



WORKING POSITIVELY FOR KINGS CROSS

King's Cross Railway Lands Group
5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX
Tel: 020 7837 6824
office@kxrlg.org.uk
www.kxrlg.org.uk

from the Joint Chairs:

Marian Larragy, mlarragy01@blueyonder.co.uk phone 0796 918 3103

Michael Edwards, m.edwards@ucl.ac.uk phone 07813 1944 01

The Right Honourable John Prescott
Government Office for London
Riverwalk House
157-161 Millbank
London SW1P 4RR
for the attention of Alison Fairhead

6 March 2006

Dear Mr Prescott

London Boroughs of Camden and Islington: Planning Applications by Argent plc for development of the King's Cross Railway Lands ('King's Cross Central')

We write on behalf of the King's Cross Railway Lands Group (instructed by the Management Committee and by the Annual General Meeting held last week) to ask you to call these applications in and determine them yourself, on inspectors' advice, following a public inquiry.

We have been campaigning for this land to be developed for nearly 20 years. A development here could make a unique and exemplary contribution to sustainable local communities, to London's needs, Britain's needs and indeed to the development of the wider European community – for which it will be Britain's gateway. We regret taking action which could further delay this essential project and we only do so because the current scheme is so bad and we have little confidence in the procedures being used by the local planning authorities to determine the applications.

Specifically our grounds for seeking a call-in are as follows:-

(i) The development is in conflict with national policy for sustainable communities: rather than sustaining communities it will accelerate displacement of low- and middle-income residents (including ethnic minorities) and of small and medium enterprises. It makes virtually no provisions for housing, sporting, cultural or other community facilities which would meet local needs and thus threatens to establish a new / luxury quarter alongside an established mixed community with virtually no sharing or contact.

(ii) The development will, of course, have enormous impacts beyond the boundaries of Camden and Islington. In particular it will generate substantial growth in medium- and long-distance commuting, adding to the pressure for Crossrail and other hugely expensive tidal-flow radial investments. It makes only a negligible contribution to affordable social housing and the proposed demolition of existing housing, combined with its gentrification effects could well outweigh even that. These and other impacts across London have not been considered in the decision process so far.

(iii) There are major architectural, urban design and historic building controversies surrounding the scheme, exacerbated by the (?unprecedented) attempt to deal with Listed Buildings through outline applications which 'wash over' them. Issues of height and bulk, integration with surroundings and treatment of historic buildings and spaces are highly controversial. Although EH has not objected, many others are strongly opposed on these grounds, including the statutory Conservation Area Advisory Committees.

(iv) Although there have been many months of orchestrated 'consultations', they appear to have been largely abortive with accusations and counter-accusations being levelled between developers, residents and other stakeholders. None of this argumentation has been tested by cross-examination and the Development Control Committee of Camden LB is being pressed to make a decision in only 2 evenings after having 2 weeks to digest a 900-page report. There are other procedural failings too.

In short, this scheme is far too big and far too controversial and far-reaching in its impacts to be left to the local boroughs to decide.

We may need to write to you again after the Camden LB meetings this week but, at the moment, it seems unlikely that we shall be writing to withdraw this request.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Edwards". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael Edwards, Marian Larragy
on behalf of the King's Cross Railway Lands Group

We should be grateful if you would send any reply electronically to either or both of us since our physical office is not regularly staffed.