

"Dreamed a dream by the old canal"

To:	planning.contact@salford.gov.uk
Subject:	Comments by the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society ¹ (MBBCS) on the proposal by H2O Urban LLP to erect a residential development of 205 residential apartments at Upper Wharf Street Planning reference: 23/82372/FUL
Version	FINAL
Status	Public
Date:	14/12/2023
From:	Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society (MBBCS)

INTRODUCTION / CONTEXT

1. MBBCS appreciated the opportunity to comment on the documents made available in the public consultation period at <https://www.upperwharfstreet.co.uk/> We are disappointed that the planning application now made does not respond positively to the points we raised regarding the potential for restoration of the canal.
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. It is vital that it is appreciated that the prospect of further restoration of the canal depends on the Upper Wharf Street section being restored in the near future. If restoration is obstructed by the current proposal as we believe it is, then the sections further 'upstream' in Salford will be left stranded. This development provides an opportunity for Salford to achieve restoration of a key piece of industrial heritage which recognises the site's unique position, alongside Worsley Delph, of driving the world's first industrial revolution. There is an entirely plausible case for this to also be recognised through a World Heritage Site designation of the canal network in Manchester and Salford.
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

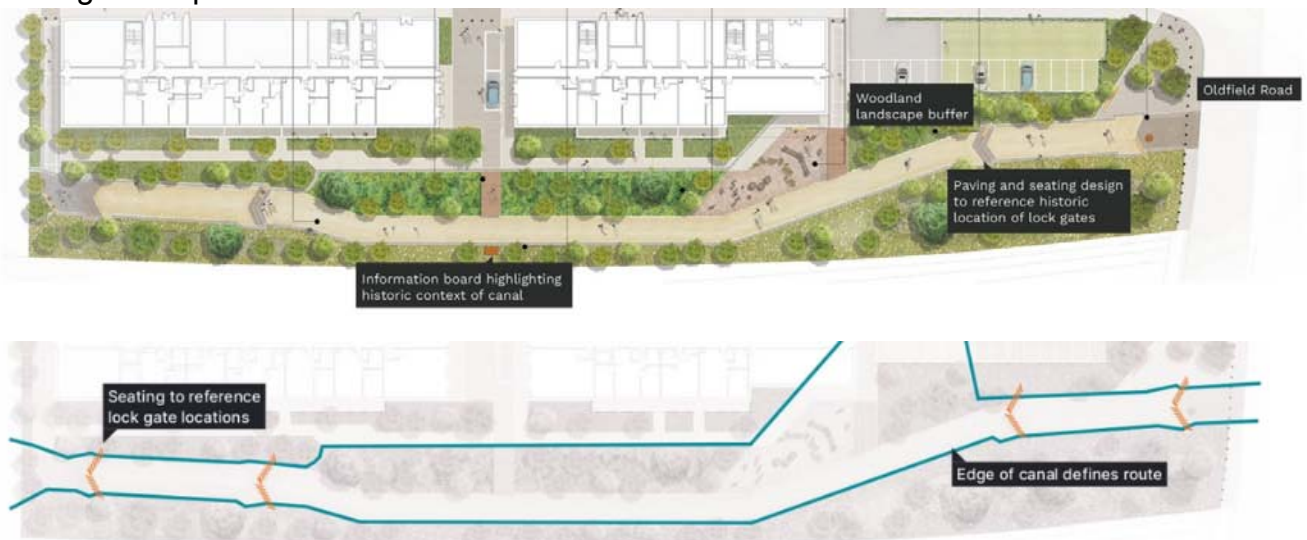
¹ <http://www.mbbcs.org.uk/>

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

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.



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 hindrance to future restoration of the canal both in cost terms and in the disturbance to the residents' expectation of their environment. 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 restored, 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 especially from a property development company that proudly announces its credentials as a 'specialist waterside development company'. 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. MBBCS remains committed to the full restoration of the canal in water including at the Upper Wharf Street site. There are two current proposals from the developers that will seriously impede that restoration at any stage and rob the site of significant heritage character. First, the removal of the canal bridge parapet wall is the unwarranted destruction of a heritage canal asset, removes an essential safety feature, and is a hindrance to future restoration of the canal. Secondly, the proposed removal of the canal coping stones which are largely intact on the site, buried just below the surface, will create an obstacle to restoration at any point in time. Our detailed reasoning in respect of those particular proposals can be found at Appendix A.
13. MBBCS is also concerned that the developer hasn't explicitly stated what is to become of the heritage brickwork and coping stones that are visible as part of the street scene on Upper Wharf Street. They partly indicate the location of the tunnel that led under Upper Wharf Street and provided the entrance to the canal branch now lost under the new build Oldfield Wharf.



14. 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. We are acutely aware that the detailed implementation of the linear park concept at this location will set a precedent for the rest of the Crescent Masterplan area. A linear park that properly acknowledges the route of the canal and incorporates a final state towpath, rather than

requiring rework at a future date, would be a tremendous asset to the city.

15. We propose that the following conditions should be incorporated into any planning decision:
- (a) No construction to commence prior to the developer providing a written scheme of investigation for the archaeology of the site which is approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
 - (b) No construction to commence prior to the developer providing a clear project plan of how restoration of the canal could be undertaken in such a way that minimises rework and expense in removing the proposed hard and soft landscaping and which is approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority
 - (c) No occupation of the dwellings to be permitted prior to the developer providing a project plan, demonstrating how the canal infrastructure is to be uncovered and the towpath reinstated as a pedestrian path/cycleway, which is approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority
 - (d) No occupation of dwellings to be permitted prior to the developer providing clear plans that demonstrate how the development would work with the canal reinstated and which are approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The expectation being that documents be produced that show how pedestrian and cycle access would be managed in a post restoration era.
 - (e) No occupation of the dwellings to be permitted prior to the developer providing a scheme to commemorate the heritage of the site and adjacent area within the new public realm which is approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
 - (f) no construction to start on site until there is a written undertaking by the developer that they will actively engage, support and work with Salford Council, MBBCS and other canal restoration partners to prepare and where needed to lead fundraising bids for the restoration of the canal on this site.

POWER / WATER SUPPLY

16. 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 to support restoration and operation of the canal.
17. We request that the current SuDS and drainage designs proposed for the site are changed. These should allow suitable surface and other water supplies to be stored on site and then be fed directly into the canal once it is able to receive water, ultimately handling the overflow by provision of a design that feeds the overflow water into Middlewood Locks. These changes would support Council Policy HE6 on MBB Canal that “development alongside the line of the canal shall facilitate its restoration”.

PHYSICAL HERITAGE

18. We support the excavation, re- use/display and interpretation of existing canal infrastructure buried on this site.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HERITAGE

19. 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.

20. The developer should provide a Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeology of the site.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. In the second half of the 20th century Salford through redevelopment lost a lot of its heritage both in terms of the physical fabric and the proud sense of identity and belonging to Salford. The restoration of the canal offers a once in a generation opportunity to recover an important aspect of the unique industrial heritage and identity of the city.

FINANCE / FUNDING / VIABILITY

24. 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. The generation of profit from Salford should be spent in Salford for the benefit of the local residents and the wider city.
25. 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.
26. 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 and potential rental income of this development. The popularity of other waterside sites in Manchester and Salford reinforces this.
27. In the past many developers have resisted making contributions to community infrastructure via s.106 payments or other means by arguing that their scheme would not be viable if such payments were made. The MBBCS is of the view that Upper Wharf Street is a handsomely viable scheme and can afford a more substantial contribution to restoration than that proposed in recognition of the heritage of the site. The MBBCS is aware of recent research that reported that rents in Manchester have increased by 20% in the last year.⁵ Rents in the M5 postcode of this development appear to mirror this. Our own ad hoc survey of local estate agents revealed typical rents in the private rented sector in this neighbourhood average £1,400 a month. 205 apartments would therefore be expected to generate an income of at least £3.4 million a year. We estimate the build cost to be £34 million so £3.4 million represents a gross return on investment of 10%.
28. Securing external grant funding, other external financial & non-financial contributions to the reinstatement of the canal on this site will reduce the landscaping costs to the developer and improve the viability of the proposed scheme.

SITE VISIT

29. We would recommend a site visit by officers and panel members where we could explain the significance of the Georgian era exposed canal artefacts that are currently viewable in situ.

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

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

⁵ <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/manchester-rents-are-20-more-expensive-than-last-year/>

These are priceless heritage assets that deserve conservation and restoration to use as foundations of a valuable blue/green corridor.

POLICIES

Other policies from the Salford Local Plan⁶ that are particularly relevant to our proposal of a partially restored canal as part of this development:

Policy F1: An inclusive development process.

There has been a pre-application consultation with local residents. Evidence should be provided of the extent of this and the feedback received..

Policy F2: Social value and inclusion.

Enables people to experience water-based and waterside activities.

Policy GI1: 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.⁷

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.

⁶ <https://www.salford.gov.uk/media/398824/salford-local-plan-development-management-policies-and-designations.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/canals-can-help-the-uk/>

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.

<https://www.mbbcs.org.uk/>

Appendix A

MBBCS remains committed to the full restoration of the canal in water including at the Upper Wharf Street site. There are two current proposals from the developers that will seriously impede that restoration at any stage and rob the site of significant heritage character. First, the removal of the canal bridge parapet wall is the unwarranted destruction of a heritage canal asset, removes an essential safety feature, and is a hindrance to future restoration of the canal, and as such is contrary to Salford Council's heritage policy HE6. Secondly, the proposed removal of the canal coping stones which are largely intact on the site, buried just below the surface, will create an obstacle to restoration at any point in time.

Section 6.7 of the applicant's Design & Access statement provides a view of the current heritage canal bridge parapet

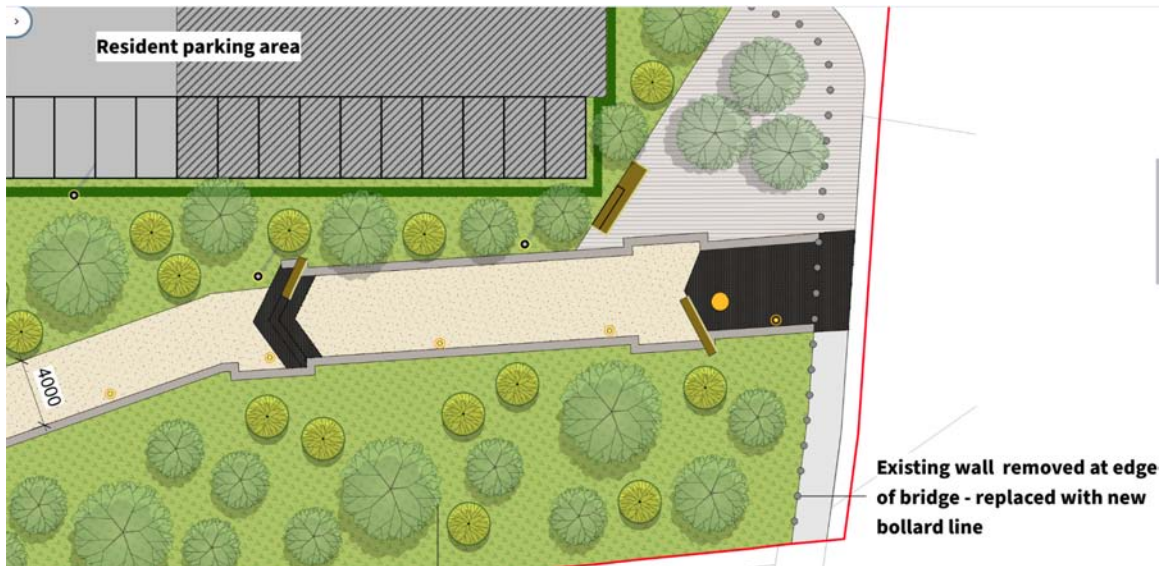


Section 6.8 of the applicant's Design and Access statement provides a view of the proposed landscaping of this area. This involves the complete removal of the heritage canal bridge parapet.



6.8 Proposed View along Upper Wharf Street

The applicant's landscaping plan confirms that treatment



MBBCS is of the view that removal of the heritage canal bridge parapet wall is the unwarranted destruction of a heritage canal asset, removes an essential safety feature, and is a hindrance to future restoration of the canal, and as such is contrary to Salford Council's heritage policy HE6. Similarly moving the canal side coping stones cannot be justified.

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.



View taken in 2008 of the heritage canal bridge parapet showing the bricked up access to the original towpath (source: Google Street View).

Age	Between Mile Posts from Salford (River Irwell)	District.	SPAN		DESCRIPTION OF VIADUCT, BRIDGE, TUNNEL, OR CULVERT					Date of Examination	If Wood or Iron, when last painted
			On square	On skew	Name	Under, Over, or Side	Public or Occupation	Number of Openings	Particulars		
8	1/4	1/2	ft. in.	ft. in.	MANCHESTER, BOLTON AND BURY CANAL - SALFORD TO PRESTOLEE - Continued.						
		Salford	27-3	27 8	Oldfield Road	Over	Public	1	Brick walls, C.I. girders and jack arches. Rebuilt in altered position in 1894-5, and replaced an arch and W.I. girders. M.B. and B. Canal diversion (for railway purposes) under L and Y R. Act 1890. Road over maintained by Salford Corporation. Notice plates fixed, 1898, re heavy loads.	25/10/1924 2/9/30	Corroded 1926 1926
			4-0				Culvert	1	At back of North abutment of last		

E, TUNNEL, OR CULVERT

Particulars	Date of Examination	If Wood or Iron, when last painted
<p>Brick walls, C.I. girders and jack arches. Rebuilt in altered position in 1894-5, and replaced an arch and W I. girders. M.B and B. Canal diversion (for railway purposes) under L and Y R. Act 1890. Road over maintained by Salford Corporation. Notice plates fixed, 1898, re heavy loads.</p> <p>At back of North abutment of last</p>	<p>25/10/1926 2/9/30</p>	<p>Coirecty 1926 1926</p>

Description of Oldfield Road Bridge from 1930 which dates the construction of the heritage canal bridge parapet to 1894/95



Lock 5 Head Gates - view towards Oldfield Road

Undated view of the heritage canal bridge parapet and Lock 5 included in section 1.13 of the applicant's Design and Access Statement



Historical alignment of the canal including lock gate position

Undated plan of the canal in the Upper Wharf Street/Oldfield Road area included at section 1.14 of the applicant's Design and Access Statement.

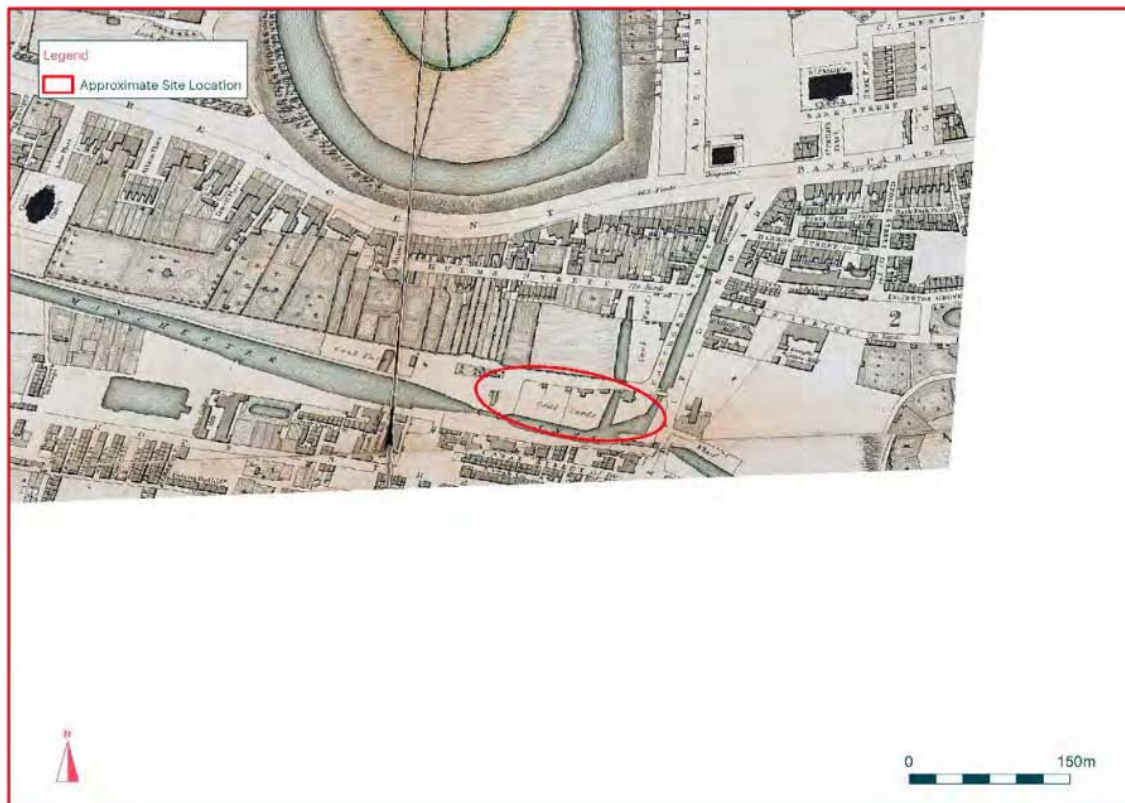


Figure 4 1832 Bancks Map showing Salford at this time. The site is labelled as 'Coal Yards' at this time.

(from the applicant's heritage assessment)

Significance of the site

The coal wharves at Upper Wharf Street were at the epicentre of industrial development in Salford. When the coal wharves first opened they were the source of much cheaper coal for commercial and industrial use. Previously coal was brought on pack horses overland, a much slower and smaller scale operation than that provided by canal boats.

History of the canal

In 1790 there was a proposal for a waterway to link Manchester with Bolton and Bury. In fact the canal was to start at the River Irwell in Salford. One of the land owners, Matthew Fletcher, was the original technical adviser and he was a mining engineer and coal mine owner. The Bill received its royal assent on 13 May 1791.

The canal was opened in 1797 from Bolton and Bury to the Oldfield Road terminus and extended down five locks to the River Irwell in 1808. Originally the canal was built with narrow locks but during construction the locks were altered into broad locks when there was a proposal to link the navigation to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Wigan Top Lock which was still being built. The scheme was known as the Red Moss extension. There were also other extension schemes to link the canal at Bury to Sladen (via Rochdale) and across the hills to Church (via Haslingden). None of these schemes was ever begun.

Coal carrying was one of the main reasons for building the canal. A lot of the mines were situated very close to the waterway so that loading was direct from pit head to boat. Lime, limestone, manure, stone, sand and slate were also carried on the canal. Prior to the construction of the railway between Bolton and Manchester passengers and parcels were carried on the packet boats. Later timber was carried in boats and by floating it on the water. Night soil was loaded onto boats from carts at Frederick Road Bridge in Salford and was shovelled through doors in the bridge parapets into the boat below. Unlike the tradition on most other canals the boatmen did not live on the boats; they lived "on the bank".

1830 there was a proposal to convert the canal into a railway. In 1831 at the first general meeting of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal Navigation and Railway Company, the line of the proposed railway was changed in order to retain the canal. In 1838, forty years after their introduction, the packet boats were sold as they were proving to be uneconomical and their speed damaged the canal banks. By 1838 the company completed the railway and commenced passenger trains between Manchester and Bolton. In 1846 the Company was taken over by the Manchester and Leeds Railway Company, and the name of the company was changed in 1847 to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company.

The Bolton arm went out of use in 1924, and in 1936 there were two serious breaches of the canal bank, notably at Little Lever, and navigation was restricted to a 4 mile length from Bury to Ladyshore and a 3 mile length from Salford to Clifton. In the immediate post war period, like most canals in this country, the remains of the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal were nationalised. In 1955 the canal was described as "a waterway having insufficient commercial prospects to justify their retention for navigation". The rest of the canal was abandoned in 1961 but some traffic continued in Bury until 1966. Parts of the canal have been filled in over the years and sections have been sold to a variety of owners.

The Engels connection

There is reference to the area in ***The Condition of the Working Class in England*** the 1845 book by the co-author of the Communist Manifesto Friedrich Engels, a study of the industrial working class in [Victorian England](#).

"...the workers of Salford live in dwellings in which cleanliness and comfort are impossible. Exactly the same state of affairs is found in the more distant regions of Salford, in Islington, along Regent Road, and back of the Bolton railway. The working-men's dwellings between Oldfield Road and Cross Lane, where a mass of courts and alleys are to be found in the worst possible state, vie with the dwellings of the Old Town in filth and overcrowding. In this district I found a man, apparently about sixty years old, living in a cow stable. He had constructed a sort of chimney for his square pen, which had neither windows, floor, nor ceiling, had obtained a bedstead and lived there, though the rain dripped through his rotten roof. This man was too old and weak for regular work, and supported himself by removing manure with a hand-cart; the dung-heaps lay next door to his palace!"

Source:

<https://genius.com/Friedrich-engels-the-condition-of-the-working-class-in-england-chap-2-annotated>

The LS Lowry connection

Oldfield dwellings, occupying a site on the corner of Upper Wharf Street and Oldfield Road, were constructed in 1893 as accommodation for 60 families of the labouring classes, built by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway to replace dwellings demolished elsewhere as a result of the expansion of the railway. Demolished in the early 1970's they were well known to LS Lowry who produced both a drawing and a painting of the location.



'Oldfield Road Dwelling', drawing by L.S. Lowry 1929. The Lowry Collection.
This is the back of the dwellings on Gaythorn Street



L.S. Lowry, Tate Gallery 1927 oil on wood



L.S. Lowry on Gaythorn Street, just about to turn into Upper Wharf Street. We are looking at the back of Oldfield Road Dwellings.

Source: <https://salfordhistory.blogspot.com/2020/>



View of Lock 5 looking towards the Oldfield Road parapet with Oldfield Dwellings to the left.

Source: Applicant's Design and Access Statement.

Conclusion

MBBCS is of the view that removal of the heritage canal bridge parapet wall is the unwarranted destruction of a heritage canal asset, removes an essential safety feature, and is a hindrance to future restoration of the canal, and as such is contrary to Salford Council's heritage policy HE6. Similarly moving the canal side coping stones cannot be justified.

We request that the developer revisits these parts of their landscape proposal so that these important heritage assets are conserved.