

*"Almost everyone now recognises that business is dependent upon its environment. It cannot work in isolation. ... We don't believe in saying 'something should be done', and doing nothing ourselves. We prefer to do something, then point to it to encourage others".*

Sir Allen Sheppard, Chairman Grand Met,  
CBI Urban Development Conference,  
25th January 1993

**3.1** The recommendations listed in Background Report 1 and the opportunities illustrated in Section 4 show that the scope for improving Coventry's Canal corridor is immense. A coherent approach to development and change along the waterway will accelerate the process of regeneration. The guidelines in this section set new standards of design, site planning and environmental responsibility. The adoption of high standards of boundary treatment, external spaces and soft landscaping on a number of individual sites will, over time, have a considerable impact on the quality and appearance of the canal corridor as a whole. It is hoped that individual businesses and landowners will recognise that a high quality canal frontage is good for business and good for the community.

**3.2** After a process of consultation, the guidelines will be produced separately as Supplementary Planning Guidance and will be used in the course of negotiation and development control. Private and public landowners and their agents will be expected to adopt these standards in preparing schemes and proposals.

**3.3** The guidelines are presented under the following headings:

- Buildings and Development
- Repairs to Historic Structures
- External Spaces
- Nature Conservation
- Soft Landscape Works
- Canalside Furniture
- Boundaries
- Access
- Water Quality.

**3.4** Examples of preferred styles and treatments for boundaries, fences and fittings, together with further specification details and suggested suppliers, can be found in Background Report 2F.

**3.5** Some of the guidelines are intended to reflect local identity and character, but should also be read in conjunction with the broader guidance contained in British Waterways' Waterway Environment Handbook. British Waterways and City Council staff would be pleased to discuss with prospective developers and agents how these principles can be integrated into individual schemes.

## BUILDINGS & DEVELOPMENT

**3.6** Few traditional waterside buildings remain on Coventry's Canal. Today, the canal is typified by industrial and housing development, much of which ignores the benefits and attraction of a waterside frontage. Warehouses, industrial units, "Nissen hut" style workshops and their associated compounds dominate parts of the canal. There are few examples of good modern architecture. Though brick was the traditional building material, no strong canal vernacular remains today. In such a heavily built up area, the way that buildings enclose and respect the waterway corridor is perhaps the most crucial element in the success of a canal regeneration strategy. The waterside can provide an attractive setting for both residential and employment uses. The following guidelines aim to encourage built development which will bring mutual benefit to both the canal and surrounding land and buildings.



**Photo 15.** An example of attractive canalside housing which makes the most of its unique location. New developments should recognise the canal as a positive asset to their site.



1. Developments should acknowledge the canal and the unique character of the waterside location, and should be both innovative and sensitive to the positive features of a particular location. New developments should recognise the canal as a positive asset to their site.

2. The development of derelict or redundant sites adjacent to the canal should include proposals to enhance its amenity value to provide opportunities for recreation and leisure use.

3. A high priority should be given to designing buildings with a high architectural standard which incorporate the possibilities of the water and an attractive canalside setting.

4. Proposals for the re-use and redevelopment of redundant waterside buildings for commercial or residential use will be particularly welcomed where this includes the retention or reinstatement of important characteristics of the buildings and their canalside setting.

5. Buildings should be of a form, scale and density to complement the local scene and should respect existing adjacent sites and landscapes and context of the surroundings.

6. Buildings should provide well designed and interesting facades to the waterside, including relief, patterns, colour or texture.

7. Industrial and commercial development should aim to create interesting and attractive buildings alongside the canal. Bland frontages do not enhance the canal frontage.

8. Roof to gable elevations should be designed to provide interest.

9. External treatments and roofing materials

should be carefully chosen to ensure an attractive appearance, which will be in keeping with the setting of the building adjoining the canal.

10. New residential developments should recognise the presence and value of the canal as a feature within their site planning and layout. Housing should be designed to take advantage of waterside views and aspects.

11. The facades of non-residential buildings should be brick faced or brick in combination with other materials.

12. Whenever possible, canalside development should aim to create attractive and purposeful waterside spaces, for both public and private use. External spaces should be designed to respect the canal environment through the use of traditional materials.

13. Careful site planning is necessary to avoid ugly storage, servicing, waste disposal, car and lorry parking areas immediately adjacent to the canal. Such uses detract from the canal setting. Where such features do adjoin the canal, they should be the subject of landscaping or screening.

14. Whenever possible, canalside development should avoid the construction of roadways adjacent to the waterway. Housing schemes in particular, should be designed to present a public face to the canal or rear gardens with a coherent structure.

15. Development should avoid the creation of canalside strips of land too small for positive use.

16. Development which maximised the potential for water based activities will be encouraged.



**CANALSIDE HOUSING**

NEW HOUSING CAN USE THE CANAL AS ITS MAIN FRONTAGE, WITH AN ATTRACTIVE SETTING WITH BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES.



**3.7** Coventry City Council and British Waterways welcome initial discussions with landowners, developers and agents considering the benefits of a canalside location. Contact addresses are shown on page 57.

## REPAIRS TO HISTORIC STRUCTURES

**3.8** Though much of the history of Coventry's Canal has been lost through bombing and development, a number of interesting buildings, bridges and structures remain. These range from the Grade II listed warehouses at Coventry Basin, with their unusual door recesses and lucams, to the rare example of a small urban coal basin at Stoke Heath. The bridge at Drapers' Field, which was deliberately built as a narrow structure, is now listed, whilst the features at Hawkesbury Junction contribute much to the character of this well-known Conservation Area.

**3.9** It is important that all work and repairs to canal structures should be carried out to match the original work as closely as possible. Any work to a listed building or structure requires consent from the City Council as planning authority. Listed building consent is also required for new development which would affect the setting of a listed building. British Waterways and Coventry City Council are committed to the sensitive conservation of the architectural heritage of the canal corridor and the following guidelines aim to encourage good practice for both public and private sector works.

1. New bricks should match old bricks and old bricks should be re-used wherever possible. Modern bricks, particularly in metric sizes, often differ in size to old bricks. Good old weathered bricks may be obtained from local sources such as the Coventry Conservation Store, Sandy Lane and, where appropriate, these should be of a textured hand-made variety.

2. Where stonework has to be replaced, similar sources should be found in order to achieve, after weathering, a perfect colour match.

3. Comprehensive repointing of a building or structure is rarely necessary. Sound old pointing should be left undisturbed. The destructive removal of old pointing to achieve a uniform appearance is not necessary. Small areas of repointing should be dealt with regularly as items of maintenance.

4. If possible, a sound unweathered example of the original pointing should be found and matched in mix and finish.

5. Mixes vary according to circumstances. A 1:1:6 mix of cement, lime and sand is the best mix for general conservation use. 1:1:4 should be used for engineering bricks in exposed positions, and 1:2:8 for brick of good durability in very exposed positions. Additives and pigments should be avoided and the correct colour should be obtained by adjusting the aggregates.

**3.10** Owners or managers of historic canalside property are advised to discuss any proposed works with British Waterways' Architectural Heritage Officer, who can advise on appropriate materials for reuse, repair and refurbishment. Contact addresses are shown on page 57.

## EXTERNAL SPACES

**3.11** Coventry's Canal passes through both heavily built up areas and large areas of green space, which vary from school playing fields to derelict open land. Each of these open spaces has potential links to the canalside and all can contribute to the environmental quality of the waterway corridor. The waterway and adjoining green spaces, such as Longford Community Nature Park, the former Bell Green Goods Yard and the proposed Foxford Community Woodland, establish the canal corridor as one of the city's most important linear parks.

**3.12** There are many other smaller external spaces, many of which are associated with private industrial frontages adjoining the canal. These present opportunities for improving employee well being through detailed environmental enhancement schemes in conjunction with boundary improvements, surfacings and provision for towing path access. Much of the quality of the waterway environment depends on the appropriate use of hard and traditional materials as part of redevelopment and regeneration proposals.

**3.13** The following guidelines aim to encourage the creation of attractive and purposeful waterside spaces on both public and private land.

1. All canalside external spaces have an impact on the waterway and careful site planning and landscape design is expected.





**Photo 16.** *Canalside external spaces around and within residential areas need to be carefully designed.*



**Photo 17.** *Traditional materials such as brick-paving, cobbles and setts should be used in the design and construction of external spaces.*

2. Traditional materials such as brick-paving, cobbles, setts and gravel should be used in the design and construction of external spaces, whether or not they are accessible to the public. Traditional materials should be used wherever possible.

3. Consideration should be given to the creation and management of small scale public spaces on the towing path side of the canal, through realignment of boundaries during development work and via the improvement of pockets of publicly owned land.

4. External spaces around buildings and developments should, wherever possible, allow both visual and physical access to the waterside. Links to and from residential areas are particularly important.

5. Opportunities should be sought to improve links between major green spaces and the canal towing path as part of a network of urban green spaces and connecting footpaths.

6. External spaces should include suitable landscape work as appropriate.

7. Views across the canal are to be given due consideration when designing external spaces and frontages, in addition to those up and down the waterway.

8. The contributions of the creative arts to the

external appearance and setting of buildings and spaces should be investigated.

9. Public and private spaces designed to cater for or link to moorings will be welcomed.

**3.14** Coventry City Council and British Waterways welcome initial discussions with canalside interests considering designing and constructing attractive canalside spaces. Contact addresses are shown on page 57.

## NATURE CONSERVATION

**3.15** Despite its urban setting, Coventry's Canal contains rich and varied wildlife habitats, supporting a wide range of aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna. Water quality is unusually high, supporting a range of submerged, emergent and marginal vegetation and invertebrates, amphibians and fish. Several bankside stretches have good hedges or attractive coppiced willows. The canal's populations of great crested newt and crayfish are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Within the Coventry area the canal is the only location for many of the species recorded. All the components of the canal's flora and fauna combine to make the waterway an important wildlife corridor linking town with country. More details of the canal's wildlife value can be found in Section 2 and Background Report 3.

**3.16** This unique asset needs to be maintained and managed and should be an important consideration in any proposals for waterside redevelopment or change.

The following guidelines aim to encourage the promotion of nature conservation on both public and private land.

1. City of Coventry Unitary Development Plan Policy GS 21 seeks to protect the nature conservation value of wildlife corridors, such as Coventry's canal, by resisting proposals which destroy or adversely affect areas of ecological interest along or adjacent to the canal.

2. The use of locally occurring indigenous plant species is encouraged in order to preserve the existing landscape character and maximise the canal corridor's wildlife potential. Locally occurring species are listed in Table 1. Ornamental planting should be limited in scale and scope.

3. New developments should aim to encourage the creation, expansion and possible linkage of canalside habitats and open spaces.

4. The creation of new wetland habitats on adjacent canalside sites will be encouraged.

5. The landscaping of key canalside sites should include native woodland planting as part of the landscape structure.

6. The assistance of voluntary and community groups in the management of wildlife habitats will be encouraged on British Waterways' and City Council owned land which is not required for development.

7. English Nature should be consulted immediately on finding or suspecting colonies of crayfish, great crested newts or bats in connection with any development or waterside work.

8. Management plans are encouraged for sites of nature conservation interest along the canal.

**3.17** British Waterways, Coventry City Council, English Nature and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust can offer advice on nature conservation and management, and will be pleased to liaise with owners of canalside property. Contact addresses are shown on page 57.

## SOFT LANDSCAPE WORKS

**3.18** In comparison to other urban industrial waterways, Coventry's Canal is relatively green. Several sections are bounded by mature towing path hedge-

rows and trees, wooded embankments or natural regeneration on adjacent derelict land. Whilst some of these will be retained and managed for their visual and wildlife value, others will be lost or changed as a result of new development. A programme of new planting and landscaping is therefore necessary to retain and reinforce this characteristic. This can occur both as part of the landscape structure of new developments and as a separate programme of screen planting.

1. Existing trees and vegetation which make a contribution to the landscape of the canal corridor should, where possible, be retained in new developments.

2. Applications for new canalside development must be accompanied by a landscaping scheme which uses locally occurring species where possible (see Table 1). Landowners are also encouraged to prepare appropriate maintenance and management programmes for new landscaping. Ornamental planting immediately adjacent to the canal should be limited in scope and scale.

3. Industrial sites and depots should be screened with a substantial band of planting. A minimum width of 3 metres will be expected in relation to new developments.

4. Security fencing should, where possible, be located within or behind canalside landscaping.

5. Trees should be planted no closer than 2 metres from the edge of the waterway to protect the structure of the canal bank from root damage. British Waterways should be consulted prior to finalising any planting proposals. Shrubs and ground covers may be planted close to the canal. The retention and improvement of marginal and aquatic vegetation should be included in planting schemes where appropriate.

6. Planting should take account of the proximity of underground and overground services.

**3.19** Coventry City Council and British Waterways welcome initial discussion to agree the most appropriate planting scheme for the location. Grant aid for landscaping, screening or boundary treatment of existing properties may be available. Contact addresses are shown on page 57.



Table 1

**Native Trees and Shrubs Occurring along Coventry's Canal**

(Recorded by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust in "An Ecological Survey of the Coventry Canal", 1990 - Background Report 3)

**TREES**

Acer campestre	Field Maple
Alnus glutinosa	Common Alder
Betula Pendula	Silver Birch
Corylus avellana	Hazel
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash
Malus sylvestris	Crab Apple
Populus x canescens	Grey Poplar
Populus x nigra	Black Poplar
Prunus avium	Wild Cherry
Quercus robur	Pedunculate Oak
Salix alba	White Willow
Salix caprea	Goat Willow
Salix fragilis	Crack Willow
Sambucus nigra	Elderberry
Ulmus glabra	Common Lime

**SHRUBS**

Buddleia davidii	Buddleia
Ilex aquifolium	Holly
Ligustrum vulgare	Wild privet
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn
Rosa canina	Dog rose
Rubus fruticosus	Bramble

**CLIMBERS**

Clematis vitalba	Traveller's Joy
Hedera helix	Ivy
Lonicera perynema	Honeysuckle

provision of appropriate facilities to the benefit of canal users, while enhancing the historic character of the Coventry's Canal and the identity of individual locations.

1. The design of all canalside furniture and fittings should be robust, simple and "user friendly", reflecting the character, traditions and materials of the canal.

2. To minimise the risk of vandalism, materials and style should be appropriate to the location and simple to maintain. It may be appropriate, for example, to use natural materials in a natural location and harder man-made materials in the most urban locations.

3. The provision of seating adjoining the canal should be frequent enough to encourage use of the waterway by the less able-bodied.

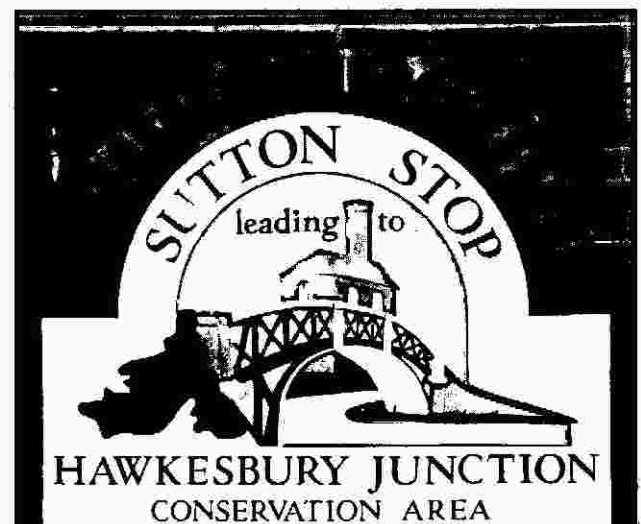
4. While individual character will be welcomed, seating and outdoor furniture on private land should aim to follow these guidelines where they are visible from the canal.

3.22 British Waterways and the City Council are pleased to advise on suitable styles for prominent canalside sites. Contact addresses are shown on page 57, and recommended styles and specifications are shown in Background Report 2F.

**CANALSIDE FURNITURE**

3.20 Canalside "furniture" includes seating, picnic tables, safety railings, litter bins, sign posts and information panels. Such facilities will continue to be provided by British Waterways and the City Council; their provision on public or private land by other landowners and agencies is also welcomed. A "house style" can help to create an identity for the waterway and a feeling of security for the user.

3.21 The following guidelines aim to encourage the



**Photo 18.** At Hawkesbury Junction, this attractive sign adds to the individuality of the Conservation Area. Businesses and landowners will be encouraged to use appropriate signage along the canal corridor.





**Photo 19. (Left)** This canal signpost reflects the traditions of the waterways.

**Photo 20. (Above)** Grey "Palisade" security fencing is harsh and intimidating.

## BOUNDARIES

**3.23** Boundaries are the interface between the canal environment and the surrounding land use. The treatment and maintenance of these areas naturally have a major impact upon the canal corridor. Too often, the canal is seen as the "backdoor" to commercial and residential properties and the area between the two is regarded as nobody's responsibility, creating neglect. The uncoordinated use of barbed wire and improvised security measures, such as corrugated sheeting, creates a poor impression of the property which lies behind it. The following guidelines aim to address these problems by encouraging a positive relationship between the canal and its surrounding land, resulting in high quality screening, landscaping and security fencing and coordinated boundaries to residential properties and gardens. As the canal corridor is upgraded, it will become more popular, reducing the need for heavy security measures on canalside frontages.

1. The fair face of all boundary treatments should be towards the canal.

2. Security fencing should not exceed 1.8 m. in height. Barbed wire will be discouraged.

3. Consideration should be given to building frontages and facades which will themselves form the canalside boundary.

4. Where possible, landowners and developers

should set security fencing back from the canal corridor to allow for soft landscaping. This could take the form of planting adjacent to the towing path, or more substantial works to the non-towing path side.

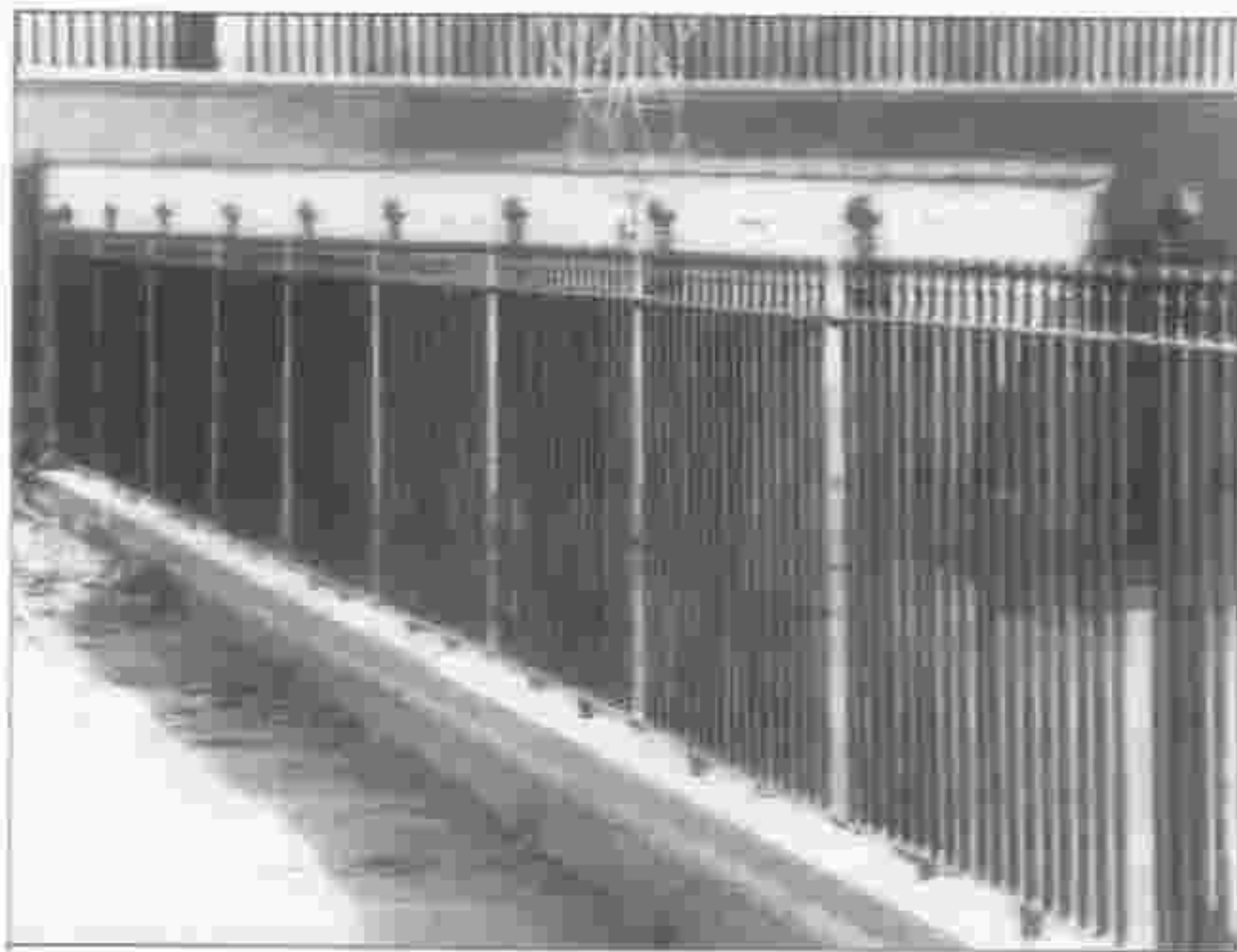
5. An open boundary treatment should be used where this would be more attractive than a solid fence or wall. In this instance, a variety of railings and fencing, in conjunction with brick walling and piers may be suitable.

6. Grey "Palisade" security fencing is harsh and intimidating and does not enhance the appearance of a boundary and vertical bar and "Paladin" styles should be considered as cost effective alternatives. Railings and fences should be painted or factory powder coated in black or conifer green where this would help it to blend with the canal corridor.

7. The use of climbing plants in association with security fencing and other landscaping is welcomed. Consideration should also be given to trellis work to enhance the canalside frontage of a property. Trellis work and climbers can also be used to break up large gable walls.

8. Although private gardens demand a degree of privacy and individuality, their boundaries are often uncoordinated. The use of stained timberwork and attractive brickwork on canalside frontages in new residential developments will





**Photo 21.** Railings, in conjunction with brickwork, are attractive means of forming a boundary. The Royal Hotel, implemented this scheme with the help of Urban Programme funding.



**Photo 22.** Courtaulds Chemicals carried out boundary improvements in 1993, including "Paladin" fencing set back from the towing path with native tree and shrub planting.

encourage occupiers to make the most of the waterside setting.

9. Brick walls should be of a high quality facing brick of exterior quality. Their design should pay attention to detail and relief. Copings and piers should be included, reflecting canal characteristics where appropriate.

10. Close board timber fencing may be used where a closed boundary is required and should be treated for longevity.

11. Some canal boundaries are inevitably long and extensive and should be broken up by soft landscaping and a mix of materials.

12. Boundary treatments should, where possible, be resistant to graffiti, or surfaced in such a manner that graffiti can easily be removed.

13. Boundaries to public open spaces should be visually permeable, but should channel towing path access to official access points.

14. There may be scope for more adventurous boundary treatments on certain sites and one-off unconventional solutions will be welcomed.

**3.24** British Waterways and Coventry City Council will be pleased to explore with landowners solutions to boundary treatment which strike a balance between security, privacy and aesthetic appeal. In addition, grant aid to enhance existing boundaries may be available. Contact addresses are shown on page 57 and recom-

mended styles and specifications are shown in Background Report 2F.

## ACCESS

**3.25** Coventry's Canal has an important role as a green pedestrian link through the City. Despite the low priority given to towing path access by local residents and canal users (see paragraph 3.43), the provision and maintenance of frequent access points is nevertheless important if this informal recreation function is to be enhanced. Managed access points can help to control unwelcome activities such as motorcycling and balance the needs of people with the needs of wildlife. Attractive and safe access points can attract new users to the canal, increasing "visual supervision" which, in turn, reduces the risk of vandalism and abuse. Access points are often the passing motorist's or pedestrian's only glimpse of the canal environment. Their appearance will influence the overall perception of the canal corridor. A little investment in the condition and safety of access points can go a long way towards raising these perceptions.

**3.26** The canal must not be seen in isolation but as part of a wider network of open spaces. Where possible, canalside pocket parks may be laid out on adjacent derelict land to create an inviting entrance to the waterway. Such opportunities exist at Freehold Street, Old Church Road and at New Inn Bridge.

**3.27** Access to the canal from private land is also encouraged where it involves the positive use of the canalside. Lunch-time sitting areas for employees, private gardens and waterside promenades at retail and leisure developments can all benefit from a waterside location.



**3.28** Access may be purely visual, such as a view along the canal from a bridge or from an office building overlooking the waterway. Visual access should be encouraged where it does not impinge upon the character of the waterway, so that the canal retains a positive relationship with its surroundings. The canal was built for active use. Access, whether visual or physical, adds life and continuity to the waterway environment, as well as increasing security for users. Access should, however, be balanced with the need to preserve the tranquillity and wildlife of Coventry's Canal. The following guidelines aim to achieve this balance.

1. Developments which close off existing official towing path access should seek to provide compensatory provision.

2. The provision and upgrading of pedestrian access to the towing path and canalside from public and private land is welcomed. British Waterways and the City Council will work with canalside landowners to provide new accesses and upgrade existing official and unofficial accesses.

3. Where possible, access improvements should

incorporate ramps and gates which allow access by wheelchair and pushchair users, whilst deterring motorcycles. Coventry City Council can provide a standard specification for gates which achieve this objective.

4. Design and materials should reflect the character of the canal and create a welcoming entrance to the waterway. Bricks, sets and traditional materials may be suitable, with associated tree and shrub planting where space permits.

5. Where private developments are sited adjacent to the canal, the opportunity for private access to the canal bank or towing path should be taken if it makes positive use of the canal.

6. Boundary fencing may be set back to provide space for private wharfs and outdoor seating areas by the canal for employees or residents. The design of such areas should be sensitive to the character of the waterway, with attention to the use of materials, boundary design and appropriate planting.



**Photo 23.** Where possible, access improvements should incorporate ramps to allow access by wheelchair and pushchair users.



## WATER QUALITY

**3.29** Canals are more sensitive to pollution than rivers and it is essential to protect Coventry's canal from the damaging effects of pollution from adjacent industrial processes and to minimise dumping and fly tipping. Any reduction in water quality could have a serious effect on the canal's wildlife. Coventry's Canal has in the past suffered from pollution by industrial discharges. In recent years, however, the situation has improved due to the closure of some factories, the modernisation of others, the obligations of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and improved monitoring by the National Rivers Authority.

**3.30** British Waterways' policy is to aim for a minimum water quality of Class 2 ("fair") on the National Water Classification System, and where this is achieved, to prevent deterioration. This system comprises 5 classes from 1A and 1B ("good quality") to Class 4 ("poor quality"). Class 2 is the minimum standard required for amenity uses and coarse fisheries. This is also the National River Authority's Quality Objective and often Class 2 quality is the best that can be achieved in a canal. A Class 2 water quality has now been achieved on Coventry's Canal. The following guidelines are intended to maintain this quality.

1. The discharge of polluted effluent into the canal should be avoided.
2. British Waterways will discourage new surface

water discharges, since Coventry's Canal pound is at full capacity. Any discharges must, however, be licensed with British Waterways Midlands and South West Region, who must be satisfied that the canal is capable of taking any increase in water volumes without affecting safety or operational issues. The cost of any new weirage requirements would be in addition to a commercial negotiation.

3. Only clean uncontaminated surface water will normally be licensed. British Waterways retains the right to sample licensed discharges and terminate licenses.

4. Where necessary, British Waterways will work closely with the National Rivers Authority to ensure a minimum Class 2 water quality.

5. To prevent the risk of accidental pollution and avoid the need for additional discharge weirs and surface water run-off from new developments will not normally be permitted to drain into the canal.

**3.31** Both British Waterways and the National Rivers Authority can offer advice on water quality and pollution. Contact addresses are shown on page 57.