



Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee

Basingstoke Canal Planning Guidance Document – Decision Paper

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1. Summary

To put before the Committee a draft Planning Policy Guidance Note prepared jointly by the Canal Society and BCA as a basis for responses to planning applications which affect the Canal corridor; and seek the Committee's approval for Officers to consult Local Planning Authorities for their views.

Recommendation

That the Committee approve the draft Basingstoke Canal Planning Guidance Note for use as a consultation draft, and authorise Officers to consult with all Local Planning Authorities within the Canal corridor, and other appropriate stakeholders with expertise in planning.

2. Introduction & background

- 2.1.** The Basingstoke Canal passes through 7 Local Planning Authority areas. It is a major heritage and landscape feature in each of those areas.
- 2.2.** The Basingstoke Canal has a great number of existing designations which influence planning controls. Key is nature conservation where 90% is designated as a Site of Scientific Interest [SSSI], for its unusual water chemistry, and the resultant range of aquatic plants and dragonfly species, and where is not designated SSSI it is either designated Site of Nature Conservation Importance [SNCI] or Local Nature Reserve [LNR]. The Canal also runs through large areas of heathland many of which have their own statutory designations and protections.
- 2.3.** Heritage and landscape are also key factors and the entire Canal and a corridor surrounding it was designated as a Conservation Area in the 1970s. Further the majority of the bridges in Hampshire are grade II Listed, and Goldsworth Bridge in Surrey is a Scheduled Monument. The Woodham Lock flight is locally listed by Runnymede Borough Council.
- 2.4.** The Canal is owned by the two County Councils as countryside land for public recreation. Public recreation on foot, cycle or by water is therefore an important part of why the Canal survives as one intact entity today.

3. Discussion

- 3.1. Nevertheless due to the crowded nature of South East England the Canal corridor is under constant pressure from third party development. There have been some large developments near the Canal in recent years and Officers have found difficulty in ensuring that there is always sufficient protection or mitigation for the Canal.
- 3.2. It has been discussed by the Committee that there is no current guidance on the way to respond to developments which may adversely affect the Canal. The Basingstoke Canal Society and Officers have previously drawn to the Committee's attention that the neighbouring River Wey have a policy guidance document. This sets out how the National Trust will respond to applications on that waterway and gives guidance to developers in preparing acceptable plans.
- 3.3. Both the BCA and BCS have regarded the preparation of such an overarching planning document as a desirable, but have not until this point had the resource to bring it to fruition. The BCS have recently recruited, a new volunteer, Graham Corser who has experience in the field who has been able to spend some time researching the project.
- 3.4. The BCS and BCA have agreed that the resulting document should be co-owned; and as a result the document should eventually be ratified by the Committee as Canal partnership policy.
- 3.5. The consultation draft attached to this report as Annexe 1 has been prepared by the BCS and the Strategic Manager. It is heavily influenced by the existing policies of the LPAs along the Canal – most notably Woking Borough and Hart District Councils.
- 3.6. In order to have a document which is ultimately adopted as Canal partnership policy, it must be acceptable to the individual Canal partners many of whom are also LPAs; it is therefore now important for officers to consult with planning officers within the LPAs and other key stakeholders with knowledge or expertise in the field.

4. Consultation in addition to those from the Conservation Steering Group

- 4.1. The draft planning guidance document has been prepared jointly by the BCS and the Canal's Strategic Manager.
- 4.2. No further external consultation has currently taken place to date. The Officer's recommendation is that the draft document before the Committee is used to consult key stakeholders including all of the Canal Partners who are LPAs before bringing a final version back to the Committee for adoption.

5. Financial and value for money implications

- 5.1. The preparation of planning guidance may lead to better involvement for the BCA at earlier stages in development proposals, where designs can be more easily amended to benefit the Canal. The preparation of the *Planning Guidance Note* alongside other documents, such as the proposed *Canal Investment Strategy*, may lead to the unlocking of capital sums from the Community Infrastructure Levy [CIL] or s.106 obligations.

5.2. There is no significant cost implication with the consultation itself, other than some officer time.

6. Equalities & Diversity implications

6.1. There are no equalities and diversity implications for the Canal or its partners in accepting the draft document and carrying out further consultation.

7. Crime & disorder implications

7.1. There are no crime and disorder implications for the Canal or its partners in accepting the draft document and carrying out further consultation.

8. Conclusion and recommendation

8.1. A Planning Policy Guidance Note will improve the effectiveness in engaging early in development proposals. It may help developers and planners mould developments so that they enhance rather than detract or damage the Canal and its environment, and along with other documents in preparation may assist in unlocking funding for key projects from s.106 obligations or CIL

8.2. The Officer **recommends** that:

That the Committee approve the draft Basingstoke Canal Planning Guidance Note for use as a consultation draft, and authorise Officers to consult with all Local Planning Authorities within the Canal corridor, and other appropriate stakeholders with expertise in planning.

What happens next

- Officers will use the draft Planning Guidance Note to consult with LPAs and other experts in planning.
- Officers and the BCS will consider the responses and prepare a final document
- The final document will be submitted to a later meeting of the Committee for approval.

Annexe 1 – Basingstoke Canal Planning Guidance Document (Consultation Draft)

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