

Comment

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Address	27 Seymour Road Bath BA1 6DZ
Event Name	Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part One - Publication
Comment by	Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (Mr Chris Coyle)
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Q1 Do you consider the Local Plan is Legally Compliant? Yes

Q2 Do you consider the Local Plan is Sound (positively prepared, effective and Justified) Yes

If your comment(s) relate to a specific site within a core policy please select this from the drop down list. N/A

If you think your comment relates to the DtC, this is about how we have worked with the Duty to Cooperate bodies (such as neighbouring planning authorities)

Q3 Do you consider the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Co-operate? No

Q4 Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible. If you wish to support the legal compliance or soundness of the Local Plan or its compliance with the duty to co-operate, please also use this box to set out your comments.

Wilts & Berks Canal - Policy 6.123 and 6.124

I am a Trustee and the Company Secretary of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (WBCT or the Trust). I am authorised by the Council of Management to submit comments on behalf of the Trust.

The objectives of the Trust include the restoration of the historic Wilts & Berks Canal from Semington in Wiltshire, through Swindon, and across the Vale of the White Horse to Abingdon, using as much of its original route as possible. The Trust has over 2,500 members.

WBCT notes that the canal lies in two neighbouring local authority areas (Wiltshire and Swindon) and restoration of the canal is fully supported in their Core Strategy and Local Plan respectively. WBCT therefore believes VWHDC is under a duty to co-operate, to further the restoration of the main line of the canal along a contiguous route for the full 52 miles of its length.

Q5 Please set out what modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound, having regard to the test you have identified above where this relates to soundness. (NB Please note that any non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination). You will need to say why this modification will make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

Wilts & Berks Canal - Policy 6.123 and 6.124

The Trust would prefer to see the VWHDC revert to its previously published policy 6.139, affording full protection to the route of the canal.

WBCT notes that it has been very active in the western area, including Wiltshire and Swindon, and has undertaken many restoration projects along the line of the canal in these areas. It is also now planning further major projects which will bring economic, social and environmental benefits to the community. However work on the eastern area including the Vale (which constitutes 40% of the main line) has been hampered for many years by uncertainty over the proposed Thames Water Reservoir, which was planned to be built on the line of the canal. This has diminished our efforts in the area considerably.

The Trust is developing a Masterplan for the delivery of the entire canal. It has also commissioned many independent studies showing the technical feasibility of the restoration and the economic, social and environmental benefits to be gained.

The Trust recognises the concerns that the apparent lack of progress has given rise to, and will seek to work with the Wiltshire Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership (the Partnership), VWHDC, local landowners and the community to demonstrate that the canal can be delivered within the timeframe of the Local Plan. The Trust is supported in this by the national waterways bodies, including the Canal and River Trust and the Inland Waterways Association.

WBCT will work with the Partnership and others to provide the necessary information to demonstrate sustainable delivery of the Wilts & Berks Canal in order to develop a suitable policy for inclusion in Part 2 of the VWHDC Local Plan. WBCT will also seek further opportunities to work with VWHDC to develop a Masterplan for the delivery of the canal, with its many economic, social and environmental benefits.

In the meantime the Trust would welcome confirmation from VWHDC that the current Local Plan policies (L14 and L15) will be preserved in Part 1 until new policies are developed in Part 2.

Please note your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested modification, as there will not normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage.

After this stage, further submissions will be only at the request of the Inspector, based on the matters and issues he/she identifies for examination.

Q6 If your representation is seeking a modification, do you consider it necessary to participate at the oral part of the examination? Yes - I wish to participate at the oral examination

Please note the Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the oral part of the examination.

Q7 If you wish to participate at the oral part of the examination, please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

The restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal is a long-running major infrastructure programme, with many facets. A number of sub-projects have already been delivered, and others are in course of delivery. There are therefore many facts and considerations which it may be relevant to bring to the attention of the Inspector.