

EXAMINATION OF THE TELFORD AND WREKIN LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031

Matter 4 – Economy & Community

Question 4.7: Should the Local Plan make explicit reference to the Newport and Shrewsbury Canals project?

My name is Eric Ashcroft. I graduated from Leeds University in July 1965 with a II (i) Honours degree in Civil Engineering. In July 1969 whilst working as a Resident Engineer for the States of Jersey Sewerage Board I was elected a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers and also a member of the Institution of Municipal Engineers.

In January 1970 I was appointed Senior Engineer (main drainage) at Telford Development Corporation and in 1974 I was promoted to Principal Engineer responsible for design, contracts and construction supervision.

In 1977 I was appointed Principal Engineer (Planning) at Severn Trent Water Authority and became Severn Trent District Manager for East Shropshire in 1985. In 1989 I was promoted to District Manager for West Shropshire and Montgomeryshire with responsibility for Lake Vymwy and Llyn Clywedog.

From January 1997 I was appointed CEO of the Trinidad and Tobago Water and Sewerage Authority until retirement in May 1999.

To describe some of the problems Telford Development Corporation's drainage engineers faced in early 1970s I refer to the attached Map 2A, which was included in the 'Proposed Telford New Town Sewerage Order' in 1969. The map illustrates the complexity of the drainage system serving the farmland north of Telford and highlights the problematic Hurley Brook which connected into the Commission Drain.

By 1973 flooding problems on the Weald Moors resulted in a meeting at Priorslee Hall at which the Landowners fully supported Telford Development Corporation's proposals for a new Northern Interceptor which would divert storm water from the Weald Moors to the River Tern and provide for the future, much higher, peak storm flows which would be generated by the New Town development.

The Northern Interceptor, which took the form of an open channel, was constructed in 1975 by Telford Development Corporation as agents of the Severn Trent Water Authority. From the River Tern to point H, Eyton Lower Lock, it consisted of a new open channel across farmland. From Eyton Lower Lock to Wappenshall Junction works were carried out on the disused canal to convert it into an open channel. Similar work was carried out on the canal between Wappenshall Junction and Britton Lock (point F).

The Hurley Brook was enlarged and improved through the Leegomery area (F to E) and connected to the Northern Interceptor F. Thus the source of much flooding on the Weald Moors was removed and provision was made for the development of North West Telford. The asset, known as the Northern Interceptor, was regarded as a sewer and became the property of Severn Trent Water Authority, now Severn Trent plc.

From the above it is clear that there is a conflict between the proposal for the restoration of the Shropshire Union Canal between Wappenshall and Eyton Lower Lock and the operation of the Northern Interceptor which now occupies the site.

The Canal requires a channel which is full of water in all conditions and which can fill locks, controlled by lock gates, prior to boats being lowered or raised. But the creation of the Northern Interceptor has required the removal of the lock gates at Eyton Lock and the provision of a concrete weir to ensure there is always a hydraulic gradient to sustain the very high rates of flow which arrive in storm conditions from the developing New Town.

In dry weather conditions the Interceptor has very little residual flow and whereas a canal operates as instructed by man, the Northern Interceptor reacts to the weather with all its varieties of timing and intensity.

The difference between the Canal and the Northern Interceptor is further illustrated by their respective flow carrying capacities. Whereas the capacity of the canal is, to all intents and purpose, zero, the carrying capacity of the Northern Interceptor is approximately 12 cubic metres/second.

I suggest the only practical solution to the obvious conflict in requirements of the two functions is to construct a new storm water channel between Wappenshall and a point adjacent to Eyton Lower Lock, parallel to the existing Northern Interceptor on its south side.

This channel would be connected to the existing new open channel ~~on the~~ ^{side} upstream of Wappenshall Junction and similarly immediately downstream of Eyton Lower Lock. With the existing flows diverted to the new channel the existing open channel would then be available to convert back to ^{its} original role ^{as part} of the Shropshire Union Canal.

The cost of these works, including land purchases (assuming land owners agreed about 8ha would be required), excavation, disposal of soil, construction of access roads, fences, creation of puddle clay lining, restoration of lock gates and removal of concrete weir from Eyton Lock etc, etc, would be very substantial for a modest length of approximately 2.25km.