
2.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICIES SPECIFIC TO THE ST HELENS CANAL

As shown in Figure 1, the canal, which with its branches totals about 26km (16 miles) in length, crosses the boundaries of three local authorities, namely St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council, Warrington Borough Council and Halton Borough Council and, hence, lies within the Counties of Merseyside and Cheshire.

2.1 St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council

The St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council covers the canal from the centre of St Helens, including the Ravenhead and the Blackbrook Branches to immediately south of Vulcan Village (Sections A-G on Figure 2), a total length of approximately 11km (7 miles).

The Council has a specific policy relating to the canal and it is the intention to:

- protect the route of the St Helens Canal;
- encourage its restoration for recreational and other uses;
- improve the environment along the canal corridor.

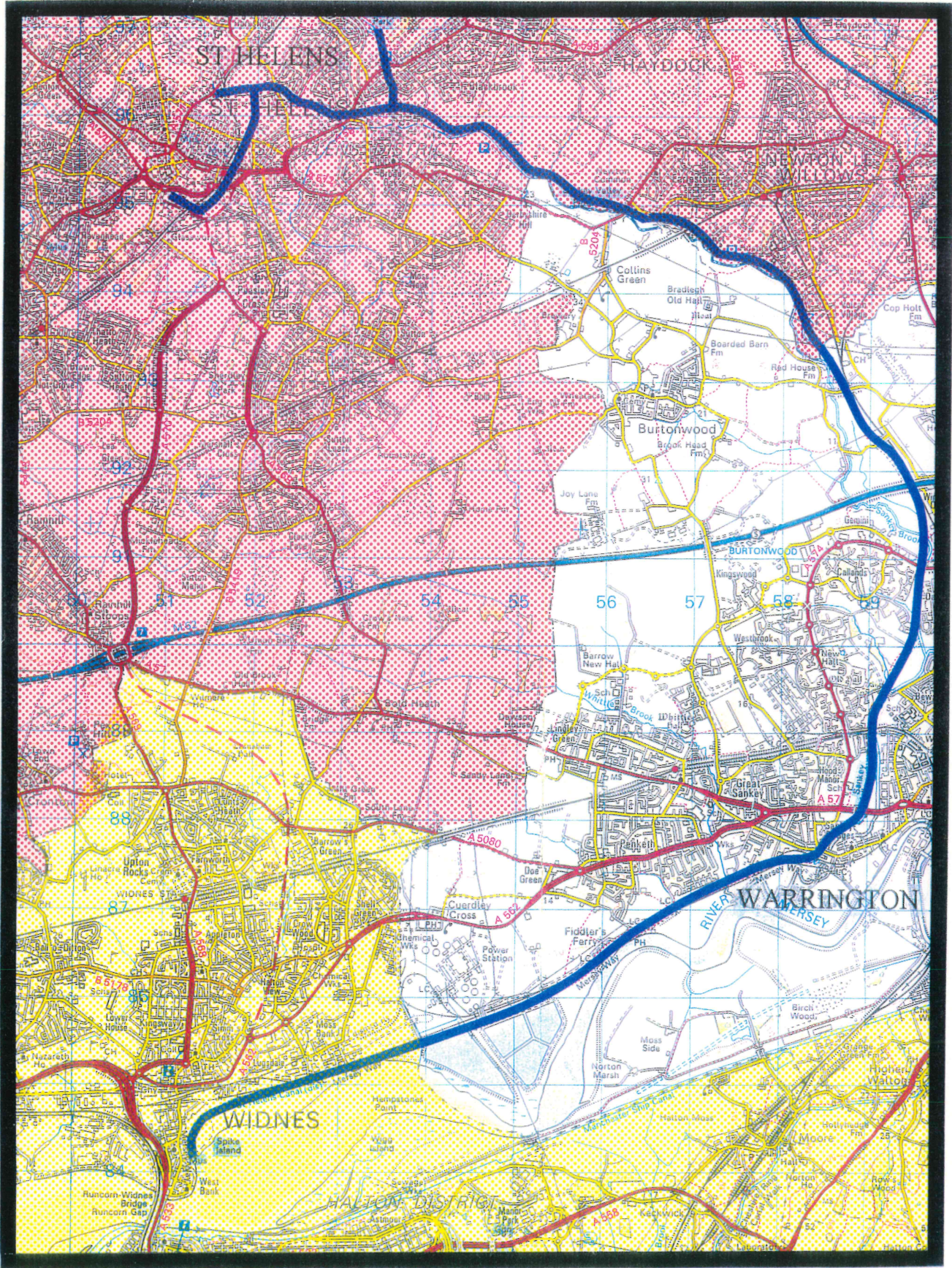
It is stated that any development which would prejudice the long-term aspiration of returning the canal to navigational use will normally be refused.

The Council has identified that the canal has major historical importance to the area and is also valuable for wildlife, informal recreation, education and environmental enhancement. In view of this, it is carrying out gradual restoration, in collaboration with voluntary organisations (notably SCARS) with the aim of improving public access and opportunities for economic development. This restoration is visible on the mainline of the canal in the town centre, formerly the Ravenhead and Pocket Nook Branches (Sections A and B).

St Helens Borough Council is aware of the difficulties that will be encountered in restoring the canal into a navigational waterway due to past development.

2.2 Warrington Borough Council

A further 11km (7 miles) of the canal corridor is under the authority of Warrington Borough Council from the southern side of Vulcan Village (in Section G) to immediately west of Fiddlers Ferry Power Station on the northern side of



ST HELENS CANAL
 Location Plan

the canal (Section M) and includes Ferry Lock which provides access to the River Mersey.

Warrington Borough Council has no specific policies relating to the protection of the canal. However, for approximately two thirds of the length of the canal under the Council's control, there are policies relevant to the canal corridor and the land adjacent to it. These include policies of Cycle Network, Green Network and Greenbelt. For the remaining one third of the canal, no specific policies apply. The main reason for this is that a substantial proportion of the canal is owned by the Council.

2.3 Halton Borough Council

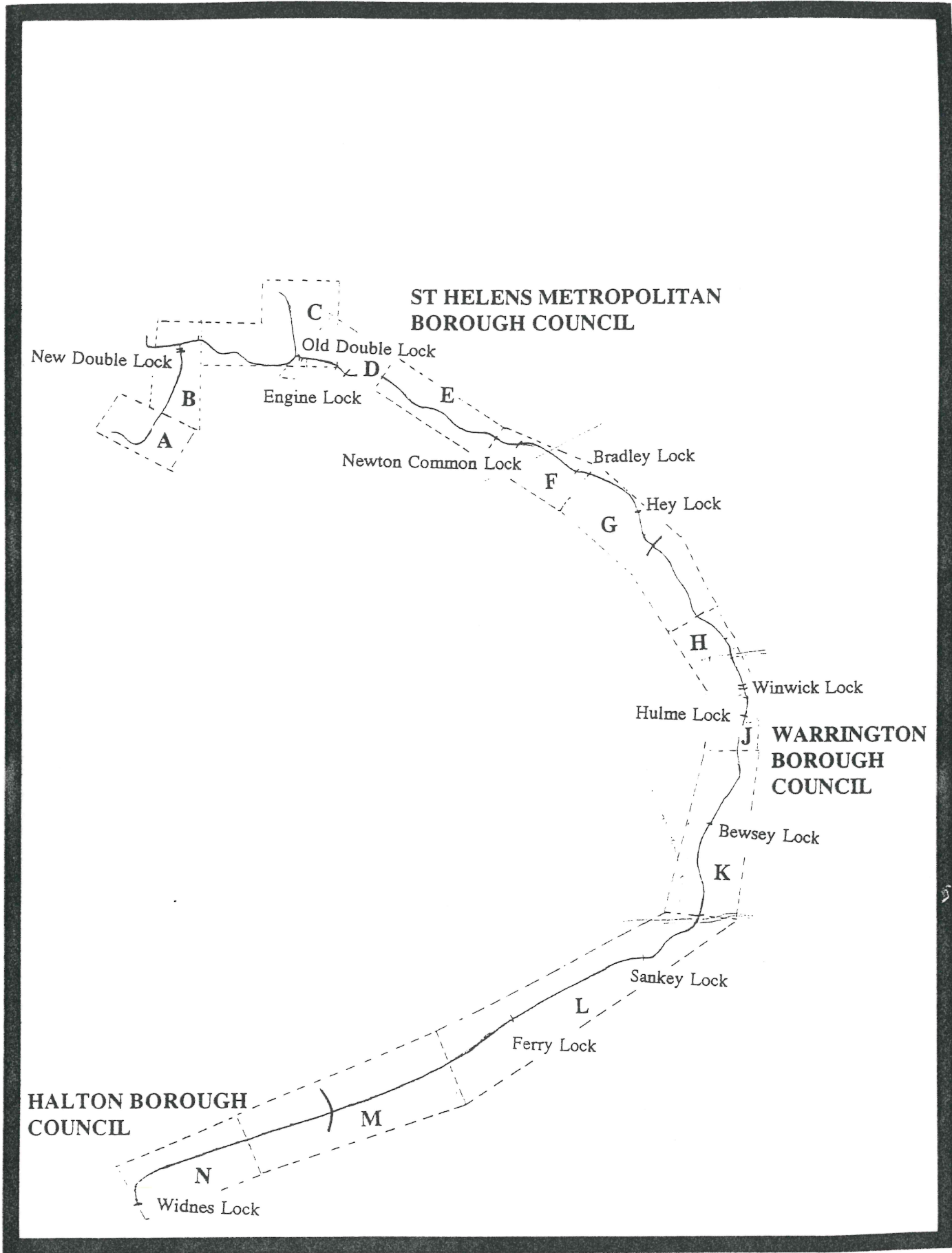
Halton Borough Council covers the canal from its eastern boundary at Cuerdley Marsh, immediately west of the power station (Section M), for the final 3km (1.8 miles) to Widnes Lock, which allows access to the River Mersey (Section N).

The Council has adopted specific policies relating to the canal, similar to those of St Helens. Stated Council policy is to encourage wider recreational use of the canal and to give favourable consideration to proposals and schemes that increase leisure, recreation and tourism opportunities along its length while balancing the ecology and wildlife issues.

The Council will not normally allow development adjacent to the canal if it will inhibit the recreation and leisure opportunities, prejudice important amenity, landscape and ecological characteristics, reduce the attractive area along its route, hamper the provision and improvement of access points and footpath link or prevent the maintenance of a clean, healthy and pleasant canal environment.

2.4 Planning Policies Section By Section

Although the above identifies the main policies relating to the canal and its corridor, policies which apply to specific lengths of the canal and the land adjacent to it are equally important particularly in the assessment of possible development sites adjacent to the canal. These are discussed below, with the canal divided into thirteen sections (A-N), as shown on Figure 2, starting within St Helens and with descriptions based on facing the direction of travel towards Widnes.



**ST HELENS METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**WARRINGTON
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**HALTON BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

ST HELENS CANAL
Key Plan
Canal Sections

A - Ravenhead Branch

The canal commences in a prime shopping area, within Safeways' car park which extends to the immediate right and left. The canal corridor itself is allocated as Greenway. As the corridor leaves Safeways' car park, the corridor forms part of a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway while on the right is the Chalon Court Hotel and the Hotties Science and Arts Centre and, on the left, a multistorey car park forming part of "the land south the Chalon Way" with acceptable uses as leisure, offices or car parking (Site 1).

The canal is crossed by a high level railway which carries the Liverpool to Wigan Line. The canal remains Greenway with the Strategic Footpath and Cycleway on the towpath to the left while on the right is a dual carriageway and to the left (Chalon Way Industrial Estate) no policy applies. As the canal turns past the Industrial Estate on the left, the right becomes Greenway and immediately adjacent to the canal, a second Strategic Footpath and Cycleway is positioned. Once past the Industrial Estate, the Strategic Footpath and Cycleway to the left crosses the canal to join up with that on the right.

The plans show the proposed Sutton Oak Link Line. Between this proposed line and the dual carriageway the canal remains in Greenway but to the right and left there is no specific policy. Once the canal corridor is crossed by the dual carriage way it becomes a very narrow route. To the right is Salisbury House where there is no policy and, to the left, an abattoir and railway lines within an area of allocated development sites known as the "land to the east of Central Station" (1.119 hectares). Acceptable uses would include light industry, offices, leisure, car parking or housing (Site 2).

B - Corporation Street Bridge to Islands Brow

Section B of the canal begins in Greenway, which is also to the immediate left of the canal. This corridor is no longer a narrow route as it was alongside the land to the east of Central Station. A Strategic Footpath and Cycleway is accommodated to the left of the canal. To the right there is light industry, with no specific planning policy up until the land immediately prior to Pocket Nook Street which is highlighted as a site for development with planning permission (land to the west of Atlas Street). This is a 1.11 hectare site with acceptable uses including light industry, general industry and offices (Site 3).

At the far side of the road, the Strategic Footpath and Cycleway is accommodated to the right of the canal. The canal is still allocated as Greenway and there are no specific policies affecting the immediate left and right of the canal, both of which are industrial land.

The present main line of the canal, originally the Pocket Nook/Ravenhead Branch, is joined below New Double Lock by the Gerrards Bridge Branch and from this point it is possible to follow the route east towards Gerrards Bridge or west towards the Old Double Lock.

The length of the canal towards the east remains in Greenway and is identified as a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site (referred in the plan as St Helens Canal, Merton Bank), as does the land to the right (referred in the plan as Haresfinch Burgy Bank). To the left, no specific policies apply.

The route of the canal to the west of the junction accommodates a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway but only as far as Islands Brow. The canal corridor is marked on the local plan as Greenway and a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site and these policies also apply to the land immediately to the left of the corridor. To the right there are no specific policies.

C - Islands Brow to Blackbrook

The canal corridor, on commencement of Section C, is the route of a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway and a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site. To the right is Greenway and designated as open space for Educational Recreation and to the left there is no policy.

The canal enters an area designated as open space for public availability. To the left are policies for Greenway, open space for public availability and a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site (Merton Bank Marsh). To the right, policies remain as above.

For the following 100m the canal corridor remains a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway but no other policies apply to it or to the land either side. Along this stretch of canal is the crossing of Blackbrook Road which forms part of the Strategic Highway Network.

Beyond this section the canal corridor is once again Greenway and Open space. The Strategic Footpath and Cycleway continues but only as far as the residential development.

To the right, open space is designated, some publicly available and some as an education recreational field. There is also a site for residential development with planning permission (2.05 hectares of land to the east of Boardmans Lane - Site 4). This land currently forms part of an industrial development with the remainder of this site having no allocated planning policies. At the far side of this industrial site is Greenbelt.

Left of the canal corridor the land starts as publicly available open space/greenway before it also becomes Greenbelt.

The Blackbrook Branch leaves the main line of the canal immediately above Old Double Lock heading north. At the start of the branch the canal is in Greenbelt, Greenway, a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway and a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site. To the right there is, for a short length, Greenbelt and then no specific policies apply. On the left of the canal corridor, between the main route of the canal and a residential site to the north, is an area designated as public available open space, Greenway and Greenbelt. The residential site is has no specific planning policies assigned and north of that there is open space for educational recreation and Greenway. The canal and land to the immediate right and left then become Greenway, Greenbelt and a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site. To the far right is Glasshouse Close Wood with a number of policies relating to its protection and to the far left is residential development with no specific planning policies identified.

D - Old Double Lock to Engine Lock

The canal corridor in Section D commences by running alongside the sewage treatment works on the right, which is zoned as industrial and has no specific planning policies, and Greenbelt on the left. The canal route itself is also in Greenbelt and is a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway, as it is for the whole of the canal in this section. Once past the sewage treatment works, the canal corridor becomes a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site and continues as such to the end of Section D.

E - Engine Lock to Penkford Bridge

For the majority of Section E, the canal corridor is allocated as Greenway, Greenbelt, a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway, publicly available open space and passes through the Sankey Valley Country Park. Along the right of this length is Greenbelt and Greenway land, as part of the Park, and to the left there is Greenbelt land.

The final length of the canal in this section is on the outskirts of Earlestown and the policies specific to the canal include Greenbelt, Greenway, open space for educational recreation, Strategic Footpath and Cycleway and a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site. These policies also apply to the right. To the left is a school with policies of Greenway and open space for educational recreation.

F - Penkford Bridge to Bradley Lock

The total length of the canal in Section F is a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway in an area of Greenway, Greenbelt and open space. Part of the canal is a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site.

To both the right and the left the land is Greenbelt, Greenway and the majority is publicly available open space. However, beyond the immediate left is the former Sankey Sugar Works and Mendbil Oil sites to the south of Junction Lane and is allocated for industrial purposes. The Council state that it will promote and support proposals for the reclamation and redevelopment of this site which is mainly derelict and polluted (from the Mendbil Oil development) and occupied by an environmentally unacceptable commercial use (Site 5).

G - Bradley Lock to Newton Brook

Section G begins immediately after Bradley Lock in a wide area of Greenway, Greenbelt and publicly available open space. The canal forms part of a Strategic Footpath and Cycleway.

Beyond the swing bridge, the canal route becomes a Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site known as Old Hey Wood. To the right is Greenway, Greenbelt and some publicly available open space. Greenbelt is to the left with some Greenway and open space towards Tyrer Road.

Down towards Vulcan Village and Hay Lock, the Site of Community Wildlife Interest/Regionally Important Geological Site ceases and although policies referring to the canal corridor remain the same, to the right there is only Greenway and Greenbelt and to the left just Greenbelt. Along this length the Local Authority changes from St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council to Warrington Borough Council. The canal, under Warrington Borough's Local Plan, is identified as a Cycle Network (T2) and Greenbelt. Land to the right and to the left are also Greenbelt.

H - Newton Brook to Winwick

This section of the canal, and either side of it, begins in Greenbelt. The canal route forms part of the Cycle Network. Once the canal passes under the M62 it is no longer in Greenbelt but enters an area of Green Network. On this land the council will normally oppose development which prejudices the protection or extension of the network of open spaces and recreational footpaths marked as Green Network on the map.

J - Winwick to Dallam

Policies in Section J continue from the final length of Section H until immediately prior to Cromwell Avenue. At this point, land to the right of the canal corridor remains in the Green Network but the actual canal and land to the left are not covered by any specific policies. From this point until the far side of Warrington town when Greenbelt resumes, the canal is not covered by any policy.

Land to the right and left is within the Green Network and within Dallam, on the left side of the canal, is a School Playing Field.

K - Bewsey Lock to Liverpool Road

Once past the proposed continuation of the Warrington link road, the Cycle Network leaves the original route of the canal and runs parallel on its right side.

The land to the right and left of the corridor remains as Green Network. On the right, by Bewsey Bridge is the site of an Ancient Monument. Further along the canal, on the far left is a site, currently a playing field, with existing planning permission for housing (Site 6).

L - Liverpool Road to Fiddlers Ferry Lock

Immediately prior to reaching the railway lines, the right side of the corridor no longer remains in the Green Network. Also at this point, the Cycle Network leaves the route of the canal to follow a road eastwards and does not return to the corridor for approximately 0.25km.

On the far side of the railway track the canal corridor and land to either side, is in Greenbelt. A short distance on, the canal turns to run immediately parallel to the railway lines which are now on the right. Beyond the railway lines is an industrial site of which approximately half has Existing Permission for Housing (Site 7).

Further down the canal, on the right, is residential development on the other side of the railway lines and separated from them by a small area of Green Network. Prior to the right side of the corridor entering Greenbelt, there is a large site identified as an Area of Search. The Local Plan defines this as "an area of land excluded from the Green Belt to enable this possible allocation for development to be considered in a future review of the Local Plan in the light of circumstances prevailing at the time of review". This site is known as Well Lane, Penketh, consisting of 15.4 hectares, and will be safeguarded for development beyond 2001 (Site 8). From this point and for the remainder of Section L, the canal and all adjacent land enters Greenbelt with the corridor also designated as a Site of Biological Importance.

M - Fiddlers Ferry Lock to Carter House Bridge

From Fiddlers Ferry Lock and past the power station on the right, policies remain as above. Towards the end of Cuedley Marsh on the left the Local Authority changes from Warrington Borough Council to Halton Borough Council.

Under the Halton Borough Council, the canal corridor at this stage is identified, as is the left side, as a Site of Nature Conservation Value. The Trans Pennine Trail runs to the left of the canal and this area is also an area of Greenbelt and Greenspace System and further down the canal route be also becomes an area of Special Development Opportunity and a Site of Nature Conservation Value. To the right is a site of proposed Greenspace followed by a large industrial development site identified as a primary employment area with special development opportunity and is within an environmental priority area (Site 9).

N - Carter House Bridge to Widnes

At Carter House Bridge the railway lines, which were running immediately parallel to the canal, cross to the outer edge of the industrial development site. Policies remain as above. Once the railway lines have crossed this site, the industrial area is no longer identified for special development opportunity.

At the point where the canal begins to turn towards the River Mersey, the Trans Pennine Trail crosses to the right side of the corridor. All adjacent land is in Greenspace, for public use, with the land to the left also in Greenbelt and an area of Special Development Opportunity. The right side, beyond a small area of Greenspace is a Primary Employment Area with site identified for proposed Employment Development (Site 10a and 10b).

Section N ends at Widnes Lock where the St Helens Canal reaches the River Mersey.