

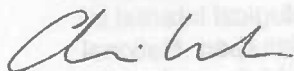
elements in the landscape which we might want to retain, we felt that its relationships with the river itself and perhaps with the two public houses at either end were significant, and the new bridge would not detract from those. The specific location of the monument is of interest, immediately below the confluence with the Windrush, but appreciation of that would be unaffected. The rural character of the location of the monument might be affected, but this is not part of its special interest as a historic asset, and is simply a result of the need to cross the river at this point. Similar scheduled bridges exist in urban contexts in Oxfordshire. In summary, we did not feel that the proposed new bridge would detract from the special interest of the setting of the monument.

We then considered which of the two proposals might on balance be preferred. As shown above, we do not have sufficient information to say whether the proposed strengthening would be unacceptable, but it would seem to involve some impact on the monument, whereas the new bridge option would not have a detrimental impact on the setting. What we felt also weighed heavily here was the fact that the public appreciation of the current bridge was rather restricted by the current traffic on it, and that the new bridge option would allow the historic asset to be appreciated. In addition, removal of traffic from the monument would prevent the ongoing minor damage which it has suffered over the years from vehicle collision. Overall, we felt that the new bridge option would be preferable.

Finally, you also asked what sort of new bridge might be preferred, indicating that the options might be broadly classified as traditional, modern and 'landmark'. In very general terms, we could see no particular reason why a traditional design might be preferred. We felt that a modern design might be best, as a 'landmark' design risked detracting from its older neighbour, but that the modern design should respect its context, perhaps through the materials used. I understand that you are at an early stage of consideration here, and these are very much provisional thoughts on the choice of design, and I would be happy to advise further if necessary.

I hope the above is helpful in indicating our views on the various points where you were seeking advice, and we will no doubt discuss the matter further in the future.

Yours sincerely



Christopher Welch
Inspector of Ancient Monuments

cc Charlie Benner, Oxfordshire County Council