

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 27 May 2022 01:38  
**To:** \_WEB\_Canals Strategy  
**Subject:** Views on the Draft Canals Strategy

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Dear Sir/Madam.

I write regarding the Draft Canals Strategy, with particular regard to proposals for redevelopment of the canal between Chalford and Sapperton in the Upper Frome Valley.

I have looked at the Draft Canals Strategy on line, and whilst acknowledging it comprises a lot of information and a considerable amount of work, found negotiating my way around it, with all the jargon and cross referencing necessary, something of a minefield.

Several items gave me real causes for concern - much of the wording on page 19 of the document (relating to the Chalford part of the canal area) relating to 'suggestions for improvements' to building and road infrastructure. Specifically, discussing the entrance to the village from the A417, at the green:

"Explore new canal-facing relationships for the existing commercial centre buildings, with new active spaces and frontages facing the canal to provide interest and business opportunities along the canal. More activity along the canal will likely increase the number of visitors crossing north of the A419, furthering the need for traffic interventions and multi-user crossing improvements along this route". This is an already heavily used area at the entrance to the village by the green. Lack of space here and in the long layby along the A149, is already caused by the need for parking by village residents, workers at the industrial estate, visitors to Chalford Chairs, Lavender Bakehouse, and walkers to the village and canal. Increased activity on the canal and greater visitors numbers will exacerbate this problem - worryingly identified on page 19 of the Draft Strategy as "(suggesting) requirements for high quality local recreational spaces and appropriate service facilities".

Even before a greater focus is proposed in increasing visitor numbers to the village and increased recreational and business opportunities, it should be acknowledged that Chalford, as it has evolved over the years, has already reached it's capacity for vehicular activity. This is particularly notable in the problems with parking and the virtual single file corridor the High Street presents, reaching virtual crisis points at the junction with Coppice Hill, and again at the junction with Marley Lane by the Chalford Valley Playground. Vehicles are often jammed, blocking the roads and causing (sometimes significant) damage to the village's feature Cotswold stone walls and to the houses. My own (300 year old, Grade 2 listed) house has been hit on numerous occasions - mostly bangs or chips, which whilst worrying (and shouldn't happen) don't cause major damage. However, on one occasion a 28 tonne tipper truck hit the corner with such force as to cause a fifteen foot crack extending up the gable end of the the house, with scaffolding requiring a road closure for three weeks whilst the corner of the house was reset and the crack repaired, and the large cracks caused to the interior walls on two floors required us to find alternative accommodation for four months whilst repairs were effected. And my garden perimeter wall has been hit many times, requiring four rebuilds in the past thirty years. The village has enough problem with traffic through it and does not need the increase that a canal visitor attraction would inevitably produce.

So far I have expressed concerns that the proposed developments detailed in the Draft Canal Strategy will implicitly have on the infrastructure of the village of Chalford. However, by far and away the most worrying aspect of the whole proposal concern changes to the nature of the canal itself and that of the Upper Frome Valley. Since the canals ceased to function as a navigable waterway the passage of time has lead to a gradual decay that is in no way negative. It has become a place of extraordinary beauty. The gradual decline has led to it's becoming a place of tranquil peace and beauty, displaying a formidable abundance of wildlife (kingfishers, dippers, herons, egret, water voles, otters, toads, frogs, muntjac and roe deer, dragon & damsel flies etc) and fauna (meadowsweet, woodruff, bluebells, ransoms, celandines, water iris, blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel and much more). There is an incredible richness of biodiversity here. This, together with it's peaceful tranquility and wild state, is why it is so loved and well used by locals and walkers, and which is celebrated as much for itself as for the restorative effect it has on them. We

need to keep it wild and quiet, free of noise and light pollution. This precious, beautiful place is worth more to us all in its fabulous decaying grandeur than a regimented theme park to a past heritage. Please, please, do not let us lose it.

Yours faithfully,

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