

## Comments on West Sussex Planning Application WSCC/036/20 from Applicants: “Ford Energy, Grundon Waste Management, Viridor Waste Management”.

These comments are submitted by the Old Ford to Hunston Canal Group whose core aims include preserving the remains of the canal, recording its history, maintaining and improving access to canal footpaths and restored remains, and promoting non-motorised users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders) along the old Canal route from Ford to Hunston. The applicants have acknowledged the centrality of the Canal to the development site and its heritage by helpfully providing Figure 2.9 in the Design & Access Statement which shows how the line of the Canal precisely bisects the development site.

While consultation comments on significant issues such as changes in the setting of historic sites, and pressures on road transport, have been made by others better qualified, our Group acknowledges the research and analysis that has gone into both the applicant’s many submissions, and in the expert views provided by the Archaeological, PROW, and Conservation teams within WSCC and Arun District Council. However, *we recommend* some re-thinking in 3 key areas of the development proposals.

Rather than comment on the absence of access footpaths, cycleways, and horse-riding routes, the applicants should be *more ambitious* at looking where some limited additional/adapted routes could fit better with the concept’s drive to set a new standard of *sustainable approaches for local transport routes*. Our current focus on promoting a “Greenway” running east west roughly along the canal line fits well with existing planning policies in WSCC and Arun and Chichester District Councils, and could be better realised by this very large development promoting such a vision. We have noted that Viridor has previously funded local projects, and e.g. some investment in biodiversity would also fit well with the proposed “Greenway”.

Little is said about the planned adjacent housing site, “The Landings” (F/4/20) promoted by Redrow and Wates, and the opportunity to join an access route through this main Ford Circular Technology Park proposal onto access routes within “The Landings” appears to be largely ignored. In particular, the current proposals do not make it clear what use will be made of the “mushroom shaped” area (the previous aircraft dispersal site) of land to the north within the site. *A provision to allow a non-motorised route across it will enable walkers, cyclists and horse riders to journey on from eg Ford Road through the north of the site, and on through “The Landings”, and onto Yapton.* This would be a practical and sympathetic realignment from the old canal route lost when the airfield was compulsory purchased by the Air Ministry after WW2, and so reinstate the connection to the canal heritage and provide an asset for the community.

While the applicants note their intention to *celebrate the heritage of the site and increase awareness* of this, the development should look pro-actively at what more could be done. The applicant may not be aware that the development site encompasses a canal bridge site which unfortunately was lost during the historical airfield expansion, but there is another more visible canal bridge nearby at Burndell which could be restored to rebalance the heritage scales. The Heritage Centre at Chichester Ship Canal Trust, and the research into Ford Airfield by the Yapton and Ford History Group also provide useful comparative sources.

FoFH Canal Group (23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2020)