

Sophie Wardell
Urban Places Programme Manager
National Trust

Your Ref n/a

Our Ref CRTR-PLAN-2021-33396

Monday 9 August 2021

Dear Sophie,

Proposal: Pre application consultation regarding the transformation of Castlefield Viaduct into an urban park and meeting place, connecting the local community with history and nature.

Location: Castlefield North Viaduct, Castlefield, Manchester

Waterway: Rochdale Canal

Thank you for your pre-application consultation and further to our virtual meeting.

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 Trust is a statutory consultee in the Development Management process.

As advised during our meeting the Canal & River Trust own and manage the Rochdale Canal which ends at Bridge No.101, next to listed lock 92 (Dukes Lock), where the Rochdale joins the Bridgewater Canal (owned and managed by others). The grade II listed viaduct is sited to the north of the canal and beyond the existing operational railway viaduct. The railway, viaducts and canal are all within the Castlefield Conservation Area here.

Based on the submitted details and promotional materials, we consider that the proposed re-imagining of this historic viaduct structure, without compromising the fabric of the structure and to create such a unique and bespoke use is fantastic and has the potential to be a masterclass in how to reinterpret and use heritage assets and re-purpose such spaces for community, ecological and health and wellbeing benefits.

Although the viaduct is not immediately adjacent to the Rochdale canal, we consider there could be a great partnership working opportunity here to promote linkage between the viaduct and the Rochdale Canal. Both in terms of encouraging people on foot or cycle to access the site via the canal corridor, and also linkages in terms of the industrial heritage of the railway and canal and the role played by both in terms of historic transport and the growth of Manchester and now in terms of the re-purposing of these historic transport assets for community, ecological and health and wellbeing benefits.

The Trust is committed to enhancing the green credentials and status of the Rochdale Canal through Manchester to change the perception and use of the space. Indeed, part of the canal corridor received Green Flag status in 2020 between Lock 89 at Tib Lock and Lock 87 Canal Street. We propose to submit an application to extend this status to lock 92 (Dukes Lock). As mentioned at our meeting, despite our constrained ownership, we have

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already commenced this with the installation of railing planters and offside floating islands, and we are exploring the possibility for subtle wayfinding lighting around bridge arches and locks etc. These of course need to be balanced against heritage and ecological considerations.

We would be very keen to explore opportunities for promoting active and sustainable travel utilising the canal and towpath to/from the viaduct installation (as well as other similar projects), with wayfinding and possibly some interpretation given the synergy between the historic use of the former railway viaduct and canal. Maximising footfall along the canal and encouraging its usage would all help to alter the perception of the canal corridor which historically has been viewed as something to be screened/fenced off. We would welcome exploring any funding opportunities in terms of promoting active and sustainable travel along the canal corridor.

It is understood that the viaduct is one of several projects within Manchester to support a wider scheme on Urban Greening and we consider the canal corridor could play a key role in linking such spaces and contributing to this. We would be keen to explore these opportunities further. There would appear to be great potential to utilise the viaduct urban park to link to existing green/wildlife corridors along the canal, which runs through the city and onto Ancoats and beyond. In partnership, there is an opportunity to create an excellent people and wildlife route here which would be available and accessible to everyone.

Depending on the final layout of the scheme, the viaduct would also offer an excellent vantage point over the canal, and we would ask that this is considered in the design and layout if possible as this would also aid the visual linkage.

Finally, we would also welcome exploring the possibility and opportunity for exhibiting within one of the 8 showcase plots on the viaduct in the longer term.

We look forward to exploring the potential partnership working with the National Trust going forward on this exciting project and role the canal corridor can play in providing green/blue linkages.

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

Yours sincerely,

Tim Bettany-Simmons MRTPI
Area Planner

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