

**From:** secretary [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 18 April 2019 20:44  
**To:** Planning [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Callaghan, Patricia (Councillor) [REDACTED] Cotton, Richard (Councillor) [REDACTED] Pietragnoli, Lazzaro (Councillor) [REDACTED] 'Ian Shacklock' [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Consultee letter for Planning Application: 2019/1410/P

Alyce Keen  
Regeneration and Planning  
Development Management  
London Borough of Camden

Dear Alyce Keen,

Planning Application Ref: 2019/1410/P OBJECT  
Walkers Quay, NW1  
250 Camden High Street NW1 8QS

Something seems to be missing in this application – heritage, and anything to do with the Regent's Canal and the esteemed Conservation Area.

The application is obviously for some commercial purpose, to make money out of the tourists, Camden Town style.

It is likely that the roof area of the premises is intended to be used as a seating area for the cafe, with tables and chairs and most probably unsightly umbrellas. I recall the lost battle with the umbrellas on the Lock Cottage, which as far as I remember appeared without planning consent but then were allowed to remain.

I also recall that there was an attempt many years ago to make the Walkers Quay roof into a cafe area, but it was turned down. It is necessary for an investigation to be made by Camden of any historical planning issues.

It is a bit dubious that no mention is made of the reason for this planning application. Perhaps the applicant realises that extending the cafe area on to the roof might (still) be a bit contentious. I think that safety factors were also one of the considerations at the time.

#### Conserve our heritage

The Regent's Canal and the Conservation Area need to be protected from tacky commercialisation. At least some patches of respect and nostalgia for the long and distinctive character of Camden Town, and the wonderful canal, should remain intact – even in the midst of the tasteless market setting.

The premises of No.250 once upheld the meaning of the name and function of Walkers Quay, and was a centrepiece of the canal's life and importance, yet nowadays it is fronted and dominated by yet another food and coffee outlet. There are dozens of them, but only one Regent's Canal and only one notable conservation area.

Considering the building's history and (previous) track record, Camden should consider positively that the waterway status and use of the Walkers Quay premises should be retained. Regrettably it seems that the current management may have lost its way.

There may be nothing wrong for the premises to have a licence for food and drink, but for this to become in effect a 'change of use' to Use Class A3, and for the cafe to subsume the Regent's Canal and its importance in such a central location, would be a step too far and is something that LB Camden should consider more carefully, and take responsibility more seriously for its long standing heritage.

It is suggested that Camden should take on board considerations of restrictions on use of the roof space, and the potential negative visual effect on the heritage. Also of the borough should act responsibly to the heritage and importance of Camden Town's true character and significance.

The street frontage should retain a traditional waterway appearance, as a canal facility and with recognition that the premises is in the Regent's Canal Conservation Area and has a long standing and attractive trip boat service on the canal.

It is noted that a recent planning application (2018/6206) for a new and unsuitable street frontage to the premises to feature the cafe usage was withdrawn. Any future street frontage designs should reflect the Regents Canal heritage, the waterways character and the trip boat service.

#### Heritage policies

The Regent's Canal is a major Heritage Asset of course, but also note that the premises and function of Walkers Quay is a recognised non-designated heritage asset, which should be taken into account in determining planning applications (see NPPF).

There are strong heritage policies in the LB Camden Local Plan which states that:

“the Council . . . must pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas”

and also:

“the Council expects that development not only conserves, but also takes opportunities to enhance, or better reveal the significance of heritage assets and their setting” (Para 7.41).

The Camden Local Plan also makes reference to the NPPF which states that:

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) . . . They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal (Para 190), [underlining added].

Then there are numerous heritage policies in the London Plan, now strengthened in the emerging draft London Plan, Chapter 7 (including Policy HC1) which Camden planning department should consider.

All these policies clearly question the dominance of ‘catering use’ over waterway function and heritage, as indicated in this application.

#### Agent of Change

There is also the matter of considering the ‘Agent of Change Principle’ (NPPF Para 123) which is now elaborated in detail in the Draft London Plan (Policy D12). This issue has been considered for quite a while, and is now coming to the fore, and its wider scope is being more readily recognised and implemented.

The principle is also briefly mentioned in the Camden Local Plan, but only with the limited remit of the impact of noise, and secured by legal agreement (Para 6.93).

However, it should be noted that the Agent of Change Principle has significantly developed, and is now beginning to be accepted in terms of policy guidelines and governance not only of noise, but also of ‘other nuisances’ and situations.

In this planning application, for instance, the more recent catering requirements should not engulf (and restrict) the well-established waterway and heritage uses of the application premises, and which is understood to be what the developing Agent of Change Principle is now expressing.

#### A new look

There is no reason why the long-established Regent’s Canal and its heritage should not thrive as it has done for the past 200 years. That would include the enhancement and relevance of 250 Camden High Street, which should not be dominated by yet another coffee shop. The premises and street frontage should be promoting and celebrating the Regent’s Canal, and could, for instance, also be developed as a canal chandlery supplying useful equipment and a wide range of gifts and attractive souvenirs. Something of that kind would suit the important waterway setting, and what an asset it would be to the canal location and Camden Town. What an eye opener!

Regrettably we already have one great canal premises in the area that has been taken over as a coffee shop – the Regent’s Canal listed Lock Cottage.

#### Bicentenary sidelined?

Perhaps an upgraded canal premises at 250 Camden High Street would help to celebrate the Bicentenary of the Regent’s Canal on 1st August 2020 which is just over a year away. Not much attention has been paid to the important event so far.

The Regent’s Canal has had a very busy and commercially important 200 year life, and it is only in the past decade that it has been sidelined and has become progressively more static. What a waste of a huge highway flowing through the centre of our capital. It is about time our waterways were brought back to life, and perhaps the bicentenary may draw attention to the great potential and activity of our canals. And perhaps LB Camden may support and promote the transport use of the canals as their contribution to the bicentenary of the Regent’s Canal.

At least LB Camden should have greater consideration for the Regent's Canal and reject the above application. Then we could look forward to the next 200 years of prosperity for our canals.

Can you see any cafe celebrating the Regent's Canal Bicentenary!

Yours sincerely,

DEL BRENNER  
Regents Network and  
associate of London Forum and Just Space and  
member of the Regents Canal Conservation Area Advisory Committee