

**From:** Jane Hennell <Jane.Hennell@canalrivertrust.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 17 September 2021 10:06  
**To:** Development Brief <developmentbrief@cherwell-dc.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Cherwell Development brief



Dear Sir

Please find attached a response in relation to the Kidlington Development Brief. We have no comments to make on the Yarnton site.

Kind regards

Jane Hennell MRTPI  
Area Planner



**Canal & River Trust**

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Dear Sir

Thank you for consulting the Canal & River Trust on the design brief for PR7b, land at Kidlington. Please find below our comments. We welcome ongoing and early engagement on this and the other canal side allocations, particularly in relation to the provision of the new bridge which will be a complex matter and require much involvement from the Canal & River Trust. Our detailed comments are set out below.

### **The canal and towpath**

The canal should be considered not as an edge to the site but an integral part of the site which brings unique opportunities to it. The benefits of being located by water are not fully exploited and the towpath is only really mentioned in context of joining PR7b and PR8, rather than a multi-functional green infrastructure asset which leads much further afield, brings sustainable transport, active travel and health and well-being opportunities as well as a multitude of other benefits to not only PR7b and PR8 but to the existing communities.

It is likely that the towpath will require improvement to the north, particularly as a result of the other proposed development locations and a proportionate contribution should be sought.

During lockdown we have recorded increases in use of towpaths in similar areas of up to 600% and this is only likely to continue, particularly where the towpath can provide a pleasant off road commuter route right into the heart of the city. Realistically, residents are likely to use the towpath as a commuting route or for recreational purposes and this is welcomed by the Trust provided that the towpath is suitable for the additional usage, both in terms of surfacing and width. This additional use is likely to take place anywhere between Oxford City Centre (for commuting) and north, perhaps as far as Langford Lane and beyond for commuting, recreation and health and well-being.

The brief mentions at 6.2 that this development will need to improve access to and along the Oxford canal corridor which is welcomed and it is understood that discussions are already taking place with both the Council and Developers relating to towpath improvements.

It would be expected that any improved towpath would be of a standard to the match sections already improved within the Oxford City council area and extending northwards to a location to be agreed. A copy of the specification can be provided on request. It will be a matter for the Council to determine what is proportionate for each development to provide and we would expect a co-ordinated rather than piecemeal approach to ensure that sections are not left unimproved. The Trust's Enterprise Team can work closely with the council on this matter.

We have published a design guide for towpaths, [here](#) but each stretch really needs individual design based on the width available, likely volume of use and need for bank protection and the area. The surfacing will alter dependant on whether the path is urban or rural in nature. Towpath improvement works can cost anywhere between £250 per linear metre and £600 per linear metre if bank improvement and stabilisation is necessary to widen the available space, where there is no existing hard surface to act as a subbase or where project costs are particularly high for any number of reasons. We have not visited the area to assess the towpath and so can only provide generic guidance.

The towpath may require widening and bank stabilisation to allow a suitable width. This could push the project close to £600 per linear metre. Project set up costs and working practices vary enormously due to savings made by economies of scale, accessibility and delivery issues for plant and machinery and even at times the need to carry out work or carry materials by boat.

Whilst the Trust would not want to see a definite contribution figure referred to, early discussions should take place with the Trust to ensure that the area identified for improvement within any outline application is suitable and realistic.

### **The new bridge**

It is noted that the development must provide land for the bridge landing and access route to it. It is described as an elegant new foot, cycle, and wheelchair accessible bridge over the Oxford Canal, built, connecting the route with the canal towpath and site PR8, with appropriate towpath improvements.

Land within the PR7b site is to be provided to facilitate this access. The exact location and design of the bridge and towpath improvements is dependent on survey and consultation with others, including the Canal & River Trust, and this is to be agreed at outline planning. The bridge could incorporate a sculptural quality as part of any public art on the site.

At the outset it should be made clear that the Trust are not obliged to accept a new bridge over the canal regardless of any requirement in the Local Plan or a development brief. However, we will work with the council and others to facilitate it if a suitable design and location can be agreed and if it has no adverse impact on the navigational safety of the canal or of towpath users.

It is for the council to determine if this development site should make a contribution towards the cost of provision and maintenance of the bridge but as the bridge is not required for navigation purposes, the Trust will not take ownership or maintenance responsibility for the new bridge. We would expect that it be adopted by the County Council to ensure it does not become a long-term liability.

The new bridge will require planning permission, a license from the Trust and DEFRA consent.

As it does not appear that the provision of the bridge will fall to this development no comments have been made on its possible design, but such details can be made available if necessary.

However early discussions with the Trust should be encouraged before the bridge location is shown on any illustrative plans to ensure that our design requirements are understood.

We are pleased to note that the development brief makes it clear that the Trust will want full involvement. We further request that a reference is made to our Code of Practice for works affecting the Trust, which can be found [here](#) although at this stage this may only be relevant to the location of the proposed bridge and its interaction with a new path along the eastern side of the canal.

By providing a link to the relevant guidance in the document multiple requests from different developers requiring detailed guidance. Bridge design is a complex issue, and we would normally expect the design to be properly reviewed by our infrastructure Services team with a cost undertaking to cover the provision of our advice. We will of course comment on anything that comes forward as a planning application but would hope that these matters would be dealt with before an outline application is submitted.

It is suggested that an assessment of the compliance of the proposed bridge location and of the bridge and towpath improvement details against our guidance document is included in the list of required supporting documents in Section 7.

### **Ecological enhancement**

We welcome mention of enhancements for Otter, Water Vole and Great Crested habitats and links within the site and to adjacent areas of habitat including the Lower Cherwell Conservation Target Area and the Meadows West of the Oxford Canal Local Wildlife Site to create a network. We also support mention of measures to minimise light spillage and noise levels and the maintenance of a dark canal corridor.

### **Sport and Recreation**

Finally, there is no mention of the need to consider the creation of water-based sport facilities such as angler platforms and launch locations for paddleboarding and canoeing which could be provided in conjunction with the new path to the east of the canal. This matter requires wider consideration in relation to the other canalside development locations and the level of provision already in the area but could provide additional leisure facilities within the area.