



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

Camden Borough Council
Regeneration and Planning Development
Management
London
WC1H 9JE

Your Ref 2021/2472/P

Our Ref CRTR-PLAN-2021-33229

26th July 2021

Dear Mr Fowler,

Proposal: Removal of existing metal walkway and boundary railings. Infill of existing carpark and erection of four storey building (Ground to 3rd floor and green roof) comprising office workspace (Class E), associated landscaping, mews improvements and cycle provision

Location: 150 Royal College Street, London

Waterway: Regent's Canal

Thank you for this consultation.

We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals & rivers. Our waterways contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities and economies, creating attractive and connected places to live, work, volunteer and spend leisure time. These historic, natural and cultural assets form part of the strategic and local green-blue infrastructure network, linking urban and rural communities as well as habitats. By caring for our waterways and promoting their use we believe we can improve the wellbeing of our nation. The Trust is a statutory consultee in the Development Management process.

The main issues relevant to the Trust as statutory consultee on this application are:

- a) The impact on the character and appearance of the Regent's Canal
- b) The impact on the biodiversity and water quality of the Regent's Canal
- c) The impact on the structural integrity of the waterway wall and the Regent's Canal

Based on the information available our substantive response, as required by the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), is to advise that suitably worded **conditions and a legal agreement are necessary** to address these matters. Our advice and comments follow:

- a) The impact on the character and appearance of the Regent's Canal

We have no objection to the principle of developing the site, which largely comprises a car park currently. However, the vegetation that has developed between the canal and the car park (and effectively screens the latter) does contribute positively to the visual amenity of the canal corridor and the Regent's Canal Conservation Area specifically, and this loss therefore needs to be adequately addressed and mitigated against.

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The mass of the building generally feels appropriate, although it does step up towards the bridge, when viewed from the canal, and we would like to have seen the parapet height of the adjacent canalside building carried through or articulated in some way.

We would have preferred to see the canal façade stepped back in line with the adjacent canalside building, to give that original canal warehouse building greater prominence, and provide a more meaningful planting strip to the canal, in order to try and retain a greater sense of the positive impacts the current green space provides. This would also have removed what seems to be a slightly uncomfortable undercroft at ground floor level facing onto the canal.

The brickwork elements to the proposed building appear high quality, with deep reveals to the windows with stepped heads, and articulated brickwork, all of which adds to the visual interest of the proposals. We have some reservation about the detail of the metal pilasters to the ground floor facing the canal, and the design of the top floor. Our preference would be for this to be removed, and the overall height brought down, but we do acknowledge it is stepped back, and the difference in material makes it appear subservient to the principal brick element.

b) The impact on the biodiversity and water quality of the Regent's Canal

Ground Investigation

According to the Ground Investigation Report a significant risk of pollution to controlled waters has not been identified during the desk study phase. We would like to know if a second phase of ground investigation is to be undertaken.

Landscaping, ecology and overshadowing

Overshadowing can affect phytoplankton growth and subsequently the wider biodiversity of the waterspace. The submitted Daylight and Sunlight Report does not consider the impact of the development on overshadowing of the waterspace, and we would like to see this updated to include an overshadowing study that appropriately considers the Regent's Canal and its towpath.

This overshadowing will also affect the scheme's proposed planting. The landscaping of the mews area looks very good, however we do have concerns about the landscaping of the canalside 'amenity garden'. While we are pleased to note that the existing vegetation on site will be replaced by a green buffer between the building and canal edge, it would appear to be in almost permanent shade, which will limit the plants which will thrive and is likely not to be as lush as in the images supporting the application. We have seen very few planted undercroft areas succeed, without additional irrigation being required.

The replacement tree, a Dawn Redwood, seems an unusual choice, given the size it could grow to - about 1m a year to an eventual height of over 25m, which would block much of the light and views from the building. It is also likely to require a substantial root system, and we are therefore concerned about the potential impacts upon the canal wall in such proximity. We would suggest a fastigate tree, based on native species such as a birch (*Betula pendula* 'Obelisk') or beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Dawyck') although the latter may not like the potentially damp ground. This could be underplanted with a native-rich mix that includes a number of evergreen species such as Holly (*Ilex* sp.) which will retain a sense of greenery all year round.

We would therefore like to see more detail of the proposed planting scheme, including root protection close to the canal wall, and have suggested wording for a landscaping condition, below. We would like to ensure that the planting is native dominant and non-native species should be nectar rich to support bees.

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An additional enhancement to compensate for foliage loss on the canal edge and impacts of canoyoning and increased human activity, would be floating ecosystems (eg <https://www.biomatrixwater.com/floating-ecosystems/>). These would not be suitable directly outside the building due to the proximity to the bridge, but there is space along the wall to the east. These will provide much needed fish spawning habitat, valuable forage for insects and bats plus the filtering of nutrients from the waterbody. We have suggested a condition regarding this, below.

The canalside area should be inaccessible from the roadside, to avoid attracting ASB and littering behind the wall. In the landscaping management plan we would like to see consideration given to measures preventing litter reaching the canal, which is a significant resource challenge for the Trust and our customers: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/features/plastic-and-litter-in-our-canal>

Surface water drainage

We note that the submitted drainage statement advises "Rainwater collected from the roof of the new building will be collected and discharged into the canal." The applicant will need to make a satisfactory application to the Trust's Utilities team for this, and any agreement will be on commercial terms. We have requested a planning condition to cover this, below. Additionally, we would want to ensure that the water entering the canal is not going to cause pollution issues. We note that green roofs generally do not require fertiliser, as most of the plants growing on them require soils with low nutrients to thrive, and so fertiliser should not be used.

Canal water for heating and cooling

In the Energy Statement no mention is made of the potential for using a water source heat pump to provide hot water and (space) heating and cooling, despite the development's proximity to the Regent's Canal. The consultant employed by the developer has proposed to use air source heat pumps which are significantly less efficient than water source heat pumps and will increase the carbon emissions for this building, and the electricity required to power the air source heat pump. We would advise the applicant speak to the Trust's Water Development Team to discuss the potential to use the Regent's Canal for the building's heating and cooling needs, via Maurice.Bottomley@canalrivertrust.org.uk.

Lighting

Lighting is an important consideration for this site, where there is currently a dark corridor along the canal and bridge hole, which has known high bat activity. Lighting between the canal edge and the building should be <5lux, warm white, and directional, with no spill over the water surface or into the air column, which includes lighting the side of the building. The light from the large office windows is also potentially problematic at night throughout the active period for bats (May-November). Even indirect light here would impact commuting and foraging bats greatly. We would suggest that either a curfew (where all lights are switched off) at sunset is adhered to, or timed automatic roller blinds are installed to prevent light spilling over the canal corridor. This would not be required between November and May.

- a) The impact on the structural integrity of the waterway wall and the Regent's Canal

Waterway wall survey

In addition to comments above regarding the Trust needing details of landscaping and root protection to ensure that the waterway wall will not be compromised by future tree growth, we have requested a condition, below, regarding the waterway wall. This requires a full survey and schedule of repairs, prior to works commencing, to ascertain the canal wall's ability to support the development and details of any repairs needed. Repairs should be sympathetic to the character of this historic infrastructure within the Regent's Canal Conservation Area.

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Offsite contribution

We would request a contribution towards wayfinding at the Baynes Street entrance to the canal towpath (at street level) to support onward connections towards Kings Cross and Camden along the canal, which may need to be included within a S106 legal agreement.

Should planning permission be granted we request that the following **conditions and informatives are** appended to the decision notice, and we would request to be consulted on subsequent applications to discharge these.

Conditions

Surface water drainage

Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, full details of the proposed surface water drainage, for the construction, and operational phases of the development, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To determine the potential for pollution of the waterway and likely volume of water, prior to work commencing. Potential contamination of the waterway and ground water from wind blow, seepage or spillage at the site, and high volumes of water should be avoided to safeguard the waterway environment and integrity of the waterway infrastructure.

Waterway wall

Prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved, a survey of the condition of the waterway wall, and a method statement and schedule of the repairs identified shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure there is no adverse impact on the structural integrity of the waterway wall and the Regent's Canal as a result of the development.

Lighting

Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, full details of the proposed lighting scheme, to include a lux levels plan, and any mitigation for expected light spill, especially during the active period for bats between November – May, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved lighting scheme and mitigation measures should be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of ecology, visual amenity and the waterway setting.

Landscaping

Prior to the operation of the development hereby permitted, full details of a landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include boundary treatment (particularly along the canal boundary of the site), root protection, reference to plant species types, and the means of on-going maintenance. Thereafter the development should be carried out fully in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development, and the safety of waterway users and natural environment of the canal.

Ecological mitigation

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Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of proposed ecological mitigation, potentially to include marginal habitat and floating eco-systems, and details of the long-term management and maintenance of these, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure there is no adverse impact on the biodiversity of the Regent's Canal as a result of the proposed development.

Informatives

Code of Practice for Works Affecting the Canal & River Trust

The applicant/developer should refer to the current "Code of Practice for Works affecting the Canal & River Trust" to ensure that any necessary consents are obtained (<http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/for-businesses/undertaking-works-on-our-property>).

Surface water discharge

The applicant is advised that surface water discharge to the waterway will require prior consent from the Canal & River Trust. Please contact Liz Murdoch from the Canal & River Trust Utilities team (liz.murdoch@canalrivertrust.org.uk).

Encroachment

The applicant/developer is advised that any oversail, encroachment or access to the Trust's land or waterway requires written consent from the Canal & River Trust, and they should contact the Canal & River Trust's Estates team (Bernadette.McNicholas@canalrivertrust.org.uk) regarding the required agreement.

For us to monitor effectively our role as a statutory consultee, please send me a copy of the decision notice and the requirements of any planning obligation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Claire McLean MRTPI
Area Planner London

Claire.McLean@canalrivertrust.org.uk

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/planning-and-design>

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