

Statement of Common Ground: The Canal & River Trust

LOCAL PLAN 2019 - 2041
PLANNING POLICY TEAM

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Executive Summary

This document is designed to identify strategic water body issues related to the canal network. These cannot themselves be wholly managed by the London Boroughs. They require the input and oversight of their owner, the Canal & River Trust (the Trust). In doing so, the Council can ensure that its emerging Local Plan will be produced positively and collaboratively with its partners. This will also assist the inspector during examination in identifying strategic matters and how they have been addressed.

The Trust manage some significant waterways in London. These include the Grand Union Canal, Regent's Canal and the River Lee Navigation. The Council is currently working collaboratively with the Trust. The main focus is creating a strategy for the enhancement of the Grand Union Canal within the Alperton area.


This Statement also ensures that the requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) have been met. The NPPF states that: *"Local planning authorities and county councils (in two-tier areas) are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries."*

Detailed matters which are best overseen by our strategic partner organisations, due to their nature, will be addressed in separate documents. This will serve to make the documents more concise for relevant parties, and reduce the number of signatories required for each matter. Separate documents have been prepared for the following strategic partner organisations:

- The London Boroughs, OPDC and the Mayor
- Thames Water and Affinity Water.
- Transport for London
- The Environment Agency.

Sign Off

The Canal & River Trust agree to matters referred to in this document as outlined within the 'Strategic Matters' section



Signed.....Claire McLean

Position.....Area Planner – London

Date.....3rd April 2020

Strategic Geography

- 1.1 The London Borough of Brent (LB Brent) is bordered by the London Boroughs of Barnet, Harrow, Camden, City of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Ealing. A portion of the south of the borough is within the Old Oak and Park Royal Opportunity Area. The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC), has been the local planning authority in this part of the borough since 1st April 2015.
- 1.2 In Brent the Trust own and manage the section of Grand Union Canal passing through Alperton, the Brent Feeder, and the Welsh Harp (or Brent Reservoir). This section of the canal is set to be the focal point of significant regeneration. It is set within the Alperton Housing Zone and Growth Area. The Welsh Harp (AKA. Brent Reservoir) feeds the Grand Union Canal via the Brent Feeder. OPDC is the Planning Authority for part of the canal within the LB Brent where it crosses the North Circular and passes through Park Royal.
- 1.3 The Grand Union Canal extends from Hillingdon in West London, to Little Venice, where it joins the Regent's Canal, and then ultimately the River Lee Navigation in Stratford, at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, East London. It provides a relatively unbroken pedestrian/cyclist transport corridor. This passes through Outer and Inner London Boroughs.

Strategic Matters

- 1.4 Blue infrastructure (incorporating all waterways and water bodies), when utilised correctly, can provide significant multifaceted benefits. It can enhance the general sustainability of a place. A significant proportion of Blue Infrastructure within Brent is managed by the Trust. The Grand Union Canal passes through a number of local authority areas. It is therefore an asset which needs to be managed strategically to ensure a consistency of approach. As such it is important for LB Brent to work with the Trust on a number of issues.

Active Transport Route

- 1.5 The Mayor's Transport Strategy states that by 2050 80% of trips should be by sustainable modes. These include public transport, walking, and cycling. The draft Brent Local Plan supports this aspiration through a number of policy mechanisms. The canal represents a unique pedestrian/ cyclist transport corridor. It provides a long distance off road route to west and central London and beyond as the Grand Union Canal Cycleway currently in delivery between Paddington and West Drayton. The existing route within Brent is not utilised to its full extent. This is likely due to its current condition and lack of awareness of the route. Brent will work closely with the Trust to enhance the pedestrian/ cyclist environment on the canal towpath and the access to it, including improved wayfinding and promoting considerate use of the towpath. This will make it more conducive to active transport. This will assist in meeting the Mayor's active transport targets. This will be supported by collaboration on schemes. The Trust's extensive experience on canal place-making will be used to improve the canal within Alperton. Resources and actions to support this improvement will be provided principally by neighbouring development.

Open Space and Biodiversity

- 1.6 The canal represents an asset of particular value as a wildlife corridor. It helps to connect otherwise isolated habitat islands. Alperton is lacking in open space. The Grand Union Canal runs directly through the deficient area. This intensifies the canal's importance for

leisure and biodiversity and helping counter known deficits. Within Alperton Growth Area policy (BSWGA1) development is expected to include public squares and pocket parks along the canal. This will further help the canal become a place of local significance. It should provide more green space for people and biodiversity. The Council will work closely with the Trust to enhance the canalside environment. This will better provide for the leisure of local residents, and for improved wildlife habitats.

Heritage

- 1.7 The area that the Grand Union Canal flows through was historically developed as part of the industrial growth of the area, supported by the transport provision from the canal. While there are currently no designated heritage assets, the protection and enhancement of the canal is important in its own right, as historic transport infrastructure. Equally, so is the protection and enhancement of the spaces around it, which impact on the setting of the historic canal.
- 1.8 The canal is supported by an aqueduct as it passes over the River Brent, the Twyford Aqueduct, which is currently hidden from view but deserves recognition and enhancement. LB Brent will work with the Trust to enhance this structure and improve access to it. That is in addition to the impressive aqueduct over the A406.
- 1.9 The Welsh Harp reservoir and associated Brent Feeder also have significant heritage importance within LB Brent, as described in paragraph 1.12, below.

Freight

- 1.10 London Plan policy T7 requires development to facilitate the sustainable movement of freight. This has been reflected in Brent's Local Plan policy BT3. This states that: *'Development that would generate significant movement of goods or materials, both during construction and in operation, should minimise the movement of goods and materials by road. The use of more sustainable alternatives, i.e. by rail and canal, is encouraged.'* As such, the Council will work closely with the Trust on developing Construction and Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) for developments adjacent to the canal. These will look into methods of transporting construction materials via water.
- 1.11 The London Plan identifies Brent as a 'Provide Capacity' borough for the provision of additional industrial floorspace. The draft Local Plan identifies a number of industrial sites for intensification. The canal is well located, adjacent to significant amounts of industrial land. This provides opportunities to facilitate greater freight by water. The Council will work closely with the Trust on applications for industrial uses on adjacent land to achieve this.

Flooding

- 1.12 Flooding is predicted to increasingly occur in LB Brent and wider London. This is due to climate change effects. In particular, increased occurrences of extreme weather events. The Trust made representations on the Preferred Options Local Plan. They advised the possibility for adjacent developments' clean surface water to drain into the canal under certain circumstances. LB Brent will therefore work closely with the Trust on this aspect for the potential management and mitigation of surface water.

Heating and Cooling

- 1.13 Within LB Brent, the heating and cooling of buildings consumes more energy than any other use. Measures to reduce their energy use will contribute significantly towards energy and carbon reduction targets. The Mayor has an aspiration to reach Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Trust's representations on the Preferred Options Local Plan advised of the potential of watercourses to assist heating and cooling of buildings. LB Brent will therefore work closely with the Trust. This will be to seek innovative ways to utilise their watercourses for this purpose.

Boating

- 1.14 The canal is not just a place to visit, but a place to live. The canal in Alperton is no exception. It includes a number of permanent residential moorings. In addition, there are numerous locations for mooring along the towpath for visiting boats and 'continuous cruisers' (boats without a permanent home mooring). These moorings assist in creating a sense of place along the canal. They provide activity, passive surveillance and increase the general feeling of safety. Developments adjacent to the canal provide opportunities to enhance moorings. They can also provide additional ones where appropriate. In a representation on the Preferred Options Local Plan, the Trust noted that new moorings be required. This would be where not having an unacceptable impact on the blue ribbon network. Matters to address would be its navigability, water resources and biodiversity. Site allocations adjacent to the canal identify the need for exploration of opportunities to provide additional residential moorings. Unlike residential moorings, continuous cruisers do not have direct access to private facilities. It is therefore stated that the potential for a boater hub facility should be explored within site allocation BSWSA2. Exploration of the potential for the operation of commercial boats within the Alperton Growth Area should also be explored. Brent will work closely with the Trust in the delivery of boating facilities along the Grand Union Canal.

Welsh Harp

- 1.15 LB Brent is working with the Trust, in collaboration with the Brent Catchment Partnership on joint blue infrastructure projects. These aim to reduce pollution and invasive species. They also seek to enhance wildlife and recreation opportunities. Part of this will be working toward the associated Welsh Harp park achieving Green Flag status. The site is of significant size in both blue and green infrastructures. It also has a number of designations, including being a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is the only SSSI in the borough. The reservoir is connected to both the River Brent, and the Brent Feeder. The Feeder is used to top up the Grand Union Canal, assisting it to function effectively. LB Brent will continue to work closely with the Trust and the Brent Catchment Partnership on joint projects.
- 1.16 Immediately to the south of Welsh Harp the draft Local Plan designates the Staples Corner Growth Area. Within Policy BEGA2 it states that the Trust need to consider how the Welsh Harp can benefit from the Growth Area. This will be especially pertinent given the current lack of open space in the Growth Area and its anticipated population increase. LB Brent will therefore work closely with the Trust toward the improvement of the Welsh Harp area, using where appropriate S106 and CIL funds received from the Growth Area.
- 1.17 The strategic vision for the Welsh Harp (Brent Reservoir), shall also reflect the fascinating history of the reservoir's construction in 1835, followed by its enlargement in 1853, then its subsequent reduction in size in the 1930s, and the addition of five iron syphons in 1936.

These changes echoed the changing fortunes of London's commercial waterways, as well as the story of its becoming a visitor destination in the 1860s, with Welsh Harp Station being opened in 1870 to bring large crowds to the reservoir, the Old Welsh Harp Inn and its associated pleasure gardens, and alterations made to prevent flooding. The elevated location offers opportunities to present its story of strategic management of water supply via the 3¼-mile long feeder (entirely within LB of Brent) to the Grand Union Canal (Paddington Arm) and Regent's Canal, against a backdrop of continual water shortage issues in the 19th century. Enhanced access would enable appreciation of the spectacular structure (the dam with its syphons), and the history of the engineering behind it, and the LB Brent will therefore work closely with the Trust toward achieving this.

Engagement

Engagement to date

- 2.1 The information and actions outlined in this statement have been informed by various evidence base documents, and through on-going engagement with the Canal & River Trust.

Engagement going forward

- 2.2 This statement focuses on the impact of spatial policies within the new Brent Local Plan. The impacts from adjacent London Boroughs will be considered in their respective Statements. This improves the fluidity of the document, allowing it to be updated efficiently whenever necessary.
- 2.3 To ensure continued effective collaboration with the Canal & River Trust, LB Brent will ensure that the document is updated at appropriate intervals. The information acquired through regular communications, in addition to strategic consultation events.