

Rugby Borough Council
Town Hall
Evreux Way
Rugby
CV21 2RR

Your Ref

Our Ref CRTR-POL-2023-40198

Tuesday 30 January 2024

Dear Rugby Borough Council,
Rugby Borough Local Plan Review Issues and Options Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above document.

We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals & rivers. Our waterways contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities and economies, creating attractive and connected places to live, work, volunteer and spend leisure time. These historic, natural and cultural assets form part of the strategic and local green blue infrastructure network, linking urban and rural communities as well as habitats. By caring for our waterways and promoting their use we believe we can improve the wellbeing of our nation. The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is a statutory consultee in the Development Management process, and as such we welcome the opportunity to input into planning policy related matters to ensure that our waterways are protected, safeguarded and enhanced within an appropriate policy framework.

Within Rugby Borough, the Trust owns and operates approximately 34km of the Oxford Canal, 4km of the Ashby Canal and 4km of the Grand Union Canal. The canal network in the Borough primarily runs through rural areas, but the Oxford Canal does also run around the northern and eastern fringes of Rugby. Over 40% of the population of the Borough live within 1km of at least one of the Trust's waterways.

Inland waterways are acknowledged as significant green infrastructure, but they also function as blue infrastructure, serving as a catalyst for regeneration; a sustainable travel resource for commuting and leisure; a natural health service acting as blue gyms and supporting physical and healthy outdoor activity; an ecological and biodiversity resource; a tourism, cultural, sport, leisure and recreation resource; a heritage landscape; a contributor to water supply and transfer, drainage and flood management. The waterway network also forms part of the historic environment, character, and cultural and social focus of Rugby Borough.

Please find below the Trust's response to the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation. We hope that the comments provided are clear and helpful. We are willing to continue to work with you, to meet and discuss these points for clarity and to seek to work together towards a high-quality borough that relates positively with the waterway network.

Land for Employment Uses

The potential Strategic Employment Locations identified on the map at page 16 of the document include two sites located in the vicinity of the canal network. As only broad locations have been identified at this stage, it is not possible to identify specific likely impacts on the canal network, but we would ask that the following general comments are taken into account when considering the potential suitability of these locations for development.

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M6 Junction 1

The Oxford Canal Brownsover Arm extends on a north-south axis out from Rugby towards the M6 about 1km west of Junction 1. Whilst this canal arm is no longer navigable and is not open to boat traffic, it remains in water and provides a valuable wildlife habitat. At its northern end (just south of the M6) the Arm joins the River Swift feeder channel, which provides a water supply to the canal network from the River Swift. The feeder channel runs north for about 1.5km beyond the M6 before joining the river.

Any development in the vicinity of the Arm or the associated feeder channel should seek to protect them from any risk of damage and should avoid any risk of adverse impacts on water quality as this could have potentially significant and wide-ranging effects on their value as wildlife habitats. It is important that the flow of water to the canal from the feeder channel is not obstructed as this may affect our ability to maintain the water levels in the canal that are necessary to allow navigation.

South of Hinckley

The Ashby Canal runs on a broadly north-south axis from the A5 about 1.5km west of the M69. The canal has a very rural character and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) in recognition of its value as a wildlife habitat. Any development in the vicinity of the canal should seek to protect it from any risk of damage and should avoid any risk of adverse impacts on water quality as this could have potentially significant and wide-ranging effects on its value as a wildlife habitat.

Potential impacts on the character and setting of the canal should be carefully considered if development is proposed nearby as it is important that the value of the canal as a leisure and recreational resource is not harmed by inappropriate or noisy development.

Design Coding and Guidance

With a significant amount of canal network running through the Borough (over 40km in total) we consider that if design codes are produced as part of the Local Plan, there is scope to use them to identify design principles that take account of the nature and multi-functional role of the canal network and consider how new development proposals can benefit from waterside locations and also serve to enhance canal corridors and strengthen the roles they can play as heritage assets, leisure and recreational resources and sustainable active-travel options for people to utilise. The Trust would welcome the opportunity to engage further with you if it is decided to produce any such design codes.

Land for Housebuilding

The potential housing locations identified on the map at page 52 of the document include four sites located in the vicinity of the canal network. As only broad locations have been identified at this stage, it is not possible to identify specific likely impacts on the canal network, but we would ask that the following general comments are taken into account when considering the potential suitability of these locations for development.

South of Hinckley

The Ashby Canal runs on a broadly north-south axis from the A5 about 1.5km west of the M69. The canal has a very rural character and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) in recognition of its value as a wildlife habitat. Any development in the vicinity of the canal should seek to protect it from any risk of damage and should avoid any risk of adverse impacts on water quality as this could have potentially significant and wide-ranging effects on its value as a wildlife habitat.

Potential impacts on the character and setting of the canal should be carefully considered if development is proposed nearby as it is important that the value of the canal as a leisure and recreational resource is not harmed by inappropriate or noisy development.

The Trust considers that encouraging connectivity with the canal is important, particularly where such connectivity is achieved by providing opportunities for active travel. Canal towpaths are an important traffic-free route for walking/cycling for both leisure and utility walkers and provide a key link through parts of the Borough as well as providing links between urban and rural areas. In this case, the canal offers a link into Hinckley which can be used to access services and facilities in the town without recourse to private motor cars.

Towpaths offer a safe, convenient and attractive walking and cycling network which links with the wider walking and cycling network across the area and increasing their use and improving their accessibility will help to promote

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the health and well being of local communities, consistent with the aims of the NPPF. Towpaths should therefore be considered as an integral element of the infrastructure needed to encourage and achieve greater connectivity, providing a sustainable option for people to use, and any allocation for housing in the vicinity should identify ways to improve access to towpaths, opportunities to create links between towpaths and other walking and cycling routes and improvements to towpath surfaces to further facilitate year round use by both walkers and cyclists wherever possible.

M6 Junction 1

The Oxford Canal Brownsover Arm extends on a north south axis out from Rugby towards the M6 about 1km west of Junction 1. Whilst this canal arm is no longer navigable and is not open to boat traffic, it remains in water and provides a valuable wildlife habitat. At its northern end (just south of the M6) the Arm joins the River Swift feeder channel, which provides a water supply to the canal network from the River Swift. The feeder channel runs north for about 1.5km beyond the M6 before joining the river.

Any development in the vicinity of the Arm or the feeder channel should seek to protect them from any risk of damage and should avoid any risk of adverse impacts on water quality as this could have potentially significant and wide ranging effects on their value as wildlife habitats. It is important that the flow of water to the canal from the feeder channel is not obstructed as this may affect our ability to maintain the water levels in the canal that are necessary to allow navigation.

Newbold on Avon

The Oxford Canal runs north west out of Rugby along the northern edge of Newbold on Avon. There are several important structures along this stretch, with the canal variously sitting in cuttings with land sloping down to the canal, being carried on embankments raised above the surrounding landform and passing through a tunnel (Newbold Tunnel). It is important that all of these structures are adequately protected from the risk of damage arising from any new development proposed in proximity to them. The Trust can provide further technical advice on potential risks to these structures should allocations for development be considered in proximity to them.

The canal is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) in recognition of its value as a wildlife habitat. Any development in the vicinity of the canal should avoid any risk of adverse impacts on water quality as this could have potentially significant and wide ranging effects on its value as a wildlife habitat.

Potential impacts on the character and setting of the canal should be carefully considered if development is proposed nearby as it is important that the value of the canal as a leisure and recreational resource is not harmed by inappropriate or noisy development.

The Trust considers that encouraging connectivity with the canal is important, particularly where such connectivity is achieved by providing opportunities for active travel. Canal towpaths are an important traffic-free route for walking/cycling for both leisure and utility walkers and provide a key link through parts of the Borough as well as providing links between urban and rural areas. In this case, the canal offers a link into Rugby which can be used to access services and facilities without recourse to private motor cars.

Towpaths offer a safe, convenient and attractive walking and cycling network which links with the wider walking and cycling network across the area and increasing their use and improving their accessibility will help to promote the health and well being of local communities, consistent with the aims of the NPPF. Towpaths should therefore be considered as an integral element of the infrastructure needed to encourage and achieve greater connectivity, providing a sustainable option for people to use, and any allocation for housing in the vicinity should identify ways to improve access to towpaths, opportunities to create links between towpaths and other walking and cycling routes and improvements to towpath surfaces to further facilitate year-round use by both walkers and cyclists wherever possible.

South of Hillmorton

The Oxford Canal runs south from the eastern edge of Hillmorton from the A428 to the B4038 Rugby Road. Any development in the vicinity of the canal should seek to protect it from any risk of damage and should avoid any risk of adverse impacts on water quality as this could have potentially significant and wide ranging effects on its value as a wildlife habitat.

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The Trust considers that encouraging connectivity with the canal is important, particularly where such connectivity is achieved by providing opportunities for active travel. Canal towpaths are an important traffic-free route for walking/cycling for both leisure and utility walkers and provide a key link through parts of the Borough as well as providing links between urban and rural areas.

Other Topics

The canal network within Rugby Borough is a multi functional resource and in addition to its value as a heritage asset and a leisure, recreational and tourism resource, it plays an important role as a wildlife habitat supporting a wide range of biodiversity and providing a link between other green spaces and habitats. We consider that the Local Plan should recognise this and seek to ensure that new development close to canals aims to protect and enhance these roles and to strengthen the role of canal corridors as part of the strategic green/blue infrastructure network of the Borough, and particularly its value in providing a connection between other areas of green space.

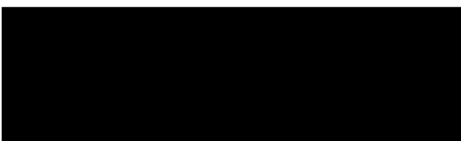
The role of the canal towpath as a sustainable, traffic-free opportunity for active travel and leisure and recreation, not only helping to improve connectivity within the Plan area but also promoting health and wellbeing by encouraging people to pursue more active lifestyles should also be encouraged within the Plan. The canal network can play an important role in providing communities with an accessible green space, offering significant benefits to health and wellbeing, whether through recreational and leisure use or as a traffic-free sustainable travelling route for walkers and cyclists to use to access services and facilities or to get to work or school. As already noted, over 40% of the current population of the Borough live within 1km of a canal, making the canal network a potentially highly accessible free to-use leisure, recreation and green infrastructure asset that can benefit local communities across the Borough.

The canal network is also a valuable tourist and visitor attraction in its own right, as well as providing links to other visitor destinations and attractions in the locality. Appropriate and sensitive development can help to enhance this role and encourage more visitors to the area by making it an attractive environment for boaters choosing to travel along this part of the canal network. Provision of facilities and links to other attractions can encourage boaters to break their journey, whether for the day or to moor their boats for overnight stays, in order to use facilities and to visit other attractions in the locality; this can all contribute positively to the local economy as well as helping to create a favourable perception of the area for visitors. To fully realise this potential, it is important to encourage appropriate canalside development and to make provision for boat moorings, as well as improving the connectivity between the canal and the surrounding areas.

Although the canal network within the Plan area is not designated as a conservation area, as a 200 year old network, we consider that it should be acknowledged as a valuable non designated heritage asset which includes a number of listed structures in the form of bridges and locks. The canal network is a prime example of a historic asset that is widely used, and a major aspect of its value is that it is both useable and accessible, for boaters and towpath users, as a piece of working heritage. Much of the form and character of the surrounding urban areas have historic links to the canal network, and the significant role it played in bringing raw materials in and transporting finished goods out. The canal network is therefore an important feature in helping to understand how the area has grown and evolved over the last 200 years and as such it should be protected and enhanced wherever possible as an important element of the heritage of the area.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries you may have.

Yours sincerely,



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