



King's Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee

Please reply to: Ernest James, Chair KXCAAC, 21 Antrim Mansions, London NW3 4XT

9th February 2007

By facsimile and post.

Mr Gavin Sexton
King's Cross Team
Development Control
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall Annex
Argyle Street
LONDON WC1H 8EQ

Dear Mr Sexton,

KING'S CROSS STATION,
APPLICATIONS NOS. 2006/3387/P AND 3394/L

Further to our letter of 14th September, and 12th October 2006, I am writing with the considered observations of the King's Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee on the revised submission above applications. Please see also our separate letter concerning the Great Northern Hotel component of the scheme. The committee has been greatly assisted by the provision of a full set of documents relating to the 2nd consultation.

We congratulate Network Rail and their architects on their efforts to improve facilities at King's Cross Station. We are very happy to see the Western Front restored as the main entrance to the Station and the Southern Front returned to the simplicity of its two dramatic arches on Euston Road.

However, we continue to oppose the proposals on the following grounds:

1 Western concourse

The western façade of King's Cross Station, the original main entrance front, is one of the most amazing industrial palace-fronts of 19th century architecture. Designed by Lewis Cubitt, it forms a set piece with his Granary to the North and together with St Pancras Station, constitutes probably the largest group of Grade I listed buildings in the country. They have added significance by being connected by function, part of a single progressive railway and canal development over a

limited period, and represent one of the major transport heritage sites in Europe.

The proposed domed canopy to the Western concourse effectively obscures the original façade of King's Cross Station, chopping it in half horizontally – above and below the roofline. This near-symmetrical façade, built as a series of short phases, is the original front to the Station, with its palladian central block and former *porte-cochère*, now temporarily removed.

Further visual obstructions will be caused by the departure boards to be set against the western elevation, the detailed design of which should be the subject of rigorous conditions.

A consultation meeting on 30th January 2007 with Network Rail and McAslans has failed to reassure KXCAAC that these matters have been duly considered. It would seem that fundamentals of heritage design have been ignored because Network Rail appear not to see any alternatives within the various conflicting constraints, and have not recognised, despite their claims to the contrary, the architectural importance of the setting.

We have demonstrated in our discussion document with Network Rail and also sent to English Heritage, that other design solutions exist, which would be feasible within the timescale and physical “below-ground” constraints of the project.

We remain wholly unconvinced that the present proposals, or any subsequent changes, require the abandonment of the former *porte-cochère*, currently required to be replaced at the end of the works by Act of Parliament.

We support Camden LB in the objections in relation to cleaning and maintenance of the domed roof.

2 Peripheral canopies, footbridge, Platform Y

We reiterate our concerns as in our letter of the 12th October 2006, (which have only been addressed in the changes in the most superficial way), to the perimeter canopies, Platform Y and the treatment of the new passenger foot-bridge. We are aware that other bodies have expressed detailed concern about these matters and shall not elaborate this ourselves in the present response, which does not nullify our earlier comments.

3 Integration into commercial setting

KXCAAC remains sceptical about the integration of the concourse into the commercial urban fabric surrounding it, particularly the southern part of Argent's development. It is apparent from discussion with Network Rail that no real discussion with Argent about the

exchange of people between the concourse and its surroundings has occurred. This can only be to the detriment of passenger movement and thus to the heritage setting of the station, which if overcrowded with ad-hoc solutions put in place, will rapidly deteriorate.

4 Integration of transport and pedestrian movements

We remain unconvinced about the integration of passenger movement across the site between the two stations, and that it has been sufficiently integrated with Argent's plans to make this narrow space between the Great Northern and St Pancras the gateway to the Railway Land development. It was apparent from our discussions with network rail that they are not happy with Argent's plan for the Boulevard.

In this respect, though it is not strictly a part of our heritage brief, we must support Transport for London in their concerns as to whether this design is "fit for purpose".

5 Premature timing of this application

In the light of the foregoing concerns in respect of transport integration, the likelihood of judicial review of the Argent application for the Railways Lands and the prospect of the planning decision having to be re-taken, it is the view of KXCAAC that consideration and approval of this application in effective isolation is premature.

It is not believed, bearing in mind the considerable work yet to be done to the below ground infrastructure, currently on site, that undue delay would be caused by allowing more in depth consideration.

6 Conclusion

While expressing our enthusiasm for the opportunities contained within these proposals, we wish to record and reiterate our planning objections to the drawbacks in the design approach and the development of much of the details of the scheme as described above, and our hope and confidence that a design be adopted which will fulfil the enormous potential offered.

Yours faithfully,

Ernest James
Chair, KXCAAC

cc English Heritage - Zoe Croad