

By email:
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Our Ref

Wednesday 24 June 2026

Saddleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan – Regulation 16 consultation

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.

The Trust own and manage the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, which runs through the area covered by the plan. The canal is a Site of Biological Importance. Our towpath runs south-west to north-east through the area, and provides a car-free route for active travel through the communities of Saddleworth.

The waterways are acknowledged as significant green infrastructure, but they also function as blue infrastructure, serving 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.

We wish to make the following comments on the draft plan:

Infrastructure

Page 8 describes the presence of footpaths in the neighbourhood. It would assist if reference to our towpaths could also be added in this section. Due their location next to the canal, towpaths can be overlooked to a degree by decision makers and developers. Our network serves a similar function to footpaths, and provides a direct link to communities including Diggle, Uppermill and Greenfield. As a result, reference in this section to our network could help ensure that the benefits of our network in providing for active travel is not overlooked.

Page 10 refers to issues with regards to investment in the maintenance of footpaths. We wish to highlight the increased use of our towpaths could result in a need to improve the towpath surface to ensure that it can accommodate additional usage. The Trust maintain our towpath network to a 'steady state' based on existing use. Additional use of our towpaths brought by new development may require improvements to the surface so as to minimise risks of erosion, and to encourage use by new users. We therefore would recommend that

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reference to the need to improve off-site walking and cycling routes should be considered for large developments, to ensure that neighbouring and nearby blue and green infrastructure is appropriately protected.

We also wish to highlight that neighbouring development can have a significant impact on the useability and attractiveness of our towpath for public use. For example, the establishment of solid boundary treatments and reduction in surveillance can make canalside spaces less inviting for use. We would welcome policy wording that highlights this potential issue and seeks to ensure that neighbouring development positively addresses footways and towpaths.

Policy 1: Green Infrastructure

The Huddersfield Narrow Canal forms part of the wider green and blue strategic infrastructure within the neighbourhood. We do suggest that the policy heading should be amended to reference 'blue' infrastructure, so that the role of waterways is made more explicit.

The proposed policy wording highlights the need to deliver a positive impact on the relationship between urban and natural features, where the development is adjacent to existing green spaces, so that it integrates positively with any natural features. This wording could help to ensure that development neighbouring our spaces is better designed to avoid the issue discussed above.

Policy 3: Protected Spaces

The Huddersfield Narrow Canal is mentioned as one of the 16 Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) in Saddleworth. Alongside the SSSI/SAC designations SBIs are also noted as critically important to the area as is their protection during planning decision. Reference to SBIs in the supporting text, as currently drafted, should help to ensure that this role made apparent to decision makers and developers reviewing the Local Plan documentation.

Policy 13: Safety and Wellbeing

The proposed content seeks to promote the provision of new active travel infrastructure alongside new major development.

We do wish to highlight that consideration should also be given to the potential for development to contribute to the maintenance of existing walking and cycling routes, including our towpath network, so that any potential damage caused by additional use can be mitigated against at the correct stage. This could be cross-referenced to the last bullet point of Policy 25 as currently drafted, which seeks to ensure that development does not degrade existing paths.

We hope the above content is of use.

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

Yours sincerely,

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

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