

# AINA CASE STUDY

## Tourism and business development

### Oxford Canal: Rugby Canal Corridor Study



Sketch prepared to show the planned vision for Hillmorton Locks on the Oxford Canal in Rugby. The proposals included the conversion of historic buildings, new craft workshops, a shop for visitors, enhanced access, and landscape and car parking improvements. The corridor study helped generate grants and funds to carry the ideas through to full implementation, in the heart of a conservation area.

#### ***Successful use of funding opportunities enabled implementation of a wide range of canalside proposals***

This corridor study was jointly prepared by British Waterways and Rugby Borough Council to examine opportunities to improve and regenerate the Oxford Canal in the Rugby Borough area. The study was driven by the need to increase tourism in Rugby – both day visits and overnight stays - whilst also seeking to diversify employment opportunities. This led to the successful use of EU funds, specifically allocated for areas that had suffered from job losses in the defence-based industries, which helped pay for the study and some of the subsequent projects.

The Oxford Canal skirts around the north of Rugby town centre, and offers access to pleasant countryside, as well as a number of former canal 'loops' which were isolated when improvements took place in the 19th century. A number of boat hire companies operate in or close to Rugby, where the Oxford Canal is a popular cruising route.

The study helped create a new focus for Rugby's waterway and included a full assessment of its landscape setting, history and heritage, leisure and recreation facilities, and the ways in which the canal corridor could be more closely linked to the town centre. Strategy plans were prepared for several key themes from which ideas and possibilities for improvement were planned.

With the EU funding, and contributions from other partners, the study quickly moved into a three year implementation phase. Works included towpath surfacing and access points, information and interpretation panels, a new footbridge to help linkages to the town centre and a landmark sculpture developed with input from schools and the local community. Alongside the conversion of some redundant historic buildings, a dozen new craft units were developed at the heart of the Hillmorton Locks Conservation Area which have been occupied by a range of local businesses.

Project outputs were the result of partnership work and a commitment to find appropriate funding. Rugby Borough Council were pleased to have supported the study: "The corridor study, undertaken in partnership with British Waterways, achieved far more than we initially envisaged. Visitors and residents have dramatically increased their use of the canal, making the study worth every penny."