

## **Briefing Note: Heritage Impacts of Crossrail on the Great Western Railway in Buckinghamshire**

This briefing note draws attention to the proposals for demolishing nine historic railway over-bridges along the London to Maidenhead section of the Great Western Railway (GWR), two of which are in South Buckinghamshire and the remainder in Borough of Slough. The GWR was designed and built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel between 1835 and 1841 and is regarded as the most complete early railway in the world. Selected parts of the GWR, (including Maidenhead Bridge but not the section east of it) have been included in Britain's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites. Thus, although the bridges are not listed nor individually exceptional structures they are significant elements of an internationally important industrial heritage site.

As part of the Crossrail scheme it is currently proposed that all nine surviving Brunel bridges in the London to Maidenhead section of the GWR are to be demolished despite the demonstrable survival of substantial 19<sup>th</sup> century fabric relating both to the work of Brunel himself and later work in the same style by the GWR. The two bridges in Buckinghamshire are: Dog Kennel Bridge and Thorney Lane Bridge, both in Iver parish, are good examples within the group (see background paper 2). The reason for the proposed demolitions is given as the need to obtain sufficient clearance beneath each bridge to enable electrification to European standards. The amount of additional clearance required varies between 350mm and over 1m with most bridges requiring c 600 - 700mm. Crossrail appear to have given only preliminary consideration to options other than demolition – e.g. alternative electrification technologies, bridge raising and track lowering considering them impractical or too costly and inconvenient.

### **Recommendation:**

The Hybrid Bill currently before parliament overrides normal planning procedures and so in order press for further consideration of options for retaining some or all of these structures it is recommended that the County Council include an objection to the proposed demolition of Dog Kennel Bridge and Thorney Lane Bridge in the proposed parliamentary petition. The aim is to secure further detailed technical consideration of options for retaining some or all of the threatened over-bridges. In putting forward this case, Officers will work with partners in South Bucks District Council, Slough Borough Council and English Heritage.

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### **Background papers**

1. World Heritage Sites. The Tentative List of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. DCMS, 1999.
2. Crossrail. Technical Assessment of Historic Railway Bridges. RPS Planning and Environment, 2005.