

# Ted Baker plans for 'Ugly Brown Building' under fire Fashion giant's HQ 'would destroy canal'

A LEADING British fashion label's plans to radically expand its Camden Town headquarters have been met with fierce criticism by a canal heritage group.

Clothing brand Ted Baker wants to demolish an office block – known affectionately by the firm as the Ugly Brown Building – it part-owns in St Pancras Way. In its place it would build a new estate rising up to 11 storeys.

The project would include its HQ, a hotel, new housing and shops. Public courtyards and a square would offer access to the canal, where the firm plans to create new moorings.

By redeveloping the site, it says that it will safeguard and future-proof its presence in Camden.

The plans would bring more jobs, as well as homes, restaurants and shops to an area currently seen as a no-man's land between King's Cross and Camden Town, the firm claims.

But objectors to the plans maintain that the project represents a massive overdevelopment alongside the historic Regent's Canal.

They say that it treats the industrial waterway as nothing more than a leisure facility, ignoring other potential uses.

by DAN CARRIER

Friends of Regent's Canal pressure group chairman Ian Shacklock told the *New Journal* that the project as it stood would ruin a significant stretch of the canal. It was a missed opportunity to create a new neighbourhood with a positive relationship to the waterway.

"It pushes all acceptable boundaries for height and bulk and will destroy the canal's attraction as an open space," he said.

"These buildings would be fine alongside an elevated motorway or railway but they are totally unsympathetic to a narrow canal."

He added that the canal offered a viable alternative to road freight.

"The designers and the council have failed yet again to recognise the canal as a functional asset," he said.

"They could have exploited this location as an ideal access point for transferring supplies between the canal and its neighbouring road, where cargo bikes and electric vans could have contributed to an integrated transport strategy.

"Instead, the whole waterfront has been pictured as a recreational precinct adjoining a boating lake."



Artist's impression of the new Ted Baker HQ with hotel, homes and shops by the canal

A spokesman for developer Reef Estates said: "Our proposals will open up a stretch of the canal that is currently underappreciated and create new public open spaces on the canal edge to be enjoyed by those living, working or visiting in the area.

"Our plans include a significant amount of new publicly-accessible space, including an open square at the centre of the scheme, a retail street linking Granary Street to the new square and St Pancras Way, and a canalside garden linking the existing greenspace on the canal edge. All proposed new spaces will

be wheelchair-accessible."

He added: "Throughout the planning process we have consulted extensively with community groups, conservation groups, businesses and residents and have taken their feedback on board where appropriate.

"As a result we have made significant changes to the plans, including a reduction in height of the tallest building from 15 to 11 storeys and reducing the massing of buildings."

The Town Hall has yet to confirm when the scheme will go to the planning committee for consideration by councillors.