

where the quality and special interest of the area is protected. Council publications, such as its Countryside Design Summary, which analyses settlement types, and Appraisals of the District's Conservation Areas, which analyse the special qualities and identify those features that make a positive contribution to the character of the place, will assist in understanding a settlement. National guidance includes Natural England's guidance on undertaking Village Design Statements.

### **Policy ESD 16: The Oxford Canal**

**B.272** The Oxford Canal is an iconic historic structure running the length of the District through the attractive valley of the River Cherwell, and is of historic, ecological and recreational significance. Following an appraisal, the length of the canal through

Cherwell District was designated as a Conservation Area in October 2012. The conservation area boundary has been drawn to include the towpath and towpath hedge, canal related earthworks and features including historic wharfs and locks, and woodland. The biodiversity value of the canal is reflected in a number of statutory and non statutory designations along the length of the canal. In terms of recreation, the canal is popular for boaters and anglers. A public footpath runs the length of the canal and a section of the route is a public bridleway. The canal and towpath is owned and maintained by the Canal and River Trust, but the responsibility for planning matters lies with the District Council. This policy for the Oxford Canal draws on the recent Design and Conservation Strategy (2012) and reflects its status as a conservation area.



**B.273** 'Policy ESD 8: Water Resources', 'Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment', 'Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement' and 'Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure' will be used to protect and enhance water quality and the contribution that the canal makes to the District's landscape, ecological and recreational resource, for its entire length through the District. 'Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment' will also be used to ensure that works to existing structures are sympathetic to the historic

context and that any new development is sensitively sited and designed to ensure that the special character is preserved or enhanced. The southern section of the Oxford Canal lies within the Green Belt and Policy ESD 14 will therefore be relevant to proposals in that area. Inappropriate development in the Green Belt will only be permitted if very special circumstances can be demonstrated, as set out in the NPPF. The approach to residential canal moorings and boater's facilities on the Oxford Canal will be set out in the Local Plan Part 2.

**Policy ESD 16: The Oxford Canal**

**We will protect and enhance the Oxford Canal corridor which passes south to north through the District as a green transport route, significant industrial heritage, tourism attraction and major leisure facility through the control of development. The length of the Oxford Canal through Cherwell District is a designated Conservation Area and proposals which would be detrimental to its character or appearance will not be permitted. The biodiversity value of the canal corridor will be protected.**

**We will support proposals to promote transport, recreation, leisure and tourism related uses of the Canal where appropriate, as well as supporting enhancement of the canal’s active role in mixed used development in urban settings. We will ensure that the towpath alongside the canal becomes an accessible long distance trail for all users, particularly for walkers, cyclists and horse riders where appropriate.**

**Other than appropriately located small scale car parks and picnic facilities, new facilities for canal users should be located within or immediately adjacent to settlements. The Council encourages pre-application discussions to help identify significant issues associated with a site and to consider appropriate design solutions to these and we will seek to ensure that all new development meets the highest design standards.**

**Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure**

**B.274** Green infrastructure comprises the network of green spaces and features in both urban and rural areas including the following: parks and gardens (including historic parks and gardens), natural and semi-natural green space, green corridors (including cycleways and rights of way), outdoor sports facilities, amenity green space, children’s play space, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, accessible countryside in urban fringe areas, river and canal corridors, woodlands, nature reserves, green roofs and walls.

