

Subject:	Briefing from the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society (MBBCS) on the proposal by H2O Urban LLP to remove the heritage canal bridge parapet on Oldfield Road Planning reference: 23/82372/FUL
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From:	Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society (MBBCS)

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

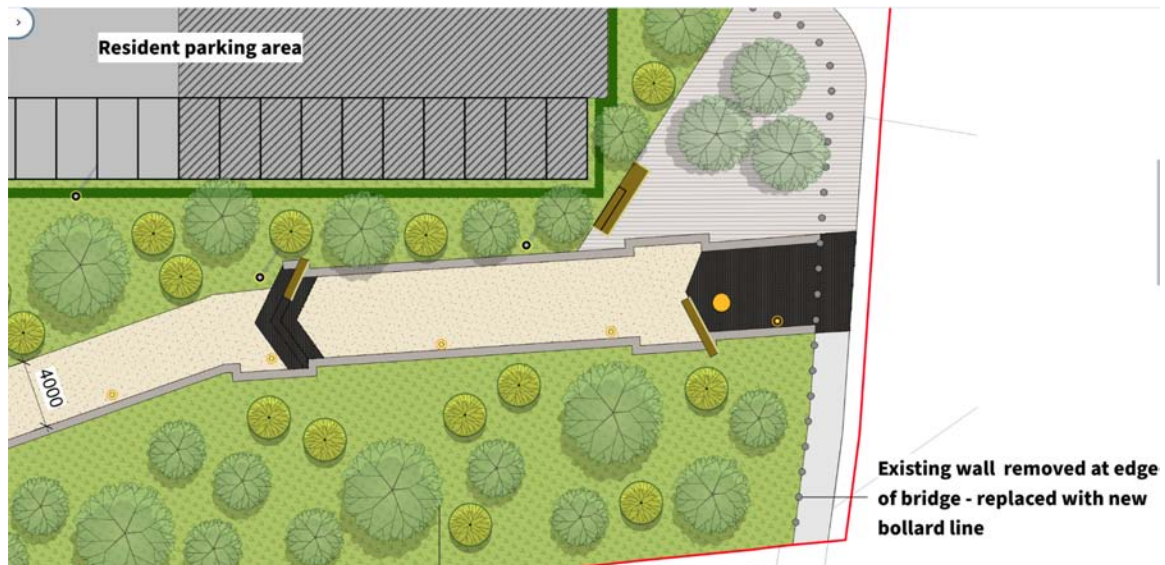


Section 6.8 of the applicant's Design and Access statement provides a view of the proposed landscaping of this area. This involves the complete removal of the heritage canal bridge parapet.



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).

No.	Span	Between Mile Posts from Salford (River level)	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		
				ft. in.	ft. in.							
8	1/4	1/2	MANCHESTER, BOLTON Salford	27-3	27 8	AND BURY CANAL - SALFORD TO PRESTOLEE - Continued. 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.	25/10/1926 2/9/30	Correctly 1926 1926
						Culvert			1	At back of North abutment of last		

E, TUNNEL, OR CULVERT		Date of Examination	If Wood or Iron, when last painted
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<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>Correctly 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.

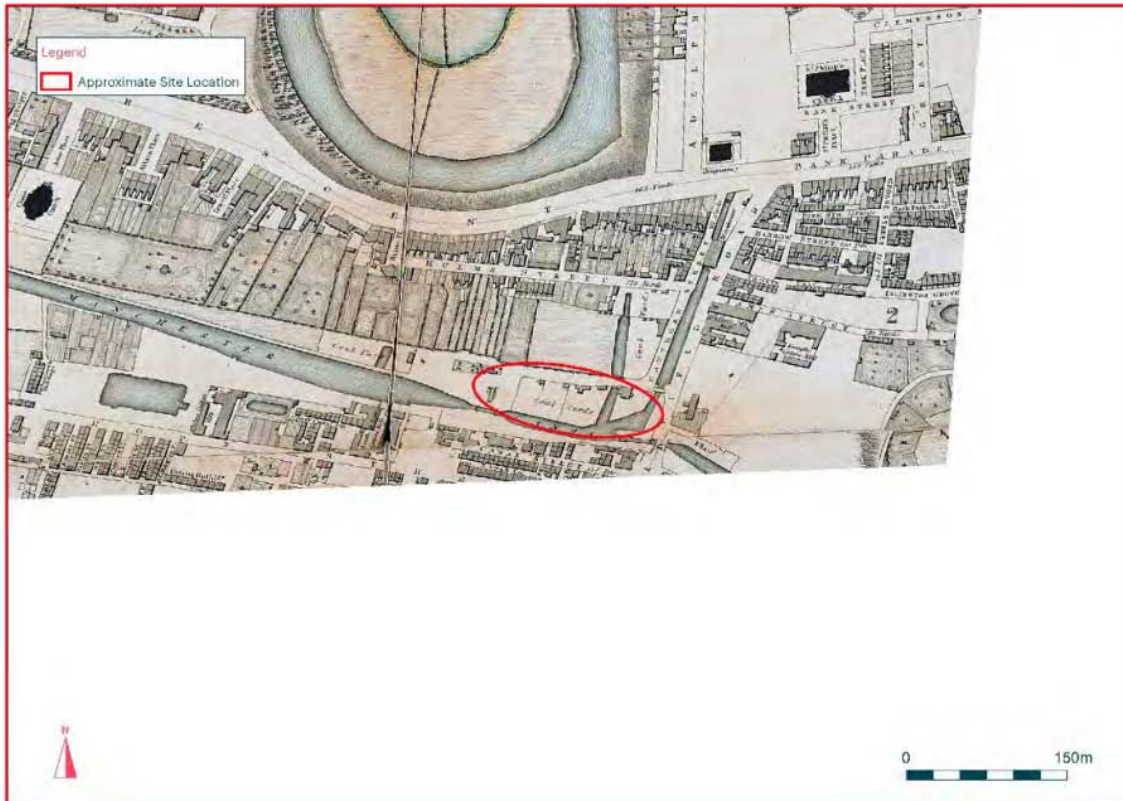


Figure 4 1832 Banks Map showing Salford at this time. The site is labelled as 'Coal Yards' at this time.

(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 Ladysore 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.