

Planning Policy
Rushcliffe Borough Council
Rushcliffe Arena
Rugby Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7YG

Your Ref

Our Ref CRTR-POL-2025-45286

Tuesday 04 November 2025

Dear Rushcliffe Borough Council,

Consultation on the East of Gamston/North of Tollerton Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document

Thank you for your consultation on the above document.

We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals and 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.

Please find below the Trust's response to the draft SPD. We hope that the comments provided are clear and helpful. We are willing to continue to work with you, to meet and discuss these points for clarity should you require.

Policy 25 in the adopted Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 1 identifies land east of Gamston and north of Tollerton as a Strategic Allocation and defines the boundaries of the site. The Trust owns and maintains the Grantham Canal, which adjoins the northern and eastern boundary of the allocated site for a distance of about 2km. The canal was closed to navigation in 1936 (under Section 38 of the LNER (General Power) Act 1936) with the proviso that a two-foot level of water should be maintained to support agricultural needs. Under the Transport Act 1968, waterways were classified as Cruising Waterways or Commercial Waterways with those not listed as either being designated as 'remainder' waterways. The Grantham Canal is a 'remainder' waterway.

Since then, as a 'remainder' waterway the Grantham Canal has become a valuable wildlife habitat. The canal is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (Grantham Canal- Bassingfield to River Trent) along this stretch. Although such sites do not have statutory protection (i.e.- set out in legislation) they are nonetheless locally important sites that are of substantive value for the conservation of biodiversity and are often home to rare and scarce species. Additionally, the Grantham Canal Society has worked extensively to restore parts of the canal. The Grantham Canal Partnership (GCP) was established in 1997 with the stated aim *"to reopen the Grantham Canal to full navigation from the River Trent in Nottingham to the centre of Grantham"*. The Trust, along with Rushcliffe Borough Council (and the other local authorities whose jurisdiction includes the canal), the Grantham Canal Society, Natural England, the Wildlife Trust and the Inland Waterways Association are all members of the GCP and support this aspiration.

Policy 25 identifies a range of requirements for the development of the strategic allocation and these include the creation of an enhanced green corridor along the Grantham Canal along with improvements to walking, cycling and public transport links through and beyond the site. Policy 31 of the adopted Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2 states

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that “Rushcliffe Borough Council supports the restoration of the Grantham Canal, including the proposed link between the Grantham Canal and River Trent which is safeguarded for this purpose and identified in the Policies Map. Development which would prevent the future implementation of this link will not be supported” and further that “across the Borough the Council will resist planning applications which will have a significant adverse impact on tourist and leisure facilities, but with particular protection applied to valued attractions such as... the Grantham Canal”. It is therefore clear that appropriate measures to protect and enhance the canal should be incorporated into any development of the allocated site to ensure that the canal is adequately safeguarded and to maximise the opportunities presented by the canal as a leisure and recreational resource which can benefit future residents of this development.

Chapter 2- Vision

We consider that the Grantham Canal can play a role in supporting the delivery of several of the aims set out in the vision for the site, particularly in terms of offering a sustainable and traffic-free walking and cycling route along the northern edge of the site which connects eastwards to the wider area and surrounding countryside (including Cotgrave Country Park) and has the potential to connect westwards into the built up part of Gamston/Nottingham west of the A52 via the canal towpath which also continues west of the A52. The canal can therefore serve to encourage active travel as well as offering a recreational resource, both of which can help to support the health and wellbeing of existing and future communities.

Section 2.7 of the draft SPD summarises the objectives for the development of the site and highlights the importance of protecting and enhancing green and blue infrastructure corridors; the Grantham Canal is appropriately identified as a green/blue infrastructure corridor with ecological, cultural and amenity value. We suggest that the role that the canal towpath could play in contributing towards the provision of appropriate walking and cycling infrastructure to serve the development and help connect it to the surrounding area could also be highlighted within section 2.7.

Chapter 3- The Site and Context

Chapter 3 sets out the site features and context and appropriately identifies the Grantham Canal's importance as a walking/cycling route and important element of the wider footpath network; as a heritage asset which provides a reminder of the industrial development of the area in the 18th and 19th centuries; and as an important wildlife habitat and green/blue infrastructure corridor. The Site Considerations & Opportunities section notes the importance of retaining and enhancing the biodiversity value of the area, highlighting the potential to create new wildlife corridors along the Grantham Canal (as envisaged in the adopted Core Strategy).

We note that the opportunity to enhance the site's perimeter with 'green edges' that will integrate site proposals into the surrounding landscape identified at section 3.5.8 specifically highlights the canal and expects the masterplan for the site to incorporate such 'green edges'. The Trust considers that this is an appropriate approach and the SPD should emphasise the importance of the canal as a wildlife corridor and acknowledge that much of its attraction to walkers and visitors is as a green corridor that provides a tranquil and pleasant link to, and route through, the local countryside. We suggest that this section could also refer to the importance of considering the relationship created between the canal corridor and new built development and ensuring that an appropriate character is maintained along the canal corridor.

Section 3.64 rightly identifies the importance of providing pedestrian/cycle links between the development and the canal and potentially in the longer term, the ability to also connect to any new link between the canal and the River Trent. We consider that the Grantham Canal can play a valuable role in offering a sustainable and traffic-free walking and cycling route along the northern edge of the site which connects eastwards to the wider area and surrounding countryside (including Cotgrave Country Park) and has the potential to connect westwards into the built up part of Gamston/Nottingham west of the A52 via the canal towpath which also continues west of the A52. The canal can therefore serve to encourage active travel as well as offering a recreational resource, both of which can help to support the health and wellbeing of existing and future communities, and this should be clearly highlighted as a significant opportunity.

The opportunities to create or enhance pedestrian and cycle connections are highlighted and whilst the role of the Grantham Canal towpath is noted, we consider that the SPD should specifically emphasise the importance of improving connectivity between the canal towpath east of the A52 and the canal towpath west of the A52. At present the road presents a substantial barrier and we consider it is important that any development addresses this. The towpath west of the A52 provides a 2.7km path which passes facilities, shops etc as it heads towards West Bridgford, including the existing Morrison's superstore (where a direct pedestrian access from the towpath already

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exists). Providing a safe and convenient connection from the site to the towpath west of the A52 should therefore be explicitly identified as a requirement of any development in order to further encourage active travel, strengthen links between the site and the existing urban area and facilitate access to the canal east of the A52 as a recreational resource that can then more readily be accessed by the wider community.

Chapter 4- Development Framework

The Design Objectives set out at section 4.5 include developing and enhancing the site's natural assets, such as Grantham Canal, whilst delivering ecological enhancements. We consider that the SPD could provide more detail on the wide-ranging opportunities the canal offers (which as highlighted above, go beyond its value as a wildlife habitat) and how they could be realised as an integral element of the development. A sensitive and holistic approach to development near to the canal can help to realise the potential that the canal and towpath have to contribute positively to the various aims set out in section 4.5 and this should be specifically highlighted.

The design objectives diagrams on pages 44- 45 show 'The Edge' split into three areas; Canalside, Water Meadows and Woodland View. The text states that development will define the outer edges through different landscape typologies and will set the development positively within the existing context. It does not however go on to discuss the character of the canalside area or what gives it a special and distinctive character, although it does refer to the approach taken in the other two areas. We consider that this section requires greater consideration of the value of the canal and how best to respond to this.

The 'Density' diagram shows mainly a medium density development facing the canal and suggests that development should "deliver the lowest densities adjacent to the most sensitive environmental areas at the eastern edges of the development area". We consider that the canal along the northern boundary is a similarly sensitive environment and as such consideration should be given as to the impact of allowing a higher density of development here, unless it is separated by a substantial landscaped buffer and how to best integrate built development with the canal corridor without risking adverse impacts on its character.

The 'Health and Wellbeing' diagram refers to the creation of a dedicated footpath and cycle track network in the form of a circular fitness trail and states that opportunities to connect into existing movement corridors outside of the site will be made at all possible locations. Again, as highlighted above, we consider that the canal towpath can play an important role in providing a pleasant walking and cycling option which also provides links to the wider area, and we consider that this should be referred to here.

The Open Space Strategy Plan (Fig. 24) suggests that for a significant section of the canal-facing boundary, the landscaped buffer will be very narrow. Whilst we acknowledge that this plan is setting broad parameters rather than precise measurements, we are concerned that a narrow buffer risks significantly changing the current green and rural character of the canal. The plan indicates substantial green infrastructure/landscaped space further east with a much greater depth on the north-eastern site boundary, but this depth reduces significantly towards the western end of the northern boundary running up to the A52.

The intention appears to be to allow built development to extend much closer to the canal along the western stretch of the boundary and this is likely to appreciably change the current, very rural, character of the canal corridor, and thus impact on its value both as a heritage feature and as a wildlife habitat. We would not wish to see significant amounts of built development located close to the canal and we consider that the SPD and the parameter plans should identify a more substantial green corridor along this section in order to help maintain the rural character and setting of the canal as well as providing greater support for its role as a wildlife habitat, both of which are important elements in the popularity of the canal as a leisure and recreational resource. Furthermore, we consider that such an approach would also better reflect the aims of Policy 25 of the adopted Local Plan.

The more limited buffer also appears to be at odds with Section 4.31 on Green and Blue Infrastructure which advocates a "continuous green buffer along the... Grantham Canal" (second bullet point) and the focus areas identified at Section 4.32 which emphasise the importance of blue infrastructure both within and adjacent to the site and green corridors. The canal corridor represents a significant opportunity to create a pleasant and tranquil environment for ecology to thrive and for people to enjoy, and although the more substantial buffer shown along the eastern half of the northern boundary provides ample scope to achieve this, the 600m or so east of Tollerton Lane should also reflect this to a much greater extent. We acknowledge that west of Tollerton Lane, the canal environment is heavily influenced by the A52 and therefore has a less tranquil character which will not be as significantly affected by reducing the landscaped buffer. We therefore consider that the SPD should clearly identify the importance of maintaining the green, rural and tranquil character of the canal east of Tollerton Lane

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and of designing the landscape buffer accordingly to create a soft edge to the development that avoids eroding the current character of the canal.

The Drainage Strategy set out in Section 4.48- 4.54 sets broad principles for the approach to surface water drainage and the SPD indicates that sustainable drainage methods will be employed with attenuation swales and basins constructed along the northern edge of the site. These will generally be in relatively close proximity to the Grantham Canal, and it is important that the canal is appropriately protected from risk of damage during construction and that any risks of uncontrolled run-off from these features entering the canal is avoided. The Trust is open to future discussion on the feasibility of accepting suitably attenuated discharges to the Grantham Canal as part of any detailed drainage strategy for the site. At this stage we cannot advise whether this may prove to be a practicable option, and we must also make clear that the Trust is not a land drainage authority, so discharges to the canal are not granted as of right and where they are granted, they will usually be subject to completion of a commercial agreement. However, we suggest that it would be appropriate for the SPD to indicate that the potential for discharging surface water to the canal could be investigated as a sustainable drainage option.

Chapter 5- Delivery Strategy

The Delivery Strategy identifies the infrastructure required both on- and off-site to support the development of the site allocation. The off-site infrastructure includes provision of connections to the Grantham Canal towpath and appropriate measures for, and improvements to, walking and cycling. We recommend that this should include consideration of improvements to the towpath itself and/or increased maintenance liabilities that are likely to arise for likely increases in use of the towpath. Section 5.4 does acknowledge that active travel provision from the site must connect properly to existing active travel infrastructure in the surrounding area and that development proposals will be expected to deliver improvements to the existing active travel provision in the area, but we consider that the SPD should specifically acknowledge that there may be a need for developer contributions to ensure that the towpath can fulfil its potential as a significant leisure, recreation and active travel route for future residents.

Chapter 6- Appendices

The Site- Wide Design Code set out in Chapter 6 is intended to provide a holistic framework to underpin the design approach to developing the allocated site. The Design Code acknowledges the importance of providing a green buffer alongside the Grantham Canal and identifies it as a mandatory requirement expecting a landscape treatment to be provided along the southern edge of the canal which will tie in with and enhance the existing setting and features of the canal and be of naturalistic value. We consider that this is an appropriate overarching approach to take.

However, in terms of built development, the Design Code also envisages the canal side area as primarily having a 'Wharf' architectural style predominantly in orange/red brick and with timber detailing and encourages a modern interpretation of the 'wharf' typology. We have no in-principle objections to either a contemporary or a more traditional design approach, but we consider that over-reliance on a 'wharf' architectural style does risk creating a much more regimented and urban character to the edge of the development than would be appropriate. There is also a risk that, depending on building heights (wharf-style buildings are often relatively tall structures), the canal could be appreciably overshadowed, particularly as the landscaped buffer appears to offer only a limited setback along much of the canalside.

The canalside area represents a transition from the development to the adjacent countryside and we do not wish to see a design approach that risks creating a rather hard edge with insufficient variations in height and massing. Whilst a 'wharf' style could certainly be one element of the buildings in the canalside area, we consider that the Design Code should clearly acknowledge that the design approach needs to achieve variations in scale, massing and density facing the canal to ensure that built development complements the character of the canal as a blue/green corridor and wildlife habitat and ensures that the qualities that make it an attractive environment for walkers and cyclists can be maintained.

We hope that these comments will be of assistance but please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries you may have.

Yours sincerely,

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