

**RESPONSE BY THE KING'S CROSS RAILWAY LANDS GROUP
TO THE REVISED PLANNING APPLICATION
SUBMITTED BY ARGENT (KINGS CROSS) LTD
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
FORMER RAILWAY LANDS WITHIN
KING'S CROSS OPPORTUNITY AREA**

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1) Process and overview

1.1 The KXRLG objects to the outline planning application as it stands, and we add our support to those organizations which are seeking further revisions and information. These are substantial and should require a further round of consultation before the application is determined by the planning authorities. At the least, there should be the opportunity to put in revised comments in the light of new material as we see it. The original response of the KXRLG submitted in October 2004 still stands, except where amended by this document. Whilst we welcome some of the revisions made by the developer, overall these do not go far enough and therefore our overall objection to the application remains.

1.2 The KXRLG seeks redevelopment of the Railway Lands which meets local needs (as well as other needs) and stops the displacement of the existing residential and small business community. This is in the interests of equity, community cohesion and sustainability. The development must compensate for adverse impacts resulting from CTRL and the Olympics and minimize further detriment.

1.3 We have considered where the revisions differ from the Joint Planning Brief, the UDP's and the London Plan. The KXRLG wishes to register that although the yardstick for judging the development is the Joint Planning Brief, we were not happy with some parts of this document, notably the significant increase in office floorspace, increased without time for adequate community consultation, a concern which was upheld by Camden Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.4 Since the London Plan was adopted in 2004, (a) there has not been enough housing provided in Central London particularly social housing to rent and larger family units and (b) there is an over-supply of office space. The revised application has not responded to these changes in circumstances.

1.5 One key issue which is new is the Section 106 proposals. The KXRLG draw your attention to the Section 106 agreement for Stratford, where millions is being invested in transport infrastructure and a community development trust. If Stratford can secure this benefit, so should King's Cross.

1.6 There is a lack of strategic direction on a number of key topics and the failure to provide linkages, for example between transport, health and environmental needs. There is also a general lack of reference in the applications to interaction

with the environs of the site i.e. how does King's Cross Central fit in with its surrounding area in terms of density and transport routes.

1.7 On a number of topics, the revisions have not reduced the uncertainty surrounding the proposals. This includes the transport proposals, the number of social rented housing units, the delivery mechanisms for local jobs, and the amount of renewable energy. Targets which are purely aspirational create uncertainty about the development. The planning authority should not give permission unless these targets have been met.

1.8 The developer should not be given a blanket outline planning permission spanning 15-25 years. Development of the Railway Lands must have the capacity to adjust to a change of environment or policy. We suggest that the planning authorities should insist on a planned approval process. The developer has stated *"unless economic conditions are favourable throughout the lifetime of the development, it is likely to take longer than the 12-15 years from start in 2007."* (original application). Hence the importance of information about phasing the early programme and the time span to achieve the targets as set out. Are the targets in the revised application to be achieved by 2020, 2025 or a longer period?

1.9 There should be conditions on the phasing of the development, and particularly when the offices and housing will be built.

2) Land Uses, Building Heights and Densities

2.1 KXRLG believes there must be a much greater reduction in total floorspace, to be achieved by a reduction in business and employment floorspace. The slight reduction in business and employment floorspace - down by 30,770 sq m to 455,510 sq m - has to be considered alongside reductions in residential, community and leisure floorspace. The broad balance has not changed and the **KXRLG is seeking a total reduction in floorspace of at least one third.**

2.2 There has been some reduction in building heights, but several development zones are in excess of 40 metres in height. The models made by Argent show how dense the development is compared to its environs. There is a very forbidding entry point to the site from the west. Building heights should be halved/limited to 7 storeys (approx. 21m).

2.3 Of particular concern is Zone B, to the immediate south of the canal, where building heights are at 42-50 metres, which will have an extremely detrimental

impact on Camley Street Natural Park, the south side of the canal and the wildlife in the Regents Canal Conservation Area. The entire frontage of Goodsway should be stepped back.

2.4 This adverse impact is contrary to the Joint Planning Brief and the London Plan which requires protection of the Blue Ribbon. The planning authorities must protect the light falling onto the canal.

2.5 Our fundamental objections remain to the Triangle site plans. We objected to the original application on the grounds that 24,000 square metres was an immense overdevelopment of this small site. The revised application is for 26,600 square metres, an increase of nearly 11%. This is a gross overdevelopment of this site, nothing new has been shown which can justify it, and the revised development specification for the Triangle site should be rejected.

2.6 We note that the number of housing units proposed for the Triangle has been slightly reduced from 250 to 246, mainly by the loss of 5 three--bed units. However, the Joint Planning Brief adopted by both Camden and Islington in 2004 states (Sub-Area 5 (4), p.69):

"Subject to satisfactory designs and residential amenity being achieved this close to railway lines, the Triangle could accommodate about 200 one- and two-bed homes."

These two restrictions - of 200 units being the absolute maximum number allowed, and being subject to satisfactory designs and amenity - must be maintained.

2.7 KXRLG is also concerned that floorspace reserved for D2 Use Class could possibly be taken up, to a certain degree, for 'casino', or casino related activities. We feel these activities would have a negative impact on local communities and we ask that the Planning Authority reserves the right to exclude any floorspace for such uses from the D2 Use Class.

3) Conservation / Heritage

3.1 KXRLG objects to the proposed demolition of the Northern Stanley Building and Culross Building. Demolition of buildings in a conservation area without fully developed planning applications is contrary to PPG 15. This continuing failure to abide by conservation area and listing building guidelines [PPG 15] is very serious. The development framework should retain these

buildings and draw upon the historic features of the site. Stanley Buildings South should not be 'embedded' within a larger new building.

3.2 Conservation is important, especially in the South of the site. There should be encouragement towards a re-think of the Southern hub including moving the gasometers to the south. The road should be routed through the middle of Culross in an arch.

3.3 Keeping Culross and Stanley Buildings would go a long way towards meeting the housing objectives (including the lost 74 units of social housing by their demolition), and doing it quickly by refurbishment. The London Plan Monitoring Reports, stating that we need more family housing and less offices, is the most powerful argument for demanding a rethink of the southern hub. Residential accommodation should be provided south as well as north of the canal. The revised application reduces the residential floorspace south of canal, so that it makes up only 1.3% of total housing.

3.4 Culross has a large amount of unused additional space at basement level, in the multi-storey Mission Hall and in the three floors of "Tenant's Offices"/ Cabot Centre. The whole building lends itself to a really good 'mixed development' – to be worked out later in detail (shops, workshops, community use, social housing of all levels including a pedestrian/public transport archway through the centre of it without the need to remove any accommodation - by exploiting the ground level difference between the front and the rear and the height of the existing basement ceiling).

3.5 We broadly support the proposals from KXCAAC for the alternative uses of Stanley and Culross Buildings and we would like to see further exploration of these proposals.

4) Housing

4.1 The London Plan has set a strategic target that 50% of new homes from all sources each year should be affordable. Within that target, the London Plan has set an objective that 70% of this should be social and 30% intermediate.

4.2 KXRLG supports provision of 2500 new units by 2016, the end of the London Plan period (1250 of them affordable, including 1000 social housing to rent) and of 3600 units by 2020 (1800 affordable, including 1350 social housing for rent).

4.3 To ensure larger units and good space standards, it is essential that the application specifies the average floorspace of each housing unit and whether the total floorspace includes corridors, walkways and housing amenity space.

4.4 Islington is meeting its London Plan targets on housing, while Camden is not. For office space, the opposite is true. This suggests that there should be less housing in the Triangle site and more in the main site.

4.5 We wish to see a far greater emphasis towards provision of more family accommodation of 3 and 4 bed units and fewer studio/1 bed apartments.

Due to the desperate local need for larger family units, there should be a condition on the developer requiring a higher emphasis on the construction of social rented homes for families in the early stages of the development.

4.6 The Joint Planning Brief requires *“the provision of at least 1800 homes and in the borough generally, Camden seeks the following mix for social rented housing: 20% 1 bed; 30% 2 bed; 30-35% 3 bed; 15-20% 4 bed or larger”*.

4.7 It has been estimated by the GLA that, between 2002 and 2012, 19% of new social housing should have 1 bedroom; 39% should have 2/3 bedrooms and 42% should have 4 or more bedrooms. However, the average proportion of homes built in the social sector with 4 or more bedrooms over the last ten years has only been around 6%. There is also a need for a larger proportion of intermediate housing provision to be family homes, to tackle retention problems in key public services and to meet the needs of those households who are currently leaving London due to affordability problems. The 2004 Housing Requirements Study suggests that at least one third of intermediate homes should be 2 bedroom or larger.

4.8 The London Housing Board has recommended to Ministers that 35% of HC allocations for social rented housing in 2006-08 should be for 3 bedroom or larger homes. This is designed to achieve a balance between achieving an increase in the supply of social rented homes, and moving towards meeting the identified need for larger homes. The Board also encourages local authorities negotiating Section 106 agreements for provision of affordable homes to have regard to the need for larger homes in their area.

4.9 The developers provide no breakdown between social housing and intermediate housing, which will be determined by local market testing. We object to this and we also bring to the planning authorities' attention that Argent's housing figures are maxima.

The Joint Planning Brief says: *Of the first 1000 additional homes, 50% should be affordable, apportioned as 35% social housing for rent and 15% intermediate. Above 1000, the Council has a target of 50% affordable housing with a significant element of social rented housing.*

4.10 The GLA published a Housing Requirements Study in 2004 which looked at both the backlog of existing housing needs and projected future housing needs of Londoners. The Study suggested that over the next ten years, around 35,000 homes will be needed per annum, of which 20,800 should be social and 2,500 intermediate.

4.11 On the Triangle site, only 34% will be affordable. Where the original application for the Triangle split the number of units as 158 to Block A and 92 to Block B, the revised application has reduced the number of affordable housing units (Block B) to 84, while increasing the number in Block A to 162. This overall shift away from affordable housing is unacceptable.

4.12 All residential units must meet the standard for Lifetime homes which is a requirement of the London Plan. The application proposes to meet the requirement of Lifetime Homes standards 'to the extent that this is consistent with the high density, mixed use nature of the scheme and the terms of an outline planning permission'.

The Islington UDP states (H20) that: *The Council will require that in proposals for new housing development dwellings with ground floor access and all dwellings accessible by lift are built to lifetime homes standards.*

If the developers have problems reconciling this policy with their high densities, it is the densities which must be lowered, not the Council's standards.

4.13 The developers feel that the London Plan target of 10% of all new homes to be wheelchair accessible is 'challenging'. Instead they propose that up to 10% of the social rented homes (that is, not even 10% of the affordable units) should be 'wheelchair accessible/easily adaptable'—and that only 'subject to identifying local need'.

We urge the Councils to ensure that 10% of all new housing on this site should be wheelchair accessible without exception.

5) Employment and Training

5.1 The existing economy of Kings Cross consists largely of small and medium enterprises, with crafts and specialized retailers, arts and cultural bodies and a charitable sector. These give Kings Cross a distinctive character and there is a potential to further develop these sectors. However, as well as providing this opportunity, the development also threatens rent and rate increases.

5.2 The London Plan indicates there should be 11,400 additional jobs provided in King's Cross Central by 2016. Argent propose 22-25,000 but over a longer timescale. The KXRLG suggest the employment target should grow to not more than 15,000 additional jobs by 2020. This would require a total floorspace between 150,000 – 240,000 sq m. (10 sq m - 16 sq m per employee). 10 sq m per employee was the figure used in the original Planning Brief calculation of the number of jobs offered by the development. 16 sq m was used in Argent's calculations.

5.3 These are in addition to the existing jobs on the railway lands and its surroundings, which we want to retain. **The KXRLG response is to scale the number of jobs back so as to facilitate a less dense development and to make more floorspace available for housing.**

5.4 The job mix should be focused away from the present proposal i.e. too many "corporate" office jobs. We believe that a greater variety of jobs will create a more sustainable economy in Kings Cross. More cultural, heritage and arts type industries should be included, with less emphasis on an "office city". There is also a need for buildings to house niche markets such as voluntary sector agencies. These are not necessarily quite the same as a community centre and would not usually depend on peppercorn rents. However, some of the larger charitable trusts might fund/buy/own the buildings as an investment as well as part of their core function.

5.5 Low levels of qualification and low wages are the twin disincentives to currently unemployed local people getting jobs. Measures need to be planned so that local people are not simply going into service jobs at the lowest level. A strong creative arts, culture and heritage sector would encourage the provision of some good quality jobs for local people.

5.6 There should be a diverse range and substantial number of SME premises (the application promises only 10 affordable business units). Leases for certain units could contain conditions relating to size i.e. that certain units should be of a sufficiently small size to encourage Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

as tenants. A proportion of the office space should be let with these size/space conditions in the leases.

5.7 KXRLG support the aspiration to provide 30% of jobs (full time equivalent) for local residents but there need to be mechanisms to achieve this.

5.8 Local employment benefits from the development should be secured through the Section 106 agreements. There is substantial unemployment in the area, which requires provisions to remove the barriers such as lack of language or job skills, and lack of affordable childcare. There should be local employment coordinators to ensure that as many local people can get construction jobs during the development as possible.

5.9 The revised application refers to a construction training centre, skills and recruitment centre, floating classroom for school – however, business connections do not amount to an Employment and Training Strategy. **There should be a local training consortium as required by the Joint Planning Brief which states:**

"a successful education, construction and training strategy will need a co-ordinated consortium... including community representatives "

5.10 Construction, will of necessity, be a large local industry for some years to come. It is an industry especially reliant on sub-contracting. We will need a locally led body which can both bid for contracts for work and organise the training needed by local people. Camden Council experienced considerable difficulty in meeting the demand for heating improvements and systems in homes of local people under a government programme because there were no local plumbers available and those travelling in from considerable distance had difficulties parking their vehicles. The experience of Camden Training Centre suggests that the demand can be anticipated long in advance of date needed if there is a commitment and a strategic lead.

5.11 This suggests that a locally developed strategy, involving organisations such as CCCU and KCCDT, is the only way to ensure an increase in jobs and training available for local people. This needs to be backed up by the developer putting in place long term sustained funding streams and the planning authorities having enforcement mechanisms.

6) Transport

6.1 Overall, we support Cally Rail Group's position that the revised application is deficient because Argent's Transport Assessment (TA) continues not to form part of the Environmental Statement. Also The TA is understood to be unchanged and continues to contain errors and omissions. KXRLG also believes that the flawed methodology of the TA does not provide a sound enough basis for the application, in its current form, to be determined by the local authorities. Further, the application with respect to the south of the site is premature and cannot be determined until an application has been made for the redevelopment of King's Cross station concourse

6.2 It is impossible to assess accurately the likely transport implications of the proposed development because Argent have not committed themselves to a fixed quantum of development and mixture of uses. Indeed Vol.5 of the ES still refers to "Development Test Scenarios". However, we believe that Argent have had significant discussions with Transport for London and we request these deliberations be made public. Argent have, to the best of our knowledge, failed to secure agreement from TfL for additional public transport provision serving the north of the site. Without such an agreement in place, the proposed development of the north of the site is not viable and this application should be refused.

6.3 This is essential given that the Joint Planning Brief requires:

"Delivering effective local transport connections is an integral part of the integration and regeneration objectives

"Facilitate the introduction of additional bus services...to link the Area and the Triangle with adjacent areas"

6.4 There is a lack of reference in the application to interaction with the environs of the site. Road schemes planned outside the development have not been fully taken into account (for example, York Way two way reinstatement). The submission for the Linear Lands, situated between the new CTRL track and the existing North London Line, will add to the current proposal for Kings Cross Central. Indeed, we hold the view that the revised application should only go to planning committee once the Linear Lands application has been submitted and the two applications should be considered in conjunction.

6.5 The re-opening of York Road Station and Maiden Lane are considered essential to make the development viable and must be referred to in the application. Reopening York Road Station will be a huge benefit to local

residents both as commuters and in terms of local employment. The boost to the North London Line from money unlocked by the Olympics bid, provides the opportunity to reopen Maiden Lane. The substantial numbers of people living in this estate (800 households) as well as new employment and homes in the vicinity will benefit from the much improved East West Silverlink service that will pass through where there used to be a Maiden Lane station.

6.6 We want to see further reductions in car-parking to at least 75% car-free housing to achieve the Joint Planning Brief aim of *"car parking at very low levels."* and *"a significant proportion of car-free housing, possibly up to about the 75% level overall."* We also want explicit provision of secure cycle storage to reflect the dramatic recent upswing in cycle usage in London.

6.7 The multi-storey car park (800 spaces) remains in zone T and cars will have to drive through Cubitt Park to reach the facility. It is unacceptable to have an access road which dissects the main park, suggesting the absence of any strategic direction with respect to open space. The multi-storey car park must be moved to a more suitable location.

6.8 We are surprised that "Walking Demand" has decreased in light of the revised proposals (Part 24.3.49 of Vol.5 of the ES). The Joint Planning Brief requires:

"High quality walking and cycle routes...easy and safe routes through the area and the Triangle...a legible network of safe and convenient internal routes for pedestrians and cyclists, including a route from the northern part of the site to King's Cross and St Pancras Stations.

6.9 For the only main bike artery to be East/West along the canal is a disaster. The primary biking need is for a route North – South and we suggest section 106 funds are released to support the proposed Camley Street Link from Agar Grove. For the only main bike artery to be East/West along the canal is a disaster. Cyclists need segregated provision. On all major roads through the site there is need for adequate segregated cycle lanes, particularly on the possible tram routes. The provision of a major artery through the development on the North/South axis will add vitality to the development and reduce demand on public transport. This will require a viable, protected bike crossing from Kings Cross across the Euston Road and into Bloomsbury.

6.10 We continue to oppose the new pedestrian/cycle bridge proposed at Camley Street Natural Park.

6.11 The proposed road layout has not been adequately consulted on and the revised proposals still focus on traffic and parking. We support the Cally Rail Group's objections to transport links on the east of the site and for more pedestrian friendly open spaces (e.g. between Kings Cross and St Pancras stations).

6.12 Argent have not committed themselves to providing or contributing towards any public transport improvements as part of their development. Contributions from Argent towards public transport improvements must be secured through Section 106 monies as vital for the viability of the development.

7) Environment

7.1 On sustainability, the plans fail to meet the official UK definition of sustainability: improving access to opportunity for less advantaged groups and minimising the environmental and resource impacts of the development. The developer should commit to a much higher level of energy efficiency, with environmental strategies extended to the whole site. There are no plans within the revised specification to adopt an environmental management system such as ISO 14001 and this is an essential requirement.

7.2 We believe that Kings Cross could be a valuable opportunity for a groundbreaking zero-energy development. One zero-energy development per borough is required by the Mayor, and the Kings Cross area could become a flagship for the whole of the UK. We also support the Green Party's call for the Climate Change Agency to be consulted, before this application can be decided, about how to maximise reduction of carbon emissions by the development.

7.3 The site would be a high pollution area if the application were allowed to proceed in its current form. The plans made by the developer are wholly inadequate. Argent is offering less than a tenth of GLA standards on renewable energy. Government policy and Camden's Climate Change Strategy point to the need for higher levels of renewable energy use. **The minimum of the GLA standard of 10% renewable energy should be applied across the whole site and there must be an energy assessment.**

7.4 The specific proposals for renewable energy are still limited. We welcome the plans for solar PV generation and for upto 14 wind turbines, but these must be made into stronger commitments. 'Upto' should be changed to 'at least' 14 wind turbines.

7.5 The number of green/brown roofs (only covering 15% of new buildings) is far too low. They are clustered to complement a green corridor along the CTRL embankment, with no adjunct to the wildlife corridor along the canal. The KXRLG would wish the number of green/brown roofs to be greatly increased, to contribute, along with trees and other green spaces, to the development of a wildlife corridor from south to north through the site.

7.6 We strongly support the protection of Camley Street Natural Park. The revised EIA acknowledges a "loss of wasteland habitats" and effects on Camley Street Natural Park from new pedestrian and cycle link plus increased population pressure (adverse – moderate) and effect on wildlife (adverse – minor).

7.7 The UDP seeks to protect and enhance Camley Street Natural Park. The Joint Planning Brief expects the new *development* "to be sensitive and avoid any adverse visual, shading, microclimate, noise or lighting effects on the Park". **The planning authorities must acknowledge the huge massing to the south of the canal and its adverse impact on the park.**

7.8 We welcome the limited new docking facilities along the canal. However, we repeat our previous call for the canal to be used for transport of demolition waste and construction materials during the building phase, and for waste and recycling transport for the completed development. In response to the new plans, we therefore call for additional docking areas, as well as space for facilities for the collection and loading onto barges of waste and recycling in future, to be included.

7.9 We propose that a short railhead with refuse sorting and compacting facilities be incorporated in a building north of the canal and one similar facility at ground floor in the proposed building next to the King Cross Suburban Platforms (previously part of the milkdock and motor rail site).

8) Community Facilities and Involvement

8.1 The revised application provides no information about the involvement of the local communities in the regeneration, and there is no reference to a Community Development Trust or Community Land Trust, or generally to the securing of community assets.

8.2 The Joint Planning Brief refers to the development's "*genuine integration with its locality and the communities who live there*" to local engagement in cultural

activities and to provide *“facilities that are accessible, affordable and responsive to community needs.”*

8.3 There should be a compact between Developer, Community groups and the Councils so that the community can be involved in tripartite working over the lifetime of the development.

8.4 We welcome the Council's invitation to submit a business plan for a community asset transfer and expect this to be included in the Section 106 agreements. There should be a focus on certain assets to be “handed over” to the community because no guarantees have been provided as to how affordable/accessible the community facilities proposed by Argent will be.

Local discussions about community building (s) have said that the building (s) should be

- readily accessible
- a model for sustainable development
- done by, with and for the community
- located to act as an anchor for a divided community and to integrate new and existing communities
- possibly an historic structure, familiar to the community and ideal for raising funds
- capable of being realised early, and a confidence builder.

8.5 The Community should have a financial stake in the eventual development as achieved with the Stratford Section 106 agreement. This affords the Community an opportunity to share in increasing real estate values as well as securing considerable transport improvements.

8.6 Every encouragement should be given to local organisations that are involved in the arts and creative industries, such as St Pancras and Somers Town Arts and the Film School (Advancement of Film Education Community Trust) which wishes to return to King's Cross.

9 The Code of Construction Practice

The KXRLG supports the response from the Cally Rail Group, including:

- To welcome cautiously the improved CoCP as far as it goes.
- There should be planning conditions requiring the applicants to abide by a Code of Construction Practice;

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- As part of the CoCP, working hours should be restricted. There is no justification for working outside the core hours other than in precisely defined circumstances;
- 'BPM' (Best Practical Means) should be used everywhere (including on contaminated land);
- All works should be subject to prior consent and control under the statutory control of pollution regime;
- Active involvement of residents as equal partners with the developer and local authorities in the control process (the St Pancras model is the exemplar);
- Compensatory penalties should be payable by the contractor where the CoCP is breached;
- Provision should be made for arbitration of complaints, paid for by the developer.

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