

A rural application site for seven dwellings, and associated facilities adjoins the non-towpath side of the canal. The canal at this point is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated because of its exceptionally diverse and well-balanced community of pondweeds. A plan showing the site and SSSI can be found on page 2.

The banks and shallow margins of the canal support a range of emergent plant species which are home to invertebrates and bird species. Residential development was proposed, but whilst the Trust did not object to the principle of development near to the canal, the application did not fully take into account the canal SSSI.

Any changes to the profile of the existing canal bank could affect the SSSI, particularly if it involved damage to or the removal of marginal plants or removal of the existing soft bank and construction of a new hard edge to the canal.

The construction of fishing platforms and the provision of moorings along the non-towpath side of the canal bank would adversely affect the SSSI through the removal of vegetation and loss of the

existing soft bank, and the Trust objected to their proposed inclusion with the scheme.

A tree survey accompanied the application and identified trees and hedges, but it was unclear from the submitted plans whether or not these were to be retained as part of the canal frontage. A reed bed pond was proposed to receive and filter surface water, and the application suggested that any overflow would discharge to the canal.

There was insufficient information available to allow the Trust to assess the acceptability of this proposal in terms of the quantity of water entering the canal or the likely effect on water quality in the canal. There was a risk of algal blooms, including blue-green algae, occurring in stagnant water in the pond, and any overflow as suggested in the application could result in it being carried into the canal.

The potential effects of any discharge on the SSSI designation would also have to be assessed. Although an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was submitted with the application, the recommendations in relation to the SSSI appeared to have been disregarded, and consequently the proposal was

considered likely to have an unacceptably adverse effect on the SSSI.

The Trust advised that unless the application was revised to satisfactorily address the concerns raised above, planning permission should be refused. The application was withdrawn.

Pre-application discussions with the Trust regarding the proposal can inform the design process for the Developer at an early stage.

The information contained within the Habitats Survey should assist in protecting and enhancing waterway related habitats and protected species. It should be used to inform the design process.

