

Camden Planning Committee
Thursday 19th July 2018

2-6 St Pancras Way, London NW1 0TB
Application Ref: 2017/5497/P

Presentation to the Planning Committee from Regents Network

I am Del Brenner of the Regents Network, with a wide range of waterway interests, and a member of the Regents Canal Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

I speak in opposition to this application.

The Regents Network does not oppose building development beside the Regents Canal provided that the scale and impact of the development does not affect the open space character of the canal, and does not in any way compromise or detract from the heritage importance and environment of the Regents Canal.

This unwelcome development is opposed, as it is an extreme example of excessive bulky development in a very sensitive and important heritage and environmental location.

It is not that it does not quite fit in. It is aggressive and overbearing.

Over many months the development has been tinkered with by the applicants, to change its appearance and architectural details, (its been endlessly fiddled with).

But the applicants have doggedly refused to address the greatest problem that is widely raised, that the buildings are too high and bulky. They dominate the historic Regents Canal, closing it in, and throwing it into shadow. And seriously affect the towpath and the residents on the other side of the canal.

But the key issue, is that the Regents Canal (and not the development) should be the centrepiece of that area. And it is the central element of the Regents Canal Conservation Area.

The canal has been there for 200 years (and is coming up for its bicentenary). That could be a great occasion, and should be celebrated at this development location, and celebrated in this application. It's not!

The Regents Canal is recognised as an important Heritage Asset nationally and has been conferred as a public asset in perpetuity, by government (Transfer of Functions Order 2012).

In case you may not realise, that means that we all own the canal. It is our canal. It is not owned by the Canal and River Trust Limited. Britain's canal network, all 3,000 miles of it, we all own it.

I suppose that may also give us all here a collective responsibility towards the Regents Canal.

So, this short section of the canal network in Camden Town that the proposed development will devastate is a part of a national network, and the borough must be mindful of the fact that they have responsibility for the well-being and protection of part of a national asset. Its not just local. Its as important as that.

This is a big responsibility that Camden and this Planning Committee must take on their shoulders.

However, there is a resolution to this liability. It is clearly outlined in the planning legislation. There are some sound Camden policies in the Local Plan, and of course some good guidance in the London Plan. And the NPPF is very supportive of heritage considerations.

The waterway section in the London Plan opens with the clear assertion that London's waterways (that's the canals up there with the Thames) – that the waterways are of strategic importance to London. – ‘strategic importance’.

That sets the Regents Canal a notch or two above property development.

Apart from protecting the Regents Canal from negative influences (such as this development) there is a long way to go to bring the waterways back to life and regenerate the transport and environmental features that will bring so much benefit to our capital, and to this borough in the future. Lets see the canals used as a busy and gentle transport route again.

I should point out that there is a new water transport project being developed in West London based on the Grand Union Canal in Park Royal where there is a cluster of over 2000 businesses and industries impatient to use their canal for transport.

The project is developing well, and don't forget that the Grand Union Canal over there in West London runs directly to Camden Town here, and very soon the canal transport project will develop in this borough to great advantage to Camden, and its economy and importance.

Recognition of that puts a fresh perspective on this planning application which must ensure that no harm or sidelining of the Regents Canal occurs.

In conclusion:

This application must not be allowed to degrade and scupper the potential flourishing future of the Regents Canal, its use in the future, and its pleasures for the community for years to come. We can't lose all that.

But consider this: it would be all the more worthwhile if developers, such as we have here, will come to their senses and develop and design their waterside buildings to be part of this great and inviting future.

It's the future, the long term, that must be considered.

Thank you.