

Dear SDC

I am making this response as a local resident, Brimscombe and Thrupp Parish Councillor, CCT Member and someone who has been intimately involved with the canal regeneration for 18 years.

1. Having an effective and appropriate canal strategy is extremely important and I support the initiative.
2. At first glance the canal strategy looks attractive, impressive and appropriate. However once one looks at some of the detail, it is clear that there are fundamental problems.
3. The consultation itself is very difficult to engage with on-line, the Document A wallchart doesn't enlarge sufficiently clearly to actually read the smallprint, even enlarged on a computer with a very large screen. And linking the non-intuitive coding for the blobs on the timeline tables referring to each area back to the code at the bottom of the chart at 400% enlargement just doesn't work (did the officer who signed off Document A and B for consultation check the ability to read the smallprint on line and navigate the chart?). There are similar but less acute legibility problems for the details in document B.

Questions 1:

Are these the right Drivers for Change? Have we missed anything you would like to add?

Almost but not quite. Often the driver is not addressed in the right way, acknowledging the practical challenges

CONTINUITY -It is a bit simplistic, especially when it comes to biodiversity. It is not yet a continuous green infrastructure spine - but the strategy is not clear what the priority blockages are and how they will be addressed. Continuity for an otter is different to that for a fish or bat (and not to mention continuity for Himalayan Balsam). Biodiversity continuity is currently very high and unique above Chalford and is likely to be significantly damaged by installing canal infrastructure - this is not addressed sufficiently. The different and sometimes conflicting aspirations for continuity - for disabled, toddlers, walkers, leisure cyclists and commuter cyclists are not addressed - and not helped by the division into 14 areas.

CROSSINGS - this creates an undue focus on physical bridges - and not on the **CONNECTIVITY** needs of people from different parts of district (and beyond) accessing the corridor and why. Parking, public transport nodes, active transport links from population clusters to the canal and then along it may be more

important than a "crossing". For Brimscombe and Thrupp the difficulty and danger of crossing the A419 to get to the canal is much more of an issue than the crossings across the canal - but not identified in the strategy.

Questions 2:

Do you agree with the number and boundaries of the 14 canal strategy areas? Do the areas and their profiles reflect your understanding of the different character and functions of places?

Partly. A geographical division like this is useful for some features but not for others. It is over and poorly-used in this strategy, with issues that need to be addressed linearly along the whole length inadequately dealt with in each strategy area (e.g. would need to be addressed 14 times). There really needs to be a proper matrix approach of issues and geography. Then specific linear continuity blockages could be properly highlighted at a specific point. Its all a bit generic and lacks local detail and knowledge.

Questions 3:

Do you agree with the key ways identified on the diagram and in the text in which each canal strategy area could be improved? Do you agree with the carbon reduction opportunities identified?

As noted in the intro - it is very difficult to actually see due to the quality of the graphics/text. Some of it is accurate and some of it is just wrong and some of it is generic and not place based. It is clear that nobody came to the local community or local key informants to get the facts right. In Brimscombe the base map shows a canal but no port basin - does SDC know something we dont? The connectivity barrier of the A419 is not recognised. There is lazy consultancy use of generic terms that are meaningless unless properly related to local opportunities (in this case Brimscombe):
Social: Healthier, Safer and more Resilient Communities,
Innovation: Promoting Social Innovation. We all want these everywhere - but why and how specifically in Brimscombe?

Intriguingly In Brimscombe, where the main housebuding is planned, the C reduction opportunities from low C housing does not seem to be mentioned but is identified for an area (water) not suitable for housing in Thrupp (see below).

While the Parish carbon database is a fantastic resource - its simplistic transposition onto the canal corridor (and canal strategy relevant opportunities and challenges) in a particular part of a parish needs to be done with local knowledge and caution. Otherwise it is misuse of otherwise useful data. The simplistic designation of a numbered blob in Thrupp that is 100% canal water and towpath with a generic "Carbon Reduction opportunity - Housing: high standards for new development" is meaningless. We all know that "high standards for new development" is existing local plan policy even wider than the canal corridor across the whole District (but not in that particular patch of water). There are genuine place based C reduction opportunities but they don't seem to have been identified - probably because nobody talked to the local community. They are also identified in our emerging neighbourhood plan and accompanying survey work.

Questions 4:

Do you agree with the ingredients in general terms? Are there other ingredients you would like to identify? Do you agree with the ingredients identified for each canal strategy areas? Do you agree with the timeframes for delivery? Should some be brought forward and others pushed back?

A good idea but not well done once one really looks at what is being proposed in each local area and when. The tables in the poster with brightly colored circles with non-intuitive lettering for each 5yr period leading to an enormous key at the bottom is challenging. Many of those things will need to continue for more than a 5 year period but they only seem to appear in one period. A more focussed idea of what will be happening when in each area with proper local consultation would be much more accurate and useful. The graphics need to be re-thought.

Questions 5:

Do you agree that the canals strategy should be used as design guidance to support the delivery of adopted Local Plan Delivery Policy ES11? Would any changes to the canal

strategy help to improve the delivery of Local Plan canal policy?

ES11 is good. However the canal strategy needs significant improvement before it is fit for purpose.

GENERAL POINT - There is a challenge in developing a strategy like this. It is possible to start generic and address the place based opportunities and challenges in relation to the various issues (e.g. on cycling continuity - where and what are the barriers and opportunities - this is useful). HOWEVER if you address drivers and ingredients in each of 14 areas that is going to be used in a legal planning process - **you have got to get it right**. This requires significant local consultation which may not be possible within budget and timetable. You cannot rely on expecting people (often knowledge rich but time poor) to engage with impenetrable and often unreadable graphics in order to endorse or correct local detail. **This is not an acceptable consultation approach.**

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Working together to tackle the climate crisis

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