

Comments by the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society (MBBCS) on the Star Radcliffe Academy planning application

From: planning@mbbcs.org.uk

To: development.control@bury.gov.uk

Planning and Building Control, Bury Council

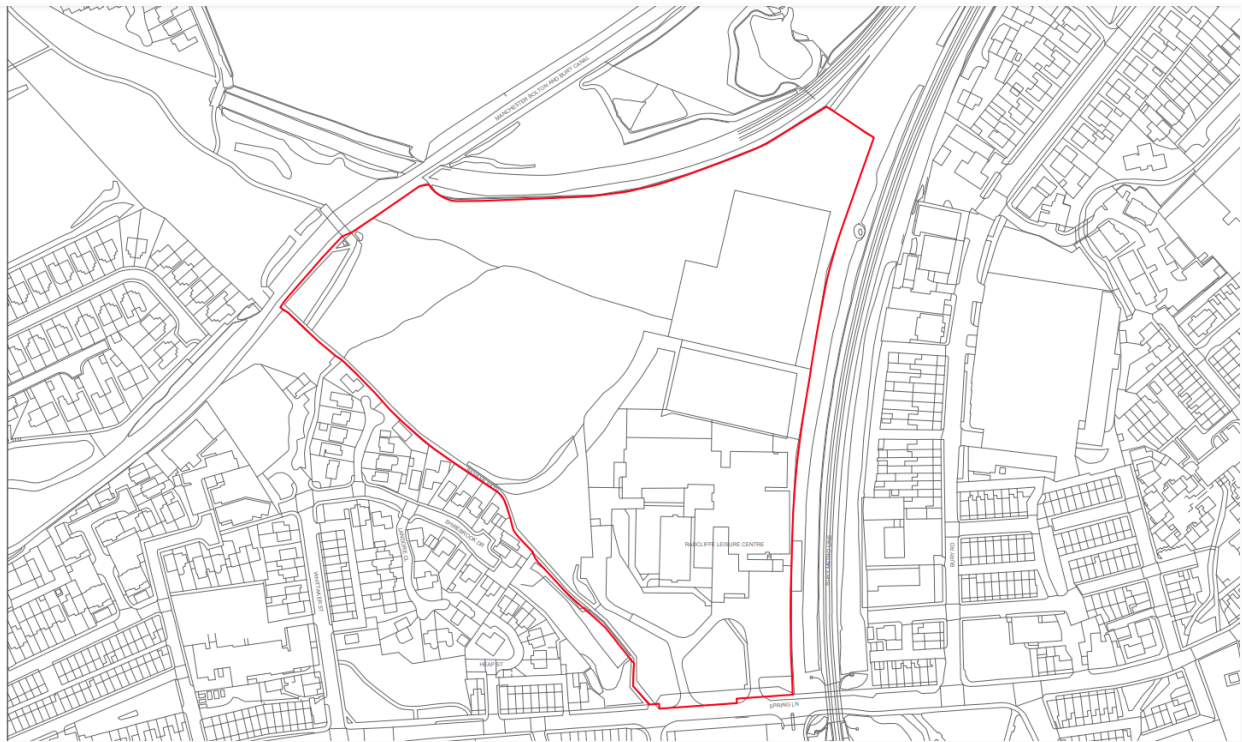
cc C.M.Wilkinson@bury.gov.uk

Subject: Planning application reference 70071

70071 | Erection of new secondary school alongside supporting sports facilities, car parking, landscaping, site infrastructure, new access road and associated access infrastructure | Site of Radcliffe Leisure Centre, Spring Lane, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 2SZ

08/10/2023

The site map provided on the planning application tells us that part of the site borders the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal. However, the plans provided show no proposals for this part of the site and we address this further below as the location offers a significant opportunity for the academy to be connected via a sustainable community travel route.





The MBBCS believes the canal side part of the site should be integrated into a strategy to develop a network of high-quality walking, wheeling and cycling routes to promote the use of active travel, working with TfGM to enhance the Bee Network. It would facilitate connections between blue and green infrastructure in this neighbourhood and provide valuable connections across communities. Key to a strategy would be the development and promotion of safe "off-road" active travel routes for walkers, runners and cyclists along the canal towpath, and watercraft users on the water.

MBBCS also proposed in response to the consultation exercise that the full restoration of the canal would be accompanied by three community environment hubs (one each in the Bury, Bolton and Salford local authority areas) offering facilities for people to engage with learning, citizen research and leisure activities including blue exercise such as paddle boarding and canoeing. The academy site would be an ideal location within Bury for the hub.

The canal from Daisyfield Viaduct in Bury to the Bolton boundary at Little Lever is a 5km spinal route comprising the canal and its towpath which links some of the most deprived areas of the borough to schools, employment and leisure facilities for local families, children & parents to use.¹

Many residents in these areas do not own a car and are not able to spend money on public transport. The route along the canal provides valuable free transport options for those who most

¹ The postcodes for the areas scoring highest in the indices of multiple deprivation in Bury are: BL8 and BL9 near Elton Reservoir and Redvales and M26 in Radcliffe around Water Street / Bolton Rd, Radcliffe.

need these. Creating and enhancing this active travel route is one way of addressing these social and economic needs across the borough, and would provide safer routes to the school and onward for example to Bury College.

Enhancement of this section of the towpath would play a part in realising the longer-term opportunities to use the canal towpath as an active travel route from Bury, along the Irwell Valley through Salford and its university, to the Enterprise City development in Manchester City Centre. It could act as a spur for the revitalising of the Irwell Valley Sculpture Trail.

A key part of the restoration strategy is for the culvert at Water Street to be removed and the road raised to allow boats to navigate through that section. This would also further enable connectivity off-road between communities via an enhanced towpath. The Academy development offers an opportunity for this infrastructure improvement to be supported and would demonstrate to young people that Radcliffe is a place with ambition for a vibrant sustainable future. Recent roundtable discussions, chaired by the GM Mayor, which included representation from Bury Council and other key stakeholders have identified that this could be achievable with support from developer, local regional and national funding. Connectivity is a vital element in promoting wellbeing on an individual and community level. The current Water Street configuration is a barrier to this, which the canal, if fully restored through Radcliffe to Bury, would rectify.

The consultation didn't reference the heritage policy context² however we feel that the developer should be aware of Policy JP-P 2 (Heritage) in the present iteration of *Places for Everyone*: "Through this Plan we will proactively manage and work with partners to positively conserve, sustain and enhance its historic environment and heritage assets and their settings. Opportunities will be pursued to aid the promotion, enjoyment, understanding and interpretation of heritage assets, as a means of maximising wider public benefits and reinforcing Greater Manchester's distinct identity and sense of place." Local Plans should support developments that "sustain and enhance the historic environment, as well as contributing to the economic viability, accessibility and environmental quality of a place, and to social wellbeing. In this instance the school is being presented with an opportunity to use the natural and industrial heritage features of the canal and towpath as educational resources for the school.

The Design & Access Statement in the planning application comments that the Bolton & Bury canal borders the northwest boundary, offering a scenic backdrop to the school. MBBCS believes this seriously undervalues the potential that the canal has to offer amenity to the Academy school. As we proposed in the response to the consultation we think that the school grounds adjacent to the canal towpath would be an excellent location for an Environment & Activity Hub, to facilitate the use of the canal for water-based sports such as paddle boarding and canoeing. Blue and green exercise have been shown to be excellent for health and wellbeing.

² (see Appendix 2)

Appendix 1

The Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society

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 2

Policy Context

Bury Local Plan

In March 2017, Bury Council gave formal notice of its intention to prepare a Local Plan in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and invited views on what the Local Plan ought to contain. It is still under preparation³.

Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

“The current Bury UDP was adopted by the Council on 29th August 1997. The Council is now working to replace the adopted UDP with a new document called the Bury Local Plan. Until the new Local Plan is produced the UDP will continue to be used to make planning decisions.”⁴

Places for Everyone

Policy JP-P 2

Heritage

“Through this Plan we will proactively manage and work with partners to positively conserve, sustain and enhance its historic environment and heritage assets and their settings.

Opportunities will be pursued to aid the promotion, enjoyment, understanding and interpretation of heritage assets, as a means of maximising wider public benefits and reinforcing Greater Manchester's distinct identity and sense of place.”

Local Plans should support developments that “sustain and enhance the historic environment, as well as contributing to the economic viability, accessibility and environmental quality of a place, and to social wellbeing.”⁵

³ <https://www.bury.gov.uk/planning-building-control/policy-and-projects/planning-policy/bury-local-plan>

⁴

<https://www.bury.gov.uk/planning-building-control/policy-and-projects/planning-policy/adopted-bury-unitary-development-plan>

⁵ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/4838/places-for-everyone.pdf>