

# **Clyst St Mary Bridge**

Setting Assessment
15 May 2020

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**Environment Agency** 

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## **Issue and Revision Record**

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# **Executive summary**

Mott MacDonald have been commissioned by the Environment Agency to undertake flood alleviation works at the village of Clyst St Mary, east of Exeter, adjacent to the River Clyst. This is to rectify issues with, and to enhance existing flood defences.

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The proposed Scheme includes the construction of improved flood defences east of the River Clyst, flanking the village of Clyst St Mary (Figure 1). This includes the construction of stop log flood defences diagonally across the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge and the replacement of the existing flood defence wall with sheet piling at the north-eastern extent of the bridge.

This setting assessment has been commissioned to accompany an application for Scheduled Monument Consent for works to be undertaken to the Clyst St Mary Bridge and should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Statement produced by Mott Macdonald (2019). The assessment will focus only on the potential impact upon the setting and significance of the scheduled bridge in relation to the following three options for a replacement sheet pile flood defence wall, northeast of the bridge:

- Bare sheet piles, with or without capping beam.
- Timber Cladding attached to the sheet piles which would resemble a wooden fence.
- Flexcrete, with timber capping beam, except for the southern 10m of the wall, adjacent to the bridge where there will be a concrete capping beam, which would appear similar to the existing flood defence wall

Following an assessment of the setting of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge in accordance with the NPPF and Historic England GPA3, it has been ascertained that all impacts are limited to an extremely small area of the scheduled bridge and the mitigation used to lessen the extent of these impacts will be reversible at the end of the lifespan of the proposed flood defences. Therefore the scheme is considered to cause no harm to the setting of the scheduled bridge.

It is considered that the proposed Scheme will not result in a change in the ability to understand the significance of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge.

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

Mott MacDonald have been commissioned by the Environment Agency to undertake flood alleviation works at the village of Clyst St Mary, east of Exeter, adjacent to the River Clyst. This is to rectify issues with, and to enhance existing flood defences.

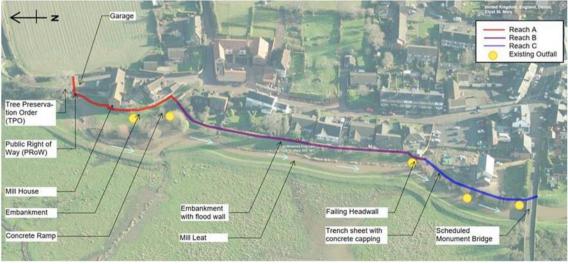
This setting assessment has been commissioned to accompany an application for Scheduled Monument Consent for works to be undertaken to the Clyst St Mary Bridge and should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Statement produced by Mott Macdonald (2019).

This Setting Assessment will only consider the heritage significance of the Scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge and how its setting contributes to this significance; how the proposed options for sheet piling to replace the existing flood defence wall north of the eastern extent of the bridge may impact upon the setting and significance of the bridge; and recommendations to minimise harm to the bridges setting, in line with National and Local Planning Policy.

The assessment does not consider other heritage assets and their settings which may be affected by the Scheme proposals.

#### 1.2 Proposed Scheme

Figure 1: Scheme location plan



Source: Mott MacDonald 2019

The proposed Scheme includes the construction of improved flood defences east of the River Clyst, flanking the village of Clyst St Mary (Figure 1). This is divided into three reaches north to south as A, B and C respectively. Only Reach C is relevant to this assessment. Reach C measures 75.0m in length and the proposed works include the construction of stop log flood defences diagonally across the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge and the replacement of the existing flood defence wall on the eastern side of the leat. This represents the only Reach of the Scheme with the potential to impact upon the significance of the Scheduled bridge, with reach A and B being further upstream to the north of the bridge.

This assessment will focus upon the potential impact upon the setting and significance of the scheduled bridge in relation to the replacement of the southern 10.0m of the existing flood wall, which ties into the eastern extent of the Scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge. The impact of the stop log defences is discussed in detail within the Heritage Statement produced by Mott MacDonald (2019).

#### 1.2.1 Raised Flood Defences

Figure 2: Existing concrete flood defence wall, north of Clyst St Mary Bridge, looking east



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2019

The existing concrete flood wall and associated outfall, north of the eastern extent of the bridge will be replaced by sheet piles (Figure 2) and raised by approximately 0.43m to the height of the bridge parapet (c. +4.9m OD). The new sheet piling will be bonded to the parapet of the bridge using lime mortar.

The scheduled area of the bridge extends to include areas immediately around the scheduled bridge. These works are therefore located inside of the protected area. The proposed works and associated impacts associated with the construction of stop log flood defences across the bridge are discussed within the Heritage Statement produced by Mott MacDonald (2019).

Three design options have been proposed for the construction of the sheet pile wall, these include:

Bare sheet piles, with or without capping beam.

- Timber Cladding attached to the sheet piles which would resemble a wooden fence.
- Flexcrete, with timber capping beam, except for the southern 10m of the wall, adjacent to the bridge where there will be a concrete capping beam, which would appear similar to the existing flood defence wall.

During construction a hop-over scaffold platform will be used to provide access to the watercourse, avoiding contact with the parapets of the bridge. This will be supported by the deck of the bridge and land north of the bridge and will not have any fixings attached to the bridge or derive any support from the parapets of the bridge.

#### 1.3 Methodology

The NPPF defines setting as "the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral".

The key guidance in reference to the setting of heritage assets is Historic England Good Practice Advice Note 3 (GPA 3): The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017), which sets out a methodology for assessing the impact of proposed development on the setting of heritage assets, and the effect that impacts may have on an asset's significance.

This assessment will follow the methodology suggested in GPA 3, specifically:

- Steps 1 Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected
- Step 2 Assess how and to what degree the setting makes a contribution to the significance of the asset.
- Step 3 Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it.
- Step 4 Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm.

#### 1.3.1 Desk-Based Research

This setting assessment is based upon existing research undertaken as part of the Heritage Statement produced by Mott MacDonald (2019). The following actions were undertaken as part of the Heritage Statement to gather the baseline and establish the significance of the heritage resource:

- a search of the Historic England National Heritage List for England (NHLE) dataset;
- an examination of local, regional and national planning policies in relation to the historic environment;
- an inspection of the cartographic evidence for the land use history of the site; and
- an assessment of relevant published and unpublished historical sources.

#### 1.3.2 Surveys

A site walkover was undertaken on 9th May 2019. The site visit took the form of a visual inspection of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge. A walkover of the surrounding area was also undertaken to assess the character of the area, the setting of the scheduled bridge and any other relevant

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> NPPF. 2019, Annex 2

heritage assets, key views, and identify whether there were any additional heritage assets not apparent from the desk-based research.

### 1.3.3 Assumptions and Limitations

This assessment is reliant on currently available scheme design data up to May 2020.

## 2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

It is important to understand the legislation and policy framework which governs changes to the historic environment when developing options and undertaking design work which may impact heritage assets. This section outlines the relevant legislative requirements and national and local planning policy which apply when considering the acceptability of these proposals in relation to the historic environment.

#### 2.1 Legislation

#### 2.1.1 The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

The Act imposes a requirement for Scheduled Monument Consent for any works of demolition, repair, and alteration that might affect a scheduled monument. For non-designated archaeological assets, protection is afforded through the development management process as established both by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

#### 2.1.2 The Environment Act 1995

The Act provides for the establishment of a body corporate to be known as the Environment Agency and in Scotland the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. To provide for the transfer of functions, properties, rights and liabilities to those bodies and conferring of other functions to them. The Environment Agency will be formed by the merger of the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesties Inspectorate of Pollution and the Local Waste Authorities. The agency will consist of at least eight members, three shall be appointed by the Minister and the rest by the secretary of state

#### 2.1.3 National Planning Policy Framework

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) considers the importance of historic environment in planning and development and sets out the government's policies regarding development which effects the historic environment. Paragraphs 189 to 202 outline these policies. The following paragraphs are relevant to this Setting Assessment:

- Paragraph 189: 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an
  applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any
  contribution made by their setting. The level of information submitted should be
  proportionate to the assets importance and no more that is sufficient to understand the
  potential impact on the assets significance....'
- Paragraph 194: 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification...'
- Paragraph 199: 'Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.'

#### 2.1.4 Local planning policy

The following saved policy in the east Devon Local Plan (2016) are relevant to this setting assessment:

 Policy EN8 states that any development which has the potential to affect the setting or significance of heritage assets should be preceded by an assessment of that setting and significance and the impact resulting from that development;

#### 2.2 Guidance

#### 2.2.1 Historic England Guide to Good Planning Advice (GPA)

Historic England have published a series of Good Practice Advice (GPA). Most relevant to this assessment is:

• GPA3 The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017). This document provides advice on the setting of heritage assets. Part 1 of the document confirms the extent of setting, as defined in the NPPF, to be the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced and that elements of a setting can make positive or negative contributions to the significance of an asset and affect the ways in which it is experienced. Historic England state that setting does not have a boundary and that setting is often expressed by reference to views, comprising the visual impression of an asset obtained from a variety of viewpoints. Setting is not an asset or a designation, rather its importance is in what it contributes to the significance of an asset and its appreciation is not dependent upon public access (para 9).

### 3 Baseline

#### 3.1 Scheme Location & Description

The proposed scheme area comprises the eastern end of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge at the eastern bank of the Mill Leat, centred at SX 97207 91080. The Mill Leat is a channel off the River Clyst. The bridge is located immediately west of the historic centre of Clyst St Mary, c.6km east of Exeter city centre. The bridge is approximately 195m in length and after passing over the River Clyst to the west of the proposed scheme area, it meets the north-western side of the modern A376 Sidmouth Road dual carriageway.

The section of bridge within the proposed scheme area comprises two stone arches over the Mill Leat with stone parapets to the north and south and a modern asphalt deck (Figure 2). Immediately south of the bridge, abutting the southern parapet, is a modern earthen embankment. To the north, abutting the northern parapet is a modern concrete wall (Figure 1). Both of these features reflect earlier flood defences employed at the site. East of the scheme area are modern steel bollards to prevent vehicular access to the bridge.

Figure 2: The eastern extent of the Clyst St Mary Bridge showing modern concrete flood wall and embankment, looking east.



Source: Mott MacDonald 2019

#### 3.2 Historical Background

This section explores the historical development of Clyst St Mary in so far as it helps to understand the significance of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge, and the potential impact of the proposed scheme. It is complimentary to, and should be read in conjunction with, the heritage statement produced by Mott MacDonald (2019), which contains a detailed historical background.

A crossing on the River Clyst is known to have existed in the vicinity of Clyst St Mary since the Roman period, on the road from Dorchester to Exeter. The exact location of the original bridge is however unknown, and an 11th century charter gives no mention of a bridge. It is suspected therefore to have been of timber construction and lost soon after the Roman period<sup>2</sup>.

The earliest documentary record of the present bridge originates in an assize roll dated to 1238 as Pontem de Clist, carrying the road from Sidmouth to Exeter. The settlement at Clyst St Mary had been purchased by Bishop Bronescombe in 1265, and amongst his and successive Bishop's responsibilities had been the maintenance of the bridge. Repairs are recorded in the Fabric of Exeter Cathedral in 1301-02, to a sum of 6d., while improvements to the bridge undertaken in 1310 cost £24 10s. 8d<sup>3</sup>. The village's mill is first recorded in 1374, although the bridge's two eastern arches crossing the leat suggests that the mill was in existence at an earlier date.

After the reformation, and the introduction of the Common Book of Prayer in 1549, dissent towards the new theology grew in areas of strong Catholic loyalty. In Devon and Cornwall this manifested in the Western Prayer Book Rebellion which, Lord John Russell was commanded by the Crown to supress. Bishop's Clyst Bridge was the location of a key movement in the short conflict when it was barricaded by the rebels. The bridge was taken by Russell's troops, before executing all prisoners at Clyst Heath and defeating the rebel army. The village was burned by Russell's troops in retaliation for the insurrection<sup>4</sup>.

Extensive repair works are known to have been undertaken again at the bridge after 1603, when Sessions recorded it as a near ruin. This is considered to be related to the causeway, rather than the arches, as well as to the construction of new revetments which survive today in the bridge's extant fabric<sup>5</sup>. Recent photographs provided by Devon County Council of the underneath of the eastern arch of the bridge, show that the bridge has been widened on the upstream side. This is likely relates to either its rebuilding in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or more recent enlargement as a vehicular bridge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The tithe map of 1836 records the village of Clyst St Mary and the bridge to the west. The settlement is nucleated around the junction of Bishop's Clyst Road (the Sidmouth to Exeter Road) and Frog Lane. The channels of the Mill Leat and River Clyst approximately correspond to their present-day forms.

Numerous repairs to the bridge are recorded as undertaken by the county during the 19th century, most significantly in 1843 to the cost of £150 (Brown, S. 1982). At this time the cutwaters of the medieval bridge, apparent on the 1836 tithe map at only the western arches, were removed and wider semi-circular arches were inserted in both the west and east arches. While the medieval arches were subject to small alteration, substantial fabric remains in-situ from this date.

The 1887 Ordnance Survey map records the Clyst Mill to the north of the village, the leat of which Clyst St Mary Bridge crosses, as a corn and sawmill.

Modern repair works to the bridge include: the insertion of a phone line below the deck of the bridge; the insertion of two services indicated by a recent GPR survey which run under the carriage way of the bridge; and the resurfacing of the bridge in asphalt.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Historic England. 2020

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Brown, S. 1982.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Victoria County History. 2019

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Brown, S. 1982

#### 3.3 Scheduled Monument: Clyst St Mary Bridge (List Entry Number: 1020209)

#### 3.3.1 Description of Scheduled Monument

Clyst St Mary Bridge comprises five spans connected by a walled causeway, approximately 195m in length and 3-4m in width (Figure 3). First recorded in the early 13th century, it is the earliest surviving medieval bridge in Devon outside of Exeter. The bridge is recorded as extremely well preserved, with medieval fabric surviving in each of its arches, with little modern intervention.

A pair of arches at the western end of the bridge span the River Clyst, with an additional single arch in the centre, and a pair of arches at the eastern end of the bridge crossing the Mill Leat (proposed scheme area). The present arches are believed to be the earliest surviving elements of the structure, employing the use of volcanic trap in their construction. The western arches additionally have chamfered rib vaulting of sandstone construction. These are believed to represent surviving fabric from the bridge documented in 1238.

The eastern and central arches, which lack the rib vaulting of those in the west, are considered to date from repair works undertaken in 1310. These also have a chamfered plinth at the base and are of greater depth allowing a wider road surface than at the western end of the bridge.

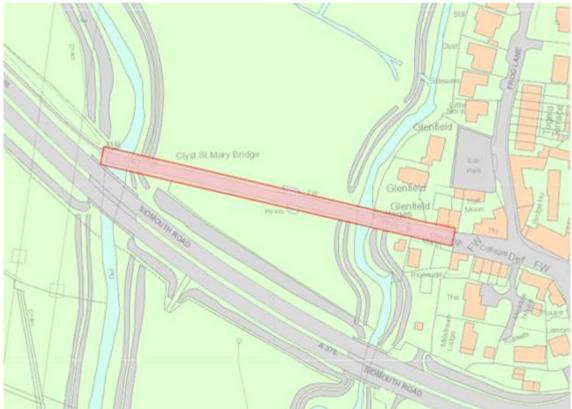


Figure 3: Clyst St Mary Bridge - NHLE Location Plan

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#### 3.3.2 Reasons for Designation

The following extract taken from Historic England's National Heritage List for England (NHLE) outlines the reasons for designation of Clyst St Mary Bridge<sup>6</sup>:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Historic England. 2020

"Multi-span bridges are structures of two or more arches supported on piers. They were constructed throughout the medieval period for the use of pedestrians and packhorse or vehicular traffic, crossing rivers or streams, often replacing or supplementing earlier fords. During the early medieval period timber was used, but from the 12<sup>th</sup> century stone (and later brick) bridges became more common, with the piers sometimes supported by a timber raft. Most stone or brick bridges were constructed with pointed arches, although semi-circular and segmental examples are also known. A common medieval feature is the presence of stone ashlar ribs underneath the arch. The bridge abutments and revetting of the riverbanks also form part of the bridge".

"Where medieval bridges have been altered in later centuries, original features are sometimes concealed behind later stonework, including remains of earlier timber bridges. The roadway was often originally cobbled or gravelled. The building and maintenance of bridges was frequently carried out by the church and by guilds, although landowners were also required to maintain bridges. From the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century the right to collect tolls, known as pontage, was granted to many bridges, usually for repairs; for this purpose many urban bridges had houses or chapels on them, and some were fortified with a defensive gateway. Medieval multi-span bridges must have been numerous throughout England, but most have been rebuilt or replaced and less than 200 examples are now known to survive. As a rare monument type largely unaltered, surviving examples and examples that retain significant medieval and post-medieval fabric are considered to be of national importance".

"Clyst St Mary Bridge survives particularly well without any major modern refurbishment or strengthening. Its fabric preserves medieval masonry and features in all of its five arches and its causeway wall provides a coherent and ancient linkage between the separate arches as well as contributing to the bridge's aesthetic qualities. The periods of construction of the bridge have been studied in detail and published in county archaeological journals, while the bridge is mentioned in several historical documents relating to the Western Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549. The monument acts as a visible reminder of significant events in local history as well as displaying clearly visible and recorded features of 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century medieval bridge construction techniques".

# 4 Setting & Significance

#### 4.1 Setting and Significance of Clyst St Mary Bridge

The setting of the bridge comprises the Mill Leat, main course and flood plain of the River Clyst, over which its arches and causeway cross. This natural boundary has been the reason for a bridge existing in the area since the Roman times, and the broad flood plain and twin channels have explicitly defined the form of the bridge. Its long causeway and five arches are specifically designed to accommodate the periodic flooding of the area and keep the road above the water level. While development has encroached upon this setting, with housing and the A3052 dual carriageway south-west of the River Clyst, the historic character of the flood plain in the immediate vicinity of the bridge is largely preserved and its setting is readily tangible in the present day (Figure 4).

Figure 4: View of the flood plain to the north of the bridge, looking north-west.



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2019

Modern flood defences comprised of a concrete flood wall, associated outfall and a flood defence embankment to the east of the Mill Leat, also form part of the setting of the bridge (Figures 5 & 6). These modern additions have to some extent detracted from the historic character of the setting and have altered views of the bridge from the west. However over time through vegetation screening and weathering of these features these elements have settled into the landscape and their presence does not affect the ability to understand and appreciate the significance of the bridge as a historic crossing point.

Figure 5: Modern flood defence embankment on the east bank of the Mill Leat, looking south.



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2019

Figure 6: North parapet of Clyst St Mary Bridge, showing stone arches crossing the Mill Leat, with existing concrete flood defence wall and start of Clyst St Mary Village beyond, looking south-east.



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2019

The village of Clyst also forms part of the setting of the scheduled bridge. The historic crossing point and the location of the medieval village are undoubtedly related, and the development of the settlement of Clyst St Mary was likely influenced by the advantages of proximity to the major

trade route of the Sidmouth to Exeter road and of access to a key crossing point over the river. The significance of the bridge as a key crossing point is demonstrated by its fortification by rebels during the Western Prayer Book Rebellion. A view from the centre of the village, looking west along Bishop's Clyst Road, is key to the tangibility of this relationship. Steel posts at the eastern end of the bridge have however, eroded the view to a limited extent.

Equally views into the village along the bridge and its causeway contribute to this significance, granting insight to the historic approach to the village from the west. These views have also been degraded by the introduction of steel posts to the bridge, and by other modern intrusions in close proximity to the east of the bridge. However, the relationship between the bridge and the village remains readily legible in this view.

Figure 7: View along the Clyst St Mary Bridge and Causeway, looking west.



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2019

# 5 Impacts and Recommendations

#### 5.1 Potential Impacts on Setting

The proposed scheme has the potential to impact on the setting of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge in the following ways:

#### 5.1.1 Permanent Impacts

piles	existing concrete flood defence wall will be replaced by steel sheet piles. The sheet cannot be clad with concrete as this would crack when the steel flexes, therefore ollowing design options have been proposed:
	Leave sheet piles bare, with or without capping beam. This would result in a permanent visual impact on the bridge and its setting. The steel sheet piles would not be congruent with the bridges existing setting and would dominate views of the bridge from the west.
	Clad sheet piles with timber so as to resemble a wooden fence. The use of a traditional material such as wood which is associated with the forming of river walls and quays would reflect the historic nature of the bridge. whilst not competing with it. Although different to the existing concrete wall, overtime the timber would weather and settle into the landscape, and would result in no harm to the setting of the bridge or cause any effect on the ability to understand the bridge's architectural or historical significance.
	Clad sheet pile wall with flexcrete, with timber capping beam, except for the southern 10m of the wall, adjacent to the bridge where there will be a concrete capping beam, which would reflect the appearance of the existing flood defence

• The replacement flood defence wall will be raised by c. 0.43m to the height of the bridge parapet (+ 4.9m OD) with a concrete infill and membrane up to the bridge to avoid fixing into the bridge. Whilst this will result in a permanent visual impact upon the bridge by introducing a new element into its setting, this is not considered to result in any loss in the ability to understand its significance. Equally the use of a membrane means these impacts will be reversible at the end of the life of the defences. This impact will therefore result in no harm to the significance of the bridge.

wall and weather in a similar way to concrete. The visual impact of this would be neutral compared to the existing concrete wall and would result in no harm to the

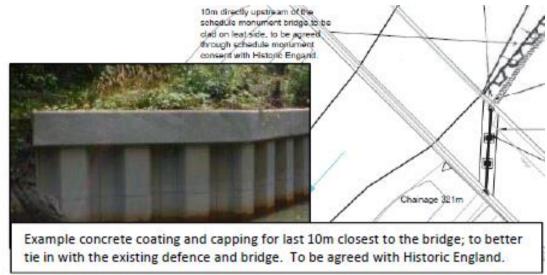
significance of the asset by retaining much of the bridge's existing setting.

#### 5.2 Recommendations

The detailed design of the scheme has been produced through extensive consultation with Historic England, and in full consideration of the likely impacts upon the setting and significance of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge. The design changes which have been made to mitigate the setting impacts discussed in Section 5.1 are outlined below:

The preferred design option for the replacement flood defence wall would be to use flexcrete
to clad the sheet piles. When finished this will leave the sheet piling looking similar to the
existing concrete wall and therefore will be the option least likely to impact upon the setting of
the scheduled bridge (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Example concrete coating and capping for the last 10m of the wall, where it joins the scheduled bridge.



Source: Mott MacDonald 2020

• The raised flood wall north of the bridge will be bonded to the bridge parapet using a concrete infill and membrane to avoid fixing into the bridge. While during the lifespan of the flood defences this will not result in harm to the bridge, it will remain reversible at the end of the lifespan of the flood defences.

### 6 Conclusion

Following an assessment of the setting of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge in accordance with the NPPF and Historic England GPA3, it has been ascertained that all impacts are limited to an extremely small area of the scheduled bridge and the mitigation used to lessen the extent of these impacts will be reversible at the end of the lifespan of the proposed flood defences. Therefore the scheme is considered to cause no harm to the setting and significance of the scheduled bridge.

The detailed design of the scheme has been produced through extensive consultation with Historic England, and in full consideration of the likely impacts upon the setting and significance of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge. Design changes which have been made to mitigate the setting impacts upon the scheduled bridge include:

- The preferred design option for the replacement flood defence wall would be to use flexcrete to clad the sheet piles. When finished the sheet pile wall would resemble the appearance of the existing wall and therefore will be the option least likely to impact upon the setting of the scheduled bridge. The other design options which have been put forward would represent a conspicuous addition to the setting of the bridge, which is not in keeping with its existing character and appearance
- The raised flood wall north of the bridge will be bonded to the bridge parapet using a
  concrete infill and membrane to avoid fixing into the bridge. While during the lifespan of the
  flood defences this will not result in harm to the bridge, it will remain reversible at the end of
  the lifespan of the flood defences.

It is therefore considered that the proposed scheme will not result in a change to the setting of the scheduled Clyst St Mary Bridge which would impact upon the ability to understand its significance.

### 7 References

#### 7.1 Legislation, Policy & Guidance

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