

King's Cross Triangle: Cally Rail Group urges Islington Councillors to reject Argent's affordable housing proposals

The Cally Rail Group will ask Councillors at the West Area Planning Sub-committee on Tuesday to reject Argent's current proposals for affordable housing on the Triangle, part of the King's Cross Central development.

In February, Councillors agreed to seek independent advice on whether Argent's revised proposals for 'affordable housing' on the site on York Way fell foul of new government policy contained in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3. Planning officers contend Argent's proposals do conform with this policy, despite the Council's own barrister saying this is seriously in question.

Argent put forward revised housing proposals for the Triangle site after Islington Councillors, worried about whether noise levels would make the site unsuitable for housing, decided in April 2006 to reduce the number of housing units from 246 to 200.

'When Argent came back earlier this year with a revised proposal, we were pleased to see they had kept the same number of social rented units and increased their size,' explained Phil Jeffries, co-convenor of the Cally Rail's technical working group. 'But they had changed the mix of so-called 'intermediate' housing and we believe 44 of these units don't qualify as affordable housing under current government policy. Instead of having 40% affordable housing in the development, there would in fact be just 18%.'

The dispute hinges on whether Argent's subsidy should go back to them as profit or be recycled for affordable housing.

'Argent's proposals are for short-term loans on these homes. If they are sold, that loan would be recycled for up to 15 years. After that, Argent simply pocket the profit. PPS3 says such subsidies should be recycled permanently into new affordable homes,' added Phil Jeffries. 'At a time of increasing housing need in Islington, it is vital that affordable housing stays affordable. Forty percent affordable homes on this development already falls short of what is needed—18% would be disastrous.'

Cally Rail Group is part of the King's Cross Think Again campaign, which took an unsuccessful judicial review against Camden council in May over its outline planning consent for Argent's development on the Main Site which is wholly within Camden. The Triangle site is split between Camden and Islington and whatever Islington Councillors decide will have to go back to Camden for reconsideration as Islington's April 2006 decision already differs radically from Camden's provisional consent. The question of recycled housing subsidies was not part of the argument put by campaigners in the judicial review.

Note to editors

- Phil Jeffries of Cally Rail Group is available for further comment on 07985 940007.
- Cally Rail Group's submission is attached as a pdf. It includes more detail on PPS3 and other background on the Triangle.
- West Area Planning Sub-committee meets at 7.30pm on Tuesday, 10th July, at the Barnsbury Complex, Offord Road, London N1. The officers' report is available at <http://www.islington.gov.uk/Democracy/meetings/areameetingdetail.asp?MeetingID=1947>.