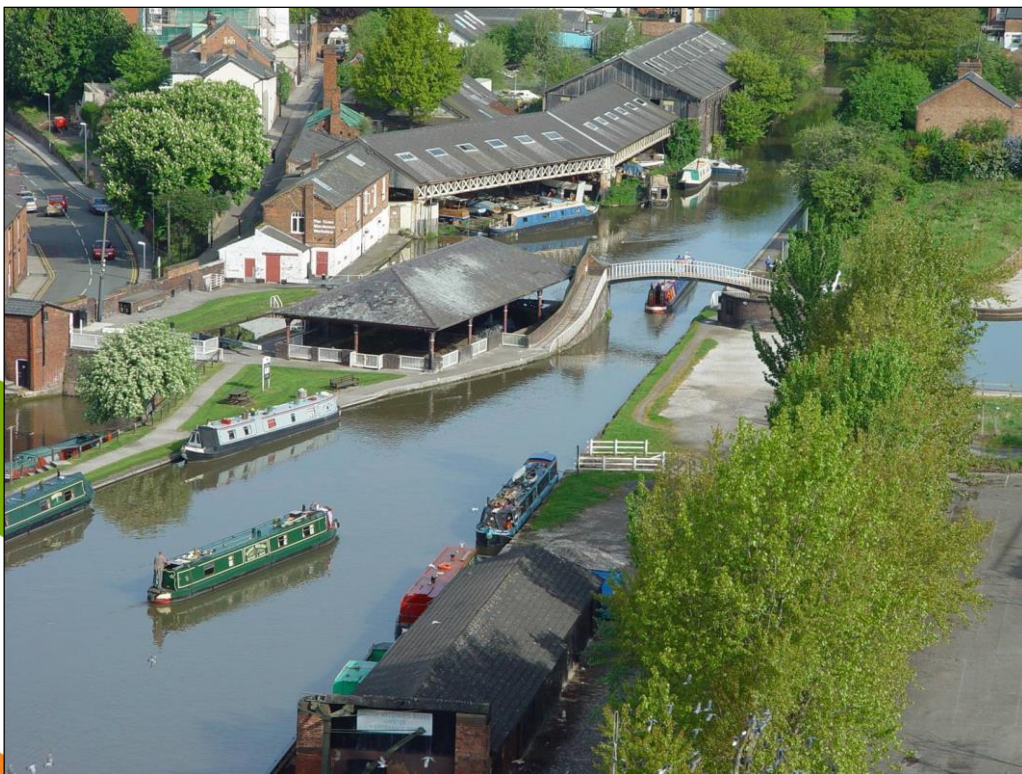


# Chester Canal Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Ellesmere Port to Nantwich



January 2018

This Conservation Area Appraisal is dedicated to the late Howard Dickenson, former Conservation Officer of Chester City Council, in memory of his great support, encouragement and inspiration during the early stages of the designation process.

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## Summary of Special Interest

The Shropshire Union Canal from Ellesmere Port to Nantwich has been designated a Conservation Area, a total length of approximately 27 miles. This includes the Wirral Line of the Ellesmere Canal (opened 1795) and the Chester Canal (opened 1775-79). For ease of reference the conservation area is called The Chester Canal Conservation Area.

This canal has many fine features which make it so special, including:

- It is one of the earliest main-line canals built as a broad canal with locks (for boats up to 14 foot wide)
- It has some of the first built broad staircase locks:
  - In Chester there is a staircase of 3 locks
  - At Bunbury there is a staircase of 2 locks
- The arrival of the canal at Netherpool/Whitby, which was responsible for the founding of Ellesmere Port – the port for Ellesmere in Shropshire
- Tower Wharf in Chester, an important canal interchange with a large boat building yard which is still operational
- The North Basin in Chester, once a thriving wharf
- The link to the River Dee, which was very important historically and remains a vital and unusual stretch of canal
- Beeston Iron Lock, a Scheduled Monument, unique in its construction
- Bunbury Locks, also a Scheduled Monument. It also has a large stable block and warehouse close by. It was originally a busy place, exchanging horses to pull the boats.
- Calveley, important for transshipment of cargoes, such as cheese, between canal, railway and road until the 1960s. Pleasure boats of up to 5 tons could be transhipped here.
- Barbridge Junction. With the Middlewich Branch it had a significant transshipment warehouse and was a very busy place in the Canal Age.
- Hurleston Junction, where the old Ellesmere Canal (now known as the Llangollen Canal) joins the Chester Canal in a very picturesque setting.
- Nantwich Basin, the terminus of the Chester Canal. It had many warehouses at one time.
- An unusually large remaining number of the original buildings and structures associated with the canal. This includes bridges and associated traditional hard landscaping, such as paving to the towpaths, under bridges, stones with rope markings etc
- Many rural mills, which probably milled flour and used the canal for transport, for example at Christleton and Waverton.
- Five round lengthsmen's huts with brick domed roofs, a design unique to this canal.
- Spectacular views from the canal, such as: -
  - St Lawrence's Church, Stoak
  - Delamere Forest
  - The Cheshire Sandstone Ridge – Frodsham and Helsby Hills
  - The Clwydian Hills from the top of Northgate Locks
  - Chester City Walls and Towers

- St Peter's Church, Waverton
- Beeston Castle
- Industrial heritage along the canal, where boats were used to take raw materials in and finished goods out:
  - Ellesmere Port –the remains of wharves, for example, the Billet Arm, that served local industry
  - Chester –evidence of the lead works, many mills and other canal side activities
  - Above Bunbury Locks –evidence of the brick kilns

There is a richness of preserved history and heritage, and the contribution that groups of trees and the wider landscape make to the setting of the canal, makes the Chester Canal worthy of preserving for current and future generations to enjoy.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.0 Background

- Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 to protect the interest and quality of an area that has special and distinct character. Under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Local Authorities are required to identify “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” as Conservation Areas. They are also under a duty to review existing designations from time to time.
- Section 72 of the above Act states that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
- It has been recognised that if the special interest, character, appearance and setting of a conservation area is to be conserved and enhanced, it must be managed. The first task in this process is to define and analyse the special characteristics that justify the designation of the conservation area. This is achieved by carrying out a Conservation Area Character Appraisal.
- The character of an area depends upon many factors. This may include its historic background, the architectural quality and interest of its buildings, their materials and detailing, the way they relate to each other, the line of the canal and towpath, the quality of and contribution made to the landscape, trees and open spaces that are in and surround it and a variety of unique features.
- A Conservation Area Character Appraisal provides a description of those elements that contribute to and define the character of the conservation area. The omission of any building, structure or feature from this appraisal does not mean it is not of any significance.

## 1.2 The Planning Policy Context

- This appraisal should be read in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para127. “When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest”
- A Conservation Area appraisal also provides the basis for the assessment of development proposals both within and adjacent to the Conservation Area boundary. It may also identify development opportunities. Para. 137 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals

that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably". It should also be read with best practice guidance from Historic England: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management; Historic England Advice Note 1.

### **1.3 Local Plan Policy**

- Cheshire West and Chester has a number of local development plan policies that protect heritage assets. In addition there may other land use policies that need to be considered when development is proposed. Local plan policy relevant to the Conservation Area and its setting is the adopted Local Development Plan Part 1 (Cheshire West and Chester). Relevant retained policies from Ellesmere Port, Chester and Vale Royal local plans are currently under review for the Local Plan (Part Two), which will set out the non-strategic allocations and detailed policies, following on from the strategic framework set out in the [Local Plan \(Part One\)](#). When adopted both documents will constitute the statutory development plan for Cheshire West and Chester and will replace all former Local Plans. The Local Plan (Part Two) will run to 2030 to align with the time horizon of the Local Plan (Part One). In Cheshire East, the saved policies in the Crewe & Nantwich Adopted Replacement Local Plan 2011 are relevant.

### **1.4 The Effects of Designation**

- The principal effects of this designation are as follows:
  - Permitted development rights are slightly different to some properties
  - Controls of demolition, or substantial demolition will require planning permission
  - Works to most trees in a conservation area, if not protected by a Tree Preservation Order, require notification to the Council
- The purpose of designation is not to restrict development but to celebrate the canal's special architectural and historic interest. Designation will ensure that any development is positively considered in the context of the character of the conservation area.

### **1.5 Location and Setting**

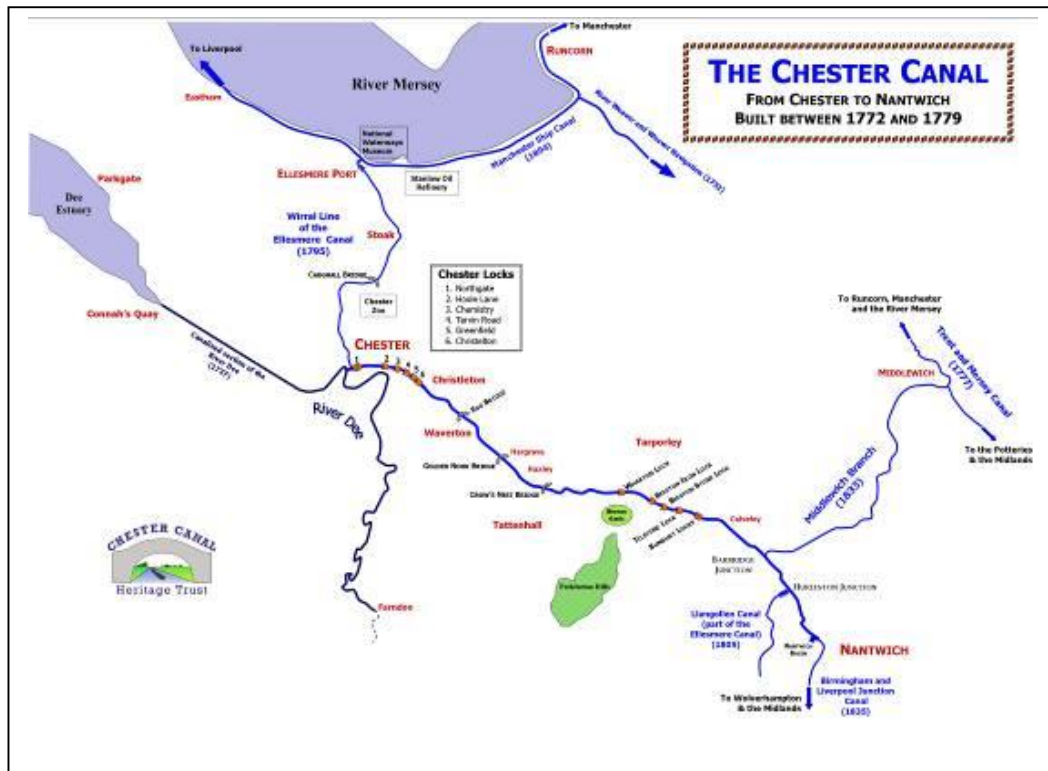
- This Conservation Area Character Appraisal is for a section of the Shropshire Union Canal, comprising the original Chester Canal, along with the Wirral Line of the Ellesmere Canal. The total length of this section is approximately 27 miles. It lies principally in the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C), with part of it in the Cheshire East (CE) unitary authority.
- There are several canal conservation areas in England, such as aim is to identify key features which need to be protected or enhanced, in order to maintain the distinctive heritage and environment of the canal. This process has already been carried out for other sections of canal in England, for example the Shropshire Union Canal in Staffordshire, the Trent and Mersey Canal in Cheshire West and

Chester, the Macclesfield Canal in Cheshire East, and the Regents Canal in London.

- The Conservation Area boundary covers the canal, towpath, hedges and boundaries together with any buildings that are associated with the canal, as well as any adjacent sites that contribute to its special character. The setting of the canal is important. Key views should be retained and the setting conserved and enhanced. See Map in Appendix 1 for details of the boundary.
- Appendix 2 is a gazetteer for the whole length of canal showing important features, following the example of the document nominating Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal as a World Heritage Site (Wrexham County Borough Council and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, 2008). This is divided into Character Areas as in the Appraisal – see below. All listed buildings and structures are Grade II unless otherwise stated and listing numbers are given according to Historic England’s National Heritage List for England.
- The long, linear canal has been broken up into Character Areas for ease of reference. The Conservation Area for the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port Docks is a separate conservation area and separate appraisal.
- The Chester Canal **Character Areas** are as follows:
  - A. **Industrial Ellesmere Port** – Ellesmere Port, M53 bridge (146A) to New Stanney Bridge (140A)
  - B. **Rural Chester, North** – New Stanney Bridge (140A) to Mollington Bridge (130)
  - C. **Suburban Chester, North** – Mollington Bridge (130) to Cambrian Road Bridge (126E)
  - D. **Chester Basins and the Dee Branch** – Cambrian Road Bridge (126E) to the railway bridges (123K)
  - E. **Northgate Cutting and Locks** – Northgate Locks to Cow Lane Bridge (123E)
  - F. **Industrial Chester** - Cow Lane Bridge (123E) to A55 Bridge (122A)
  - G. **Suburban Chester, South East** – A55 Bridge (122A) to Waverton (Davies Bridge, 118)
  - H. **Rural Cheshire West and Chester** – Waverton (Davies Bridge, 118) to the spillweir above Tilstone Lock (Bridge 106)
  - I. **Rural Cheshire East** – Spillweir above Tilstone Lock (Bridge 106) to Basin End, Nantwich
- The format is as follows: -
  - The historical development of each character area
  - Designations
  - Character of that Conservation Area
  - Major Features
  - Positive Elements



- Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features
  - Local views
  - Other significant buildings
  - Landscape and wildlife
  - Neutral Elements
  - Negative Elements
  - Recommendations for the future specific to that Character Area.
- Positive elements represent features within the Conservation Area that highlight why the character and appearance are special. Neutral elements represent features that offer no strong positive or negative influence upon the area. Negative elements detract from the special character of an area and present the opportunity for change, which will enhance the character and appearance of an area.
  - Recommendations appear in four distinct ways in this document:
    - For specific buildings or sites – in the Gazetteers
    - For each Character Area of canal – at the end of the section for the Character Area
    - For the whole length of the canal – in Section 4 of this document



## 1.6 The Chester Waterways Strategy

- The Chester Waterways Strategy was launched in June 2014 following on from Chester's One City Plan. The Strategy's development was undertaken in partnership between Chester Growth Partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Canal and River Trust, Chester Canal Heritage Trust and the Inland Waterways Association (Chester and Merseyside Branch). It is designed to realise the potential of Chester's fascinating and historic system of interconnected waterways by:-
  - Providing clear direction for how developments related to the waterways can contribute to the growth agenda and for realising waterside development potential in a sympathetic manner
  - Improving connectivity between the canal, the river and the city to encourage increased inward investment and increased tourism, including a feasibility study into improved navigation between the upper and lower Dee by way of the old mill race on the Handbridge side of the river
  - Creating new jobs in water-based, waterside and leisure activities
  - Marketing the waterways of West Cheshire as a worthwhile destination for boaters and other tourists and maximising the potential of the waterways for recreational purposes
  - Complementing the transport and cycling strategy and providing input to the statutory Local Plan.
- The Strategy sets out specific policies towards fulfilment of these objectives and identifies timescale priorities ranging from immediate to long-term action (5+ years). The Chester Canal Conservation Area is material to the Strategy's policies relating to the canal 'Character Areas' covering the Boughton Corridor, City Gateway, the Walls, Tower Wharf and the Riverside Link.

## 2.0 Historical Development Of The Canal

- Although Chester was regionally important, by the second half of the eighteenth century its position was under threat from more dynamic areas, particularly Liverpool, North-east Wales and the Cheshire salt field. The Port of Chester was in decline because of competition from Liverpool, and shipping activity became increasingly focussed on downstream locations along the Welsh shore. The building of the Grand Trunk (Trent and Mersey) Canal threatened to channel even more traffic to the Mersey. Chester's merchants therefore decided that they needed a canal to link the city to its hinterland and win back trade for the port. Despite stiff opposition from rival canals, such as the Trent & Mersey, the Chester Canal Act was passed in 1772 and construction work started in May of that year. The first traffic was carried in 1775, but business was poor, since the canal went only as far as Nantwich and there were major engineering and construction problems.
- By the end of the 18th Century, the Chester Canal was facing ruin, but was saved by a link with the Ellesmere Canal Company, which had been set up in the 1790s to link Ellesmere in Shropshire, and the quarries and other industries of North Wales, to the Mersey at Netherpool/Whitby, now known as Ellesmere Port. In Chester, the company built the section of canal known as the Wirral Line, which runs north to Ellesmere Port and which was completed in 1795. Historically, this was of great significance and represented a major upturn in the fortunes of the owners of the Chester Canal Company, which would probably not otherwise have survived.
- A further link between the Chester and Ellesmere Canals at Hurleston also meant that any problems over water supply were solved by the flow of water brought down from the Welsh Hills. By 1813, the partnership had been so successful that the two companies merged to create the Ellesmere and Chester Canal Company.
- In 1846, the Shropshire Union Railways & Canal Company (SURCCo) represented an amalgamation of a number of earlier canal ventures. The oldest of these was the Chester Canal, and it was only through mutually beneficial links with the Ellesmere Canal and then the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction Canal in the early 19th Century that commercial success was achieved and the SURCCo was formed, with a Head Office based in Chester in the buildings next to what is now Telford's Warehouse.
- The railways were beginning to revolutionise transport in ways even more far-reaching than those achieved by the canal network. A year after it was formed, the SURCCo came under the control of the London and North Western Railway Company (LNWR). An extensive canal carrying business was soon established, largely in territories served by rival railway companies. To service this trade, a large fleet was required and Chester was chosen as the location for a boatyard, both to build and maintain the boats. The chosen site was in Chester Basin, sandwiched between the canal and Upper Cambrian Road.
- With an annual turnover from carrying of nearly £200,000, the company

appeared to be performing quite well and showed a profit in most years, but this was an illusion, since it was dependent on subsidies from both the parent company LNWR and, during the Great War, from the government. The withdrawal of these subsidies in 1920/21, combined with an attempt to restrict the boatmen's working day to 8 hours plunged the company into massive losses and the decision was taken, quite abruptly, to withdraw from carrying all together and sell off the fleet.

- Today, the canal is largely used for pleasure. The Canal is owned and managed by the Canal and River Trust. Volunteer groups such as the Shropshire Union Canal Society, the Small Tasks Team Volunteers and Chester Canal Heritage Trust work with CRT to improve the condition of the canal for all users and also to encourage knowledge of appreciation of the canal.

### **3. Conservation Appraisals For Each Character Area**

#### **A. Industrial Ellesmere Port - Ellesmere Port, M53 Bridge (146a) To New Stanney Bridge (140a)**

##### **A.1 Historical Development - Sections A – C (The Wirral Line)**

- The 8 miles of canal that runs north from Chester towards the River Mersey is not the historic Chester Canal. It is the Wirral Line of the Ellesmere Canal, which was planned in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century by supporters of the industries growing up around North Wales and Shropshire. These were mostly owners of various iron, coal and limestone works, as well as millers, and they wanted a canal to transport goods to and from the River Mersey and also south to the River Severn at Shrewsbury. The Wirral Line was the first section to be built and was completed in 1795, joining up with the Chester Canal at a large basin close to the bottom of the Northgate Locks. Originally three locks took it down into the Mersey near the villages of Netherpool and Whitby, which now form part of the town of Ellesmere Port, named because of its connection with the Ellesmere Canal. About 100 years after the Wirral Line was opened, its direct link to the River Mersey was replaced by a connection to the Manchester Ship Canal which opened in 1894.
- There are no locks on this section of the Ellesmere Canal and the ground conditions made the construction relatively easy, as the course of the canal followed the glacial overflow channel between the Mersey estuary and the River Dee. At Backford, this channel passes through a gap in the sandstone ridge that runs down the middle of the Wirral peninsula. When the canal reaches the village of Stoak, it turns sharply west in order to keep within the boulder clay and avoid the alluvium of the River Gowy valley. From the very beginning, the Wirral Line proved to be a great success carrying freight and passengers from Chester to the Mersey at Ellesmere Port from where they were taken across the estuary to Liverpool.
- As the Wirral Line was built to connect the Chester Canal to the River Mersey, it was built to the same dimensions, as a wide canal for 14 foot wide Mersey Flats. When the M531 was proposed in 1966 by the Ministry of Transport, the plan was to culvert the Wirral Line under this new motorway (now the M53). The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) led a successful campaign from 1966-69, pointing out that the motorway was at a high level anyway and managed to retain a navigable culvert under the motorway. Unfortunately this is not wide enough for the wide 14 foot boats for which the canal was originally built, but at least the route was maintained. It is understood that some modern motorway bridges, whilst not wide enough for these boats, were built such that the towpaths could be removed in the future to allow passage of wide boats. The narrowest motorway bridge is 146A at the start of the Chester Canal conservation area.
- Canal Trail signs have been installed at several points along the canal. There are 10 of these directional sculptures between Ellesmere Port and Chester, as part

of a European Project called CultMark. In 2011, Cycle Trail signs were erected as part of the Chester Cycle City project.

- The Wirral Line is a green finger extending from Chester towards Ellesmere Port. It is desirable to protect and enhance its special character for the enjoyment of all.

## A.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	Ellesmere Port Docks Conservation Area is directly north of this area and adjacent to it
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Not known
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	Bewley's Bridge 144, 1138817 Weaver's Bridge 142, 1138816
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	Site of Wolverhampton Corrugated Iron Works, the Billet Arm
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	None
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	None
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI) Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV) Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV) Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	None None None None
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Adopted highway Regional Cycle Route 70

### **A.3 Character of the Conservation Area**

- This section of the canal can be divided into two parts: that north of the M53 (Bridge 144A) and the southern section. The motorway corridor follows the canal, and despite much landscaping has been a dominant feature since its construction in the 1970s. It has a clearly defined boundary, which although built to serve industry, had an essentially rural character as identified on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS maps of 1875 and 1910.
- The northern length is part of the former industrialised zone of Ellesmere Port, initially developed to be served by the canal and railways. Its character is somewhat urbanised with bridges, wharves and remaining viable industry contributing to its industrial appearance. However there is a clear dichotomy between the industrial features of the canal and its tranquil character on the towpath. Although rundown, this area is of considerable historic interest.
- The setting of the southern length was considerably changed by the development of the petrochemical industry from the 1940s. Before this period it was largely rural. Its character now is of a green rural corridor between the industrial area to the east and the motorway corridor to the west. The older bridges provide reminders of its rural past.
- The whole of this section is on one level, running through flat country. The site's designed aesthetic value, due to its construction as a significant transport network is narrow and linear, with associated historic bridges. The motorway, with bridges at a higher level, divides the landscape and provides contrasting views by boat or on foot. The background noise of motor vehicles is consistent, but not overwhelmingly dominant. The canal provides a green and tranquil corridor between the industrial area to the east and the motorway corridor to the west.

### **A.4 Major Features**

- There are no major features on this section of the canal.

### **A.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

#### **A.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- The railway and road bridges on this section are a clear link to the industrial transport infrastructure in this area and a clear reminder of how important and relevant they are, historically and in modern times. The original bridges on this section were specifically designed for the canal, and most are clearly characteristic of the canal. The 1930s bridges and their change in character, appearance and materials are characteristic of the later industrialisation of the wider area.
- The wharf wall for the former Burnells' Iron and Galvanising Works contains inbuilt mooring rings with bollards on the top.

#### **A.5.2 Views**

- The views from the bridges of the canal are generally up and down the canal and associated towpath. They are typically linear and framed by largely self-seeded vegetation. The linear nature of the canal is enhanced by existing hedge and tree boundaries. Views from adjacent sites to the canal are to some degree obscured by hedging. Compromised views tend to relate to views from the canal to standard modern industrial units. This is particularly evident where site boundaries are relatively open.

### **A.5.3 Other significant buildings**

- There are none on this section of canal.

### **A.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- This section of canal runs through flat country.
- There are formal and informal open spaces adjacent to both sides of the canal at various points, many linking through to local housing. These help to screen the motorway embankments and industrial installations. Hedges and trees contribute to the canal corridor's role in screening industry and the motorway. There are patches of reed beds to the offside all along this stretch, providing habitats for wildlife such as water birds and invertebrates.

## **A.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- Some landscaping of modern industrial units has taken place, which can help to screen them. Although there are no specialised designations along this section, there are large areas of green space around the motorway junctions.
- There are substantial walls to the offside of the section north of the M53 (144A), representing former industrial uses. South of the M53 (144A) there are landscaped areas next to modern business units as well as areas of informal open space.
- The towpath surface is mostly asphalted. It forms part of a Cycle Route.

## **A.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- The hedging and fencing to open spaces is in variable condition in places and should be rationalised. The use of chain link or palisade fencing is not appropriate to the canal setting as it creates an industrial, urbanised and poor quality aesthetic.
- Ramping and accesses create a poor quality environment to some bridges, for example Waring's Bridge, 142, Bewley's Bridge, 144, Stanlow Bridge, 145, and Pickering's Bridge, 146.



- Some pipes through bridges and pipe bridges have been crudely inserted across principal sections of the structures and do not have any aesthetic and functional relationship to the canal's history or character.
- The industrial units on the offside around Stanney Mill Bridge (141) and towards New Stanney Bridge (140A) are of a standard and bulky type of industrial unit, where the use of materials, form and build create a poor visual setting to the canal. These are directly adjacent to the conservation area. The opportunity to create permeable links and active frontages to the canal has been lost, with buildings turning their back to the canal. This creates a sterile and poor quality urban environment.

## **A.8 Recommendations**

- Any redevelopment proposals of the sites of the former Burnells' and Wolverhampton Corrugated Iron Company works should retain the wharf walls and scale of the previous developments. The wharf walls may benefit from being locally listed, with the remains of Wolverhampton Corrugated Iron Works and the associated railway bridge retained.
- Built development up to the boundary of the canal may drastically alter its setting, changing the landscape context from rural to urban. Avoid development in close proximity to canal towpath and improve the appearance of industrial units. The units on the offside around Stanney Mill Bridge (141) and towards New Stanney Bridge (140A) are of a standard and bulky type of industrial unit, where the use of materials, form and build create a poor visual setting to the canal. Although not within the conservation area, the appearance of these building and associated boundaries adjacent to the canal, are important considerations in planning applications.
- Existing offside industrial units viewed from the canal would benefit from screening, such as bund and planting.
- Buildings should be set back from the canal. Screening of the site by an appropriate and enhanced tree and hedgerow boundary is supported, possibly with bund and planting.
- To mitigate new build where there are clear gap sites for development, retain substantial tree screening to eastern and western boundaries to retain and enhance setting of the canal and towpath and the associated enclosure and landscape.
- Attention to the quality of landscaping and the design of the new built development, including a sensitive approach to density, massing and height would help further to reduce the impact on important views to and from the conservation area.
- The impact of development should be reduced by maintaining and managing the impact on views and ensuring the retention of an appropriate setting of the

conservation area, which is a green corridor of rurality and tranquillity. Ensuring the retention of the majority of the established green infrastructure would help screen and soften the urban character of new development.

- The hedging and fencing to boundaries should be enhanced to respect the canal's character, towpath and setting. The use of chain link or palisade fencing is not appropriate to the canal setting as it creates an industrial, urbanised and poor quality aesthetic.
- Consideration should be given to innovative towpath solutions under the motorway bridges to allow for 14 foot wide boats can pass.
- The opportunity to create other permeable links, and improve existing over the canal, is supported.
- Appropriate and well-designed hard and soft boundary treatment will enhance the canal towpath, and make it more permeable for a wider access group.

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## B. RURAL CHESTER, NORTH - NEW STANNEY BRIDGE (140A) TO MOLLINGTON BRIDGE (130)

### B.1 Historical development

- See A.1 above.

### B.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	None
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Chester Waterways Strategy, Bridge 134 to Bridge 130
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	Mason's Bridge 140, 1130649 Meadow Lane Bridge 139, 1130650 Dension's Bridge 138, 1139453 Stoak Bridge 137, 1330239 Picton Lane Bridge 136, 1330220 Croughton Bridge 135, 1115503 Railway Viaduct 132, 1278977 Knolls Bridge 131, 1229632
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	None
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	None
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	None
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI)  Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV)  Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV)  Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	SUC (Main Line), SJ414712, Grade B Viaduct Wood, SJ 391705, Grade C Gowy Meadows and Ditches, SJ 436737, Grade A  Area north of canal at Collinge Wood East of canal from north of bridge 131 to bridge 130  Whole length of canal Area around motorway junctions Between canal and Wervin Chester Zoo and fields Area north of canal from bridge 134 to Collinge Wood South of canal from bridge 133 to 130 None
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Adopted highway National Cycle Route 56, from Caughall Bridge (134) to Backford Bridge (133)

	Regional Cycle Route 70, from New Stanney Bridge (140A) to Picton Lane Bridge (136) and south from Backford Bridge (133)
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### **B.3 Character of the Conservation Area**

- This section of the canal runs through a rural area, but one with major contrasts. The northern section, between New Stanney Bridge (140A) and the motorway bridges (135A and B), includes a winding section through flat country, where views of pylons and the M53 create an urban and visually intrusive character. There are open views over the Gowy floodplain towards Helsby Hill.
- This agricultural area is followed by another section, with a set of offside moorings, and the approach to the Backford Gap. There are pipes and a tank farm, and a length that passes close to Chester Zoo. The canal passes through the Backford Gap, with an area to the south which is used for military training, and then a substantial railway viaduct (132). South of the latter is a section flanked by woods, and then an area of open agricultural land.
- The final section enters the northern boundary of Chester, with a former golf course in the village of Mollington to the east and the Countess of Chester Country Park in the suburb of Upton to the west. Both of the above sites replace areas used for landfill in the 1960s.
- There are few historic wharves on this section, but a number of original bridges, lengths of substantial nature conservation value, and contrasting open and wooded areas. This largely rural section is used by walkers, runners, cyclists, anglers and boaters. Motorways and the railway are close at hand and typically intersect the canal at various locations, dependent on the topography of the area.

### **B.4 Major Features**

- The most significant feature is the Backford Gap, which is crossed in two places at high level by the A41, and the red sandstone Chester & Birkenhead railway viaduct. The A41 is quite urban in character, the viaduct rural in character. The viaduct is impressive in scale, height and design with five arcades. Its rusticated, rock faced appearance is typical of the period in which it was constructed in 1839, with blue and orange brick likely to have been imported from Staffordshire or Stoke via the railway. It is an important focal point along the stretch of canal.

### **B.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

#### **B.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- At Top Farm, Croughton, a building on the offside adjacent to the conservation area represents the place from which one of the earliest canal boat hiring operations took place from 1932. A building is shown at this site on maps from

1910; The current building is much altered from this and more research needs to be done.

- The numerous original bridges on this section are of considerable interest, being designed specifically as key routes over the canal and several are listed (140, 139, 138, 137, 136, 135, 132, 131). The original bridge at Caughall (134) was rebuilt 40 years after the canal, following incidents on passenger boats. There are reports of injuries to passengers, including losing their heads or being knocked off the boat, at the original bridge.

### **B.5.2 Views**

- In Area B the canal leaves the Ellesmere Port urban and industrial area and passes through the agricultural green belt. There are three landscape phases, firstly the flat margins of the lower Gowy valley, then the confined valley of the Backford Gap and finally the rolling northern urban fringes of Chester.
- Although the Stanlow Oil Refinery forms a negative element in the landscape, the view eastwards across the undeveloped Gowy Marches is framed by the sharp feature of Helsby Hill and the mid-Cheshire Ridge.
- The canal curves round Stoak village. The village is largely hidden by trees but Stoak church is a focal point in the medium-distance landscape when seen from various angles across the intervening open fields.
- At Croughton a white Victorian cottage with a steep and complex gabled slate roof, porch and bay window, and framed by mature woodland, is seen across the rising open field on the west side of the canal.
- From the north the elegant structure of Caughall Bridge (134) with its black and white ironwork contrasts harmoniously with the rolling and rising fields and woodland to the south west which form the entrance to the Backford Gap.
- Between the pipe bridge and Backford Bridge (133) the sinuous view of the canal from both east and west is framed by the wooded margins and slopes of the Backford Gap in which no obtrusive development is visible.
- West of Backford Bridge the roofs and chimneys of Lea by Backford hamlet are seen in the trees above the well-wooded fields that rise to the north of the canal.
- Between Backford Bridge and the railway viaduct flat and undeveloped water meadows with large patches of contrasting woodland are seen to the south and east of the canal as it curves round from a westerly to a southerly direction.
- Between the railway viaduct and Knolls Bridge (131) the view across the reed-covered water meadows is backed by a striking row of Lombardy poplars, an associated and unusually sympathetic low barn with a rusty corrugated iron roof, the whole ensemble backed by the wooded higher ground along the railway track.
- North and south of Mollington Bridge (130) there are views across the fields to the former Deva Lunatic Asylum Water Tower, a Victorian structure in a distinctly

Italianate style, which has been preserved amid modern housing development. This is an important focal point on this section of the canal.

### **B.5.3 Other significant buildings**

- There are none on this section of canal.

### **B.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- This area is largely flat and the southern section passes through generally attractive, gently undulating countryside and alongside a former golf course. The hedgerows are mainly complete, and there is a belt of trees between the motorway bridges which provides effective screening.
- Parts of the canal have recently been dredged and soft piling installed to protect the banks from erosion and stock poaching. In time this will provide extra habitat for wildlife.
- The canal links an important series of paths and open space adjacent to Knolls Bridge (131), part of the Countess of Chester Country Park that allows the use of the towpath for walking, cycling, running.
- The whole section is an Area of Nature Conservation Value, and there are other designations, focusing on the central length between Backford Bridge (133) and Croughton Bridge (135). There are many reeded banks with associated wildlife and clumps of reed often break off forming floating islands.

## **B.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- The trees to the railway embankment mask the trains, but also limit views of the substantial viaduct. The open space north of the viaduct provides part of the canal's essential setting, but access is restricted by military use.
- There are moorings, including a fairly substantial length at Croughton, to the offside. The Croughton mooring includes an area for winding (turning round) boats, and there is also a winding hole by Backford Bridge.

## **B.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- The motorway and electricity pylons to the northern section are somewhat intrusive in terms of noise and appearance respectively.
- The general appearance of Stoak from the canal could be improved. Untidy fields and sheds detract from the view of the church.
- The links with the footpath network around Stoak are compromised by barbed wire across many paths.

- The United Utilities waste water treatment works is a poorly designed functional building that adds little to the canal character. The area would benefit visually by a more innovative approach to pipes crossing the canal. Fencing adjacent to the towpath could similarly be designed to better reflect the special character of the canal and towpath.
- The tank farm north of Caughall Bridge (134) appears to be little used, but it has a neglected appearance. This farm was probably used to decentralise fuel storage away from the possibly vulnerable refinery, but may also have been associated with the wartime PLUTO (Pipe Line Under The Ocean) project.
- The palisade fencing near the Railway Viaduct (132) is a standardised galvanised fence that is not locally distinctive, creating a poor quality urban boundary to a rural area. It could be placed further away from the canal towpath edge, with hedging in front, or powder coated to blend in better with its surroundings.
- The laying of asphalt has destroyed or damaged the original towpath surface under some of the bridges. This has created an uneven towpath which would benefit from appropriate surface treatment to enhance both the character and historic appearance of the canal and its use.
- There are many saplings between the canal and the towpath which may cause an obstruction for horse boating. This stretch is used for horse boating demonstrations between the National Waterways Museum and Chester.
- Opposite Top Farm, Croughton, there are streams and pools of water across the towpath that may cause problems for towpath users.

## **B.8 Recommendations**

- Any opportunities to reduce or remove the visual and noise impact of the motorways, pylons, waste water treatment works, tank farm and pipes should be taken.
- Fencing, particularly at the waste water treatment works and at the Railway Viaduct (132), could be replaced by hedging or other appropriate boundary treatment.
- Any new development in the area of Stoak Church, Backford Gap, and the railway viaduct should include the identification of and protection of key views in and out of the conservation area.
- Enhancement of the moorings at Croughton should be encouraged, including protection for the historic wharf there – consider local listing if appropriate.
- Caughall Bridge (134), locally known as Pretty Bridge, could be considered for listing.



- Any development at Chester Zoo should ensure that boundaries of the canal corridor east of Backford Bridge (133) and the canal section adjacent to Zoo-owned land reflect the canal's rural open character. Interpretation and links to the Zoo are welcomed.
- The Countess of Chester Country Park has well used pedestrian links to the canal between Mollington Road Bridge (130) and Knolls Bridge (131). There is an opportunity for interpretation of the canal at this point. Continued management of the wider landscape in the County Park will help to achieve this.
- The open countryside character and contours of the landscape of the former golf course north of Knolls Bridge (131) should be retained in any subsequent development proposal.
- The redevelopment of the Countess of Chester Hospital has clearly distinct phases of development. The more recent development from 2012 onwards is undoubtedly more successful in terms of its visual appearance, massing and materials and has improved the visual relationship between the hospital and Countess of Chester Country Park. A landscape plan to identify and enhance views and vistas over the Countess of Chester Country Park and conservation area is supported.
- Removing saplings between the canal and the towpath and regular maintenance would improve the route for horse boating.
- Investigate the streams and pools of water across the towpath opposite Top Farm and install drainage as necessary.

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## C. SUBURBAN CHESTER, NORTH - MOLLINGTON BRIDGE (130) TO CAMBRIAN ROAD BRIDGE (126E)

### C.1 Historical development

- See A.1 above.

### C.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	Chester City Conservation Area is directly to the south of this area
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Chester Waterways Strategy, Bridge 130 to Bridge 126E
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	None
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	None
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	None
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	None
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI) Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV)  Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV) Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	Finchett's Triangle, SJ 385673, Grade C Around aqueduct, east along Finchett's Gutter Whole length of canal Several individual ones between Bridges 128 and 126E Group TPO NW of aqueduct Group TPO along bank, east of canal, north of Bridge 128
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Adopted highway National Cycle Route 5 Regional Cycle Routes 70 and 71 National Cycle Route 45 north to Bridge 128B

### C.3 Character of the Conservation Area

- This section of the canal shows the typical changes from rural to urban. The lighting from Chester as far as Blacon Avenue Bridge (129) means that it is used at all times of the day and night by people going to and from the city. The towpath is used by walkers, cyclists and fishermen as well as people travelling into the city for work or leisure.
- There are houses along parts of this section abutting, but not within the conservation area, at first only on the towpath side on Parkgate Road, then only on the offside, then on both sides as the canal reaches the more built up areas of the city. Some of the house owners have embraced the canal at the foot of their garden and have opened up their gardens to view the canal and its associated bank. Some have built platforms and decking, seating areas on grass or hardstanding, or garden sheds, summerhouses and gazebos. Areas of high solid fencing are quite dominant and could detract from the open character of the canal if of a functional, rather than aesthetic design, but areas of hedgerow add to the character, as do traditional painted, solid timber single gates.
- In between the stretches of houses, particularly towards the northern end of this section there are fields either side of the towpath side, that are mainly pasture with horse grazing, a playing field between the canal and the Police Station, and the new, and well-designed and well landscaped crematorium at Blacon on the off side. This gives this area a very open feel, and contributes strongly to the tranquil setting of the canal. Here there are far reaching views to Chester city centre, where key landmarks, such as the Cathedral and Town Hall can clearly be seen.
- To the south of the modern Deva Aqueduct which crosses the A5480, Chester University is adjacent to the towpath as far as Stone Bridge (128).
- The whole length of the canal is designated as an Area of Nature Conservation Value, and, close to the aqueduct there is a more extensive green space which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. This is along the floodplain of Finchett's Gutter – the crossing of these two linear watercourses is important for wildlife movement and dispersal. Adding value to this, the former railway line, now part of the Millenium Cycle Way and footpath, crosses the canal in this area, and is also designated as an Area of Nature Conservation Value. In 2010 a new link between the canal towpath, the Millennium Cycle Way and the Deva Link Road was constructed. This creates permeable pedestrian and cycle routes to Chester villages such as Guilden Sutton and Mickle Trafford to the east and to North Wales to the west. At Cambrian Road Bridge (126E) the canal flows into Chester City Conservation Area.
- There are no locks on the stretch, although the canal is on a slight embankment at the northern end of the section, between the houses after Mollington Bridge (130) and the former railway bridge, and in a small cutting in the Garden Lane area, with the gardens above the level of the towpath. The bends in the canal add to the unfolding sequential views and pleasant nature of this section.

## **C.4 Major Features**

- There are no major features on this section of the canal.

## **C.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

### **C.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- The bridges on sections of the canal are typical of an urban area, and quite different to the traditional curved brick bridges more usually seen on the Shropshire Union Canal. They are, however, in keeping with the character of the canal in this section. The former bridge to Blacon Hall, now gone, is evident by a narrowing of the canal and a slope in the garden of the house close to the canal.
- The new crematorium with associated landscaping has been built adjacent to the canal and is a positive development along this stretch.
- The Deva Aqueduct over Deva Way was constructed in 1992 and is a strong modern linear landmark, seen in various viewpoints within and below it.
- Stone Bridge (128) carries Cheyney Road over the canal. This bridge has been sympathetically extended, probably in the 1930s given its architectural form and character, when the road was widened to take modern traffic. South of here, to Cambrian Road Bridge (126E) the off side bank appears to be protected with railway sleepers.
- The raised bricks, and setts, under some of the bridges are contemporary with the canal and of historical and educational value. Their surface assists horses when pulling boats to and from the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port.

### **C.5.2 Views**

- In Area C the canal has two contrasting phases. From Mollington Bridge to the University the aspect is generally open with the canal running along the valley of a minor brook, culminating in an embanked course across the Deva Aqueduct. Between the University and Cambrian Road bridge (126E) the waterway is enclosed by development and the only significant vista is to and from Tower Wharf.
- South of Mollington Bridge, and again south of Blacon Avenue Bridge (129), Chester Cathedral and Town Hall are silhouetted on the urban skyline and dominate a view which otherwise largely obscures tall but less distinguished buildings. The Chester skyline from this perspective is an important element in the city's urban character.
- When travelling along the canal towards the city, there are views across the fields to the Water Tower at Upton Dene (part of the former Deva Lunatic Asylum). This is an important focal point on this section of the canal.

- From the site of Blacon Hall Bridge and the Deva Aqueduct it is possible to see the Cathedral and Town Hall, particularly in the winter months when there are no leaves on the trees. These views should be protected as key visual anchors that add to the richness of Chester's skyline.
- The Welsh Hills are visible, on a clear day, over the houses of Balmoral Park. This view is one of the few outward views from Chester of the surrounding wider landscape, and should be retained.
- The view of Chester University buildings by the bend in the canal is important and should be maintained.

### **C.5.3 Other significant buildings**

- Stone Bridge House, 26 Balmoral Park, was built prior to the canal and extended in 1869. Apparently the canal was diverted around it. The building creates a strong and important landmark on this stretch of canal and is included within the conservation area.
- The house at the site of Blacon Hall Bridge may have been a gate house for the Hall. The access ramp to the bridge is still evident in the garden.

### **C.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- As this area of land is fairly flat, there are no locks on this section of the canal. Where the land does rise and fall, there are small cuttings and embankments.
- The canal and its towpath form an important open space. There are key access points from and to the Countess of Chester Country Park, and to the Millennium Cycle Way.
- Along this whole section the natural environment consists of trees, hedges and some reed beds in the canal, these contribute to the distinctiveness of the canal.
- There are several large trees which could benefit from protection by a Tree Preservation Order such as the willow by Stone Bridge (128) and the fairly mature beech and Scots pine trees at Stone Bridge House, 26 Balmoral Park, opposite the Chester University.
- The trees planted on the bank next to the towpath, by the University, have significant amenity value and are protected by a group Tree Preservation Order.
- This stretch of the canal has most of the wildlife species generally associated with this type of waterway. In addition to fish in the canal, there are usually mute swans, mallard, and moorhens, with the occasional heron, kingfisher or cormorant. The reed beds support populations of beetles, and other invertebrates, and dragonflies.

## **C.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- Some houses have embraced the canal bank and included it in their garden area. Some add to the character of the canal, others are less successful.
- The style of the electric lighting along the towpath is unremarkable but functional.

### **C.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- Some of the garden fencing backing onto the canal, but not within the conservation area, consists of corrugated iron and breeze blocks, which have a detrimental visual appearance on the canal setting.
- Along most of the boundary with Chester University there is a tall palisade. This creates a very urban context that changes the character and appearance of this section of the canal to the detriment of its amenity value. There is also no link between the University and canal towpath. The university and its grounds are outside the conservation area, but there are clearly permeable links to it via the canal.
- Areas of stained decorative balustrades and associated decking next to the canal and adjacent to the conservation area are highly visible and would benefit from screening or weathering to a grey timber.
- There are disused wharves north of Stone Bridge (128) and Cambrian Road Bridge (126E) which are becoming very dilapidated.
- Cambrian Road Bridge (126E) is a modern structure that does not reflect the historic canal bridge character.
- The stone walls along the gardens on Garden Lane have, in places, been raised with low quality materials such as bricks and breeze blocks, rather than the original stone. These are not within the conservation area but this has a detrimental visual impact on the setting of the canal.
- The area is prone to invasion by Japanese knotweed.
- This section of canal is part of several Cycle Routes. The condition of the towpath, which has a hard surface, is somewhat neglected.

### **C.8 Recommendations**

- Canal surfacing for all purpose recreational use should be of high quality; be appropriately designed and relevant to context, and sensitive to the canal side setting and special character.
- The views into the city, especially to the Cathedral, Town Hall and to the Welsh Hills should be retained and protected.

- The Water Tower at Upton Dene is a key focal point and visual anchor, seen from the towpath, but outside the conservation area. This viewpoint could be enhanced and framed by sensitive soft landscaping.
- Buildings and structures such as Stone Bridge House and the house at the site of Blacon Hall Bridge could be considered for local listing.
- Trees at Stone Bridge House and the wharf by Stone Bridge (128) are an important group of trees of high amenity that may benefit from extra protection in the form of a Tree Preservation Orders.
- Permeable links would be welcomed between the University of Chester campus and the towpath. Active frontages between the canal and University could potentially be further explored with any future development proposals.
- A hard and soft landscaping design guide should be considered for back gardens and backs of sites backing onto the canal.
- Further enhancement of this section of canal with well detailed and appropriately scaled garden structures and fencing details is welcomed.



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## **D. CHESTER BASINS AND THE DEE BRANCH - CAMBRIAN ROAD BRIDGE (126E) TO THE RAILWAY BRIDGES (123K)**

### **D.1 Historical Development**

- Chester canal basins were once a busy and thriving centre of the canal trade, dealing with both cargo and passenger traffic. They are located at the bottom of Northgate Locks at the junction of the Chester Canal, and the Wirral Line of the Ellesmere Canal, both now part of the Shropshire Union Canal. The basins and associated locks and Graving Dock (where boats are taken out of the water to “grave” or scrape and repair the bottom of the boat) were built to accommodate the 14 foot wide Mersey Flats.
- By the end of the 18th century, the Chester Canal was facing ruin, but was saved by a link with the Ellesmere Canal Company, which had been set up in the 1790s to link Ellesmere in Shropshire and the quarries of North Wales to the Mersey at Netherpool/Whitby, now known as Ellesmere Port. In Chester, the company built the section of canal known as the Wirral Line, which runs up to Ellesmere Port and which was completed in 1795. When this section of canal was built, two of the locks in the original staircase were taken out and replaced by two new locks on the Dee Branch of the canal, separate from the main line. This is the section of canal just to the west of the main Canal Basin. The increase in trade resulting from the Wirral Line was of great significance and represented a major upturn in the fortunes of the owners of the Chester Canal Company, which would probably not otherwise have survived.
- The Dee Branch drops the canal down into what was once the Dee Basin, extending almost to the edge of what is now Southview Road. It was surrounded by a variety of warehouses and other industrial buildings, including a boatyard and stables, all of which have since disappeared. Archaeological excavations of this area prior to its redevelopment in 1996 uncovered the remains of over 30 sunken boats including ‘Earl’, a flat built at Frodsham in 1802 for use on the Ellesmere and Chester Canal.
- In the 1970s, the local canal supervisor, the late Philip Williams, instigated the creation of Williams Moorings.

## D.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	All of Area D is within the existing Chester City Conservation Area
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Chester Waterways Strategy Bridge 126E to Bridge 123K, including the Dee Branch
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	Taylor's Boatyard (including Former Flat Shed, Narrowboat Shed, Former Steam Saw Mill, Blacksmith's Forge, Carpenter's Shed, Paint Shed, Stores, Warehouse/Office Range and Dry Dock), 1375715 Graving Lock, 1375932 Roving Bridge 126, 1375933 Bridge Lock, 1375930 Telford's Warehouse, 1375919 Raymond House 1375918 Water Tower, 1376129
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	None
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	Scout Hut, Dee Basin
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	Water Tower, 1006785
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	River Dee SSSI
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI) Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV) Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV)  Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	None None Whole length of canal and area between main line and Williams Moorings 5 opposite Taylor's Boatyard 1 close to Graving Dock 5 near to Bridge Lock
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Adopted highway National Cycle Route 5 Regional Cycle Routes 70 and 71 National Cycle Route 45

## D.3 Character of the Conservation Area

- The character of the canal basins and Dee Branch is dominated by the buildings associated with Chester as a canal port. Many of the canal buildings are typical of the style of those built by Thomas Telford, and the majority of them are Grade II listed. The historic buildings, clearly visible from several vantage points in the area, attract many visitors. Taylor's Boatyard was originally the boat maintenance and building yard for the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company Ltd, and it still functions as a working boatyard, with the associated

Graving Dock and Graving Lock. The Dock and Lock are used for taking boats out of the water for repair.

- The whole of this section of the canal is within the Chester City Conservation Area. There is an interpretation board by the towpath in the basin, and another adjacent to the Graving Lock.
- The towpath is an adopted highway, and has been resurfaced. It is used by walkers, cyclists and fishermen and there is a Canal Trail sign adjacent to the access slope near Cambrian Road Bridge.
- The grassy areas, picnic tables and other benches attract many people to the area. This whole area is designated an Area of Nature Conservation Value, and it attracts the usual collections of water birds including mute swans.
- The elegant roving bridge carries the towpath over the canal. It was built to allow horses to tow boats along the canal without having to unhitch the rope when the towpath changes from one side of the canal to the other.
- The character of the North Basin was changed by the development of a range of houses, flats and retail/entertainment properties. These were finished in 2014 and generally reflect some of the past life of the basin, and the built form resembles the warehouses which used to be around it.
- The Towpath student accommodation development between the North Basin and Telford's Warehouse dominates Tower Wharf.
- Access to the River Dee is through the Dee Branch and River Lock. The River Lock is one of the longest in the country. It was extended when Sealand Road Bridge was made into a fixed bridge when the road was upgraded. Passage through this lock is difficult and requires going under the bridge before the rising tidal river is too high.
- Williams Moorings is full of boats, which greatly improves the appearance of the area.
- The Dee Basin has been reduced over time, and is now surrounded by tall wharf-like apartment blocks. The 8<sup>th</sup> Scout Headquarters building, shaped like a boat, is a strong and well-designed piece of architecture that clearly demonstrates the area's association with the port.
- Several of the listed buildings associated with the canal that are adjacent and close to the site have classical elements of architectural design that are common in Telford's architecture of this period (1790's - early 1800s). Raymond House, designed in a classical style by Thomas Telford, was the offices for the Canal Packet Boat, which carried passengers to Ellesmere Port, and an inn, then living accommodation for canal workers. Telford's Warehouse was a warehouse and constructed over the canal to allow for boats to be loaded and unloaded. It is a popular public house and live music venue.

- There are particular architectural details that are characteristic of Telford's architecture and seen to good effect in particular on Telford's Warehouse such as sandstone plinths to Telford's Warehouse and a strongly articulated rusticated plinth in stucco to Raymond House. An important palette of materials - brick (typically English garden wall bond), sandstone, render and slate exist in this area. The textural effect of the rusticated stucco to Raymond House is striking and pronounced, giving a clear horizontal depth and shadow to the ground floor.
- The twin railway bridges, below Northgate Locks, together with the sweeping slope up to Raymond Street Bridge and the cantilevered road opposite Telford's Warehouse were all built around the same time and form a dramatic entrance to the main Chester Basin. Near to Raymond Street Bridge, a large hook on a ring mounted low down on the wall was apparently used to hook the towrope on to so that boats could be pulled straight out of the locks, so making it easier to negotiate the sharp turn into the basin.
- The staircase of three locks on this stretch carries the main line of the canal down to Tower Wharf.

#### **D.4 Major Features**

- The major features on this stretch of the canal are: -
  - the complex of buildings forming Taylor's Boatyard
  - the buildings associated with the former Chester to Ellesmere Port Packet Boat – Telford's Warehouse and Raymond House
  - the Dee Branch connecting the canal to the River Dee.
  - The location and setting of the locks and basin next to the defensive sandstone city walls

#### **D.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

##### **D.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- The canal basins are a good example of a canal port which has survived with many of its original features. Around the main basin, the majority of the remaining buildings have been present since this was a thriving area for trade.
- The roving bridge is a fine example of its kind, and has a plaque on it commemorating Tom Rolt, one of the founders of the Inland Waterways Association, who was born in Chester. The other bridges are in keeping with the area. Generally they are in good condition, although the surface of the roving bridge needs some attention.

##### **D.5.2 Views**

- In Area D the primary focus is within the canal basin itself with its unusual contrasts in water level, significant canal structures and important canalside buildings. Views beyond the canal environs are limited but those into the basin

complex are an important part of Chester's urban environment in this area and all proposed developments should be considered carefully in terms of their compatibility with the area's unique character.

- From the roving bridge (126) there is a good view of Taylor's boatyard and associated buildings.
- The Basin can be seen from the city walls, although the view is partly obscured by trees in the summer. There is a similar but unobstructed view from the towpath in the basin itself encompassing the roving bridge and dry dock with Taylor's boat yard in the background.
- From the Dee Branch there are close views over intervening undeveloped ground of the Water Tower and adjacent city walls.

### **D.5.3 Other significant buildings**

- The Scout Hut on Dee Basin is a contemporary building that contributes to the setting of the Old Port with its responsive built form and quirky design character.

### **D.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- Although this is a comparatively small area, there is a great deal of variety and interest.
- There is a change in level from the mainline of the canal down the Dee Branch towards the River Dee. The Graving Lock takes the canal down to Williams Moorings, Bridge Lock drops it down to the formerly tidal Dee Basin, and then the River Lock goes out into the tidal river almost at sea level.
- The historic open wharf area between Telford's Warehouse and the North Basin has now been built over. However, the area between the canal and the Dee Branch is a small grassed area, which acts as relief to the built form. There are rings for visitor moorings here and most of the trees are protected by TPOs.
- Moorhens, mallard and mute swans all regularly nest in this area. Kingfishers, herons and cormorants are occasionally seen passing through or fishing.

### **D.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- The substantial development on the site of Tilston's Joinery Yard dominates the north side of the River Lock..

### **D.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- The area around the North Basin needs commercial development and boats to achieve its full potential.

- The raised horse bricks are not present under any of the bridges.
- The flood barrier inserted in the River Lock prevents navigation.

## **D.8 Recommendations**

- The towpath surfaces could be improved to create a locally distinctive setting, and used as a template for sensitive areas of towpaths in Chester.
- The vibrancy of the Canal Basins should be further enhanced through sympathetic development and active uses, such as Taylors Boatyard.
- The North Basin should be opened up for visiting boats and ground floor active frontages of the apartment blocks should be encouraged.
- The lock numbers could be removed and the lock name plates reinstated where necessary.
- The flood barrier inserted in the River Lock should not be allowed to become a permanent fixture.
- The Scout Hut at Dee Basin could be considered for local listing.

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## E. NORTHGATE CUTTING AND LOCKS – NORTHGATE LOCKS TO COW LANE BRIDGE (123E)

### E.1 Historical Development - Sections E – I (The Chester Canal)

- Started in 1772, at the time of the Industrial Revolution, the Chester Canal was intended to link the City of Chester with growing centres of industry and trade, such as the Potteries and the Midlands. Opposition from the owners of the Trent & Mersey Canal to a junction with their waterway at Middlewich meant that the owners of the Chester Canal had to settle for Nantwich as the terminus for their venture but, because of a lack of funds, even that plan could not initially be achieved and Beeston became the initial terminus of the Canal with the first traffic being carried in 1775. This canal was designed to carry 14 foot wide Mersey Flats, so the canal and bridges are wide enough for this.
- Even after the link to Nantwich was completed in 1779, Beeston was again the end of the canal for a considerable period at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, since the lock just to the east had collapsed and defied all attempts to repair it. Hence, a wharf and associated buildings were built here to deal with the limited amount of traffic still using the canal during that period. A short railway was also built to transport goods between the two sections of canal around the inoperative lock.
- A deep cutting takes the canal under Chester City Walls, to Cow Lane Bridge. The original plan envisaged that this section would have to be a tunnel but, when the work started here in the 1770s, the remains of an old ditch, probably the Roman fossa external to the walls, were found. This made the excavation work easier and a cutting was made instead, although it was still necessary to remove large sections of the bedrock.

### E.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	All of Area E is within the existing Chester City Conservation Area
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Gorse Stacks Development Brief Chester Waterways Strategy Bridge 123K to Bridge 123E
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	Northgate Locks and bridges, 1375934 Northgate Lock Cottage, 1375735 Holly House, 5 Canal Street, 1375734 Hospital of St John Almshouses, 1375965 Bluecoat Hospital, 1375966 The Northgate, Grade I, 1376370 Northgate House, 1 Upper Northgate Street, 1375958 2 and 4 Upper Northgate Street, 1375959 Northgate Bridge123G, 1375968 Bridge of Sighs, 1375967

	City Walls, Grade I, 1376135 4,6,8,10,12,14,16,&18 George Street, 1375821
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	None
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	Former Temperance Hall, George Street 22 George Street, The Manse Penri Chapel, George Street
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	City Walls, 1006785 (adjacent)
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	Northgate Cutting and Walls
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI) Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV) Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV) Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	None None Whole length of canal 13 individuals between locks and railway
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Adopted highway National Cycle Route 45

### **E.3 Character of the Conservation Area**

- From the basin the canal rises 33 feet at the Northgate Locks. This staircase of three locks has a dramatic setting under the City Walls, linked to the city centre by trees and a small open space between the Walls and Locks.
- A deep cutting then takes the canal from the locks, under the City Walls, to Cow Lane Bridge (123E). This follows the line of an old ditch just outside the City Walls. Large sections of the bedrock had to be removed resulting in a cutting which is dramatic from all viewpoints but especially from the canal and towpath. The rock is typical of the Triassic sandstone of the area being largely Chester Pebble Beds which is noted for the cross bedding of sandstone showing dune structures.
- The canal cutting is dominated on the south side by the City Walls. These are listed Grade I and are a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Of particular interest along this length are the Water Tower, Bonewaldesthorpe's Tower, Morgan's Mount, Pemberton's Parlour, views of sections of the original Roman walls complete with their original cornice, and the Phoenix or King Charles Tower. The views to and from the Walls are very important to the setting of the canal in this area.
- Two important bridges cross the canal. The Northgate Bridge is high and reinforces the deepness of the cutting. There are interesting views of the canal from both sides of the bridge. The Bridge of Sighs, which runs parallel to Northgate Street from the Bluecoat School, is now unused; but used to take condemned prisoners from the Northgate Gaol to the chapel in the Bluecoat building across the canal.
- This length of the canal has many features associated with the operation of the canal, for example rings and rope marks.
- There are also lines of holes in the rock face, 'pudlocks', which were to take the wooden joists, and 'put-ups', used to support a platform for men quarrying the stone or perhaps for the roof of small lean-to structures.
- This section of the canal forms part of the Chester City Conservation Area. Modern development along this stretch has been largely sympathetic but there are some exceptions.
- The towpath along this section is shared by pedestrians and cyclists being part of National Cycle Route 45 and is lit at night. Parts are narrow where the space is constrained by the rocks of the cutting, some of which are unstable.

### **E.4 Major Features**

- The major features of this section are the Northgate Locks, the Northgate Cutting and the City Walls and its Towers.

## **E.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

### **E.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- This section is very rich in interesting canal related buildings and features. The Northgate Locks with their associated buildings and green setting are a significant attraction in the historic city centre, although overshadowed by the oversailing Ring Road, St Martin's Way. The original "barrel organ" paddle gear on one of the locks has been retained.
- The Bridge of Sighs and Northgate Bridge both cross the canal at a high level and are important features in the cutting.
- Other interesting features include several rings, possibly used for tethering horses, horse steps as well as rope marks left by horse-drawn boats on the rocks in the cutting. Close to Cow Lane Bridge (123E) there is a brick built structure alongside the towpath which used to form a bridge over a canal arm (now filled in).

### **E.5.2 Other significant buildings**

- This length of canal is dominated by the City Walls which top the southern face of the cutting.
- The south wing of the Bluecoat School is adjacent to the canal and contained the chapel which was connected to Northgate Gaol by the Bridge of Sighs.
- The contemporary extension to 2 Upper Northgate Street, to convert the building for use as a Dental Practice, is modern but its scale, form and use of materials is a positive addition to the listed building. It provides impressive views of the canal from its waiting room.
- The terrace of small houses, 4-18 George Street, which are set at a high level in the cutting form an interesting boundary to the canal and close the view looking from the Northgate Bridge.
- The Temperance Hall in George Street is a Victorian building which was originally a Primitive Methodist Chapel. It is an impressive building viewed from George Street but, unfortunately, new additions to the rear spoil the view of it from the canal towpath. It is considered to be of Townscape Merit in the Chester Characterisation Study.
- The Manse, 22 George Street is considered to be of Townscape Merit.
- The Penri Chapel, George Street is considered to be of Townscape Merit.

### E.5.3 Views

- In Area E, from Northgate Locks to Cow Lane Bridge, the canal mostly follows the line of the city walls in a deep cutting with sheer sandstone sides. This gives rise to some of the finest waterway views in Chester encompassing the canal, the city walls and the crossing points at the Ring Road, Northgate Bridge and Cow Lane Bridge (123E). The character of this stretch of canal is of national importance.
- The city walls and Pemberton's Parlour tower stand above but somewhat set back from the canal amongst mature trees and grass when viewed from the towpath alongside the Northgate Locks. This stretch forms a gentle visual scene contrasting with the more severe environment of the sandstone cutting to the east.
- The view from the Ring Road bridge and the top of Northgate Locks is partly framed by trees to the north and south of the canal but that down the flight of locks, over the railway line and the western peripheries of Chester, is bounded by the Clwydian hills on the skyline.
- From the Ring Road bridge the view eastwards along the canal is of an increasingly constricted waterway overlooked by trees and modern buildings but then by the deep cutting walls together with Northgate Bridge, the Bluecoat School and the Bridge of Sighs.
- The vista to east from the towpath of the unique urban canal environment of the Northgate Cutting is defined by its vertical sandstone sides framed by the Bridge of Sighs and the Northgate Bridge.
- The view from Northgate Bridge westwards to the Bridge of Sighs and the canal in its deep cleft form a defining element in the environment of the northern part of the City Centre Conservation Area.
- The view of the canal eastwards from Northgate Bridge is bounded to the south by the fine surviving stretch of Roman masonry and wall parapet which surmount a stretch of sheer native sandstone. The view is closed in the distance by the bend of the canal towards Cow Lane Bridge. Trees on the north bank largely conceal the less distinguished modern development on George Street.
- Looking westwards from the towpath the Northgate Cutting is framed by Northgate Bridge with No 1 Northgate visible above the bridge parapet. The view extends to the bridge carrying the ring Road and the top of the Northgate Locks.
- There is an important view of the canal from the northern stretch of the City Wall as it emerges from the Northgate Cutting and includes the listed terrace of houses on George St.
- From the walls in the vicinity of King Charles Tower the view across the King Charles Garden and the bend of the canal towards Cow Lane Bridge is framed

by the modern but sympathetic housing development on the northern bank of the waterway.

- From west of Cow Lane Bridge the city walls, King Charles tower and the King Charles Garden frame the bend in the canal, although the bulk of the modern 'Fountains' development on Delamere St now diminishes the previous sharp silhouette of the King Charles Tower, an important element in character of this area. Further west along the towpath towards King Charles Tower the new development is no longer visible and the view is closed by the terrace of listed houses and the former Temperance Hall on George Street.
- From the vicinity of the King Charles Garden there are important views of the Cathedral rising above the city wall.

#### **E.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- The most successful open spaces are between the City Walls and Northgate Locks, and King Charles Tower Garden. Both form part of the essential setting for the locks and Walls. There are 'natural sculptures' in the grassed area of the former and several walkways in the latter.
- Trees, presumably self sown, populate most of the flatter areas in the cutting.

#### **E.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- Examples of more recent developments alongside the canal which are acceptable, if unremarkable, are the group of houses to the rear of Canal Street which overlook the canal and the sheltered housing at 'Waterside View' which has attractive gardens on the canal side.
- The 'green amphitheatre' open space above the locks is under used.

#### **E.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- The brick buildings on both sides of the canal by Cow Lane Bridge (123E) are unremarkable. Penri Chapel is not used and neglected. The modern extensions to the rear of the Temperance Hall detract from the building and its setting.
- The open space between the canal and George Street is neglected and not accessible to the public. The proposal for a pocket park is one of the aspirations for the Waterways Strategy.
- Recent developments to the north of the canal and east of Northgate Bridge (for example the new health centre), whilst built of high quality materials and good detailing, are overbearing in scale, height and mass and it is questionable as to whether they preserve the setting of the canal or the view across the canal from the City Walls, particularly as services on roof level are highly visible and on the same horizontal roof line as King Charles Tower.

## **E.8 Recommendations**

- Any new development should take into account the setting of the Northgate Cutting, and views which exist from the walls, out of the cutting or along the canal towpath. Particularly high standards of design should be demanded in this area.
- The canal-related features which exist along this length, such as rings, original bollards, horse steps, original paddle gear on the locks, arch over filled-in canal arm, should be retained and interpreted where possible.
- The City Walls and cutting would benefit from sympathetic lighting.
- The open space between the cutting and George Street should be developed as a small public pocket park.
- The Temperance Hall, the Penri Chapel and number 22, all George Street, could be considered for local listing.

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## F. INDUSTRIAL CHESTER - COW LANE BRIDGE (123E) TO A55 BRIDGE (122A)

### F.1 Historical Development

- See E.1 above.

### F.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	Chester City Boughton Canalside Chester Railway Lands Christleton
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Boughton Canal Corridor Development Brief Chester Waterways Strategy Bridge 123E to Bridge 122A
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	Hoole Lane Lock, 1375740 Chemistry Lock and sluice, 1375738 Chemistry Lock Cottage, 1375739 Tarvin Road Lock, 1229365 Tarvin Road Lock Cottage, 1279055 Tarvin Road Lock Lengthsman's Hut, 1279062 Greenfield Lock, 1229360 There are several outside the conservation area on the edge of the canal, within Chester City Conservation Area and Boughton Canalside.
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	None
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	None
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	None
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI) Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV)  Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV) Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	None Waterworks Boughton Hall and Cricket Ground adjacent, but not within the conservation area Whole length of canal One near bridge 123B Two in The Holkham
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Adopted highway National Cycle Route 45

### **F.3 Character of the Conservation Area**

- The canal and much of the area adjacent to it in this area lies within existing Conservation Areas (Chester City Centre and Boughton Canalside). The area around the canal between Cow Lane Bridge (123E) and Chemistry Lock was the focus of significant industrial activity, served by the canal, in the nineteenth century. There were timber yards, brick and tile yards, chemical works and flour mills. A lead works together with shot tower was in use until 1986. This is outside of, but immediately adjacent to the canal conservation area, and within Chester City Conservation Area. Much of the historic fabric and street pattern of this area remains relatively intact. A number of former mills and warehouses have been redeveloped, or are being redeveloped, for a variety of uses. Beyond Hoole Lane, outside the canal conservation area but within Boughton canalside conservation area, the canal is dominated by Boughton Waterworks and its water tower. There are two interpretation boards providing information about these industries and the canal, one by Cow Lane Bridge and the other at the Waitrose store.
- Most of this area is also covered by the Boughton Canal Corridor Development Brief (July 2001). The area is part of the Commercial Business Quarter policy and there are approved development plans for the Shot Tower site. A Waitrose store is on the south bank of the canal and the two sites are linked by a metal footbridge across the canal.
- For part of this length the canal towpath runs alongside a road, Canalside. Posts prevent vehicles from straying on to the towpath; a variety of materials has been used including timber, and ex-LNWR rails. The road surface varies but some of the recent stretches have successfully mimicked the original surface and are part of the distinctive Chester palette of public realm materials.
- From Chemistry Lock to Christleton Lock the character of the canal changes. It runs through the residential areas of Boughton, Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross. At times it is sufficiently well screened from these to appear almost rural, particularly on the length between Tarvin Road Lock and Greenfield Lock, creating a green corridor stretching out of Chester. At the A41 (Bridge 122B) the canal enters green belt and there is a partial break in development until Christleton is reached, although housing has been built on the south bank adjacent to Christleton Lock. Here the canal runs through the Christleton Conservation Area.
- This towpath is part of the National Cycle route 45 and so is shared by pedestrians and cyclists and is asphalted. This length is particularly well used by both, and is lit from Cow Lane Bridge (123E) to the bridge carrying the A55 over the canal (122A).

### **F.4 Major Features**

- The most important features on this section are the five wide locks which are interspersed to lift the canal from the city centre to the long pound from Christleton to Wharton's Lock. All except Christleton have lock cottages. Tarvin Road Lock has a lengthsman's hut too, one of only three remaining and unique to this canal.
- There are several historic listed buildings just outside the canal conservation area which give the part of the canal below Hoole Lane Lock its industrial character; of these the Lead Shot Tower is the most significant. There is a straight length of canal with good views, especially from Cow Lane Bridge (123E).

## **F.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

### **F.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- Most of the historic buildings which line the canal between Cow Lane Bridge and Chemistry Lock relate in one way or another to the canal.
- The gate paddle on Hoole Lane Lock is probably original to the gate.
- There are a number of interesting buildings worthy of note locally, for example the small corn mill below Tarvin Road Lock, and Tarvin Road Lock Cottage itself.
- There are many features relating to the canal such as the Lengthsman's Hut at Tarvin Road Lock, the crane base at the pub by Cow Lane Bridge (123E), and original brick surfaces under bridges.

### **F.5.2 Views**

- In Area F the stretch of canal from Cow Lane Bridge (123E) to Hoole Lane Bridge (123A) is bordered by several of the original industrial buildings associated with the canal. Most have been converted to modern uses but have retained their character and help preserve the 'industrial feel' of this part of the canal. Beyond Chemistry Lock the canal rises through a largely suburban landscape and forms a boundary between Boughton/Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross.
- The view eastwards along the canal from Cow Lane Bridge shows the historic building of the Mill Hotel to the left with its modern extension across the canal to the right with the Steam Mill as the dominant building on the skyline beyond.
- From Seller Street Bridge (123C) and the towpath eastwards weeping willow trees on the north bank are a key element in the foreground view of the waterway whilst the Water Tower which is straight ahead dominates the more distant skyline. The view is completed by the Steam Mill and other old and relatively sympathetic modern buildings that retain the historic industrial character of the south bank of the waterway.

- The view to the west from the vicinity of the 'Waitrose' footbridge is dominated by the Steam Mill to the left and a modern apartment development on the right which is generally sympathetic in scale, form and materials to the original buildings. The straight stretch of canal is framed by Seller Street bridge and the willow and other mature trees on the north bank are a significant softening element in this otherwise strongly urban waterway scene.
- The grade 2\* listed Shot Tower, part of the original leadworks, is not easily seen from the west along this length of canal despite its height, but it does finally dominate the scene from the towpath immediately opposite and from the Waitrose footbridge. It is an important element in the townscape when viewed from the eastern stretch of towpath above and below Hoole Lane Lock. These are important views which should be preserved in any future development of the leadworks site. The view to the west from Hoole Lane Bridge (123A) is bounded on the left (south) side by the modern but reasonably sympathetic 'Wharton Lock' apartments.
- From Chemistry Lock the view westwards is dominated in the foreground by the Water Tower whilst the Steam Mill and the Shot Tower stand out on the more distant skyline. These striking elements of the urban scene should be maintained in any future development of the northern bank of the canal in Boughton.
- Viewed eastwards, the straight stretch of canal between Greenfield Lock and Christleton Lock is framed on the skyline by mature trees and the A55 bridge (122A) and Christleton Bridge (122), whilst a more rural feel is engendered along the towpath between the two locks by a view across undeveloped fields to the north. The open ground of the original diversionary canal line on the south side is a point of interest but the view has been somewhat compromised by the housing development to the east adjacent to the canal before bridge 122A.

### **F.5.3 Other significant buildings**

- The most important buildings along this length of canal, abutting the canal conservation area, are the historic 'industrial' buildings. Of these the lead shot tower is the most significant and is a landmark in near and far skyline views.
- The various mill buildings alongside the canal conservation area are all very important and create a strong urban industrial character for the area. The converted chapel (St Paul's Mission Church), outside the conservation area is also of merit, above Hoole Lane Lock and the Water Tower. The Mill Hotel, Old Harkers Arms and St Paul's Mission Church are all considered to be of Townscape Merit, and add to the canal's setting, outside the conservation area boundary.
- The Waitrose development is a strong and eye catching building of copper coloured anodised aluminium and glass, the scale and massing of which has been masterfully handled to create a very strong sense of place. Outside the canal conservation area but within the Chester City Conservation Area, the associated public realm works and steps/seating have significantly enhanced the canalside setting. The bridge link to the Shot Tower and the design of the

building and pathway from Boughton has allowed for a dominant stop view of the Shot Tower. This is a key view to encourage pedestrians to the canal. It creates part of a principal and permeable route to the railway station and Carriage Shed. The public realm works along this stretch of the canal add enormously to the distinctiveness of Chester.

#### **F.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- Boughton Hall Cricket Club, adjacent to the canal conservation area, has the most extensive open space along this section of the canal but there is no access to the towpath. Permeable links may be of benefit.
- The section between Tarvin Road Lock and Greenfield Lock is particularly attractive - mature trees and shrubs almost hide the new housing developments to the north of the canal whereas, on the towpath side the gardens of the rather older houses have mature trees and hedges to the canal. There is access to the towpath from most of these houses which are generally well kept.
- There are usually many mallards on this stretch. Sometimes swans nest along here too.

#### **F.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- The variety of suburban housing ranging from traditional red brick terraces to modern detached dwellings are outside the conservation area boundary, and typical of this sort of area and are in keeping with the canal setting.
- The Waitrose development adjacent to the towpath has significantly improved the character of this area, and the public realm works have substantially improved the canal's setting and sense of place. There is an Interpretation Board on the wall by the towpath.

#### **F.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- There are a number of negative elements. These include: the large car park adjacent to the canal below Hoole Lane Lock and the rear and side of the Bingo Hall (originally the Gaumont Palace cinema) by Cow Lane Bridge (123E), the non-native conifers planted on the off side of the canal at the Aldi store. All these are adjacent to the canal conservation area but impact significantly upon its setting.
- Pedestrian access along the north side of the canal from Cow Lane Bridge is limited and the public realm could be greatly improved.
- Concrete walls adjacent to the towpath and some very basic fencing in the Churton Street area of Boughton downgrade the public realm. The edge of the towpath would benefit from repair in sections.

- Changes in materials and original features, and disrepair to some traditional local lock cottages have altered the character of the buildings to some degree. Reinstatement of traditional materials and features would be supported.
- The Aldi store, west of Tarvin Road Bridge (123) adjacent to the canal conservation area, is an unremarkable and typical of out of town retail unit in terms of scale, mass and materials. There is an opportunity to better relate such structures, landscaping, boundary treatment and permeability to this area of the canal.
- The towpath between Tarvin Road Lock and Greenfield Lock was asphalted a number of years ago and the surface is in poor condition.
- The raised brick surface under the A41 Bridge (122B) has been partially covered with asphalt.
- Between Greenfield Lock and Christleton Lock there is a short, isolated, abandoned section of canal. This was built to divert the canal while the railway tunnel was being built. Vegetation and rubbish, as well as garden encroachment are visually and perhaps structurally having an impact on the structure.

## **F.8 Recommendations**

- Between Cow Lane Bridge (123E) and Hoole Lane Lock every effort should be made to preserve the industrial feel of the area. Higher density buildings using the local palette of building materials could directly front the canal. This would create a strong building form that would enhance the canal's urban setting. This area is suited to a variety of uses – residential, retail, offices, community facilities, pubs and restaurants. There is an excellent opportunity to create active frontages to the canal, which will enliven the character. Access to all public buildings should be easy from the canal side, mooring rings should be provided where appropriate and high quality public realm materials and key access points across the canal should be encouraged.
- A priority should be to improve the area with high quality public realm works using the distinctive Chester palette around the Cow Lane Bridge (123E) winding hole. This is a prime site and an important entrance to the City, not only for boaters but for people walking to the centre from the station and the bus exchange at the former Gorse Stacks car parks. There is a need for information on Chester and its facilities to be available at the popular mooring site near Cow Lane Bridge (123E).
- The narrow streets which lead to the canal, for example Russell Street and Steam Mill Street, help to give the area its character. The sense of enclosure and existing street pattern should be preserved and appropriate street surfaces considered when resources are available.
- The existing posts between the towpath and Canalside should be retained and replaced once beyond repair with similar appropriate structures when necessary.

- Hoole Lane Lock Cottage, if restored to its original condition, could be a candidate for local listing.
- The canal side at the Aldi store could include an enhanced waterfront with the opportunity for moorings.
- The towpath surface could be improved between Tarvin Road and Greenfield Locks.
- The short, isolated section of canal, above Greenfield Lock, should be protected from further damage and perhaps developed as a nature reserve.
- The Mill Hotel, Old Harkers Arms and St Paul's Mission Church adjacent to the canal conservation area but within existing conservation areas, could all be considered for local listing.

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## G. SUBURBAN CHESTER, SOUTH EAST - A55 BRIDGE (122A) TO WAVERTON (119 EGG BRIDGE)

### G.1 Historical Development

- See E.1 above.

### G.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	Christleton Conservation Area from A55 Bridge (122A), to Rowton Bridge (120)
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Chester Waterways Strategy Bridge 122a to Bridge 121
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	Christleton Bridge 122, 1130668 Quarry Bridge 121, 1187373 Rowton Bridge 120, 1298829  Field Hospital, 1130640 Victoria Mill, Waverton, 1330259 Davies Bridge 118, 1130608
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	None
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	None
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	None
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI) Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV) Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV)  Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	None None Whole length of canal and the field opposite The Old Trooper adjacent to conservation area Group TPOs between bridges 122 and 121 Several individual TPOs opposite The Old Trooper, SE of Bridge 121, SE of Bridge 120 and both sides of Bridge 119
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Adopted highway National Cycle Routes 45 and 56, and Regional Cycle Routes 70 and 71 to Egg Bridge, 119 Public Right of Way south of Egg Bridge, 119

### G.3 Character of the Conservation Area

- From the A55 Bridge (122A) to Rowton Bridge (120) the canal is included in the existing Christleton Conservation Area. All but one of the bridges on this stretch is contemporary with the canal and is the graceful arched type typical of the Chester Canal. Christleton Bridge (122) and Quarry Bridge (121) have stone wall approaches alongside the road which are unusual.
- The small wooded area near Christleton Lock is possibly the remains of a Deer Park associated with Christleton Hall. This is an attractive small area of woodland with some fine beech trees.
- This stretch of the canal shows the transition from suburban Chester to rural Cheshire. As the towpath from Bridge 122A (A55) to Egg Bridge (119) is a multiuse path it is covered in asphalt, and then it reverts to a grassy towpath to Davies Bridge (118). Also, the surface under Bridge 121 has been replaced with cobbles/setts, whereas under 122, 120 and 118 it is concrete (degraded under 118). Egg Bridge (119) however, has retained the raised bricks, but asphalt covers the half nearest the bridge. Many cyclists and walkers, as well as fishermen, use this section.
- The two canal side pubs, adjacent to but outside the canal conservation area, as a result of their location, encourage people to go onto the towpath to see the canal. Most of the development of Christleton and Waverton is on the offside, with many well kept gardens which abut the canal. This, combined with the fields in between areas of housing, gives a very open feel to the canal.
- Christleton Mill, previously Butler's Mill, outside the canal conservation area, has been sympathetically converted into flats and the surrounding former mill cottages are also well kept and attractive. South of Quarry Bridge (121) the adjacent house and garden make a feature of the wider canal here, a winding hole for turning boats. One of the houses with a canal side garden has a shed within the garden that looks like a boathouse and adds to the character and setting of the canal, even if not within it.
- The modern development of houses close to Egg Bridge have gardens on the edge of the canal conservation area. Some gardens are developing into wharves with small boats moored. The former Victoria Corn Mill at Waverton has been sympathetically converted into flats, with an extension which has been built in a similar style. The mill itself, now known as Waverton Mill, is a Grade II listed structure with an associated wharf which is now part of the garden of one of the flats. It is outside the canal conservation area, but forms part of its setting.
- There have been three boatyards in this area in the past. Dean's Boat Yard was west of Rowton Bridge (120), with a slipway. On the east side of this bridge was Wain's Boat Yard, and north of Egg Bridge (119), was another boat yard with a slipway on a former coal wharf which is now a private dwelling. These were some of the earliest hire boat fleets on the canal system.

- Between Christleton and Waverton, there is a small caravan park on the towpath side behind a neat fence and has trees bordering it. There is an access gate through the fence. Approaching Waverton from the north west, the open aspect of the canal is retained by the fields on the offside and the grassy area between the towpath houses and the canal. This area is well maintained with gates through many of the fences to the houses.
- There is a change in character around Egg Bridge (119). The original bridge was replaced with a flat decked structure with a concrete parapet in 1937. There is a car park here which is well used by walkers, fishermen and families with children. This is the end of the asphalt surface to the towpath, so the whole feeling is rather more rural towards Davies Bridge (118). The houses on the offside, adjacent to but outside the canal conservation area, have well maintained gardens running down to the canal, many of which are developing paved wharf like areas adjacent to the canal. These are replaced by fields just before reaching Davies Bridge.
- Away from the houses, the towpath hedge has a number of gaps which, together with some of the overhanging willows, gives a neglected feel to parts of this stretch of canal.

## **G.4 Major Features**

- There are no major features on this section of canal.

## **G.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

### **G.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- Most of the bridges are contemporary with the canal and Grade II listed, except Egg Bridge (119) which was rebuilt in 1937. The original bridges were once painted white, but have been repaired with a mixture of blue and red brick. There are rope marks on the brickwork of the bridges – a legacy from when the boats were pulled by horses.
- Christleton Bridge (122) and Quarry Bridge (121) have substantial walled approaches adjacent to the road on the offside of the canal.
- Christleton and Waverton Mills, adjacent to the canal conservation area, were both previously corn mills and still show features associated with this activity. The conversion and extension at Waverton Mill is generally sympathetic to the building's previous form, function and character.
- The character of the towpath changes to a more open aspect after Egg Bridge (119), when it becomes a Public Right of Way.

### **G.5.2 Views**

- In Area G the canal is rarely far from housing development. It skirts around Christleton and then there is a short length where it crosses flat and generally open agricultural land before reaching housing in Rowton and Waverton.
- From the east the view of the winding hole, Bridge 121 and Christleton Mill form a classic canal scene.

### **G.5.3 Other significant buildings**

- The Cheshire Cat public house is a converted early 19<sup>th</sup> century manor house of Georgian character and the outbuildings have been converted into accommodation. The built form, which contributes to the canal setting, although outside the canal conservation area, adds visual interest and character to this stretch of the canal.

### **G.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- This part of the Cheshire Plain is flat, so there are no locks on this section. There is a small embankment to the north of Waverton, but otherwise the gardens and fields are at canal level. There are few tall buildings, and most of the housing is set back from the canal, so there is generally an open feel to most of the canal and towpath.
- Some sections of the canal bank have quite extensive reed beds, others have overhanging willows. Parts of the canal have been dredged and soft piling has been installed to protect the banks from erosion and stock poaching. In time this will provide extra habitat for wildlife. The reed beds support beetles and other invertebrates.
- Mallards and moorhens often nest along this stretch. There are also mute swans and kingfishers are sometimes spotted.
- There is a selection of coarse fish in the canal.

### **G.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- The two canal side pubs, abutting the canal conservation area, are fairly typical with gardens, and other outdoor seating areas, allowing customers good views of the canal and access to the towpath, which creates an active and vibrant feel.
- There is a development of houses in the grounds of the Cheshire Cat pub which are almost invisible from the canal.
- The access to the towpath at Christleton Bridge (122) is stepped and sloped with wooden post and rail fencing.

## **G.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- At Dean's Boat Yard, adjacent to the canal conservation area, there is a complex of offices and associated buildings which do not reflect the historic nature of the area. Plans have been passed to redevelop the boatyard, remove the slipway and build houses.
- In places the towpath hedge is intermittent which gives a neglected feel to parts of this stretch of canal.
- As most of the towpath forms part of several Cycle Routes, it is covered in asphalt, so most of the horse bricks have been lost from under the bridges.

## **G.8 Recommendations**

- The Cheshire Cat pub could be considered for local listing.
- Interpretation boards could be installed for the former boat yards and corn mills.

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## H. RURAL CW&C - WAVERTON (119 EGG BRIDGE) TO SPILLWEIR ABOVE TILSTONE LOCK BRIDGE (106)

### H.1 Historical Development

- See E.1 above.

### H.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	Tilstone Bank Conservation Area, from fishing pond to new spillweir
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Not known
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	Salmons Bridge 117, 1330258 Faulkners Bridge 116, 1330238 Nixons Bridge 114, 1130645 Duttons Bridge 112, 1230413 Williamsons Bridge 111, 1130647 Dales Bridge 110, 1130524 Bate's Mill Bridge 109, 1160267 Wharton's Bridge 108, 1160264 Wharton Lock, 1330296 Beeston Iron Lock, Grade II* listed, 1240680 Beeston Stone Lock, 1160260 Beeston Lengthsman's Hut, 1130523 Tilstone Fearnall Mill Bridge 106, 1130518 Tilstone Fearnall Lock, 1160222 Tilstone Fearnall Mill, 1130519 Tilstone Lengthsman's Hut, 1330293
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	None
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	None
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	Beeston Iron Lock, 1006759
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	None
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI)	Brookhole/Gowy, SJ516603 (?509603), Grade A Nixon's Bridge Meadow and Canal, SJ489608, Grade A Tilstone Bank and Gowy Flushes, SJ 565595, Grade A Simpson's Rough and Foxey Wood, SJ546602, Grade B SUC (Main Line) SJ524603, Grade C

Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV) Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV) Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	Yes Whole length of canal One by the Shady Oak public house
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Public Right of Way

### H.3 Character of the Conservation Area

- The canal is now out of suburbia and into the Cheshire Plain. Whilst the conservation area is focused almost exclusively on the canal corridor the setting, outside of the conservation area, is impressive. Most of the surrounding fields are flat giving good views of Waverton Church initially, and then the Peckforton Hills, Peckforton Castle and the spectacular Beeston Castle. There are also views to the east of Kelsall Hill, Delamere Forest and the hills of Frodsham and Helsby. The canal rises 32 feet and 10 inches through the four locks as it approaches the foothills of the Peckforton Hills. The towpath is a Public Right of Way and the canal is crossed by the Sandstone Trail at Wharton's Lock and the Eddisbury Way at Brockholes.
- This open feel to the canal is cluttered by a two mile long stretch of moored boats on the offside either side of Golden Nook Bridge (115) as well as boats out on the bank at Golden Nook Farm. Near the farm, on the towpath side, there is an old brick hut (presumably once a lengthsman's hut) and a concrete structure in the field on the opposite side of the bridge, which is apparently a World War II strongpoint. There is another one in the field on the other side of Long Lane.
- Most of the bridges are the typical graceful brick built bridges of this part of the canal. They were all painted white in the past and have now been repaired to varying degrees in blue and red brick.
- There is a shallow cutting around Nixons Bridge (114) and then the site of brickworks which is now builders' merchants. After Crow's Nest Bridge (113) the site of a bone works is now largely occupied by an agricultural equipment company. Opposite here is the Tattenhall Marina, which is included within the conservation area.
- Between Duttons Bridge (112) and Williamsons Bridge (111) an aqueduct carries the canal over the River Gowy and a footpath, the Eddisbury Way. This area is locally known as Brockholes. The spillweir takes excess water down to the river.
- Beeston Castle is visible for much of this stretch of canal and at Wharton's Lock a footpath (part of the Sandstone Trail) takes walkers to it.
- Approaching the Beeston Locks near Tiverton, there is a wooded hill on the offside, the small valley of the River Gowy, the railway line and the wartime PLUTO (Pipe Line under the Ocean) Tanks on the towpath side.



- Near Beeston Brook Bridge (107), which was at one time the terminus of the canal, there is a wharf which is now a boatyard and opposite, on the towpath side, there are horse steps largely overgrown with reeds.
- Woodland continues on both sides of the canal towards Tilstone Lock, which is within the Tilstone Bank Conservation Area. The settlement of Tilstone was an important crossing point of the River Gowy and Chester Canal. The lower part of the village owes its development to the mill and canal activities.

## **H.4 Major Features**

- The major features on this section are the four locks and the views of Beeston Castle. The original route of the canal, with its staircase locks can be seen from above Beeston Stone Lock Cottage.

## **H.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

### **H.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- All but two of the bridges are contemporary with the canal and are the arched brick structures typical of this canal, which were once painted white. They have grooves caused by the ropes from horse boating days with cast iron rope guards on the corners. Some of them have the raised bricks on the towpath as well. The accommodation bridges were all named after the local landowners at the time the canal was built.
- The other two bridges are Crow's Nest Bridge and Beeston Brook Bridge which have been replaced with more modern structures, but still fit well into the canal scene.
- The lengthsman's huts at Tilstone and Stone Locks, together with another at Tarvin Road Lock, are unique to the Chester Canal. The one at Tilstone Lock has been restored by volunteers working with CRT Heritage staff.
- The four locks on this section have a variety of bollards – some original wooden ones, some modern wooden replacements and some large old cast iron ones. Also at Tilstone Lock and Wharton's Lock there are large bollards (strapping posts) adjacent to the bridge by the towpath. At Wharton's Lock this is wooden, and at Tilstone it is cast iron. Tilstone Lock still has the metal guard rails to protect the side of the lock from rope wear. There are attractive sweeping by-washes at all of the locks on this section.
- Beeston Iron Lock is Grade II\* listed and a Scheduled Monument, and is somewhat eye catching in terms of its character and appearance.
- The hut at Wharton's Lock is all that remains of the former lock keeper's cottage, and shows some evidence of the bomb blast which destroyed it.

- Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Beeston Brook was the terminus of the Chester Canal. The terminal wharf is now a boatyard, and boats used to transport both goods and passengers from here to Chester and back.
- The Shady Oak has a few moorings on the offside and there are lots of visitor moorings on the towpath side. It has had extensions in the past that have little architectural quality.
- The towpath is as yet unimproved, and it is still used by many walkers and some cyclists.

### **H.5.2 Views**

- In Area H the canal passes through two contrasting landscapes. Between bridge 118 and Wharton's Lock it follows the imperceptible watershed between the River Gowy and tributaries of the River Dee before crossing the former and beginning to follow its valley. In this section the surrounding land is flat and there are broad vistas. East of Wharton's Lock the canal is increasingly hemmed into the Gowy valley as it flows through the gap in the mid-Cheshire Hills. Area H has many important views, particularly of Beeston Castle and the mid-Cheshire ridge.
- Waverton Church tower with its low surmounting steeple dominates close views from the canal across open fields from the vicinity of bridge 118 to east of bridge 116.
- The Welsh hills west of Wrexham frame the distant skyline across the flat intervening agricultural landscape to the south-west of the canal between bridges 116 and 114.
- Kelsall village and the northern mid-Cheshire ridge frame the skyline across the flat intervening farming landscape to the north-east between bridges 116 and 112.
- The Peckforton and Bickerton Hills provide an undulating skyline framing the intervening flat but well-wooded farmland to the south-east of the canal between bridges 115 and 114. Beeston Hill and its Castle are first visible to the east of bridge 113 and also appear in the vista on the southern approach to the Gowy aqueduct.
- In the vicinity of bridge 111 the western flank of Beeston Hill and Castle dominate the view eastwards along the canal, particularly in juxtaposition with the classic traditional lines of bridge 111.
- West of bridge 108 the canal emerges from the confined Gowy valley and between bridges 109 and 110 the distant Welsh mountains frame the skyline to the west across the intervening flat agricultural landscape.
- Between bridges 109 and Wharton's Lock Beeston Hill and Castle lie within a kilometre of the canal and, viewed here from the north, the 'crag and tail' profile of the feature contrast sharply with the flat and generally open intervening fields.

- East of Wharton's Lock the canal is confined within the upper Gowy valley and the views are from a shortened perspective. The view along the canal in both directions is dominated by the mature woodland on the slope to the north of the canal but to the west of bridge 107 the view opens out to undulating meadows reminiscent of eighteenth century parkland.
- West of Beeston Stone Lock the view westwards along the canal encompasses a gentle and elegant reverse curve framed by a number of free-standing mature trees and the sharply higher ground of Tiverton Bank to the north of the canal.
- West of Tilstone Lock a symmetrical Victorian house with two large and one small intervening bay, each with black and white gables, and with heavily corbelled chimneys, dominates the close-by skyline above the canal.

### **H.5.3 Other significant buildings**

- Tilstone Mill and the views of other listed structures contribute to the historic significance and character of the canal.
- Bate's Mill is a building of merit and interest. It now uses the water wheel to generate electricity.
- Beeston Brook House used to be a public house around the time when the canal terminated at Beeston Wharf.

### **H.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- The canal rises up 32 feet and 10 inches through the four locks from the Cheshire Plain into the foothills of the Peckforton Hills. There is an old sand quarry in the field above Stone Lock which is now a rabbit warren. Tilstone Bank rises up to 60 metres above ground level below Tilstone Lock. The old mill pond is still visible on the opposite side of the road to Tilstone Mill. Below Iron Lock, the Pluto Tanks are an artificial hill with some imitation ruins and tree stumps.
- The River Gowy and the Eddisbury Way pass under the canal at Brockholes aqueduct.
- This section of the canal is almost completely rural. The views are expansive along a large stretch until the wooded sections are reached, but even here the canal feels very open with the valley of the River Gowy alongside.
- Much of this section of canal has hedgerows along both sides. There are wooded sections on the banks above Wharton's Lock, and also in the valley of the River Gowy. One tree near the Shady Oak public house has a Tree Preservation Order.
- As there is a natural towpath, it is very good for wildlife with the many hedges and Eaton Golf Course, between Bridges 118 and 117, which has wildlife areas and a barn owl nesting box. There are several others spaced along the River Gowy, which itself is good for wildlife and there may be otters in this area.

- The usual range of water birds is present on this stretch including mute swans, mallards and moorhens. Kingfishers are often seen along the section adjacent to the River Gowy. Swallows, house martins and swifts are present during the summer months.
- As well as the rabbits in the old sand quarry, there are badgers along this stretch of the canal. During summer evenings bats can be seen feeding around the trees.
- The reeds and other bank side vegetation support many invertebrates including damselflies, dragonflies and banded demoiselles. The rotting wood which has been left in the valley of the River Gowy will support large populations of invertebrates as well as many fungi.

## **H.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- Most of the access points to the towpath are acceptable.

## **H.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- Access at Davies Bridge (118) is to a Public Footpath and consists of a steep flight of wooden steps with wooden post and rail guard rails. It is between the bridge and the structure holding the stop planks. This access detracts from the canal setting.
- The whole of the Golden Nook stretch is degraded by lines of moored boats and associated inappropriate development on the bank.
- The Agricultural Merchants, and associated buildings, near Crow's Nest Bridge (113).
- The two spillweirs and associated fencing on this section, at Brockholes and above Tilstone Lock, are visually poor and detract from the canal setting.
- Where the Sandstone Trail crosses the canal at Wharton's Lock there are two functional kissing gates that are utilitarian in character and appearance.
- PV (solar) panels to some buildings that face the canal are visually intrusive.
- The condition of some associated cottages along the canal is causing concern and there is an opportunity to support sensitive repair.

## **H.8 Recommendations**

- There is an opportunity for high quality development that reflects the canal's special character on brownfield sites using good urban design principles.

- The area of land south of Davies Bridge (118) could be developed as a small nature area.
- The number of boats moored on the offside of the canal should be substantially reduced. This should be done by building a marina in one of the canalside fields at Golden Nook Farm, and/or encouraging boaters to move to existing marinas.
- The fences on the spillweirs would benefit from being painted, perhaps in the traditional Shropshire Union colours of grey, black and white or to be agreed.
- There are many features along this section of canal which would benefit from interpretation boards. These include the previous industry near Crow's Nest, Brockholes aqueduct, the locks and lengthsman's huts, the PLUTO tanks and the old route of the canal near the Beeston Locks, as well as Beeston Castle and the WWII strongpoints.
- The access to the marina at Tattenhall would benefit from further mature tree planting which will enable the marina to blend more into the surroundings.
- There is an opportunity to specify and approve solar panels that relate better visually to the roof shape, form, character and appearance.

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# I. RURAL CHESHIRE EAST – SPILLWEIR ABOVE TILSTONE LOCK (BRIDGE 106) TO BASIN END, NANTWICH

## I.1 Historical Development

- See E.1 above.

## I.2 Designations

<b>Conservation Areas</b>	None
<b>Relevant Strategies</b>	Not known
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	Bunbury Lock Bridge 105, 1275369 Bunbury Locks, 1115812 Cottage at Bunbury Locks, 1115813 Bunbury Stable Block, 1320252 Clays Farm Bridge Calveley Bridge 104, 1138652 Wardle Old Hall, Grade II* listed, 1312857 Barbridge Junction Bridge 1 (Middlewich Cut), 1312853 Canal House, Barbridge Junction, 1320254 Bremilow's Bridge 100, 1330145 2, Basin End, Nantwich, 1330140
<b>Locally listed buildings</b>	None
<b>Buildings of Townscape Merit</b>	None
<b>Scheduled Monuments</b>	Bunbury Locks, Bridge and Stables, 1006766
<b>Registered Battlefields</b>	Battle of Nantwich, 1000022
<b>Registered Parks and Gardens</b>	None
<b>RIGgS</b>	None
<b>SSSI</b>	None
<b>Any other designations:</b> Site of Biological Interest (SBI)  Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV) Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV) Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	Bunbury Lock Meadow, SJ582588, Grade B Bunbury Brickworks, SJ582589, Grade B Hurleston Reservoir, SJ623554, Grade B Wardle Canal Banks, SJ607575, Grade C None None None known
<b>Towpath designations</b>	Public Right of Way

### **I.3 Character of the Conservation Area**

- The character of the canal changes through this section, from the more enclosed wooded hills below Bunbury Locks where the canal rises 15 feet 7 inches to its final level on the approach to Nantwich, to the open expanses of the Cheshire Plain above the locks. The A51 road is very close to the canal for much of the stretch.
- Former stables and a beer house exist along the canal, which although altered, still embody aspects of their original function and character. On the towpath side there are some cottages which pre-date the canal and are Grade II listed, and a large traditional farmhouse with many large outbuildings.
- Evidence of the historic nature of the canal and its surroundings can be seen in the derelict brick kilns above Bunbury Locks, and at Calveley with the evidence of the transshipment between canal, road and railway, which was still operating until the 1960s; and the old cheese warehouse, now a Canal and River Trust Service Station and Yard.
- More recent industry is visible further along the canal with the former landfill site and the distribution depot of Boughey's and North West Farmers, all on a former airfield.
- Around Barbridge Junction there are still many buildings associated with the canal age. There used to be a covered warehouse over the narrows here, and there are the remains of this on both sides of the canal along with a large house possibly for the Canal Inspector of the time. There is a roving bridge over the junction with the Middlewich Cut.
- In the village of Barbridge, the changes in level of the land adjacent to the canal contribute to the special sense of place. A few houses with gardens running down to the canal but only the top storeys of some houses are visible, some with gardens at canal level after the Old Barbridge Inn.
- The canal passes through flat farmland with hedges on both sides until it reaches the high banks of Hurleston Reservoir. This dominates the offside, until the magnificent view of the locks rising from Hurleston Junction taking boats on their way to Llangollen. A fine roving bridge carries a section of the towpath onto the Llangollen Canal.
- The canal passes through Henhull where there are permanent moorings on a wide section of the canal, and then there is more farmland with the farm buildings visible from the canal.
- The towpath is covered in crushed gravel from Henhull Bridge (95) to Acton Bridge (93). After Acton Bridge (93) the towpath is covered in asphalt all the way to Basin End (the terminus of the Chester Canal) and on towards Nantwich. This is part of a circular walk through Acton from Nantwich.



- Approaching Nantwich there are small sections of embankment, with the moorings and club house for Nantwich and Border Counties Yacht Club. There is a short narrows before Basin End which was the terminus of the Chester Canal. Opposite the basin entrance is the start of the Nantwich Aqueduct Sculpture Trail (a Millennium Project) with a large horse made out of wood and metal from old lock gates.

## **I.4 Major Features**

- The major features on this stretch of the canal are the staircase locks and other buildings at Bunbury and the junctions at Barbridge and Hurleston.

## **I.5 Positive Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

### **I.5.1 Canal related buildings, canal furniture and features**

- The complex of buildings around Bunbury Locks demonstrates the former uses of this area. The locks, bridge and stables are a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The warehouse, built after the other buildings, is now the offices, shop and cafe for the Anglo Welsh hire base, and it still shows signs of the hoist which would have lifted goods from boats into the warehouse. This building is a heritage asset. The stable block has been used for boat building services, so most of the stalls have been removed, but the stable doors and roof vents remain. The buildings beside the basin were originally associated with the canal. The horse bricks are retained down the slope by the locks and under the bridge.
- The remains of the brick kilns, above Bunbury Locks, are still evident.
- At Calveley the open space between the railway line and the old cheese warehouse was a transshipment area. By the slipway, there are the bases of the cranes which transhipped goods between the canal and the road or railway. There are rope marks on the roof supports of the warehouse. The modern extension forming the service block is reflective of the style of the old building.
- Very little remains of the large warehouse complex which was around Barbridge Junction, but the impressive canal house, Junction House, shows the typical style of Thomas Telford.
- At Basin End, Nantwich, the old warehouse is now an antique shop. Nantwich Canal Centre uses most of the remaining buildings as workshops or stores for their business needs, as well as a new wharf on the main line of the canal.
- Many of the bridges on this stretch are contemporary with the canal, but have been altered. Some are now flat spans and have been strengthened to cope with heavy traffic. There are good examples of roving bridges at Barbridge Junction, across the Middlewich Cut, and Hurleston Junction, across the Chester Canal. The brick turnover bridge at Calveley (104) is noticeable for its stop planks. The main Chester to Crewe railway line crosses the canal below Bunbury Locks on a large flat span deck, and the A51 bridges crosses the canal near Barbridge and

Henhull - these bridges are Art Deco concrete structures. Most of the bridges show rope marks from horse boating days.

- At Barbridge there is a finger post indicating which way to go for Chester, Middlewich or Atherley Junction, and there is also an old wooden strapping post used to loop the tow rope around when turning right coming out of the Middlewich Cut. The finger post at Hurleston points to Llangollen, Chester and Birmingham. All that remains of the Junction House at Hurleston are distinctive railings which would have enclosed the garden.
- The towpath is natural, although overgrown in places, from below Bunbury Locks to Henhull Bridge (95) then it is gravelled to Acton Bridge (93) where there is asphalt surfacing all the way to Nantwich. This section has many walkers coming out of Nantwich and making a circular route through Acton.

### **1.5.2 Views**

- In area I at Bunbury Locks the canal finally climbs out the narrow Gowy valley and into a flat Cheshire landscape. From Barbridge to Nantwich the land falls gradually to the east. In a few places there are extensive views from the canal in this direction over largely agricultural land. The land rises slightly to the west limiting the views in this direction.
- To the east of Tilstone Lock there are long views of the canal framed to north and south by mature woodland.
- At Hurleston there is a clear view of the flight of 4 locks rising from the junction of the Llangollen Canal with the Chester Canal.
- From the junction at Hurleston to Bridge 92, where gaps in the hedges permit, there are extensive views out to the east with Mow Cop in the distance.
- Around Acton there are views, up the hill on the offside towards the A51 road, of Acton Church and village, Hurleston Locks and Lock Cottage, and Car Transplants with cars stacked on shelves visible on the skyline.
- At one point near the narrows (site of Bridge 94) the tower of Nantwich Church is visible in the middle distance across open fields to the east of the canal.
- There are views of Acton Church tower between the narrows (site of bridge 94) to Bridge 92. The best view of the church and Acton village is from across the canal at the Nantwich and Border Counties Yacht Club near Bridge 92.

### **1.5.3 Other significant buildings**

- Near Barbridge Junction, Wardle Old Hall (Grade II\* listed) is not directly connected with the canal, but is adjacent to Goodwin Bridge (101).
- The house known as 2 Basin End, Nantwich.

#### **I.5.4 Landscape and wildlife**

- From the wooded hillsides below Bunbury Locks the Chester Canal rises through the locks to summit level and then is flat to Nantwich. The Llangollen Canal rises up from this canal adjacent to Hurleston Reservoir which forms a high steep bank on the offside. The flat nature of the landscape allows far reaching views and makes for a very open feel to much of the canal.
- The hedge next to the extended dredgings disposal site near Calveley has been traditionally laid and enhances the rural character of this part of the canal. Many of the overhanging trees have been cut back and this helps to increase the apparent width of the canal. There are no prominent individual trees on this stretch, although there are some significant groups of trees, particularly on the offside between Bridges 98 and 99.
- This section of canal passes through mainly farmland. Large stretches of the offside banks have soft piling where there has been erosion. This allows water edge plants to grow and so protects the bank. The waterside plants support many invertebrates, so the usual collection of water birds is present including mallard, mute swan and moorhen.
- Around Calveley there are many swallows that make their nests under the overhang at the old warehouse.
- There are coarse fish present in the canal and adjacent fishing ponds.

#### **I.6 Neutral Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- There is a fishing pond at Bunbury Locks that provides sites for wildlife.
- The buildings by the basin at Bunbury Locks have been rebuilt and renovated and fit into the canal scene.
- The cheese factory adjacent to the CRT Service Station at Calveley has created a gated access to the shop and cafe.
- The industrial developments on the old airfield site do not have a significant visual impact on the canal.

#### **I.7 Negative Elements within and close to the Conservation Area**

- Towpath edging, where eroded, may be potentially dangerous to boaters and towpath users.
- The A51 and Industrial Estate along this section are very visible due to a lack of soft landscaping.
- At Bunbury Locks a large poly-tunnel is visible from the canal. It provides a cover for boat repairs.

- There is damage to the concrete edging opposite the entrance to the Middlewich Cut at Barbridge Junction, and on the offside at the junction with Basin End, Nantwich. This may be caused by boats turning.
- The original sash windows have been removed from Junction House.
- At Stoke Hall Bridge (99), a footpath crosses the canal and there is a functional, rather than aesthetic aluminium kissing gate allowing access to the towpath. This is the same design as used at Wharton's Lock where the Sandstone Trail crosses the canal.
- At Basin End, there are areas of pointing that would benefit from a more sympathetic traditional technique and application in future.

## **1.8 Recommendations**

- The listed and scheduled locks, buildings and structures at Bunbury Locks should continue to be monitored to ensure that they do not fall into disrepair, and are sympathetically restored. This particularly applies to the stable roof.
- The warehouse building at Bunbury Locks is a heritage asset and could benefit from local listing..
- The setting of Bunbury Locks would benefit from the replacement of the polytunnel with a structure that is more contextually appropriate to the historic character of the site that would enhance the setting to the approaches to the lock at Bunbury.
- The old brick kilns would benefit from some restoration, and interpretation.
- The towpath near the A51 should be repaired. Vegetation management might be beneficial to prevent reeds from growing between the concrete edging and the towpath.
- The setting of the canal could be enhanced on this stretch by the A51 by an appropriate landscaping scheme.
- The windows of Junction House would benefit from authentic restoration.
- A solution needs to be found to prevent further damage to the concrete at Barbridge Junction.
- Basin End, Nantwich, should have interpretation boards showing that it is the end of the original Chester Canal, and explain why it is significant.
- Best practice conservation repair should continue to be encouraged to properties and structures in Basin End.

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## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WHOLE LENGTH OF THE CANAL

- This Conservation Character Appraisal clearly demonstrates that this section of the Shropshire Union Canal has a fascinating and unique history. In order to preserve this for future generations it is vital to protect and enhance this heritage, including the setting of the canal in both its urban and rural sections.
- The following recommendations have been formulated in order to achieve this aim.

### Principal recommendations:

<b>Recommendation</b>	
1	Development should preserve and enhance the canal and its wider setting in terms of architectural expression, views and its important communal value, based on a clear understanding of the significance of the canal and associated structures.
2	Design and conservation should be of the highest possible standard and sensitive to the historic and environmental character of the canal and its environs.
3	The CRT best practice guidance document “Heritage Works” should continue to be referred for all canal related features and furniture including bridge access, towpath access, locks, and historic bridges.
4	Encourage more boaters to visit the canal, with improved facilities.
5	Existing heritage canal features must be retained, protected and maintained.
6	The wildlife corridor of the canal should continue to be protected and enhanced.
7	An awareness of the canal, its history, heritage and environs could be promoted as widely as possible.

### Specific recommendations:

- In order to preserve and enhance the heritage, setting and environment of the canal there are more specific recommendations which should be implemented along the whole length of the canal.

<b>Trees, Hedges and Fencing</b>	
8	Retain, and reinstate, towpath hedgerows by replanting and laying where necessary as part of the canal heritage tradition.
9	Plant species suitable to the location.
10	Designate more Hedge and/or Tree Preservation Orders as and when appropriate
11	Replacement fences and posts beside the canal towpath be in keeping with the canal’s history and heritage.

<b>Towpaths</b>	
12	Towpath works should consider the needs of horse boating.
13	The towpath surface in urban areas should be suitable for intensive use and surfaced with materials in keeping with the canal's history and heritage.
14	The towpath in rural areas should continue to be maintained in a condition suitable for general access and surfaced with materials in keeping with the canal's history and heritage.
15	The original towpath surface should, where possible, be retained or reinstated, particularly under bridges and around locks.
16	Update the CRT Towpath Resurfacing Guide and where necessary develop and public realm strategy for key sections

<b>Bridges and other Canal Features</b>	
17	Repairs to historic canal structures and buildings close to the canal should be carried out using original materials and techniques or suitable equivalents that fully respect the original structures.
18	Ensure lock numbers are correct.
19	Restore the Dee Branch to the River Dee.

<b>Interpretation</b>	
20	An interpretation strategy should be considered for the canal
21	Signage should be installed to develop the Riverside park/circular river and canal walking route in Chester.
22	Information technology to enhance the interpretation of the canal should be developed.

<b>Wildlife Considerations</b>	
23	All policies should ensure that they continue to maintain and encourage native wildlife.
24	A wildlife survey of the canal should be carried out.
25	Improve links to other wildlife corridors.
26	All strands of Japanese knotweed, and other invasive non-native species, should be eradicated

Suggestions of structures to be listed:

- Caughall (Pretty) Bridge, 134
- Christleton Lock
- Brockholes aqueduct
- Bunbury Locks Warehouse
- Stoke Hall Bridge, 99

Suggestions of buildings/structures to be locally listed:

- Wharf wall at Burnells' Iron and Galvanising Works, Ellesmere Port
- Wharf near Top Farm, Croughton – if research shows that it is historic
- Stone Bridge House, Chester
- House by former Blacon Hall Bridge, Parkgate Road, Chester
- Water Tower Hospital tower

- Tin Tabernacle, Whipcord Lane, Chester – now residential
- River Lock
- Former Temperance Hall, George Street , Chester
- 22 George Street, The Manse, Chester
- Penri Chapel, George Street, Chester
- Mill Hotel
- Old Harkers Arms, Canalside, Chester
- Hoole Lane Lock Cottage
- St Paul’s Mission Church, Chester – now residential
- Cheshire Cat public house
- Bate’s Mill
- Bate’s Mill Cottage
- Shady Oak public house
- Chas Hardern’s Castle Wharf, Tiverton
- Stone Lock Cottage
- Jolly Tar public house
- Avenue Cottage, 1 Basin End, Nantwich
- Shed, east of Avenue Cottage, Basin End, Nantwich
- Former Boat Shed, Basin End, Nantwich
- Canal Cottage, Marsh Lane, Nantwich



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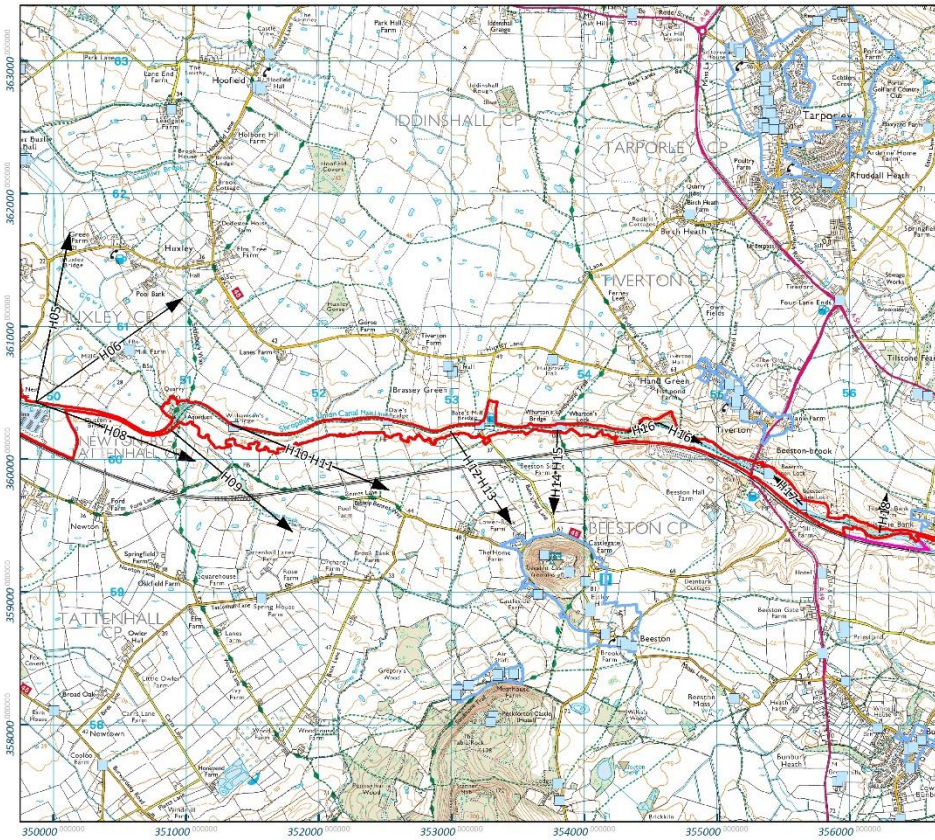
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# Appendix 1 - Maps



**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 10:  
Gazetteer Area H (East)**

**Key**

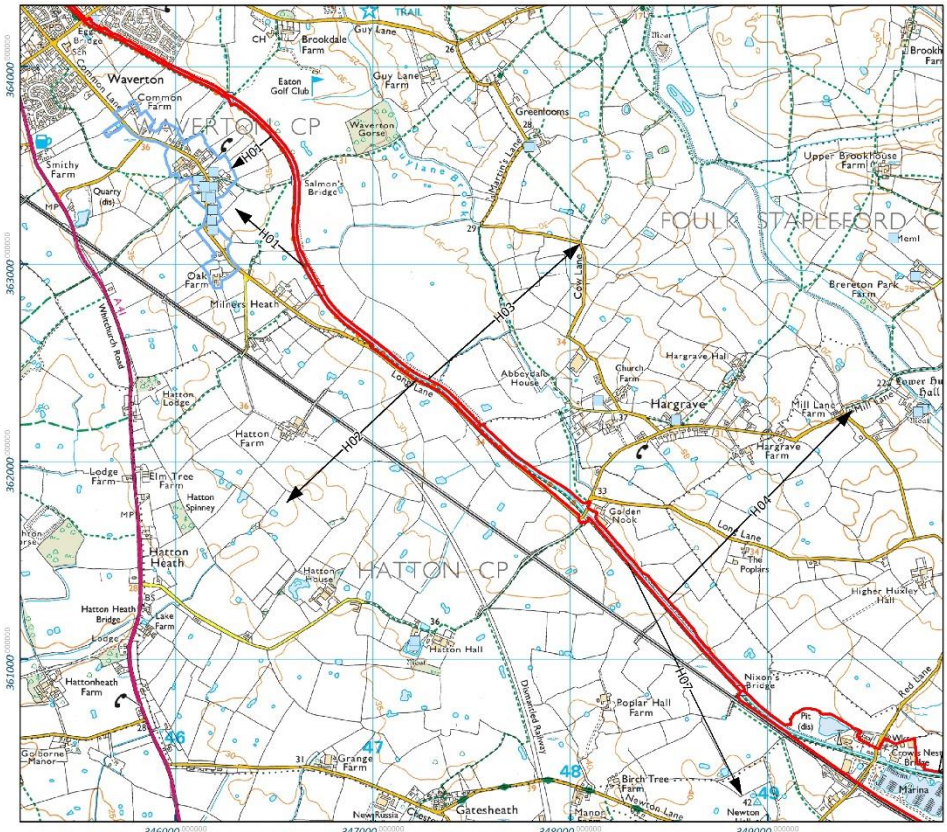
- Key Views
- ▭ Adopted Conservation Area
- ▭ Proposed Conservation Area
- ▭ Listed Building
- ▴ Scheduled Monuments
- ▭ Other Conservation Areas

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Kilometres

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**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 9:  
Gazetteer Area H (West)**

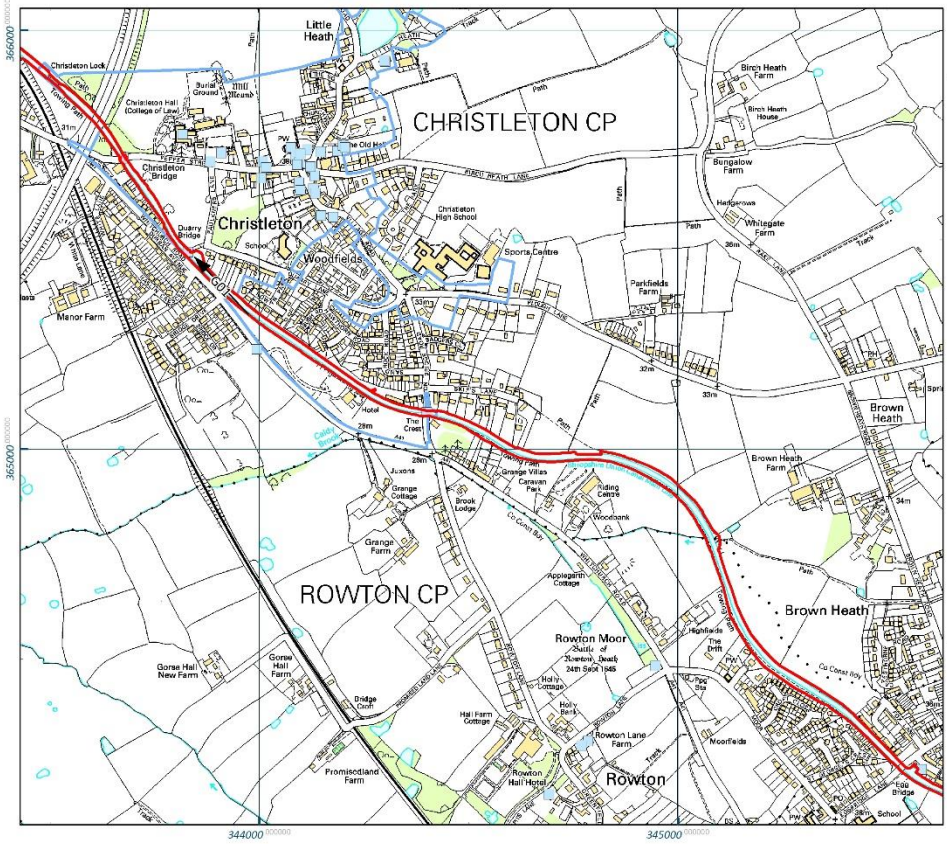
**Key**

- Key Views
- ▭ Adopted Conservation Area
- ▣ Listed Building
- ▴ Scheduled Monuments
- ▭ Other Conservation Areas

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Kilometres

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**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 8:  
Gazetteer Area G**

**Key**

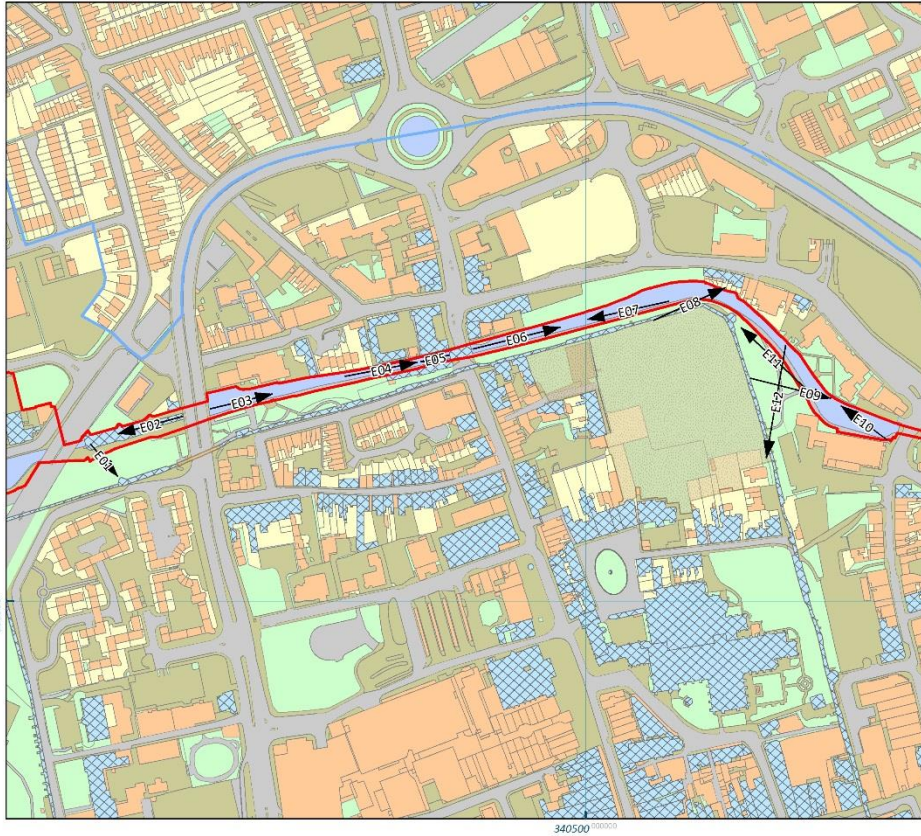
- Key Views
- ▭ Adopted Conservation Area
- ▣ Listed Building
- ▴ Scheduled Monuments
- ▭ Other Conservation Areas

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Metres

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**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 6:  
Gazetteer Area E**

**Key**

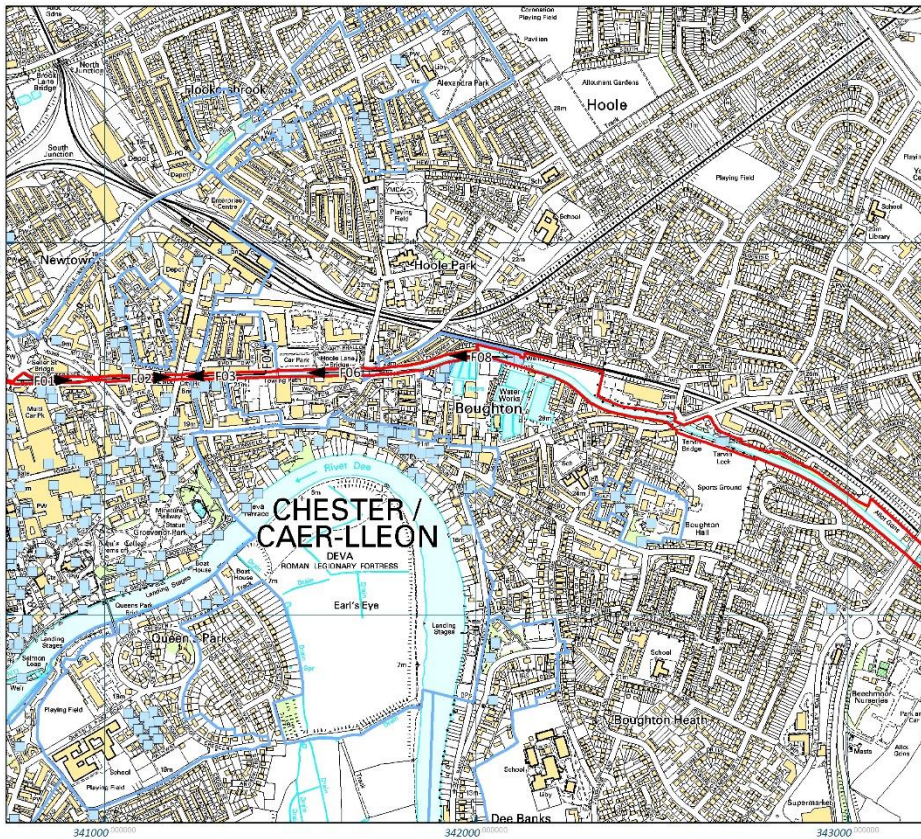
- Key Views
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- ▨ Listed Buildings
- ▩ Scheduled Monuments
- ▭ Other Conservation Areas

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**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 7:  
Gazetteer Area F**

**Key**

- Key Views
- ▭ Adopted Conservation Area
- ▨ Listed Building
- ▩ Scheduled Monuments
- ▭ Other Conservation Areas

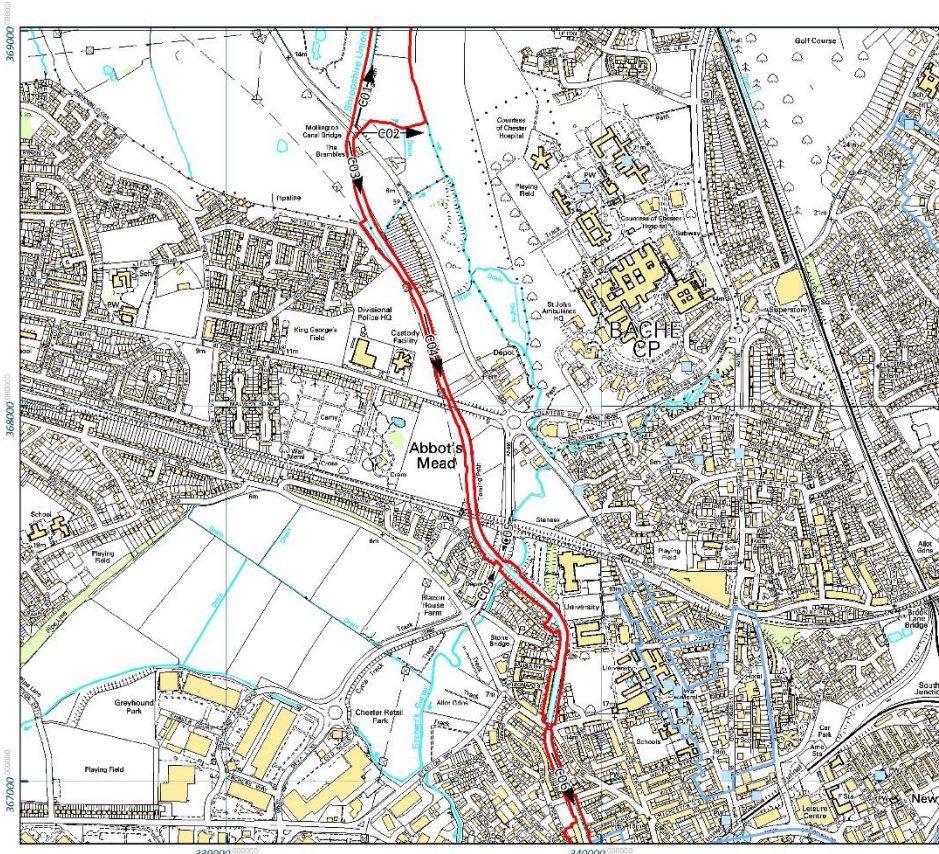
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**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 4:  
Gazetteer Area C**

**Key**

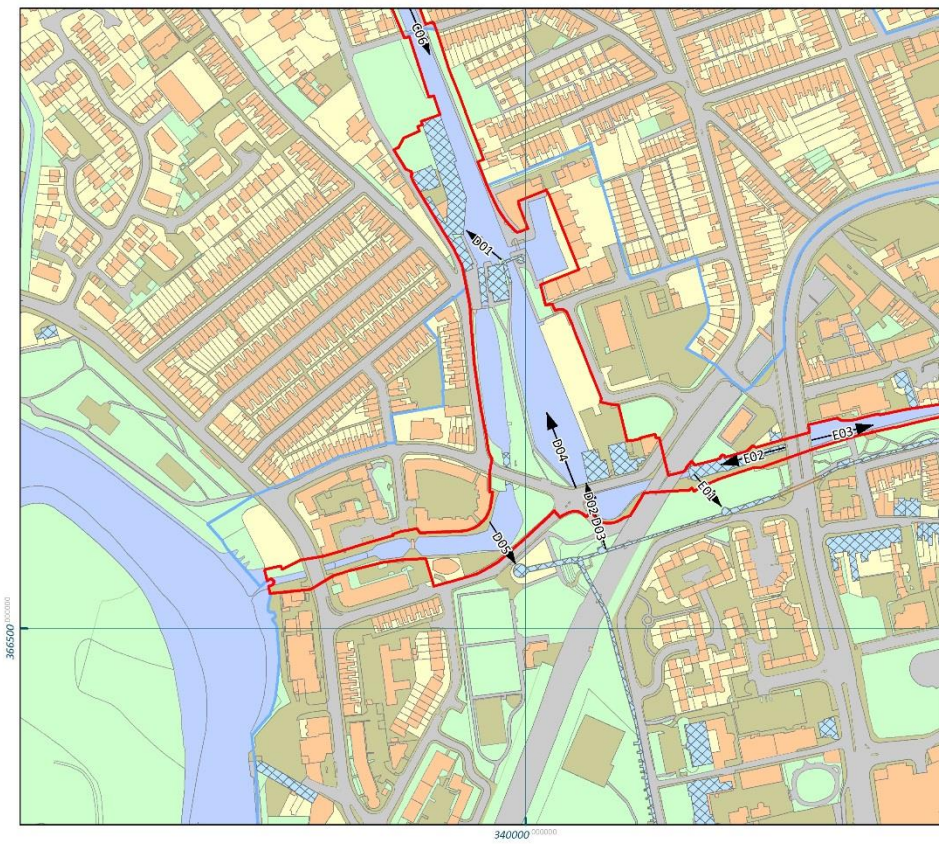
- Key Views
- ▭ Adopted Conservation Area
- Listed Building
- ▼ Scheduled Monuments
- ▭ Other Conservation Areas

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**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 5:  
Gazetteer Area D**

**Key**

- Key Views
- ▭ Adopted Conservation Area
- ▨ Listed Buildings
- ▨ Scheduled Monuments
- ▭ Other Conservation Areas

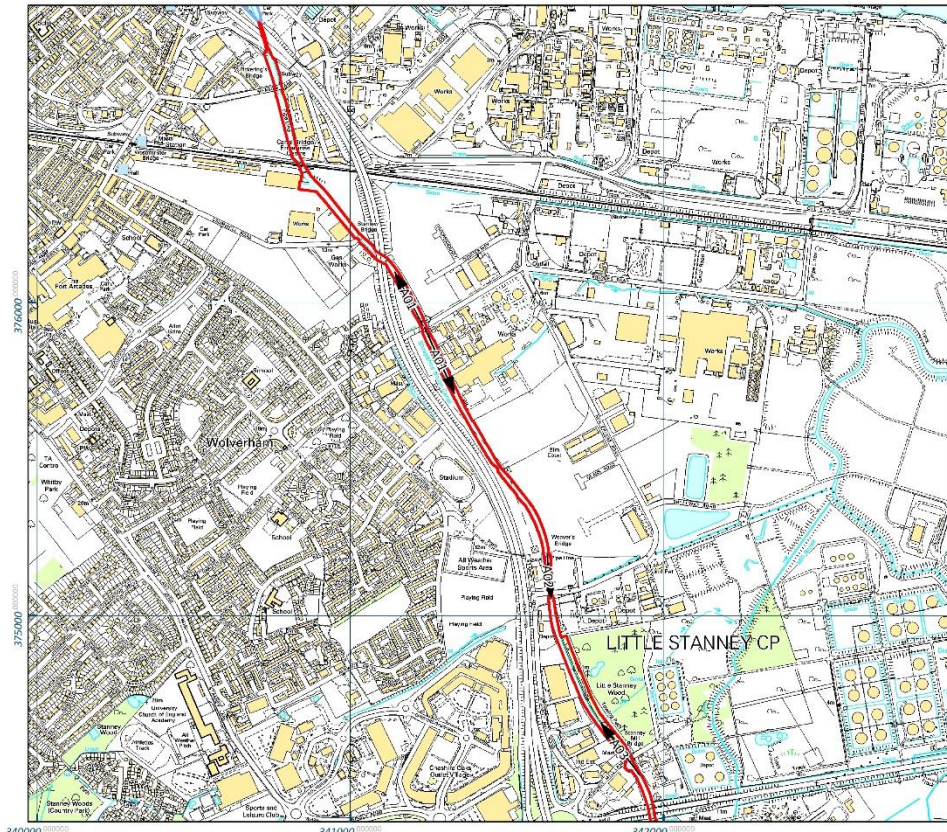
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**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 2:  
Gazetteer Area A**

**Key**

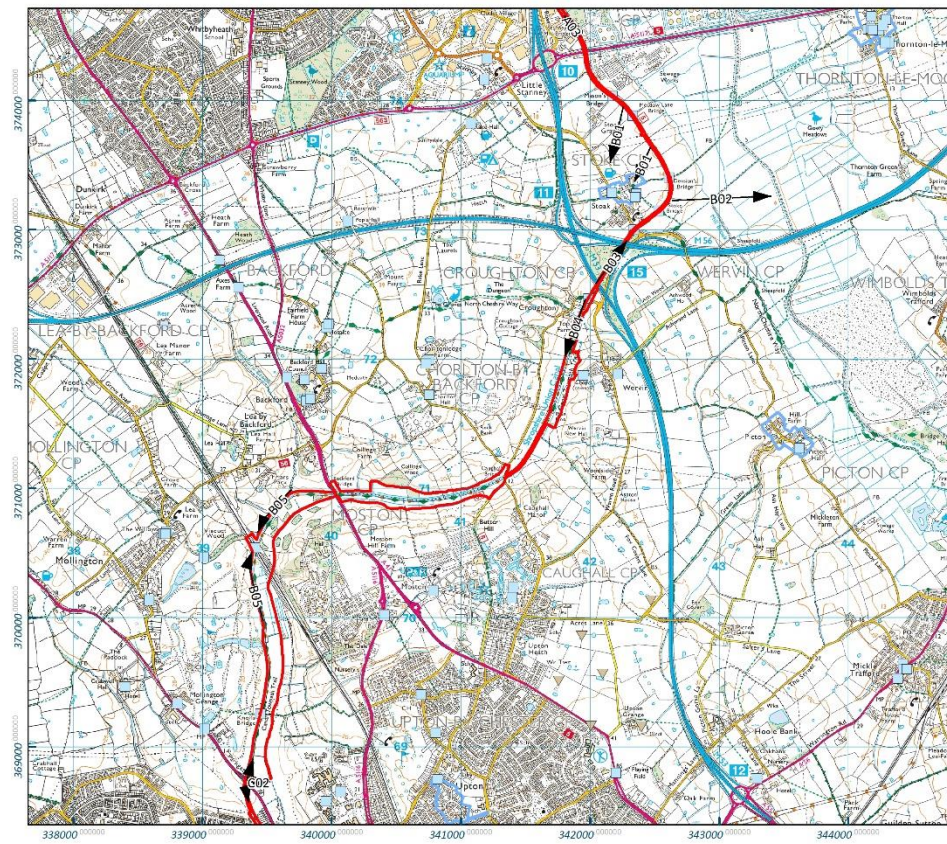
- Key Views
- Adopted Conservation Area
- Listed Building
- Scheduled Monuments
- Other Conservation Areas

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**Shropshire Union Canal**

**Figure 3:  
Gazetteer Area B**

**Key**

- Key Views
- Adopted Conservation Area
- Listed Building
- Scheduled Monuments
- Other Conservation Areas

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Kilometres

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## Appendix 2 – Gazetteers

The gazetteers are separately presented as spreadsheets.

The Grid References are as central to the site as possible.

- A. **Industrial Ellesmere Port** - Ellesmere Port, M53 bridge (146A) to New Stanney Bridge (140A)
- B. **Rural Chester, North** - New Stanney Bridge (140A) to Mollington Bridge (130)
- C. **Suburban Chester, North** - Mollington Bridge (130) to Cambrian Road Bridge (126E)
- D. **Chester Basins and the Dee Branch** - Cambrian Road Bridge (126E) to the railway bridges (123K)
- E. **Northgate Cutting and Locks** – Northgate Locks to Cow Lane Bridge (123E)
- F. **Industrial Chester** - Cow Lane Bridge (123E) to A55 Bridge (122A)
- G. **Suburban Chester, South East** - A55 Bridge (122A) to Waverton (Davies Bridge, 118)
- H. **Rural CW&C** - Waverton (Davies Bridge, 118) to the spillweir above Tilstone Lock (Bridge 106)
- I. **Rural Cheshire East** – Spillweir above Tilstone Lock (Bridge 106) to Basin End, Nantwich