

1. History of the Canals

The construction of the tub boat canal network in Telford between 1768 and 1792 provided the transport network for raw materials and goods that enabled the development of the foundations of the modern industrial revolution. In 1797 this network was extended to Shrewsbury (the Shrewsbury Canal) and in 1835 a new section of canal was constructed from Wappenshall in Telford to Norbury Junction on the main line of the Shropshire Union canal in Staffordshire (the Newport Canal) to connect the local canal network to the national network. In 1944 the route was officially abandoned. (see www.sncanal.org.uk).

2. The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust

In 2000 at a public meeting in Newport, the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust was formed. It now has approaching 1,000 members. Since that date the Trust has worked closely with Staffordshire and Shropshire County Councils, Stafford Borough Council, Telford and Wrekin Council, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council and all the parish councils along the route to develop the project.

The objectives of the Trust are:

- (1) To promote and undertake the restoration of the Shrewsbury Canal between Shrewsbury and Trench in the county of Shropshire and of the Newport branch of the Shropshire Union Canal between Wappenshall Junction and Norbury Junction in the county of Staffordshire by the original route or diversions as necessary (hereinafter together called "the Canals") to good and navigable order and to promote and undertake the maintenance and improvement of the Canals for the benefit of the public.
- (2) To promote and undertake the fullest use of the Canals by all forms of waterborne traffic and for all forms of water-related commercial, local amenity, tourist and recreational activity for the public benefit.

To promote and undertake the education of the public in the history and use of the canals and waterways and of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals in particular.

3. The Wider Restoration Proposal

Although the Trust has the objective of the restoration of the whole length of the canals, the initial priority is the restoration of the 17 kms of canal from Norbury Junction in Staffordshire (where it connects with the national network) to Wappenshall in Telford. This restoration has four broad aims to meet the

needs of the communities along the route. These are leisure, economic, conservation and education. The aims in detail are;-

Leisure

- A major new amenity and leisure facility stretching from Staffordshire to north Telford
- A wide range of leisure activities for all abilities – angling, walking, boating, cycling, painting, photography, wildlife studies etc.
- An opportunity for all to participate in volunteer projects
- A linear park providing additional opportunities for relaxation, enjoyment and interpretation of the countryside
- An inter-county green footpath from Stafford to Telford and, eventually, on to Shrewsbury.

Economic

- A major stimulus to sustainable economic regeneration of the rural area, the rural villages in Staffordshire and Shropshire, the town of Newport and the northern part of Telford.
- Initial benefits in the form of local employment and local materials and services purchased for the reconstruction.
- A significant long-term tourism attraction of regional/national importance for Staffordshire, Shropshire and Telford providing employment in boatyards, marinas, retail, pubs, restaurants, accommodations etc.

Conservation

- In the built environment of locks, wharves, basins, junctions, warehouses and other associated canal infrastructure etc.
- In the natural environment the waterway, towpath and hedgerows will provide a wildlife corridor and sanctuary for a wide range of flora and fauna.

Education and Training

- The opportunity at primary, secondary and tertiary levels to study transport heritage and engineering, human geography, environmental and economic sciences and to apply historic learning to the modern world. Opportunities for interpretation for the public as well as research at Norbury Junction.
- Training opportunities to work on the restoration and running of the Canals.
- An environment that provides authentic local experiences and teaching and learning resources for all ages, regarding the development and use of alternative energy sources, the canal and its history, as well as the wildlife and plants that the new environment creates.

4. Government Policy

The Government's policies for inland waterways in England and Wales are set out in "Waterways for Tomorrow" published in June 2000. The Government's aim is to promote the waterways, encouraging a modern, integrated and sustainable approach to their use. This involves conserving the waterways, while at the same time maximising the opportunities they offer for leisure and recreation, urban and rural regeneration, the environment, and for freight transport.

The restoration of the canal is strongly supported by Government policy. In the DETR publication "Waterways for Tomorrow" the government sets out its encouragement for restoration.

"Restoring waterways to full navigation also produces many benefits. Waterway restoration over the last 40 years has revitalised key parts of the country's transport and industrial heritage, generated jobs and development and increased opportunities for leisure, recreation and tourism. The government supports this approach and looks to Regional Development Agencies and local authorities to support worthwhile projects. Local Authorities can help..... by adopting appropriate policies and land use allocations in development plans."

5. Inland Waterways Advisory Council (IWAC)

The Inland Waterways Amenity and Advisory Committee (IWAAC) was created by the Transport Act 1968 to advise the Government and British waterways about the use and development of the latter's waterways for recreation and amenity purposes. In 1993 IWAAC was asked by the Government to concentrate on providing strategic policy advice on issues such as widening the customer base, balancing the needs of conservation and greater use, and development and regeneration. On 1st April 2007, IWAAC was replaced by the Inland Waterways Advisory Council (IWAC), established by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Relevant recent publications by IWAAC include:-

- Working Group on Conservation Management Planning (2001)
- The Inland Waterways: towards greater social inclusion (2001)
- The Benefits of Sustainable Waterways; British Waterways since 1996 (2003)
- Just Add Water; how our inland waterways can do more for rural regeneration - a practical guide. (2005)

- Inland waterway restoration & development projects in England, Wales & Scotland – third review report (December 2006)

The Third Review Report (December 2006) reported on the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Project. It classified the restoration as a **nationally** significant project and defined the projects Key Asset as having a “**high built heritage value**” and its Key Benefits as:-

- Strategic link and/or extension to the national connected system,
- Regeneration – urban
- Regeneration – rural.

In the review of canal restoration schemes, IWAAC commented on the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals project as follows:-

*Council welcomes progress by the Trust since the last review on this **outstanding** heritage waterway. Feasibility study and detailed engineering report completed [showing that full restoration is feasible in engineering terms] and partnership being formed. Implementation issues, including water supply and wildlife, considered with care. Privately financed development initiatives expected to provide about 25% of restoration costs but success in obtaining regional/national funding will be the key. An early priority should be the conservation of the surviving heritage structures along the route. A successful restoration would be a significant addition to the national system and the waterway heritage.*

6. West Midland Development Agency – Regional Economic Strategy

Advantage West Midlands’ Economic Strategy *Connecting to Success*¹ is centred on a future low-carbon economy and sustainable growth.

“Becoming a more sustainable region, correctly valuing our natural, historic and cultural assets, seeking to minimise our use of the planet’s resources and preparing for a low-carbon future.”

Two related papers “*Rural Dimensions*”; and an economic review of rural areas², set out the significance of the WMES to the rural areas of the region and thus to this restoration project:

Market towns are recognised in the WMES as important focus for rural communities for business, work, services and leisure.

‘There are however, other villages and larger rural settlements that will require some development in order to foster sustainable communities, as well as

¹ West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) December 2007

² *WMES Rural Dimensions* Dec 2007 and *West Midlands Rural Economy Study*. 2007 SQW

opportunities to continue to make use of redundant buildings in the countryside for alternative economic uses.’

There is general recognition that the rural areas of the region are an important consideration in the WMES because rural economies:

- □ Make an important contribution to the health of the region’s economy, providing diverse and high quality businesses and working environments
- Affect the economic and social well being of the 1.19million people who live in rural areas in the region
- Offer high quality environments, including important landscapes and built heritage that are valued by local residents and visitors

Two further factors are highlighted with relevance to this report:

‘Most rural economies are not particularly growth orientated. They have low levels of investment (net capital expenditure per business), an under representation of employment in knowledge based, high tech and fast growing sectors and over representation in declining sectors. This is particularly the case in less accessible rural areas.’

‘Disadvantage in rural areas is generally not concentrated in particular communities as it is in more urban areas. Recent research by the Commission for Rural Communities concluded that one in five households in rural England live below the poverty line (less than 60% of median income). These households are found in all types of rural communities and their situation is often masked by the relative affluence of others.’

Relevant opportunities are clearly identified in WMES:

2.3. Infrastructure improvement: Sustainable management and utilisation of our land and property assets

80% of the region’s land is in rural areas. The effective management of these natural and agricultural assets is fundamental to the future sustainability of many local economies and communities. Investment in property and the reuse of buildings in rural areas will continue to provide sites for economic activity for rural residents.

2.7. Maximising our cultural offer and natural assets

Rural areas contain many of the region’s cultural and heritage assets and most of its natural assets. Actions to improve the management and enhancement of these are important for the region’s economy (particularly the visitor economy) and the quality of life for its residents.

Weaknesses and barriers to success: A focus on ‘beacons’, ‘key attractions’ and ‘major destinations’ should not be at the expense of the large number of smaller assets, which *together* provide the rich diversity of the region’s cultural, heritage and natural offer.

The former *Heart of England Tourism* has been subsumed into AWM, as *Tourism West Midlands*, working with each sub-regional “Destination Management Partnership”. In 2007, the *Regional Visitor Economy Strategy* was revised³, producing a clear set of development priorities for the region

- Business Tourism
- Culture
- Festivals and Events
- Food & Drink

Culture’ in this context includes heritage, and the Agency has continued to support major investment in cultural heritage and tourism e.g. in Ironbridge Gorge Museum, Black Country Living Museum, Severn Valley Railway, Stourport Canal Basins generally in partnership with major funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. However, AWM has no formal heritage strategy or policy and no published policy on waterway development, despite its investments covered later in Section 14. Current economic challenges, severely reduced funding for all RDAs, combined with political uncertainty is already affecting funding decisions. The need for any investment to contribute to its reductions in the GVA gap against other regions (now increased from an already challenging £10bn) will be crucial. For rural investment the Rural Development Programme for England may help, which is also managed by the Agency.

7. Local Planning Policy – Norbury Junction/Shelmore

This section of the canal comes within the administrative areas of Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council.

The Local Development Framework

Stafford Borough Council is currently developing its Core Strategy as part of the new Local Development Framework for the area. The recently published “Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough ~ Issues and Options ~ February 2009” paper includes the following statements:-

Delivering a Sustainable Future

Areas outside settlements identified for growth

Provide increased rural employment through renewable energy schemes including biomass, low impact hi-tech industries in agricultural buildings and sensitive new national and regional tourist attractions which enhance the high quality environment of the area.

³ Regional Visitor Economy Strategy – revised by L & R Consulting 2007 for AWM/TWM

Open Space, Sport and Recreation

9.115. *There is an extensive canal network with potential for restoration and expansion; particularly the Newport Canal which joins the Shropshire Union Canal at Norbury Junction. The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust has been examining alternatives to the restoration of the extensive flight of locks which link Norbury Junction to Newport. The currently favoured option involves an inclined plane at a location south of Norbury Junction combined with a new length of canal to link to the existing canal route east of Newport. **We think that the restoration could provide economic and other benefits and recognise that the connection to the Shropshire Union canal is a vital element to the scheme of restoration as it is the only link to the national canal network.***

Transport

9.172. *A number of walking and cycling routes have been delivered to provide links from the town centre mainly along the Rivers Sow and Penk, the former railway lines to Newport and the former RAF Stafford (now MoD Stafford) and along the canal towpath through to the open countryside. **We think that linked routes including walking and cycling should be protected and extended as an integral part of new developments.***

Existing Planning Policies

The existing Structure and Local Plan policies for the area will have been superseded by the new Local Development Framework by the time the Shropshire Union Canal to Forton Bridge section comes forward for development.

8. Staffordshire County Council - Economic Development Strategy

Economic Development plays a key role in achieving the County Council's mission statement - **'To make Staffordshire a great place to live, work, visit and invest'**.

The aim of all Economic Development activities, therefore, is - **'To improve the prosperity of the people of Staffordshire (and particularly of those suffering deprivation) whilst having regard to sustainability in all that we do'**.

Actions planned to achieve the above are as follows:-

- Develop and implement an Economic Regeneration Strategy for the County
- To make a full contribution to the Strategies of the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership and Rural networks so as to create a higher quality and quantity of accessible jobs throughout the County
- To preserve, diversify and enhance the County's economy through the stimulation of new investment, support to existing business and performance of specific regeneration projects
- To provide managed workspace and land for industry
- To work in close partnership with economic development agencies to help local businesses and support inward investment
- To promote and develop the County's tourism sector through targeted and co-ordinated marketing initiatives with the private and public sector
- Seek to influence decisions by national and European institutions that will affect Staffordshire's ability to attract resources required for economic development and infrastructure improvements.
- Think Local is a business initiative that encourages public sector and private companies to buy local, giving local businesses every opportunity to prove their value and succeed www.think-local.biz

All of the above link to, complement and work with the objectives set out in the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy ensuring that Staffordshire plays an integral part in the overall growth, prosperity and competitiveness of the West Midlands.

9. Phased Development of the Canal

The restoration of the Newport canal from the junction with the Shropshire Union Canal to Wappenshall offers the opportunity for a phased approach. Development could take place in four phases.

These are:-

- (i) Restoration of 4.388 km from Lubstree Wharf (Humber Arm) to Wappenshall Junction (£8.246m) which provides very significant economic, tourism, recreational, educational and heritage benefits. *(Within this Phase priority could be given to the restoration and development of the warehouses and east basin at Wappenshall as a key canal "Hub").* The Trust has recently acquired a long lease of the site of the Wappenshall warehouses and canal basin. *A Development Appraisal of the restoration and the economic/tourism benefits from this section has already been produced.*
- (ii) Restoration of 7.125 km between Newport Town Basin and the Humber Arm (£9.515m) which connects Newport to the Wappenshall section, There are low economic benefits directly from this section, but it will create substantial secondary benefits from connecting the Wappenshall section to the main canal network
- (iii) Restoration of 2.025 km from Forton Bridge to Newport Town Basin (£3.481m) which provides very significant economic, regeneration and heritage benefits to the town of Newport. *A Development Appraisal of the restoration and the economic/tourism benefits from this section has already been produced.*
- (iv) Restoration of the 4.6 km section from the Shropshire Union Canal at Norbury Junction or Shelmore to Forton Bridge (£12.9m to £23m depending on whether the all the original locks are restored or an inclined plane constructed to bypass locks 1-12). Although the most expensive section its construction enables very significant additional economic benefits to be achieved on the other three sections above from boat traffic being able to travel to and from the national network.

Phasing of the redevelopment of the Newport Canal will make the funding problems easier. The ordering of the phases is likely to be influenced by land acquisition, funds available and local commitment.

10. The Junction with the Shropshire Union Canal to Forton Bridge

The means of re-connecting the Newport Canal to the Shropshire Union Canal is probably the most significant decision in the whole restoration of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals network.

The existing Shropshire Union Canal is approximately 31.6 metres above the level of the Newport Canal as it approaches Forton Bridge.

Thomas Telford originally solved this problem by the creation of a flight of 17 locks over a distance of 2.4 kilometres. The Trust's Engineer has put forward two alternative solutions to this problem.

The first solution (the Traditional Solution) adopts Telford's original design and restores the original flight of 17 locks and the existing channel and bridges from Norbury Junction to Forton Bridge.

The second solution (the Inclined Plane Solution) proposes a modern alternative about 800 metres south of Norbury Junction at Shelmore. This scheme bypasses the first 12 locks of the original design with a double inclined plane (*following the concept, but not the actual design used at Falkirk to join the Forth and Clyde Canal with the Union Canal in 2002*). The restoration of the remaining locks L13 – L17 and associated bridges and channel to Forton Bridge is common with the traditional solution. However these remaining locks only involve a fall of 9.29 metres over a distance of 2.75 kilometres.

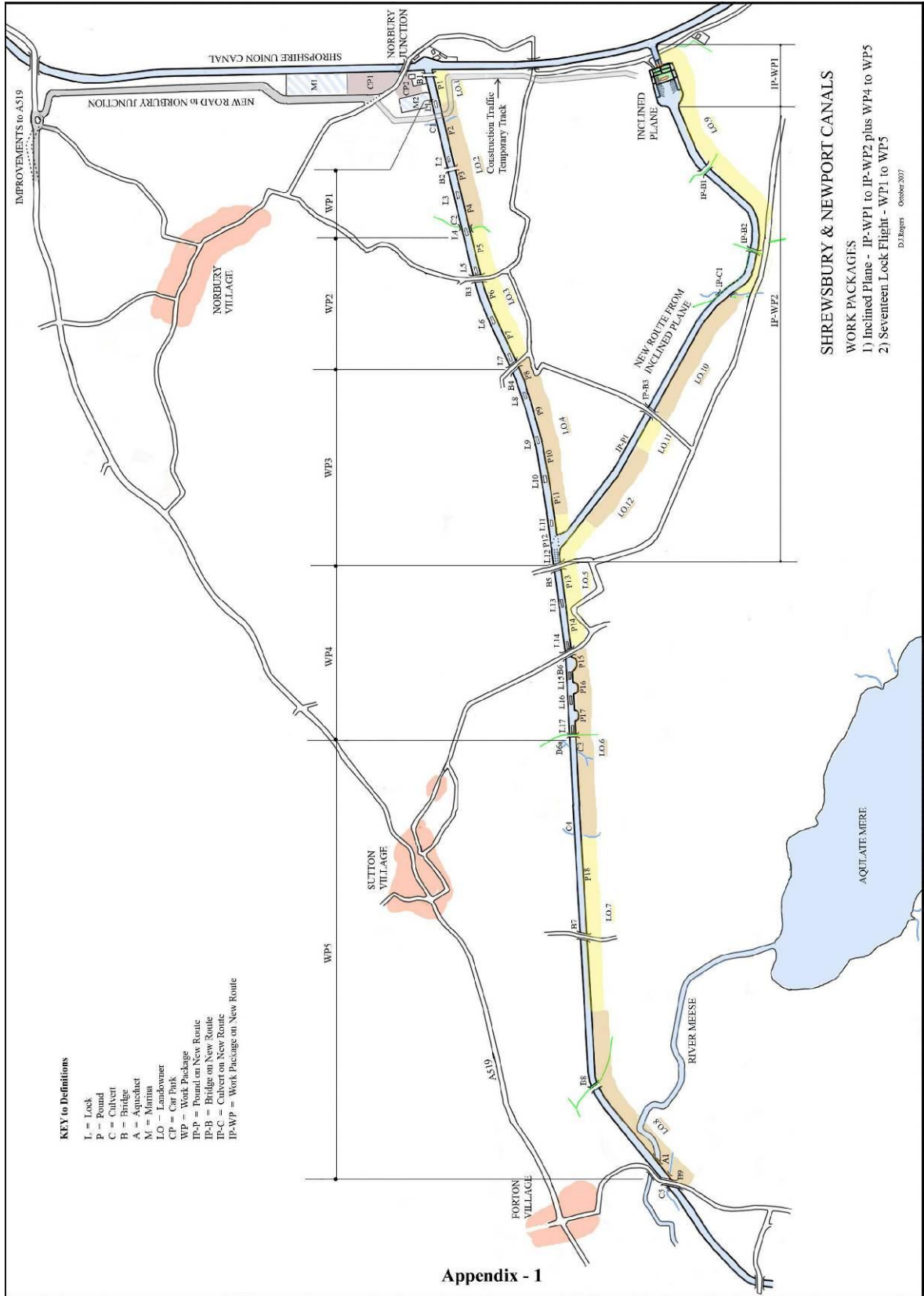
Both of these options have to be evaluated against:-

- Capital cost and funding potential
- Engineering factors
- Water Supply, Environmental and sustainability issues
- Economic and Tourism generation including direct income generation
- Provision of leisure and educational opportunities

Details of the present position and the proposed solutions are set out in the following pages.

The work packages (WP) in the traditional restoration scheme following the existing route of the canal are referred to as WP1 to WP5. WP1 – WP3 relate to the restoration of the first 12 locks and WP4 - WP5 refer to the remaining 5 locks and channel to reach Forton Bridge. WP4 and WP5 are common to both solutions.

The work packages on the Inclined Plane Solution are referred to as IP-WP1 to IP-WP3. These replace work packages WP1–WP3 in the traditional solution.



Appendix - 1

Present Condition of the existing route - Work Packages WP1 to WP5

The Pound P1 from the junction with the Shropshire Union Canal to Lock L1 is currently navigable for access to the dry dock. It has been improved with sheet piling to both sides to prevent erosion and to allow boats to be moored.

WP1. Lock L1 has been modified for use as a dry dock with a building constructed over it. A short distance behind the building Pound P2, which is on a high embankment, has been cut through to remove a culvert for better drainage. This length beyond is overgrown with mature trees and scrub for a short distance. Locks L2 to L4 are buried and Pounds P2 to P4 filled in and the land returned to agriculture. On this length the original boundaries still exist with the plot created having been utilised for grazing.

WP2. Locks L5 to L7 are open and can be seen, although in poor condition with trees and tree roots growing out of the wall structures. All gates have gone except for one on Lock L6, which is in an advanced state of decay. These locks and Pounds P5 to P7 are in a cutting with the sides of the cutting initially increasing in height and then decreasing along the length. The original boundary still exists. Natural elements have eroded the channel sides with the towpath being completely eroded away down the majority of the length. Water is present in the bottom of the three locks and down the length there is a trickle of water in the centre of the channel.

Bridge B3 is a road bridge in good condition and maintained by Stafford County Council. Bridge B2 was a stone humpbacked farm accommodation bridge, which has been dismantled by the landowner and the stone sold. It was redundant as an accommodation bridge, the land on the opposite side now under different ownership, it will not therefore need replacing.

WP3. Bridge B4 is a stone road bridge maintained by Stafford County Council. Locks L8 to L12 and Pounds P8 to P12 have all been filled and returned to agriculture.

WP4. Bridge B5 is a stone bridge over which a public road passes. This road 'Cliffs Lane' is very little used and has deteriorated through lack of maintenance into a farm track. The bridge however is still in good condition. Bridge B6 is a road bridge maintained by Stafford County Council. Bridge B6a, which served both as a footpath and accommodation bridge has been demolished. Locks L13 to L17 and Pounds P13 to P17 are all filled in and returned to agriculture.

WP5. There are no further locks on this Pound P18. From Bridge B6a to Culvert C4 the pound has been filled and returned to agriculture, from C4 to halfway between Bridges B7 and B8 the landowner has retained the pound in water for fishing, and from there onwards to Bridge B9 the pound is dry with the towpath being used as a footpath. At Culverts C3 and C4 the bed has been cut through and the culverts removed.

Bridge B7 is a stone accommodation bridge that is in reasonable condition with some minor damage from farm machinery scraping and disturbing the top coping stones. Bridge B8 (now demolished) was an Accommodation Bridge. Bridge B9 (Forton Bridge) is a stone road bridge maintained by Stafford County Council. It is skewed at an angle with the canal and apart from one other this bridge has a greater angle of skew than any other bridge on the national canal network.

Aqueduct A1 is unique as it carries both the canal and the adjacent road running parallel to it. This aqueduct which carries the canal and road over the River Meese is a three arch stone structure and has been well maintained by Stafford County Council on the road half and British Waterways on the canal half. Both the Forton Bridge and the River Meese aqueduct structures are close together are unique and have potential as a low key tourism resource.

Site Constraints. The road access to Norbury Junction is via one of three narrow (virtually single-track) country roads leading from the A519 main road and through the centre of Norbury village. At present the Junction, with its public house and café shop, boatyard and chandlery, is 1 kilometre from the village centre. In its current state it is popular with local people from the surrounding areas although the resultant traffic is a source of annoyance for the Norbury village community.