

# **HAYES TOWN PARTNERSHIP**

**c/o Botwell Green Library East Avenue Hayes UB3 2HW**

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Michael Briginshaw  
Planning  
Hillingdon Council  
Civic Centre  
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Dear Michael Briginshaw

## **UNION PARK UP4 NORTH HYDE GARDENS HAYES UB3 4QQ COMMENTS ON PLANNING APPLICATION 75111/APP/2025/739**

I refer to the above planning application submitted on behalf of Ark UP4 Ltd for the construction of a fourth data centre on the former Bulls Bridge Industrial Estate site in North Hyde Gardens Hayes and I wish to submit the following comments on behalf of the Hayes Town Partnership and the Hillingdon Canals Partnership:

### **Principle of development**

We have no objections to the proposal in principle but would like to make sure that full account is taken of the relationship of the development to the Grand Union Canal, the travel options for employees, the connections with Brunel University and Uxbridge College and the need to maximise job opportunities for local people.

### **Landscaping**

When completed, the Union Park Data Centre will have a major impact on the local area because of its scale and massing. This will be especially true for the residents of Hayes Village on the opposite side of the canal and for users of the canal. Good landscaping is therefore essential in minimising any adverse effects and this has been largely achieved in the proposed design except for the boundary with the towpath. The strip of land adjacent to the security fence is in an unkempt condition and is used from time to time for drug-taking and rough sleeping. The presence of unknown persons in the undergrowth deters some people from using the towpath. It is appreciated that the land is not in the ownership of the applicants but the Canals Partnership requests that they should enter into an agreement with the Canal & River Trust to undertake regular maintenance in the interests of all parties.

## Travel plan

It is submitted that the Travel Plan gives insufficient attention to the potential of the canal towpath to play a significant role in encouraging employees to walk or cycle to and from work. Passing reference is made to “The Grand Union Canal Walk” but in the opinion of both Partnerships the towpath is the shortest and most direct route to the site for anybody who uses Hayes & Harlington Station or comes from the Town Centre. A journey along Station Road, Nestles Avenue and North Hyde Gardens is extremely lengthy and it is unlikely to be used by many.

The Council and the Canal and River Trust have an ambitious programme to upgrade the towpath from the Bulls Bridge junction through Hayes Town Centre to Stockley Park and onwards to West Drayton. This is being done in stages as funding opportunities arise for the negotiation of Section 106 agreements with the developers of sites near to the canal. Ark are contributing to this programme and the work they have done to improve the access at North Hyde Gardens has already transformed that particular location. Once all sections have been completed the towpath will offer an attractive place for people to walk and cycle.

Currently the stretch of the towpath between the Town Centre and Bulls Bridge is little-used by the general public because there is no real destination on which to focus attention. As a result, it is a fairly isolated thoroughfare and it is quite intimidating especially for lone women. The Ark development provides the opportunity to change that situation and it is interesting to note that during construction of the first three phases of Union Park a considerable number of the construction workers have been using this route to go to and from the station or to their cars parked at the Navnat Centre in Printinghouse Lane. This is making the towpath feel much safer for others but the challenge will be how to sustain this once construction is completed and the numbers reduce. The Travel Plan needs to be revisited so that it can come up with some more radical proposals on how to encourage more people to walk and cycle.

## Lighting of towpath

Both the Canals Partnership and the Hayes Town Partnership believe that the lighting of the towpath is one practical way that would encourage more people to use it both as pedestrians and cyclists. Light from the data centres will spread onto the towpath along the frontage of the site but the section under the railway bridge and into Western View will remain very off-putting. We believe that lighting along this short stretch would be a significant improvement and lead to a realistic and safe level of use. The possible adverse effect on bats has been mentioned to us but it is important to emphasise that we are not proposing street lighting columns. Low level lighting of towpaths has been used successfully in other urban locations and we would like to see it installed here.

### Bulls Bridge improvement project

The Canals Partnership and the Canal & River Trust have devised a series of improvement schemes aimed at encouraging greater use of the towpath by walkers and cyclists at various locations across the Borough and one of these envisages enhancements to the area under the A312 flyover which is just to the east of Union Park. The area is currently underused and subject to drug-taking, which together with extensive graffiti and tagging creates an alien environment. The outline scheme proposes the installation of an outside climbing wall and properly designed urban art. The Partnership believes that once implemented these improvements would make the area into a destination and provide a much more pleasing landscape than exists at present. It would therefore like the Council and Ark to consider entering into a Section 106 agreement to meet the cost of the scheme.

### Links with educational establishments

From previous discussions with data centre operators it is understood that there is a current shortage of skilled staff in the industry. With the rapid increase in the number of centres needed for the widespread extension of artificial intelligence that shortage can only get worse. With this in mind, the Hayes Town Partnership has encouraged those proposing data centres to contact Brunel University, Uxbridge College and local secondary schools. In the case of Ark there has been some contact with the College but not the University. The Partnership requests that ways be explored of informing and engaging local students so that they are encouraged and equipped to enter the data centre industry

### Local recruitment

The Council has in place a well-established system for providing job opportunities in the construction phase of major developments. There does not appear to be any similar system for operational functions. It is accepted that the specialist nature of data centres inevitably means that technical staff will be recruited from far and wide. However, it is submitted that roles such as security, cleaning, grounds maintenance and administration could be competed for by local people if they knew that the vacancies were available. Large developers tend to recruit to these posts by using central London-based agencies but the Hayes Town Partnership would like to see a more coordinated local recruitment exercise and requests that this be secured as a condition of any planning permission that is granted.

Yours sincerely

**David Brough**  
**Chair**  
**Hayes Town Partnership &**  
**Hillingdon Canals Partnership**