



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

Planning Policy - Shropshire Council
Three Parishes Neighbourhood Plan
PO BOX 4826
Shrewsbury
SY1 9LJ

Your Ref

Our Ref CRTR-POL-2023-39622

Friday 1 September 2023

planningpolicy@shropshire.gov.uk

Dear Planning Policy - Shropshire Council,

Three Parishes Neighbourhood Development Plan Regulation 16 Consultation (The parishes of Adderley, Moreton Say and Norton-in-Hales)

Thank you for your consultation on the above document.

We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals & rivers. Our waterways contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities and economies, creating attractive and connected places to live, work, volunteer and spend leisure time. These historic, natural and cultural assets form part of the strategic and local green-blue infrastructure network, linking urban and rural communities as well as habitats. By caring for our waterways and promoting their use we believe we can improve the wellbeing of our nation. The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is a statutory consultee in the Development Management process, and as such we welcome the opportunity to input into planning policy related matters to ensure that our waterways are protected, safeguarded and enhanced within an appropriate policy framework.

Our waterways should be acknowledged within the policy document as significant blue/green infrastructure which can serve as a catalyst for regeneration, a sustainable travel resource for commuting and leisure, a natural health service acting as blue gyms and supporting physical and healthy outdoor activity, an ecological and biodiversity resource, a tourism, cultural, sport, leisure and recreation resource, a heritage landscape, and a contributor to water supply and transfer, drainage and flood management. The waterway network hereabouts forms part of the historic environment, the character, cultural and social focus of the Three Parishes area and this part of Shropshire in general.

The Plan Area includes a stretch of the Shropshire Union Canal measuring approximately 6.5 km in length, and which is very rural and isolated in character. This stretch of canal takes in the dramatic Adderley Lock Flight, consisting of five locks. Our nearest moorings are south of Audlem locks, close to Market Drayton. The Trust has been working with Adderley Parish Council to look to strengthen the links between the village and the canal towpath as it offers a safe, alternative off-road routeway for villagers and visitors to the area.

Based on the documents and information available the Trust has the following general advice and considers a number of draft policies would still benefit from further modification to ensure that the Shropshire Union Canal can make a greater contribution to achieving the objectives of the plan area.

Canal & River Trust Planning Team

Canal & River Trust, National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port South Pier Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH65 4FW
T: 0151 355 5017 E: nationalwaterwaysmuseum@canalrivertrust.org.uk W: canalrivertrust.org.uk

Development Plan Conformity

The Trust notes that NDP's must conform to higher level policy, both national and local including in this case Shropshire Council's strategic planning policy, which is contained within the Shropshire Core Strategy and the Site Allocations & Management of Development, which together make up the Development Plan. However, the current development plan is out now out-of-date and its existing documents are under review. The submitted NDP documents suggest that as Shropshire have now reached the examination stage of the Local Plan Review, an appropriate and sensible approach from this point is to proceed with the Neighbourhood Plan on the basis of the emerging strategy and policies, working closely with Shropshire Council during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and supporting documents. The Trust however notes that due to on-going additional work in relation to emerging plan soundness and challenges arising thereto there is currently no date set for its public Examination. The Council and Parish Councils may therefore wish to consider whether a commensurate delay to the preparation and consideration of this NDP, starting now, would be beneficial to ensure that their timeframes progress together and do not result in abortive work. This suggestion also reflects the statement on page 17 of the draft NDP document which acknowledges the potential need to pause the Neighbourhood Plan process pending emerging issues from the Local Plan Review Examination process.

NDP Policies

The Trust made comments on the Regulation 14 consultation for the NDP in our response dated 4th January 2022. This response below builds upon those previous observations.

Vision and Objectives

We previously commented, *"Objective 9 refers to the provision of a 'safe, accessible and well-maintained network of roads, cycle routes, footpaths, rights of way and pavements...'. The Shropshire Union Canal towpath also provides a direct, traffic-free route for sustainable modes of travel, and we request that the towpath be added to the wording of Objective 9. Objective 11 refers to the protection of the '...character and setting of the Three Parishes historic buildings...'. As Figure 10 and Appendix 3 identify, there are a large number of Listed Buildings along the canal corridor. The canal corridor itself is also a non-designated heritage asset requiring protection from adverse impacts arising from development. We request that the wording of Objective 11 is revised to include reference to historic structures (rather than just buildings), and to the character of the Shropshire Union Canal corridor as a non-designated heritage asset."*

The Trust notes that neither Objective 9 nor 11 have been amended as requested. We remain of the view that these wording additions to both objectives remain important to the contribution our network can make to the 'Transport and Movement' and 'Built Environment and Heritage' objectives of the Plan, and we reiterate our request for their amendment as described above.

Policy H1 - Housing Design

We previously commented, *"Policy H1 sets out a number of design principles which development proposals should have regard to. We consider that many of these principles should also apply to non-residential development, and that a more general design policy may be appropriate."*

The stretch of the Shropshire Union Canal within the Plan Area has a very rural and isolated character, and requires protection from influences which may have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of canal users.

We request that the list of design principles be expanded to include the following:

"Where proposed development may affect the visual amenity of the canal corridor, this be specifically addressed, either within a Design & Access Statement or elsewhere. The canal must be sympathetically treated through the design approach, backed with reasoned justification. Orientation, scale, massing, character,

Canal & River Trust Planning Team

Canal & River Trust, National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port South Pier Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH65 4FW
T: 0151 355 5017 E: nationalwaterwaysmuseum@canalrivertrust.org.uk W: canalrivertrust.org.uk

materiality, landscape, engagement, and connectivity must all be design considerations when shaping the future of the canals' context."

The Trust has some broad design guidelines, available at the following link:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/planning-and-design/creating-successful-waterside-places>

Where proposals may impact on the canal, we encourage applicants/developers to use our free planning and design pre-app service. Please direct applicants/developers to <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/planning-and-design/our-statutory-consultee-role/what-were-interested-in/pre-application-advice> for further information. The Steering Group may wish to include this at the end of the Plan, in a section providing additional sources of information and advice."

The Trust notes that policy H1 has not been amended as requested. We therefore repeat our request that the list of design principles be expanded to specifically incorporate the canal corridor as suggested, and more broadly that the policy title be amended to reflect the applicability of high-quality design to all development rather than exclusively, by title, to housing.

Policy G2 – Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity

We previously commented, *"The Trust supports the intentions of Policy G2, to protect and enhance biodiversity within the Plan Area in line with national legislation and emerging Shropshire Local Plan policies.*

We request that an additional item is added to the list of requirements in Policy G2, referring to the protection and enhancement of existing wildlife corridors such as the canal corridor, as follows:

"Protecting and enhancing existing wildlife corridors such as the Shropshire Union Canal corridor."

We also request that the list is expanded to include reference to the control of external lighting along the canal corridor, to avoid adverse impacts to nocturnal species which use the canal, such as bats, as follows:

"Ensuring that any external lighting within the vicinity of the Shropshire Union Canal conforms to the protocols set out in Guidance Note 08/18 – Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK (BCT and ILP, 2018) to avoid adverse impacts to nocturnal species which use the canal, such as bats."

The Trust welcomes the addition of specific reference to the canal corridor within this policy wording, and explicit mention of external lighting control. More generally, the policy wording supports and promotes Biodiversity Net Gain and integration of the canal into wider green infrastructure. Accordingly, we request no further amendments to this policy.

Policy G3 - Local Carbon Reduction

We previously commented, *"We welcome the ambition of Policy G3, which promotes sustainability in new development proposals, and supports the installation of community energy facilities.*

The water flowing through our waterways nationally contains enough thermal energy to produce approximately 640 MW of energy. There are a number of examples of successful schemes involving the use of canal water to provide for space heating and cooling of buildings of various sizes and uses.

In order to help to achieve ambitions for carbon reduction, we are seeking opportunities to power development using canal water and would welcome policy support for this."

The Trust notes that the wording of this policy does not list the potential sources of energy facilities and the policy would benefit from strengthening in this respect, and within it explicit inclusion of the use of water-source heat pumps utilising the canal network. Alternatively, the associated explanatory text for the policy should be expanded to add this level of detail and thereby clarify the Plan's expectations.

Canal & River Trust Planning Team

Canal & River Trust, National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port South Pier Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH65 4FW
T: 0151 355 5017 E: nationalwaterwaysmuseum@canalrivertrust.org.uk W: canalrivertrust.org.uk

Policy T1 – Linkages and Connections

We previously commented, *“Policy T1 supports development proposals for the enhancement and improvement of the existing Public Rights of Way network, which the Trust welcomes.*

We request that the wording of Policy T1 be expanded to include support for enhancement and improvement of the Shropshire Union Canal towpath.

Responses to Question 52 suggest that public footpaths and the canal are used frequently (Referred to at page 44 of the Draft Plan), and therefore we consider it would be appropriate to include reference to the canal.”

The Trust welcomes the addition of reference to the Shropshire Union Canal towpath within the policy wording as requested. Accordingly, we request no further amendments to this policy.

Built Environment and Heritage

We previously commented, *“The Trust welcomes the focus on protecting heritage assets within the Three Parishes. We provide below some additional information on the history of the Shropshire Union Canal, which the Steering Group may wish to include in the Plan.*

The Shropshire Union Canal was constructed in three stages by three different companies. Firstly, the Chester Canal was built in the 1770s, connecting the River Dee with Nantwich. In the mid-1790s the Ellesmere Canal was built from Chester to the River Mersey, creating the town of Ellesmere Port at its northern terminus.

The branch from Middlewich opened in 1833, enabling clay to be taken to the Potteries and crockery exported. The canal from Nantwich to Autherley Junction (near Wolverhampton) received its Act of Parliament in 1826 but was not completed until 1835. This was the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction Canal, which provided a direct route from the industrial West Midlands for exports and imports through Ellesmere Port, where the facilities were considerably enhanced. A branch went from Norbury Junction through Newport to join the Shrewsbury Canal near Wellington.

These canal companies were merged in the mid-1840s to create the Shropshire Union Railways & Canal Company. The canal saw a further period of prosperity in the late 1800s with investment into the docks at Ellesmere Port and the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in the 1890s. The Shropshire Union’s fleet of boats grew to be the largest fleet in the country by 1900. (and),

Policy LE1 – Conservation of the Three Parishes Historic Character

We welcome the intentions of Policy LE1, to protect and conserve the historic character of the Three Parishes.

As figure 10 identifies, there are a considerable number (thirteen) of Listed Buildings along the Shropshire Union Canal corridor, most of which are accommodation bridges and mileposts. However, the second paragraph on page 40 of the Consultation Document refers to ‘...the greatest concentration of listed buildings being found around the main villages of Adderley and Norton in Hales...’. We would welcome an acknowledgement of the large number of Listed Buildings along the canal corridor.

We note that Policy LE1 and its explanatory text refers to ‘...listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and other buildings considered to contribute to local or historic interest...’.

The Trust is keen to ensure that our heritage assets within the Plan Area are afforded appropriate protection from adverse impacts. This includes the canal itself, which is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.

The Plan Area contains a number of traditional stone road and accommodation bridges, including Adderley Lees Bridge, Betton Coppice and Betton Wood Bridges. The navigation also features a number of important historic engineering features, such as cuttings and embankments, throughout the Plan Area.

Canal & River Trust Planning Team

Canal & River Trust, National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port South Pier Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH65 4FW
T: 0151 355 5017 E: nationalwaterwaysmuseum@canalrivertrust.org.uk W: canalrivertrust.org.uk

Since many heritage assets are not buildings in the ordinary sense, we request that the wording of the policy be amended to refer to 'other heritage assets, whether designated or otherwise' rather than 'other buildings'.

We further request that the list in Policy LE1 be expanded to include reference to protecting and enhancing the heritage significance of the Shropshire Union Canal corridor (as a non-designated heritage asset) and the designated and non-designated heritage assets along its length."

The Trust notes that not all of its previous heritage-related comments have been explicitly incorporated into the general text or detailed policy wording, and we reiterate our request for these additions. In particular, protection and enhancement of the canal corridor in this interest would be better secured by specific policy reference to protecting and enhancing the heritage significance of the Shropshire Union Canal corridor as a non-designated heritage asset, and the designated and non-designated heritage assets along its length. We therefore reiterate our previous requests for expansion of both the text and policy wording to address this aspect.

Future engagement

We previously commented, *"The Trust hopes that the above advice is helpful and we are happy to engage further with the preparation of The Three Parishes Plan."*

The Trust reiterates we are very willing to continue to work with you, to meet and discuss these points for clarity, and to seek to work together towards a high-quality Three Parishes plan area that relates positively with the waterway network.

The above comments do not prejudice any further matters that might be raised at a later stage as the plan emerges.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Tracy Humphreys MRTPI
Area Planner

Tracy.Humphreys@canalrivertrust.org.uk
07503993473

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/planning-and-design>

Canal & River Trust Planning Team

Canal & River Trust, National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port South Pier Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH65 4FW
T: 0151 355 5017 E: nationalwaterwaysmuseum@canalrivertrust.org.uk W: canalrivertrust.org.uk