used or put on public display on another site.

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