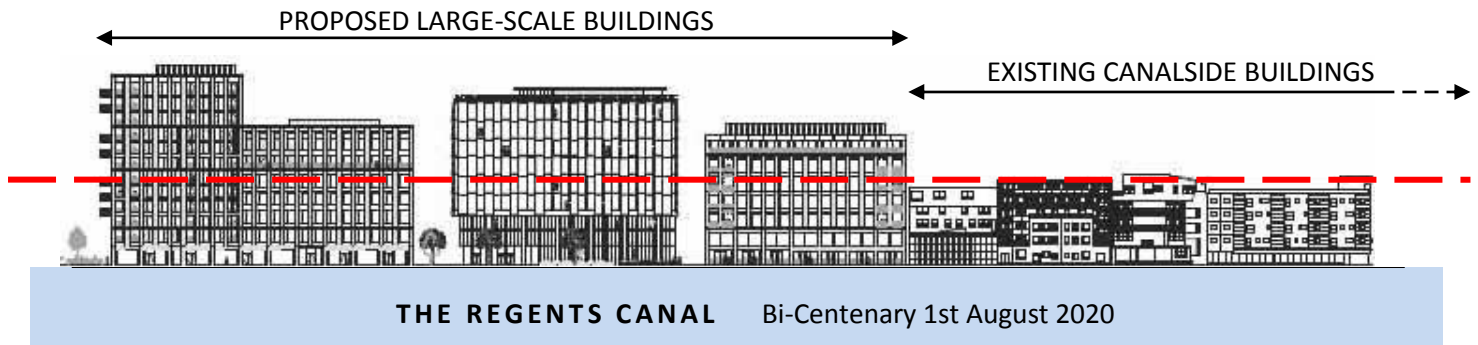


THE REGENTS NETWORK

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A WATERWAYS RESPONSE TO THE OVERDEVELOPMENT OF 2-6 ST PANCRAS WAY, NW1



LB Camden Planning Application Ref: 2017/5497/P – **OBJECTION**

No excuse

The applicant's elevation (above) shows how out of step the proposed buildings are compared with the heights of the existing buildings along the Regents Canal to the north (shown by the red dotted line), and also considerably larger than the current buildings on the development site that were there (with consent) when the applicants purchased the site. There's no excuse for breaking the bounds so shamelessly.

Forewarned

There is no excuse that the applicants were not aware of the sensitive character of the Regents Canal and the Conservation Area. Apart from the requirements and specifications in the planning policies in the Camden Local Plan and more directly in the London Plan and its Blue Ribbon Network Policies, the applicants were forewarned by the Regents Network at a face to face meeting (9 August 2016) of the importance of the Regents Canal and its intrinsic sensitivities, and that they could not expect to be permitted to build tall buildings. When the applicants were asked about the height of buildings that they were planning they made no reply, which was noted at the time as being of concern that they were avoiding revealing the issue.

Out of touch?

The concerns seem to have been justified, and the planning policies and Blue Ribbon Network requirements have been swept aside by the applicants. They have shown little restraint and moderation, and their development is excessive, even though it is claimed that there has been a reduction in scale. It is worrying to consider what the original gross intentions of the applicants could have been for this sensitive waterside site in a significant conservation area.

The scale and appearance of the unwelcome proposed buildings are out of character with Camden Town which is predominantly low level with the characteristic terrace housing and commercial properties. The development should fit in with the local architectural 'grain', and work together with the current tens of thousands of other residents and occupiers in the locality.

New arrivals are welcome, but not if they are intent on muscling in with grand notions of turning Camden Town into Croydon or Canary Wharf! They should consider fitting in with Camden Town and the local residents, rather than seeming to focus on the pursuit of huge profits. This would be exploitation of the wrong kind.

Does not fit in

Not only are the proposed buildings far too high and shut the Regents Canal in, they are not a pretty

sight, and are very unsuitable for the special character of the admired canal. They just do not fit in and seem to be ‘off the shelf designs’ rather than carefully and individually designed to suit the heritage waterside setting and to complement it.

Are the people shown in the illustration walking along the towpath admiring the huge edifices or just tolerating them? Perhaps the children are being shown examples of current architecture to admire.



Regardless of the aesthetics the sad fact is that the sky is blotted out and the sunshine is seriously compromised. Just imagine how clear and refreshing the same scene would be without those buildings dominating the view, and with the sky and the canal the main features.

Loss of sky and open space

It is plain to see from the illustration that even if the buildings were half the height they would still be inappropriately enclosing the canal, and still taking away a large patch of sky. This could be resolved if all the buildings when lowered were also set well back from the canal edge, preferably much more than the width of the towpath opposite, which is a bit restrictive (historically!). This would result in retaining the open character of the Regents Canal as required in the London Plan policies which categorise London’s Blue Ribbon Network as ‘open space’ with the same consideration and protection as a park (LP Policy 2.18, Table 7.2).

It should be noted that sections of the existing brown building are set back and do not oppress the canal scene, especially at the south end.

Calm and steady

The applicant’s illustration of a busy and bustling canal is not realistic, and it is wrong-headed to attempt to ‘animate’ the canal, as unfortunately is often suggested. Our canals are quiet havens, and



even when busy they are peaceful, steady and calm. Also it would be helpful to see the applicants illustrating boats navigating along the canal rather than lying static along the banks, and it is the objective of Regents Network and others to bring the canals back to life.

The boats need not run straight past the application site, particularly if it is redesigned and more attractive, and visitor moorings could be provided for passing boats. This is the sort of involvement

from waterside properties that would be appreciated, and of course offers of financial assistance which is required for the maintenance and upkeep of the canals. The waterside sites take such great advantages from the canals and it is only right that they give something back, on a regular basis.

Waiting to be used

Further involvement of the site with the Regents Canal would be for a variety of goods and freight to be carried on the canal. In the applicant's Transport Statement there is a muddled note about waste collection (Para 7.38) from the kerbside (in St Pancras Way!) or a loading bay, or from a nearby street perhaps. Why no mention of using the Regents Canal?

There is a direct route by canal from Camden Town to the Waste Centre at Edmonton, and to where Camden's waste vehicles travel each day through London's overburdened streets. The emerging North London Waste Plan promotes the use of the canals for waste disposal, and some of the details of a water freight network are developing.

Even if the water freight transport is not yet up and running, provision should be made by the applicant for a wharf facility at the new development to handle the waste. The freight boats may well be operating by the time the development is planned and built.

This is confirmed in the Transport for London response to the application, stating that a condition should be made "encouraging servicing of the development by canal boat during both site clearance and construction, and once the building is occupied".

The centrepiece

It is of concern that the applicant in the planning documents refers to the proposed buildings as "the visual centrepiece" of the locality, and that the buildings have "distinctive character", yet there is nothing to give any credit to the heritage canal that has been flowing gently alongside the application site for nearly 200 years.

The Regents Canal is the "centrepiece" of the locality, and the proposed new buildings should not take that away from the canal. There is a certain amount of concern that the applicant does not give the canal its due appreciation, but nevertheless exploits the canalside location and the financial gain that it provides with an over development, knowingly. It is not fair – or right.

The blight of balconies

The canal elevation seems to have some serious shortcomings, but the addition of some obtrusive and oversized balconies glaring out at the canal caps it all. Many streets and locations around London have been blighted with excessive balconies, most of which stand empty and ugly.

The most appropriate and useful balconies are internal, and they provide a far more useful space which becomes available as part of the residence. Note that balconies cannot be included as amenity space, according to policy.

Regents Network and other organisations are suggesting in the consultation for the new London Plan that the matter of balconies is considered for inclusion, and that the proliferation of external balconies is regulated or rationalised in some manner where they overhang waterways, open spaces and views.



Afterthought

If only the applicant's professional architects and developers had not overlooked the London Plan Policy 7.24 which states that "**the starting point for consideration of development and use of the Blue Ribbon Network and land alongside it must be the water. The water is the unique aspect**" (Para 7.71), then this potential tragedy for our Regents Canal could have been avoided.

Del Brenner

Regents Network and

a member of the Regents Canal CAAC and Friends of Regents Canal

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