Warwick Town Council

Canalside Consultation responses

Reflecting on Policy DS17, the Council sought to obtain a DPD which provided a robust assessment of the canals within Warwick District and identify areas for regeneration within urban areas. The content of the DPD as consulted upon contains a significant proportion of irrelevant information and appears to lack any depth, ambition or a coherent plan and/or idea.

The document sets out the policy requirements which are already within the Local Plan which has been adopted and this document appears to regurgitate assertions, and some facts, but has very limited substance.

The objectives of the DPD to identify the issues and opportunities and identify a number of potential schemes to encourage the use of canals is excellent. Like many towns and cities across the UK and indeed Europe the use of waterways as commuting routes, activity areas and places to live have demonstrated that there are opportunities provide places. Which expose the setting and location of canals near town centres, with links to wider suburban areas, such as the Woodloes, Emscote and Myton and Heathcote.

Canalside development such as adjacent to the Moorings off Myton Road for example shows that active frontages contribute to a sense of place. As such it is disappointing to read within the document that the area of focus is for three sites.

Rather than focusing on three potential schemes, other areas of development should not be precluded from the document, whilst they may not be site specific. However, basic guidance and design principles should be included, to increase the lighting and tow path surfaces adjacent to development and to have other design principles whether that be by activating the frontages against canals with habitable rooms or broader design guidance to ensure a sense of place.

Overall, there is as stated within the adopted policy very good potential to better utilise the land adjacent to canals within Warwick and the wider District, and the re-use of urban areas will hopefully mitigate further sprawl in the medium term. Indeed, the development of canals by virtue of increased lighting and security, year-round usable paths and development to enhance safety and use should all be sought. Arguably weight should be given to the re-use of unused and under-used land adjacent to canals, such as the former Tamlea building in Warwick amongst other locations.

Relating to this document specifically however, when assessing whether the content of the document fulfil the policy requirement and indeed the objectives of the document as set out. It is our view that the document lacks enough depth and detail and is a missed opportunity from what could be a valuable contribution to the development of Canalside land within Warwick.

The Town Council therefore disagrees with the conclusions of the document as set out in paragraphs 5.45 to 5.47 stating the positive effects of the document.

The length of Grand Union Canal passing through Warwick Town is approximately 4.82k. The tow path runs along the north bank of the canal for the whole distance. The opposite bank of the canal has soft landscaping for total length of approximately 3.49k. Despite the proximity of housing and other building, this narrow gap is protected from disturbance and provides nesting habitat for waterfowl. The tow path side of the canal has no nesting habitat, even in green space, as there is no protection from disturbance.

The Canal Conservation Plan addresses a number of issues, three of which are; aesthetics, facelift and biodiversity. Ensuring that these three issues do not conflict will provide a challenge for the two sites described as options in the DPD.

1. Montague Road/Nelson Lane.

This sites development area is largely north of the canal alongside the tow path and as there is no waterfowl habitat on the north bank tow path side any re-development should not reduce nesting although, waterfowl do feed in the green margins at the edge of the tow path. Although the Nelson Lane has little green space its protection from disturbance does provide active nesting space in a number of places.

1. Cape Road/Millers Road.

Despite this site’s ‘tired’ appearance the lack of public access along the canal provides a large number of nesting sites. Any attempt to improve the ‘aesthetics’ from the point of view of boat users would clearly conflict with the habitat.

The wild waterfowl life is not only important to our biodiversity but they are also an attraction to the canal for our residents and particularly young families from the surrounding residential areas.

I would recommend that, before any development occurs a full survey is undertaken of the waterfowl habitat. We must ensure that our canal does not suffer from a loss of this important facet of our natural history and, preferably, be even improved.

1. Access to the Canal: this needs to be improved to enable all users to be able to access the towpath and for the towpath to be widened and made good all along it's length so people with pushchairs, in wheelchairs etc can use it safely when  bikes pass them.  Currently in some places (i.e. Warwick Cemetery to The Cape of Good Hope) the path is only wide enough for 1 person and if passing somebody coming the other way involves jumping in the hedge, often overgrown with brambles and nettles.

 A number of recent canal side developments have been constructed next to the canal and we would like to see new developments set back from the canal to make the area more of an open space.

1. The Cape Road/Millers Road Rationalisation of employment land: This area currently houses several longstanding businesses and if the intention is to improve the buildings then where would the businesses relocate to while the work was being carried out. I am assuming they would be allowed to return to their current site. Also, the area highlighted in red doesn't include the canal side of Scar Bank but talking to a business in that area they have been told by WDC the map was wrong and they were included. This needs to be clarified as a matter of urgency as one firm were about to sign a contract for a £100k plus refurbishment of their premises but have put it on hold

I am assuming, as it wasn’t mentioned in the document, all potential building/redevelopment for both housing and industrial use will be considered individually when planning permission is sought.