

Lancaster Local Plan 2025, call for Green Spaces

Aldcliffe Cutting to Deep Cutting – a new Green Space for Lancaster

The canal corridor and the sides of the two drumlins that run down to the canal side between the cutting at Aldcliffe should be designated as a Green Space that would come within the Local Plan policies of Green and Blue Infrastructure (currently policies DM43 and T3 in the Local Plan 2025). The canal is already a green corridor that links green spaces but designating the banks of the drumlins on either side of the canal as a green space will enhance its effectiveness as green infrastructure. The land is currently open grassland, that is primarily used for grazing and as such is not particularly biodiverse. However, the fields of the proposed green space are of significance environmentally for those moving through the landscape either on or beside the canal providing open and unpolluted air, free of traffic noise and fumes and urban activity. In particular, the views across the sides of the drumlins give an experience of space and sky, unusual within a city. There are no buildings other than some low level small wooden or metal agricultural buildings and a disused set of stables. On the west side at the top of the drumlin sits Inverlune, a dramatic arts and craft design house from 1910. With its half-timbered tower and gable and traditional dormer windows it is a non-designated heritage asset and a local landmark that overlooks the proposed Green Space.

The importance of the area as green space is because of the canal and its towpath. Walking or riding along the towpath from Lancaster provides a dramatic opening out into the green space of the drumlin sides as you leave Aldcliffe Cutting with its narrow towpath and close banks covered with trees on both sides. Beyond the cutting the stretch of the canal through the proposed green space, there are no sights or sounds of the city which is so near; roads, cars, brick and stone buildings are absent. In their place are grassy fields, with hedgerows and occasional small trees that allow for a beautiful and open aspect, rising to the sky on each side. The same effect is achieved for those moving slowly through the space on canal boats – the west bank is a popular mooring place. The towpath runs through a wide grassy verge alongside the western canal edge with reeds, flag irises and lilies. Ducks, swans and moorhens are resident with goosanders and reed-warblers occasional visitors. Kingfishers can sometimes be glimpsed. The drumlin to the east of the canal is the highest in the area and is crested by a line of trees. The open aspect on both sides gives a sense of airy space over green fields – green space – that is unusual along the length of Lancaster canal, but exceptional so close to the City. The towpath is heavily used by pedestrians – strollers, dog walkers, pushchairs users, runners – and cyclists. Some are using it as a safe commuting

link between the city centre and south Lancaster and the university, but most are just enjoying their leisure in the green space. During Covid it was especially popular as an area for outdoor exercise. Because most of the land is private, those moving through the landscape are channelled by the canal and towpath and so cannot intrude into the open space on either side. As the towpath approaches the busy Ashton Road bridge carrying the A588 it enters tree-lined Deep Cutting that will last for a couple of kilometres until the canal is well clear of the City.

Many green spaces will be entirely open to public use as parkland for games and sports. The Aldcliffe to Deep Cutting green space is owned and worked and not available for public use except along the towpath with its wide verge. But this means that it is largely empty, enabling an openness and spaciousness that are a rare experience so close to a city. While the canal originated as part of industry and commerce it is nowadays used for leisure and relaxation. Horses and sheep graze in the fields and are no longer linked to the canal as a means of transport – either as cargo or pulling power. But evidence of the heritage of the use of some of the fields for resting and feeding horses that pulled the working boats remains in the form of a gateway on the western side that is too narrow for a cart but wider than one for pedestrians.

There have been two planning applications in recent years for housebuilding on the banks of the drumlins alongside this stretch of the canal; one on the west side around Inverlune (Ref: 19/01460/OUT), the other on the east side running from the top of the drumlin down to the canal (22/00885/OUT). Both were refused by Lancaster Planning and Regulatory Committee and the refusals were upheld at appeal by Planning Inspectors; nine houses off Aldcliffe Road (APP/A2335/W/20/3256311), seventy houses at Canal Bank Stables, (APP/A2335/W/18/3195605). A key reason for refusal that was sustained in both appeals was the preciousness of the landscape that they would have been interrupting.

This proposal has been prepared with the specification of the designation of Green Spaces within the current National Policy Planning Framework (2012), paragraphs 96-108, especially paragraphs 103 and paragraph 107 which states:

107. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

(a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

(b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

(c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Guidance from government on designating green open spaces includes:

“all open space of public value ... that that can take many forms...[including] linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to [green infrastructure](#) (see National Planning Policy Framework [paragraph 171](#), as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development.”

Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 37-013-20140306, Revision date: 06 03 2014

