



Rochdale Canal walking and cycling improvement consultation: Ramblers Response

This response is on behalf of the Manchester and Salford Ramblers. We are the local organisation of the national walking charity, the Ramblers, and we help everyone, everywhere, enjoy walking and protects the places we all love to walk.

Strategic Response

We strongly agree that there should be a high quality route for walking and cycling from the border with Oldham to the city centre that maximises the benefits and minimises potential conflicts.

Maximising the benefits that local residents and visitors get from this route is important for economic, environmental, social justice and health reasons. However, one issue that has become more apparent over recent months has been that conflict between different user groups significantly reduces the benefits that people gain and acts as a disincentive to active travel and increased leisure walking.

This project has the opportunity to find innovative and equitable site-specific solutions to accommodate the different needs of for example; parents with children, those with reduced mobility, single walkers, walkers in groups, leisure walkers, commuters on foot and bike, those on bikes with trailers, cargo bikes, trikes and leisure cyclists.

Manchester and Salford Ramblers are committed to work with the City Council, the Canal and Rivers Trust and other partners to find lasting solutions.

Detailed Comments

We have made the following detailed points via the on line consultation form:

Improving the route

Lighting should be provided to ensure that the route is usable all year, but the lighting should be appropriate to the location and not unduly disturb wild life or residents. The water's edge should be marked, but only where it would be of value to vulnerable people.

Poor surfaces and steep gradients are barriers to increased usage for those with mobility difficulties, parents with children and people on bikes.

The tow path is of limited width in parts and in particular the section that runs parallel with Navigation St (after New Union St) is much too narrow.

Accessing and enjoying the route

The path should be made more accessible, and the proposed improvements to specific access points are welcomed but the design should take account of the needs of all users and provide protection for walkers, parents with children and encourage considerate behaviour.

More seating along the route would make the area attractive to those who need to rest, but should be designed and located in a way that doesn't narrow the foot way or impede those

with prams etc. There should be a commitment to regular inspection and maintenance to discourage misuse.

Signs and information

We strongly agree that there should be better signage along the route. There are two aspects to signage. In general signage should be welcoming and positively encourage responsible use, but should recognise the hierarchy of vulnerable users with walkers given clear priority.

Signage is also important to show how far the next access point is and other points of interest. It is also important that there are clear signs and interpretation where the route links to the wider footpath and rights of way network. For example, the Manchester Green Trail follows the canal from Flash Street to Ten Acres Lane and crosses the canal from Redhill Street.

The canal in Ancoats links to the Ashton Canal that provides significant routes to Clayton Vale, the Etihad stadium, Debdale and the Grow Green park in West Gorton. The southern section of the canal is also close to the important new Mayfield Park developments.

Green Spaces

Our experience of life under the pandemic has emphasised the critical importance of access to green space for health and well-being. The provision of bins for litter and dog waste and regular inspection and collection are needed along the whole route, but particularly in the green spaces.

The areas around New Islington and Victoria Mill Park are of reasonable quality, and we have already commented on the section that runs parallel with Navigation St. However, the remainder of the route between Hulme Hall Lane and Droylsden Road is more difficult given the nature and position of the canal side buildings. Consideration should be given to including pocket parks in the redesign of access points.