

To:	development.control@bury.gov.uk
cc:	C.M.Wilkinson@bury.gov.uk
Subject:	DRAFT Comments by the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society ¹ (MBBCS) on Planning reference: 70284
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From:	Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society (MBBCS)

1. The MBBCS propose that condition 14 of the decision in the related outline application ref. 62969 could be at least partially satisfied if the developer were to make a contribution to the constructing or improving of any active travel routes that lead from this development to the canal towpath of the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal in Radcliffe.
2. Though not immediately adjacent to this development the canal is a major blue/green asset to this locality. Its attractiveness as a recreational and active travel route would be enhanced by further investment to enable easier access to the towpath..
3. We ask the LPA to be cognisant of the policy framework set out in the latest iteration of the “Places for Everyone” strategic planning document in relation to the management and development of waterway assets.

Greener Places

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River valleys and canals are vital components of the wider network of habitats, transport routes and recreation/tourism opportunities, and their long-term management is essential to provide benefits to flood risk, water quality, climate change adaptation, wildlife and creating attractive healthy environments for people to live. They provide important corridors of seminatural habitats and natural green space, with open grassland, woodland and wetland, linking urban centres with open countryside and connecting other strategically important areas such as the uplands and lowlands. As such, river valleys and canals will form an important part of our Nature Recovery Network.

Policy JP-G3: River Valleys and Waterways

8. Where compatible with the requirements of commercial and freight use, increase the use of canals and watercourses for active travel, with improved and extended rights of way alongside the water providing walking and cycling routes for both recreation and commuting, thereby increasing access to natural green space; and
9. Ensure that development relates positively to nearby rivers and other waterways, taking advantage of opportunities to integrate green infrastructure through:
 - a. High quality frontages to the water; and
 - b. Public realm alongside the water for both recreation use and maintenance access.

¹ <http://www.mbbcs.org.uk/>

4. We also remind the LPA of Bury Council's policies RT3/4 and RT4/7 from the Unitary Development Plan

RT3/4 - Recreational Routes In promoting access to the countryside, the Council will seek to establish a network of designated recreational routes to provide access, where appropriate, for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. These routes will be safeguarded and any development which would prejudice their establishment or use will not be permitted. The following routes are presently identified as having potential for recreational use: ...

RT3/4/4 - The Irwell Valley South of Bury Town Centre. This route follows the canal towpath and a former railway line linking Prestwich Forest Park with Radcliffe and Bury Town Centres.

RT4/7 - The Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal. The Council will protect and safeguard the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal and support proposals for its restoration. Proposals for canalside development will be expected to enhance the canal environment and not prejudice its restoration. In accordance with this policy, the following sites are allocated for canal related development:

RT4/7/1 - Land South of Daisyfield, Bury. The northern end of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal now terminates south of Daisyfield and a site is allocated for the development of a boat turning area and terminus facilities at this point.

RT4/7/2 - Water Street, Radcliffe. The canal has been culverted beneath Water Street in Radcliffe. It is proposed to reconnect the main lengths of the canal still in water by re-bridging Water Street to allow the passage of boats beneath.

Justification For a number of years the canal has been seen as having an important role to play in the environmental improvement, recreational development and economic regeneration of the Irwell Valley, a belief which has been expressed in documents such as the Croal Irwell Valley Local Plan, the Radcliffe Renewal initiative, the Mersey Basin Tourism Strategy and the Croal Irwell Valley Land Reclamation Strategy. The canal has considerable potential for recreational uses, as it passes through the Borough, in terms of a linear recreation route for walking and cycling and, as progressively restored to navigable status, boating. The canal is also important for fishing and represents the most important aquatic habitat in the Borough. Restoration of the canal and towpath, where appropriate, will not only provide an important recreational resource, but should maintain and increase the wildlife interest in the waterway and will attract visitors to the area. It will make an important contribution to the regeneration of the middle Irwell Valley.

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 1936 breach in the canal near Nob End Locks is currently being repaired and that section of canal is due to reopen in 2025.

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 which is to progressively restore the canal to fully navigable condition, and in doing so create blue-green spaces that aid wellbeing and environmental improvement.