
5.0 DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 Background

From the local plans on the canal's route a number of development sites are identified that could benefit from the canal's restoration. It is an established fact that canal-side location can add up to 20% to the value of new development sites, and up to 10% when the development is in the general vicinity of the canal.

The validity of this argument is demonstrated by investments such as the Chalon Court Hotel in St Helens, where the canal exists as an amenity feature and the largest impact of restoration will be the addition of boats on the waterway. However, this does not demonstrate that the canal only needs "cleaning up" to maximise investment. Only by restoring the canal to navigable order will its future be assured in many locations, with resulting confidence from investors, and the addition of boats to the waterway adds visual interest and activity, increasing the attractiveness of the canal and maximising property values.

Along most of the canal, the increase in value may well be realised by bringing forward development that would otherwise be delayed. For this reason the increases in value have not been directly identified. However, the values should not be under estimated, for example, a small canal-side housing development of just fifteen houses will ultimately be worth over half a million pounds and the development of them will provide an opportunity for a local builder. Where this occurs on a site such as the land east of Central Station in St Helens, where development would otherwise be very sluggish and possibly of low value (e.g. surface car parking), the total benefits are considerable.

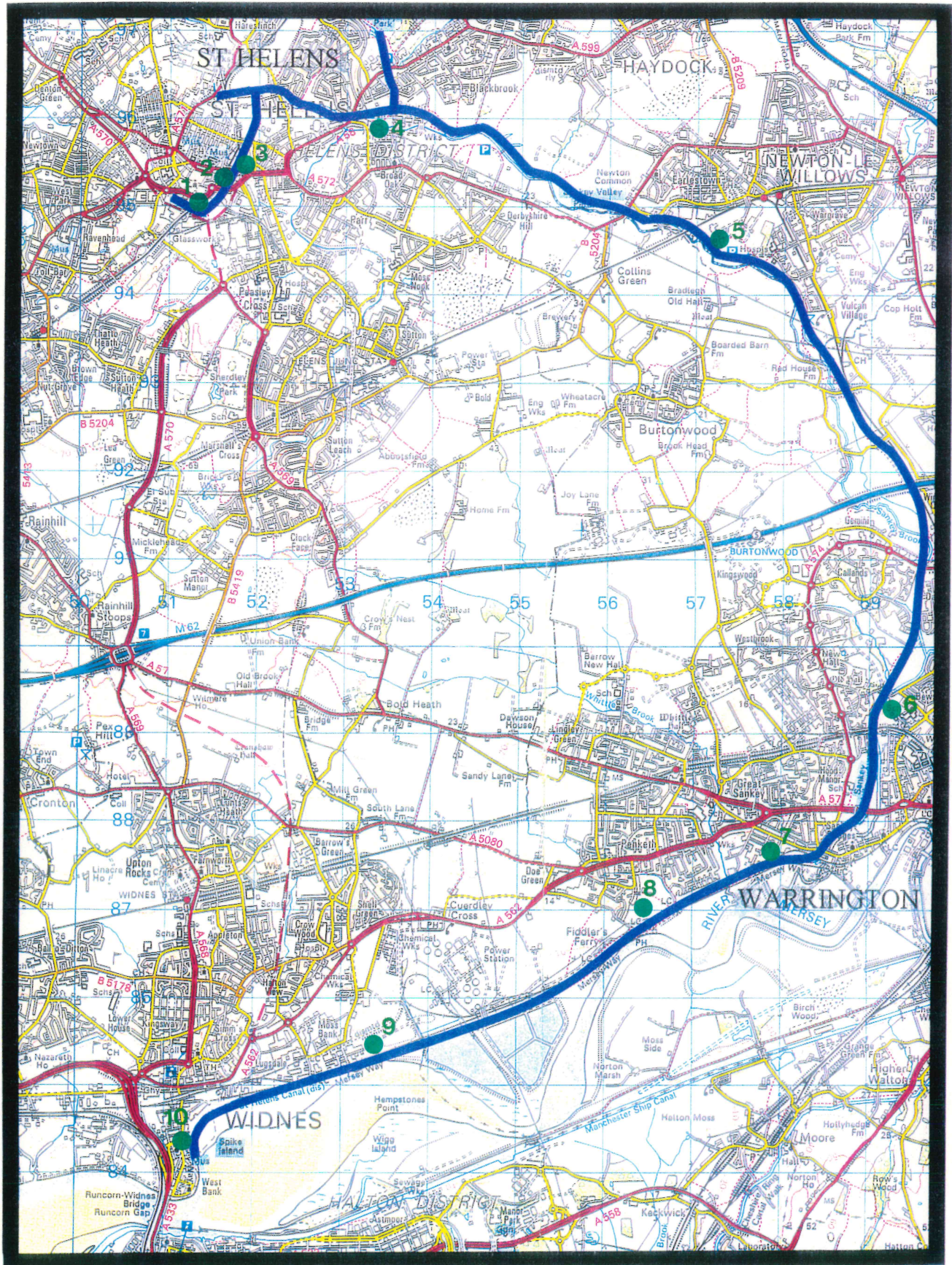
Despite this, it must be emphasised that in many lengths of the canal, restoration will merely make development viable, rather than increasing profits, therefore private sector funding for the canal from this source is likely to be minimal.

5.2 Site-by-Site Descriptions

The location of the following sites is indicated on Figure 3.

SITE 1 - Land to the South of Chalon Way

Site 1, is located to the east of Safeways and opposite the Chalon Court Hotel. At present, this site (1.1 hectares) is used for surface parking and the existing



- SITE 1 Land to the South of Chalon Way
- SITE 2 Land to the East of Central Station
- SITE 3 Land to the West of Atlas Street
- SITE 4 Land to the East of Boardmans Lane
- SITE 5 Land to the South of Junction Lane
- SITE 6 Bewsey County High School
- SITE 7 Victoria Road
- SITE 8 Well Lane, Penketh
- SITE 9 Area North of St Helens Canal
- SITE 10 Spike Island

ST HELENS CANAL

Development
Opportunities

FIGURE 2

Council Offices. It also accommodates the temporary portacabins used for an exhibition on the proposed Hotties Science and Arts Centre. This area has been allocated as a development site with suitable uses including leisure, offices and car parking.

SITE 2 - Land to the East of Central Station

This 1.119 hectare site currently accommodates an abattoir, (recently demolished) a builders yard and at the rear, railway lines. It is identified as a potential development site with possible uses including light industry, offices, leisure, car parking and housing.

SITE 3 - Land to the West of Atlas Street

Site 3 is, at present, derelict land after its previous use for industrial purposes. Acceptable uses, identified by the Local Plan, include light industry, general industry and offices.

SITE 4 - Land to the East of Boardmans Lane

This land currently forms part of an industrial development although there are no structures on the site itself. This site, south of the canal corridor, comprises 2.05 hectares and has planning permission for a residential development.

SITE 5 - Land to the South of Junction Lane

Site 5 is the former Sankey Sugar Works and Menbill Oil development. The Council state that they will promote and support proposals for the reclamation and redevelopment of this site which is mainly derelict and polluted. It has recently been occupied by an environmentally unacceptable commercial use but now lies abandoned and severely derelict.

The canal was originally located close to the boundary of the site but now there are no visible signs of its route.

This site would be appropriate for a boatyard and would also have the advantage of close proximity to the Sankey Viaduct which was the first railway over the first canal. It would also benefit by being in the first section of canal to be restored in the proposed phasing programme.

SITE 6 - Bewsey County High School

Site 6, a 7.2 hectare playing field is adjacent to the Sankey Valley Park and, within the park, the canal. The Warrington Local Plan has allocated this site for housing with existing planning permission (LPS4). A recent site visit, however, revealed that the construction of housing is already underway.

SITE 7 - Victoria Road

The Warrington Local Plan has allocated approximately 5.7 hectare site off Victoria Road for housing with existing planning permission (LPS4). This site was previously used for industrial purposes. However, a site visit identified that on approximately 50 per cent of the allocated area, housing development has already taken place. The eastern section still remains industrial.

SITE 8 - Well Lane, Penketh

This 15.4 hectare site is identified in the Local Plan as an Area of Search, defined by Warrington Borough Council as "an area of land excluded from the Greenbelt to enable its 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". The site is therefore safeguarded for development beyond 2001, and will be available around the time of the canals restoration.

SITE 9 - Area North of St Helens Canal

Site 9 is approximately 25 hectares identified in the Local Plan as a Primary Employment Area, within an Environmental Priority Area and has Special Development Opportunities. According to the Local Plan, this land is owned by ICI. Much of the industrial units appear redundant at the present time.

As an area with Special Development Opportunities the Council wishes to extend open space uses particularly at riverside locations. The Halton Borough Plan states that "in the event of closure of industrial uses in this area, the opportunity exists for the future development pattern and uses of this area to be related to take advantage of the waterside location beside the St Helens Canal and the Mersey Estuary". It is suggested that this land may be suitable for new employment and leisure uses to allow for improvement to the existing waterside environment and improve the image of Widnes.

SITE 10 - Spike Island

10a

This 6.9 hectare site is on the final section of the canal, prior to the locks through to the River Mersey. Policies applicable include Primary Employment within an area of Environmental Priority. The Council hold the view that there is an opportunity to develop new water sports, leisure and boating facilities on this site to redress the general lack of water-based recreation facilities in the Borough. For example, a scheme was proposed a few years ago to create a marine lake by enclosing an area of the Mersey Estuary off Spike Island. This lake, Halton Water, would provide facilities for activities such as wind surfing, power boating, yachting and pleasure boating. Halton Borough Council point out that this would encourage other forms of development for recreational purposes including pubs, restaurants and a visitor centre.

10b

Site 10b is within site 10a, and referred to as Waterloo Road, Widnes. It consists of 0.96 hectares and is highlighted for proposed Employment Development. Suitable uses would include general business, general industry and storage and distribution.