

"Dreamed a dream by the old canal"

Comments by the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society¹ (MBBCS) on the proposal by H2O Urban LLP to erect a residential development of 205 residential apartments at Upper Wharf Street (<https://www.upperwharfstreet.co.uk/#getinvolved>) - Planning reference: 21/01520/PA42
Sent via email to : consult@upperwharfstreet.co.uk

INTRODUCTION / CONTEXT

1. MBBCS appreciates the opportunity to comment on the documents made available in the public consultation period at <https://www.upperwharfstreet.co.uk/>
2. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these comments with the developer and/or Salford Council in more detail at each stage of the consultation and design process. We expect that the decision on this application will be seen as setting a precedent for the role of canal restoration in delivering the Crescent Salford Development Framework.
3. We welcome the changes in design since the developer's first pre-app consultation (Nov 2021 - Feb 2022).
4. We note the protection and facilitation of restoring MBB Canal in the latest Salford Local Plan² which applies to this proposed development.

Policy HE6: Canals

In the case of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal and Fletcher's Canal:

A. Development alongside the line of the canal shall facilitate its restoration or, where this is not practicable, provide open space incorporating walking and cycling routes and heritage interpretation features along its line so that the potential for future restoration is retained and people can appreciate the history of the canal; and

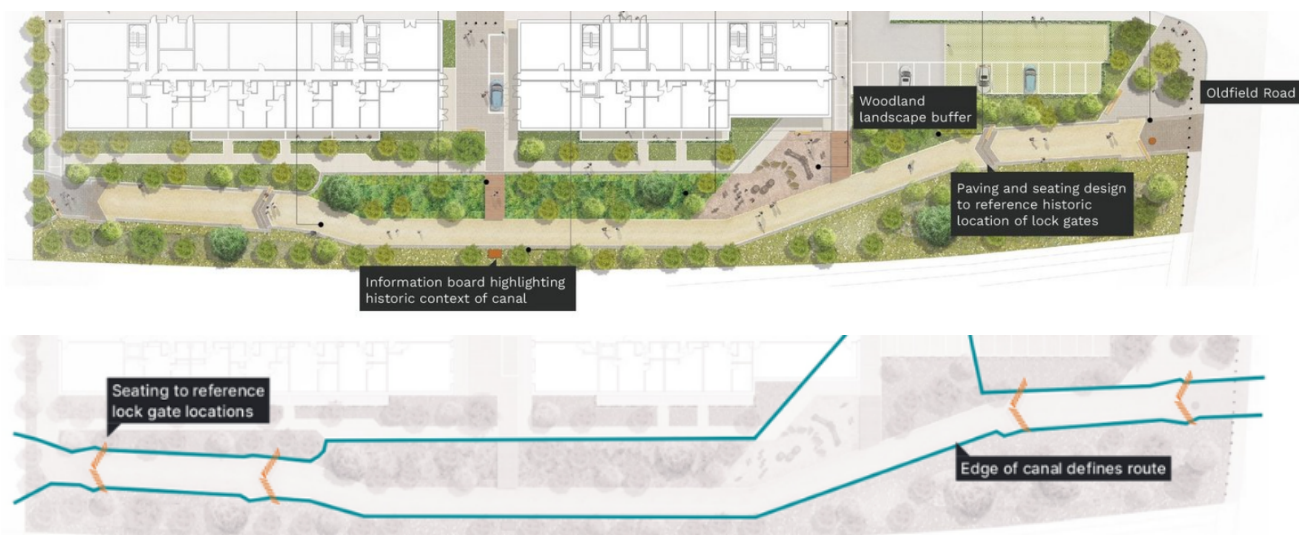
B. Development that would prevent or significantly hinder the future restoration of the canal or its towpath will not be permitted....

Developer contributions to the restoration and/or improvement of the city's canals will be sought where appropriate in accordance with policy PC1.

5. The developer has failed to explain how their scheme will facilitate restoration. The only reason this wouldn't apply is if the restoration is not practical at the particular location. The developer has provided no evidence that restoration is not practical at this location. The policy is clear that development that prevents or significantly hinders restoration will not be permitted.
6. In our view, this proposal does not make restoration easier, and it will hinder the restoration, looking at the plan below.

¹ <http://www.mbbcs.org.uk/>

² <https://www.salford.gov.uk/media/398824/salford-local-plan-development-management-policies-and-designations.pdf>



The developer has ignored the requirement that they should illustrate how a restored canal would sit within the site and allow for access. The cyclepath along the canal bed looks to be fairly fundamental to how the access across the site frontage is achieved and removing it and replacing it with a canal would mean, for example, that the only route from Oldfield Road is through the car park. Half the landscaping and the major pedestrian and cycle thoroughfare are in the canal line, and there isn't room to relocate these out of the canal line to allow reinstatement of the canal. It is incumbent on the developer to demonstrate that their scheme works with the canal reinstated, and to demonstrate this they should provide a drawing of the site with the canal in place and landscaping, footways etc working around it. In our view reinstatement of the canal is practical without completely reconfiguring the scheme. We would expect the developer to demonstrate this to be the case in a revised proposal.

7. The proposal to build a cycle/walkway on the line of the canal represents a serious financial hindrance to future restoration. The costs of digging up and then re-positioning this facility along the towpath would add considerably to restoration costs and would be detrimental to future fundraising bids.

8. All the information we have about how the canal was abandoned and what has happened since indicates that it should be practicable to fully reinstate the canal to navigable standard through the site.

9. It is imperative that the canal structures alongside the development are uncovered, and that the former towpath should become the route of the path/cycleway (widened if needed), rather than being along the line of the canal itself. This development would be the first of others to begin to restore the canal as the key feature of a linear blue/green park.

10. It is inexplicable that the developer has not explored the practicality of restoring the tunnel under Oldfield Road, and the associated winding hole (situated underneath the soon to be demolished Regent Trading Estate) which would provide a connection to Middlewood Locks and on to the national canal network.

11. The present landscaping plans for this site demonstrate an indifferent approach to restoring this section of canal and are remarkable for missing the opportunity to create a waterside development. Missing is a collaborative and positive commitment by the developer to work with the restoration partners and stakeholders in developing a strategy for restoring the whole of the Middlewood to Salford Crescent section of canal. This in turn would improve the prospects of securing external funding. This would help to support the financial viability of the planning proposals at the site on Upper Wharf Street.

12. It would be perverse for the planning authority to approve this scheme in its current format given that the proposal is contrary to policy HE6 which specifically requires developments to facilitate the restoration of the canal or at least to not hinder the restoration.

POWER / WATER SUPPLY

13. We support the installation of solar PV power systems, blue roof, surface water catchment and SuDS to capture and make the most of natural resources.

14. The provision of water to fill and top-up the canal between Locks 5 and 6 is a key issue for discussion with C&RT and Salford Council.

PHYSICAL HERITAGE

15. We support the excavation and use of existing canal infrastructure buried on this site.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HERITAGE

16. This wharf was the original terminus of the canal in the 1790s. It is thus an area of national and international significance in relation to the Industrial Revolution. Coal was unloaded for domestic use and in particular for the then new steam-powered mills in Manchester and Salford.

17. The developer should provide a Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeology of the site.

18. The Society can help prepare interpretation boards as a vital part of the development to explain the history of the canal, its traffic and the navvies who built it.

19. Restoration would bring to life the second line of Ewan MacColl's legendary song Dirty Old Town³ - *Dreamed a dream by the old canal* – Salford City's unofficial anthem.

FINANCE / FUNDING

20. H2O have assured participants in their consultation webinar that the CRT share of profits from this development will be used to support the canal network. It would be egregious if this share of the profit were not devoted to restoring the canal on this site. Otherwise the use of the profits would be the transfer of value from an area of relative deprivation to areas of relative prosperity.

21. Eventual full restoration works would result in any non-canal features in the line of the canal needing to be removed, which would generate an adverse reaction and waste valuable resources.

22. Recent research found evidence of uplift for commercial and residential uses. The research estimated the premium for new residential properties with a waterside frontage of around 20%.⁴ Adding water to the landscape at this location would increase the final sale price of this development. The popularity of other waterside sites in Manchester and Salford reinforces this.

³ <https://genius.com/Ewan-maccoll-dirty-old-town-lyrics>

⁴ Quoted in <https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=42822>

POLICIES

Other policies from the Salford Local Plan⁵ that are particularly relevant to our proposal of a partially restored canal as part of this development:

Policy F1: An inclusive development process.

There should be pre-application consultation with local residents, and evidence should be provided of the extent of this.

Policy F2: Social value and inclusion.

Enables people to experience water-based and waterside activities.

Policy G11: Development and green infrastructure.

Can be a repository for water run-off.

Allows residents to “dream a dream by the old canal” and celebrate the reappearance of a heritage asset buried for over 70 years.

Can cool urban areas by up to 1.6°C during heatwaves in a 100-metre-wide corridor along the waterway.⁶

Green infrastructure includes canals.

Policy WA5: Surface water and sustainable drainage.

Provides a storage facility.

Policy HH1: Development and health.

Adds to the attractiveness of the linear park and encourages higher levels of participation in walking, cycling and wildlife appreciation.

Society Background

The Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society was founded in 1987, with the aim of restoring the canal. It has had several successes, despite often difficult economic times. In the 1990s two bridges (one in Salford) were restored to full navigable dimensions.

In 2008 the first length of the canal at Middlewood in Salford was fully restored, including construction of a new deep lock allowing access from the River Irwell. The Society built the unique Meccano Bridge in 2012 and then undertook 'Big Digs' to reveal the flight of six locks at Nob End.

The Society continues to work with Bolton, Bury and Salford Councils, as well as with the Canal & River Trust. In the past few years the towpath from Hall Lane to Radcliffe has been resurfaced. The Canal Society is currently finalising a feasibility study with Bolton and Bury Councils and the Canal & River Trust to investigate reopening the canal to navigation from Little Lever to Bury.

The Canal Society has a clear vision and purpose to progressively restore the canal to full navigable condition with blue-green spaces for wellbeing and environmental improvement.

5th August, 2023

⁵ <https://www.salford.gov.uk/media/398824/salford-local-plan-development-management-policies-and-designations.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/canals-can-help-the-uk/>