

Thank you for consulting the Canal & River Trust (The Trust) on the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites Publication Version document.

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales. We are among the largest charities in the UK. Our vision is that “living waterways transform places and enrich lives”.

One of the Canal & River Trust’s charitable objects is to promote, facilitate, undertake and assist in for public benefit, the restoration and improvement of inland waterways. We are, therefore, generally supportive of any sustainable project seeking to expand the country’s inland waterway network.

As mentioned in our response at Preferred options stage, the fully restored Wilts & Berks canal would comprise part of the original route (and would bring back into use a valuable local heritage asset for the benefit of the local communities and economy) along with new sections where the restoration of the old canal route is unfeasible.

The Trust notes that the Council supports the principle the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal and recognises the significance of the wide range of benefits that a restored canal would bring in terms of attracting visitors to the Vale, contributing towards the local economy, promoting sustainable transport and providing an important element of the strategic GI network in the district.

In accordance with our own guidance, the historic line of the Wilts and Berks Canal is shown as safeguarded from development that would prejudice the canal’s restoration under Development Policy 32: The Wilts & Berks Canal. We support this and welcome the additional detail and guidance provided in the supporting text.

We are very pleased to note that the policy has been amended in line with our suggestion made at preferred options stage and in our response to the draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). We suggested that it is important that the route is not just protected but that the council where possible, to ensure that new development contributes to the restoration of the canal either via the S106 mechanism or Community Infrastructure Levy funding where such a contribution would meet the legal tests set out in Regulations 122 and 123 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Following this change I can confirm that the Canal & River Trust fully support the inclusion of Policy 32 in the emerging Part 2 of the Local plan.