

Section 10 - Regent's Canal

- 10.1 Regent's Canal, which is part of the Grand Union Canal, passes through many London boroughs before reaching the Thames. Within Camden, the Canal and surrounding area forms a unique corridor of historic and visual interest which, following the decline of traditional canal-related commercial activities, has been increasingly recognised as a valuable resource in terms of water-based tourism and leisure activities, informal recreation, biodiversity and its transportation potential.
- 10.2 The Council aims to conserve and enhance the existing character of the Canal and to improve its potential for recreation, transportation and wildlife. This is consistent with the Greater London Authority's 'Blue Ribbon' network, which includes Regent's Canal. This aims to enhance the use and value of canals, ensure that new development contributes to the character of waterways and canal-side areas, and protect biodiversity along London's waterways.
- 10.3 Further information and guidance on part or all of the Regent's Canal can be found in the Council's Regent's Canal Conservation Area Statement, the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement and the London Canals Committee 'Guidelines for Canalside Development' (2000). Reference should also be made to Supplementary Planning Guidance, in the form of the Camden Biodiversity Action Plan, which contains a chapter relating to Regent's Canal.

RC1 - Character and vitality of Regent's Canal

The Council will only grant planning permission for development that will maintain or enhance the character and vitality of Regent's Canal. The Council will consider:

- a) the existing openness or enclosure of the specific part of the Canal;
- b) if any structures encroach on, cantilever or bridge over the Canal, its banks or towpaths;
- c) if the height of the proposal reflects that of existing canalside buildings;
- d) the contribution made to the creation of active frontages onto the Canal;
- e) the provision for new public access to the Canal by opening up new footpaths, providing direct secure access onto the towpath from surrounding areas, or enhancing existing public access for all users;
- f) opportunities to provide public art, signposting and informative material along the Canal corridor;
- g) opportunities for reopening canal basins, particularly where this creates opportunities for new moorings, improved turning facilities for barges, or provides a focus for new activity; and
- h) opportunities to provide soft planting along the towpath or aquatic planting within the Canal to improve the quality of the towpath or to enhance biodiversity.

- 10.4 The character of Regent's Canal changes dramatically along its course, ranging from enclosed spaces to wider open spaces; hard industrial townscapes to semi-rural sections; buildings against the Canal edge to those that are set back with landscaping adjacent to the Canal. The Council wishes to maintain this diversity.
- 10.5 Encroachment, cantilevering or bridging of the Canal will have an effect on its character by enclosing the Canal and towpath. This may have a consequential impact on the use of the Canal for recreation, transportation and as a pedestrian route. Such development will also have an effect on the quality of the water environment. For example, development may shade the water, or alter the banks of the Canal that provide a habitat for particular species. Therefore, if any structures are proposed to encroach, cantilever or bridge the Canal, they should be accompanied by a risk assessment detailing the impact and mitigation measures proposed to address the harmful impacts identified.

- 10.6 The scale of canal structures, such as bridges and locks, and canalside buildings are generally small. The scale of new development should be consistent with this and should not harm existing views or skyline to, or from, the Canal. As a general guide, buildings should not exceed four domestic stories (12 metres) on either of the canal, as taken from the towpath. Buildings above four domestic storeys only occur in the Camden Lock (west) and Bonny Street sections of the Canal but this should not be taken as a guide for future development. In the Kings Cross Opportunity Area, the height of development along the canal should be guided by policies in section 9 - Kings Cross Opportunity Area.
- 10.7 The Council recognises the importance of promoting the character and vitality of the Canal, by ensuring that development along it provides a range of uses that are available throughout the day, evening and year-round. For this reason, the Council will assess proposals against criteria d) to h) of policy RC1. Where appropriate, the Council may require such matters to be provided through a planning obligation, in line with policy SD2 in section 1 - Sustainable Development. Regent's Canal is designated as a public open space, a metropolitan walk, a green corridor and a Metropolitan Site of Nature Conservation. Relevant policies for protecting and promoting the open space and biodiversity character of the Canal are N2B, N4A and N7C.

RC2 - Building use along Regent's Canal

The Council will not grant planning permission for development that would result in a loss of traditional uses and/or water-based leisure uses along Regent's Canal, unless the Council considers that it would improve the character and vitality of the Canal. The Council will consider whether:

- a) the building has remained vacant or underused due to a lack of demand for its existing use;
- b) the proposal improves direct access to and/or along the Canal;
- c) historic features and the architectural quality of the building are retained and enhanced;
- d) the development will provide a mix of uses, particularly for recreational, tourist or leisure purposes, to maximise the use and vitality of the Canal;
- e) the proposal will result in the loss of scarce canal-based facilities; and
- f) the proposed use is compatible with adjacent uses and does not have a negative environmental effect on the Canal.

- 10.8 Traditional canal uses, such as commercial, industrial and warehouse uses that relied on the waterways, have influenced the character of Regent's Canal through the design of canal-side buildings. Some of these buildings remain. However, with the decline of freight transport, the buildings have been converted to different purposes. More recent uses that have contributed to the character of Regent's Canal are recreation and leisure pursuits, such as cruising and canoeing clubs and areas used by anglers.
- 10.9 The Council recognises the importance of retaining canal-side premises for traditional and/or water-reliant uses as one means of protecting the character of the area. It is also important to retain buildings for these uses in order to provide for possible future demand for freight transport and light industrial uses which will benefit from canal side locations, and to promote leisure activity on Regent's Canal. Therefore, the Council will favour the retention or reinstatement of such activities along the Canal.
- 10.10 Notwithstanding the above, as the vitality of the Canal may be jeopardised if buildings remain vacant or under-used until appropriate uses are proposed for them, the Council may consider proposals that do not involve traditional or water-reliant uses. The matters that the Council will consider when assessing such applications are set out in criteria a) to f) of policy RC2.

10.11 Where development that is not for traditional or water-based uses is proposed for buildings and/or sites that are vacant or under-used (criterion a)), the Council will expect them to have been vacant or underused for a minimum of two consecutive years, due to a lack of demand for the use. Evidence will be required that the building has been adequately marketed for an existing use over a period of no less than one year. The phrase 'scarce canal-based facilities' in criterion e) refers to facilities such as jetties, slipways, offsite transfer facilities, and access to these facilities including links to railheads.

RC3 - Permanent mooring of boats

The Council will grant planning permission for the permanent mooring of boats in locations that will not hinder navigation on the Regent's Canal, and where it considers there will be no harm to the amenity of the surrounding area. The Council will consider:

- a) whether the mooring is on the non-towpath bank;
- b) the accessibility to the mooring site; and
- c) the availability of servicing facilities.

10.12 The Council recognises the demand for the permanent mooring of boats, including houseboats on Regent's Canal. King's Cross and Cumberland Basins have potential to provide well-serviced, permanent moorings for boats, including residential moorings.

10.13 In order to function without causing problems to local amenity, permanent moorings should not interfere with pedestrian movement on the towpath, and need to be accessible and adequately serviced. When considering applications for such moorings, the Council will have regard to the London Canals Committee Guidelines for Canalside Moorings.