



# How to respond to a planning application

**L**ocal communities in Camden and Islington are waiting to see what revisions the developers will make to their proposals for King's Cross. The original Argent St George outline planning applications were submitted in May 2004. Since then officers from both boroughs have been talking to Argent (now separated from St George) about revisions to those proposals.

The revisions may come in around the end of July – then again, they may arrive later, or not all! As we went to press, there was still no firm timetable.

Argent could decide instead to appeal on the grounds of 'non-determination' of their original application – that is, because no decision has been made.

If revisions are made, the community will want to see how far these reflect the views expressed last year in the record number of responses from statutory bodies, local groups and individuals.

If Argent submit revisions there will be a 21-day public consultation period. Then officers will consider the comments and write reports for committees of their respective boroughs. Objectors should be notified of these reports well before the committees meet.

## FIND OUT WHAT THE REVISIONS ARE

- Copies of the revised application will be available in both Camden and Islington – contact the Kings Cross teams for details (see below).
- It doesn't make you stupid if you find planning-speak baffling! If in doubt, ask your KX team or the developers for an explanation of any unclear terms.
- Look at policies which cover the application, starting with the Camden and Islington *Joint Planning Brief* and each borough's *Unitary Development Plan*. The

**Most of us find the planning system complex and bewildering. The government talks about the need to involve communities in planning decisions but, until they give us the resources, this involvement may continue to be too little, too late. UNA SAPIETIS outlines the main things to look for when responding to a planning application.**

*London Plan*, with its emphasis on sustainability, may also help. Ask your KX team where to find copies.

## DECIDE HOW TO RESPOND

- If you're in a group, decide your position: should you ignore, support or oppose the application, in part or completely?
- You can comment as an individual (even if you also respond on behalf of a group).
- If you have *any* concerns about any part of the application – even if you support 99% of it – state clearly at the beginning that you object to the application (which means as it currently stands). If you want even one small part changed, you need to spell out that you object or your comments could be interpreted as support.
- Even if you did not respond to the applications last year, you can object to the revisions.
- If you *did* object last year, don't forget to restate any objections which have not been properly addressed.

## PRODUCING YOUR RESPONSE

- Get it in on time! If you can't get all your points written by the deadline, send a letter summarising your views and follow it up with detailed comments. These comments may be taken into account, though you cannot rely on this.
- Try to support your arguments from planning policies (see above). List the policies that support your case and explain how they do so.
- What issues are important for your community as a whole or the

wider public interest? For example, if there is an identified local need (such as five-bedroom homes) and that need is not addressed, comment on that.

- Be clear and avoid personal feelings ('This building will block daylight for neighbouring residents' rather than 'I hate tower blocks'). Separate out each point. Explain what you want and, where appropriate, suggest any conditions you would like imposed if the application is granted.

## FURTHER ACTION

- Build support for your views. Copy your response to your local councillors and MP.
- Tell the local press. Send a press release (one side of A4) with your main points, a brief quote from a spokesperson for your group and contact details.
- Get involved in the Kings Cross Development Forum (see opposite).

## USEFUL CONTACTS

Camden's Kings Cross Team on 020 7974 2565/5009

email: [kxteam@camden.gov.uk](mailto:kxteam@camden.gov.uk)

website: [www.camden.gov.uk/kingscross](http://www.camden.gov.uk/kingscross) or

Islington's Kings Cross team on 020 7527 2297

email: [kxteam@islington.gov.uk](mailto:kxteam@islington.gov.uk)

website: [www.islington.gov.uk/kingcrossteam](http://www.islington.gov.uk/kingcrossteam)

Argent on 020 7734 3721

email: [kingscross@argentgroup.plc.uk](mailto:kingscross@argentgroup.plc.uk) web-

site: [www.argentkingscross.co.uk](http://www.argentkingscross.co.uk)

Thanks for much of the above information to the Council for the Protection of Rural England's useful website, written in plain English, at [www.planninghelp.org.uk](http://www.planninghelp.org.uk).



**IN APRIL** around 150 young people from Islington came to a special event on regeneration in King's Cross, Under Construction. Organised by Copenhagen Youth Project in partnership with Islington's Listen Up, the day included workshops on the Argent plans and a panel discussion on what regeneration in King's Cross would mean for local young people. Planning Aid for London, planning officers from Camden and Islington, architects Leitwerk, and local councillor, Arnie Gibbons, all contributed to the day's success (Argent themselves, though invited, did not attend). There was also consultation about youth space which local youth projects had been developing, including art, photography, video and music. Held at Egg nightclub on York Way, which gave their facilities free, the young people enjoyed an excellent variety of activities, including stalls, workshops, a panel discussion, BBQ lunch and MC competition. Copenhagen Youth Project hope this youth conference will be the first of many similar events.

PHOTO: GILL CALVERT

# Islington's views on Argent proposals

In March Islington's West Area Committee agreed a 60 page report outlining its views to Camden Council on Argent's planning application for the main site, which is in Camden.

Councillors welcomed the proposals in principle, but were concerned that they should 'not be at the expense of local communities'. Specific calls included:

- A higher proportion of residential development in areas where offices would currently dominate.
- Revisions to bulk and massing of key development zones.
- Better integration with surrounding neighbourhoods by revising the street layout, and minimising impacts on Copenhagen Street.
- Clearer commitment to phasing, including community benefits in each phase.
- Further development of Argent's Regeneration Strategy, which should become part of the formal application.
- Commitments to specific training and employment initiatives for the local community, and to use

local businesses and labour during construction.

- A revised *Transport Assessment* based on accurate prediction of the impacts, followed by proper management and mitigation.
- More green space within the development.
- Environmental sustainability measures to become commitments rather than 'aspirations', which must be agreed at outline stage because of the implications for phasing and infrastructure.
- The Code of Construction Practice must be revised to ensure best practice, including mechanisms for community involvement.

Councillors explicitly opposed the demolition of Culross Buildings and Stanley North.

Meanwhile Camden Council has yet to consider the main site proposals itself. Nor have the two councils yet agreed how they will decide on plans for the Triangle site, which lies in both boroughs.

**The report to West Area Committee is available on [www.islington.gov.uk/environment/planning/majorschemes/kingscross](http://www.islington.gov.uk/environment/planning/majorschemes/kingscross)**

## King's Cross Development Forum

The Forum was set up by Camden and Islington Councils to facilitate community consultation on the development proposals. King's Cross Railway Lands Group has been active in it from the start, and we hold a place on the Co-ordinating Group. We have attended around 40 meetings of the Forum and Co-ordinating Group over the last two years.

In April a well-attended Forum meeting worked hard to prepare questions for Argent the following week. Unfortunately Argent let the Forum down, pulling out of the subsequent meeting at the last minute after seeing the Forum's questions. Since the questions themselves were drawn from the Forum's own

response to the Argent applications last year they can't have been unexpected. This left many people feeling their work had been wasted and Argent were not taking the community seriously.

One concern is that, as planning issues are complex and the Argent proposals are both massive and hard to understand, people need more support and briefing. So far, for example, no one has produced a simple guide to the proposals, the planning system and the consultation process.

If the Forum had independent staff support it could be far more effective. After all, this is a huge task for a group of volunteers, especially when

contrasted with the resources available to the developers! And, as Forum members have said, the real test of the Forum's credibility will be when we see how far our views affect the developer's revisions.

When Argent submits its revised application, we will have a matter of weeks to analyse and comment. The Forum will hold several meetings to do this, including looking at any 'section 106' proposals (see p.4).

Make sure you and your neighbours get involved, before all the decisions are made.

**And if you're not yet on the Forum's mailing list, contact Vanessa Wisby at Camden Council on 020 7974 5009, email [kxteam@camden.gov.uk](mailto:kxteam@camden.gov.uk).**

Whenever there is a big planning application, there is talk about 'section 106 agreements', sometimes also called 'planning gain'. Local authorities, and the local community, hope to get some social benefit from a development. **MICHAEL EDWARDS**, senior lecturer in the economics of planning at University College London, explains the scope – and limits – of the system.

# What is a 'section 106' agreement?

**C**amden and Islington Councils are not only considering whether to give planning permission to Argent for their King's Cross Central development. They are also negotiating an agreement in which some of the profits would be committed to socially useful purposes: a 'section 106 agreement'.

**WHAT ARE THESE AGREEMENTS?** They started as a means for councils to ensure that developers paid for socially essential parts of their schemes, doing whatever was necessary to fit them in with their surroundings and compensating for negative impacts. So a developer might pay to improve local roads because of the extra traffic they would create, or provide a site for a health clinic because the new residents would put pressure on the existing one. The agreements have grown to become – in effect – a tax on some of the initial developers' profit to pay for social housing and other necessary social expenditure, payable not just in material form but sometimes in cash.

**WHAT S.106 IS NOT.** Councils and local communities often get bogged down in debates about 'wish lists' of goodies – arguing whether open space should have priority over social housing or health services. But s.106 does not allow communities simply to go for 'wish lists' of things they want.

Any gains must be related to the impacts caused by the development.

For example, if new housing means lots of new residents crowding out a small local park, there's a case for getting new green space in the development to compensate. But it would be very unlikely to get a full-size football pitch on the development just because that's what local people have always wanted. It is important not to waste time and energy fighting amongst ourselves about wish lists.

**A MESSY SYSTEM.** Councils often feel they are in a weak bargaining position because the developer can argue that (at this early stage before permission is granted) their project is highly risky and they can't afford to give much away. And if the council demands too much, the developer can walk away.

But taxing developers' profits at King's Cross is only fair. Once planning permission is granted, the value of the land will shoot up because Argent will be able to make buildings they can lease out at very high rents. These rents can be high because of the value created by the site's incredible location – the result of two centuries of investment in roads, railways, tubes and the CTRL.

Central London also enjoys one of the world's highest concentrations of skilled labour, businesses, universities, hospitals and so on. So the

developer stands to collect profits generated by the past efforts of our whole society. Quite right for that society to claim some of it back.

What should community groups do about this? The main focus should be on campaigning for a good development – instead of a bad development with terrible impacts which then needs more compensations through s.106. For example, using sustainable building methods and a robust code of construction practice should be essential parts of the Argent planning agreement, not 'concessions' we have to fight for.

**TRUST THE COMMUNITY.** In addition, a Community Development Trust should be set up through which substantial land assets are made over to community ownership and the community can benefit from their growth in value over the long term. Coin Street on the South Bank is the most inspiring example of what communities can do if they just get a real share in the land ownership.

Another priority should be to embed community power in the long-term decision-making about the development. KXRLG has already warned that granting planning permission for the current proposals would provide a blank cheque for developers to carry on without further regulation for 15 years or more.

Finally, planning permission is supposed to be the outcome of a

## Any gains must be related to the impacts

transparent and open debate, accountable to local people through consultation and council reports. But s.106 negotiations are often secret and remain secret even after agreement has been reached.

Local groups should demand open negotiations with the councils, in line with the requirements of the *London Plan*, in its policy 3A.25. This lays down that 'local neighbourhood needs, identified by local community organisations and other local partners, should be used as a basis for negotiating local community benefit from development, including Section 106 agreements.'

# 'All the promises have long gone'

## LIVING NEXT TO ARGENT'S DEVELOPMENT IN BIRMINGHAM



Brindleyplace in Birmingham is promoted by King's Cross developers, Argent, as a shining example of what they have achieved elsewhere. Indeed, they have generously hosted trips for King's Cross people to see for themselves, though some responses to the upmarket development, with its sterile hard environment and pricey cafés, were not enthusiastic. But what's it like to live next to it? *Network* talked to **GILLIAN ROBINSON**, chair of Central Ladywood Neighbourhood Forum.

Two coachloads of King's Cross residents took a look at Brindleyplace last November and also met residents from Ladywood. The visit was organised by Camden Central Community Umbrella, and KXRLG are working with them to organise a return visit later this year

PHOTO: GRACE ADAMS

When the development was first mooted in the late 1980s, local people were quite excited, Gillian told us. Along with the International Conference Centre and the National Indoor Arena, it would help regenerate a rundown part of the city.

'The residents in the community thought, great, at last our area will start looking good and there will be decent jobs for the people who live close by.'

Outline planning permission was first given in 1989, and then the vagaries of the property market came into play. Finally in 1993 Argent bought the Brindleyplace site for an undisclosed sum and work began soon afterwards, with the canal side part of the scheme, The Water's Edge, open the following year.

**OPPORTUNITIES?** Alan Chatham, who was in charge of the development at local level, used to come to Forum meetings, Gillian remembers. 'He'd show us what a fantastic place it was going to be, with the new offices and restaurants, and what job opportunities there would be. Well, there are if you're good at cleaning and washing up and other menial jobs.'

Some local people did get jobs during construction, but not many

Ladywood residents have jobs on the site now.

'We were promised training courses and, yes, some people did get some decent jobs, but not to the extent we were told.'

After suffering the impacts of the construction – with all the dust, noise and heavy traffic familiar to King's Cross residents – there is very little to benefit the existing local community. Some small concessions were made during planning, such as saving an 1870s school building and making the development as a whole walk-through. But the promised improvements to local roads did not materialise, and resi-

### 'The mix between us and them did not happen'

dential streets are now jammed with office workers' parked cars every day.

Housing is another issue. Symphony Court, originally part of the Brindleyplace development, was sold on to Crosby Homes. Not one of its 143 units is affordable housing.

'The new apartments on the canal side of Brindleyplace are very expensive, which meant that anyone who lived in the area could not afford one. They are also gated, so

the mix between us and them did not happen. We are, after all, only council tenants while Brindleyplace is a very clean and lovely place.'

Despite the fine promises, there was no direct planning gain for the local community, and Gillian's advice is not to trust any promise that isn't on paper, signed and sealed.

**INTEGRATION?** One of the main issues about Argent's outline plans for King's Cross is whether the development can be integrated with existing communities in Camden and Islington. Brindleyplace wins no prizes for integration: there is no contact, either physical or organisational, between residents of Ladywood and Symphony Court, where the newcomers have formed themselves into a City Centre Forum rather than join the existing community forum.

'It doesn't feel like part of our community, and the contact we used to have with the developers has gone,' says Gillian. 'We feel that all the upset and aggravation we put up with have long been forgotten and, while they proceed to build fancy apartments in our area, the real down to earth people are forgotten. All the promises have long gone but, being the strong community we are, we carry on.'

# ■ News from KXRLG

## New Management Committee

A NEW MANAGEMENT Committee, with both new and old faces, was elected at our Annual General Meeting in January. Una Sapietis, who has been involved on and off over the group's 18 year history, was elected Chair.

We would particularly like to introduce the new members of the Committee: Helen Rahman, elected as Vice Chair, is a resident of Camden Town. She is particularly interested in seeing that the needs of children and young people are addressed in a meaningful way in the ongoing and future development of the area.

Chris Gidden lives in the Caledonian Road area, and would like to build a good future for her children and grandchildren in the area. She is particularly interested in the *London Plan*, transport and construction issues.

Stuart Cottis lives off York Way and is interested in KXRLG supporting the creation of a mixed community in King's Cross.

Teresa Hoskyns is another Islington resident. She has a background in planning and is particularly interested in the idea of cities being for citizens and supporting a diverse community.

The following were re-elected to the Management Committee: Marian Larragy (Treasurer), Mandy Graham (Company Secretary), Alison Blackwood, Michael Edwards, Herman Tribelnig.

## Funding

WE ARE pleased to announce that Camden Central SRB Partnership will continue to fund the Kings Cross Railway Lands Group for a third and final year in 2005–6. The grant of £17k a year provides core funding to KXRLG and helps us to run the office, employ a part time co-ordinator and even produce this copy of

*Network*. So thank you again.

We have also secured a further £4,580 from the Islington Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest. A previous grant in 2004 allowed us to raise our profile in Islington, and this extra funding means we can build on this and be much more active in going out and meeting people. We want to work with other local groups to ensure that more local people understand what is happening at Kings Cross and can influence it.

**If you would like us to come and visit your group, please contact Lis Dale at the KXRLG office, tel: 020 7837 6824, email: [office@kxrlg.org.uk](mailto:office@kxrlg.org.uk).**

## Membership reminder

**OUR NEW membership year started in April. If you're a member but haven't yet renewed, you'll find a membership form enclosed, or there's one on the back cover. And if you're not yet a member, do please consider joining. It doesn't cost much, but it does help us cover our costs. More importantly your membership helps us demonstrate to funders that we have the support of local people – and that means we can continue our work. So please help us by taking the time to join or renew.**

## Email list

**TO HELP improve our communications we are putting together an email list, in addition to our *Network* mailouts. We want a quick and efficient way of contacting as many members as possible with useful information. We don't want to overwhelm you, and we promise not to fill up your mailbox.**

**So if you do not already get emails from us and would like to subscribe then please let us know on [office@kxrlg.org.uk](mailto:office@kxrlg.org.uk).**

## Want to get more involved?

**IF YOU** have some spare time and would like to support our work, then why not volunteer on a regular or occasional basis? We are currently looking for two regular volunteers to do a couple of hours a week on bookkeeping or maintaining our membership database. We also need hands-on help on an occasional basis such as helping with mailouts, with no regular commitment required, just a couple of hours' catching up on the latest at King's Cross while stuffing envelopes.

**For more information please contact Lis Dale on 020 7837 6824, email: [office@kxrlg.org.uk](mailto:office@kxrlg.org.uk)**

### King's Cross Railway Lands Group

## GENERAL MEETING

### Securing community assets from the development

#### Date and venue on enclosed flyer

Details will be sent to members directly, or contact Lis Dale at:

KXRLG, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX

**tel: 020 7837 6824**

email: [office@kxrlg.org.uk](mailto:office@kxrlg.org.uk)

website: [www.kxrlg.org.uk](http://www.kxrlg.org.uk)

# Can York Road station be reopened?

London Underground has completed an initial feasibility study into reopening the station on York Way which was closed in 1927. They conclude that it is technically possible in engineering terms: the platforms could be upgraded, with lifts and emergency access, though it would take a slightly larger site.

But there are problems. First, there would be an estimated cost of at least £25 million needed for the work. If that kind of money were made available by London Underground or the developers (and Argent has not yet proposed funding any additional transport) some local people feel it might be better spent on other upgrades, like improved bus provision.

Second, there needs to be careful assessment to ensure that congestion would not increase at King's Cross station.

But the bottom line is how sound the business case is, given that every additional stop loses time for all the through passengers on the line. The study estimates that in 2016 at least 10,000 people would use the station during the three hour morning peak, either leaving or arriving in roughly equal numbers.

London Underground are now apparently doing further assessments to see whether the business case adds up, and their final report should be available in the coming weeks. But whether the financial and congestion issues can be sufficiently resolved to make reopening York Road really feasible remains to be seen.



**THE CHANNEL TUNNEL** Visitor Centre has moved from Brill Place to the German Gym in Pancras Road, shown here from the new St Pancras station. The Centre is open Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 6.30pm, and on Saturday, 9am to noon. As well as information on the rail link, there is exhibition space and a display about the building's history. Following demolition of the famous old entrance the exterior has been refurbished, but a

false ceiling to create another floor has destroyed the unique space inside the gym. Further ignoring our local heritage, even the historic name German Gym has been changed to 'The gymnasium'. This name change is a small but unnecessary slight to local people, who have already suffered enough from construction of the rail link. *Network* was told the name change is not necessarily permanent – we hope not. PHOTO: DIANA SHELLEY

## Channel Tunnel Rail Link works

The Thameslink 'box' at St Pancras was finished on time and the through line reopened in May. These works – for which last year the contractors failed to get consent for 24-hour noisy work – are being done as part of building the CTRL. But actually fitting out the station and line depends on whether Thameslink '2000' gets the go-ahead. And whether it gets government funding probably depends on the success of London's Olympic bid.

Work continues on CTRL at St Pancras. In May the contractors withdrew their attempt to extend working hours to Sundays, under pressure from local residents.

Meanwhile on the Islington border, York Way was shut for more than three months from January to the end of April, while York Way viaduct was demolished and the new road built at ground level. The rail link between the mainline out of King's Cross and the North London Line was also rebuilt.

Some of the worst impacts during this closure were not down to CTRL. The agreed temporary rerouting of southbound 390 buses along

Copenhagen Street led to many other bus drivers doing the same illegally. Huge numbers of HGVs also used Copenhagen Street when they found there was no route north. Copenhagen Street is banned to HGVs, but poor signage in Camden and lack of enforcement meant constant heavy traffic on this residential street. Local people even organised a symbolic blockade of the road to highlight the problems.

Another major impact was noise, with weeks of daytime percussive 'drop hammer piling' at the Islington end of the new Thameslink tunnel.

As we go to press, the future of more than one project depends on the Olympic bid. The long-awaited works to build the Northern Ticket Hall at King's Cross (demanded on safety grounds in 1988 after the King's Cross fire) got government go-ahead in February, just in time for the Olympics committee's visit.

If London fails to win the bid, cynics warn the plugs could be pulled again on this – taking with it the King's Cross concourse redevelopment and even the Argent development.

## Kings Cross Railway Lands Group

- We are a local group made up of community groups and individuals living and working in Camden and Islington.
- We aim to be actively involved in the planning and implementation of developments in and around the Kings Cross Railway Lands in order to ensure they benefit local residents, community groups and businesses.
- Since we formed in 1987 we have monitored rail and other development proposals in the area as well as informing and consulting local people about them.
- We represent the community interests to Camden and Islington councils, at public enquiries and to Parliament.

If you would like to join the group and support our work, please return the coupon below

## 英皇十字鐵路土地發展關注組

-我們是由一群在甘頓和依士寧頓居住或工作的社團及個人組成的當地機構。  
 我們專門致力於還繞英皇十字鐵路(King's Cross)之土地發展計劃及措施。目的是確定其對當地居民、社團及商業機構帶來利益。  
 自1987年成立時，我們已監察這地區的鐵路及其他發展建議，同時亦知會及諮詢當地各階層人士。我們代表各社區的利益向甘頓及依士寧頓市政府、公眾諮詢會及國會發表。如果你想參加這個組織，或者要找到更多資料，請填寫以下回條回本組。

## किंग्स क्रॉस रेलवे लैंड्स ग्रुप

- आम्हाला एकत्रित प्रश्नांसाठी या क्षेत्रातील रहिवासी, कामगार, व्यापारी आणि नागरिक समाजाच्या हितक्षेत्रात काम करणे हे आमचे उद्देश्य आहे. आम्हाला चाकरी करणारे रहिवासी समाज आहे.
- आमच्या उद्देशाचा भाग म्हणून, किंग्स क्रॉस रेलवे लैंड्स ग्रुप आमच्या नागरिकांना आवाजासाठी एकत्रित करणे हे आमचे उद्देश्य आहे. नागरिकांच्या सोबत प्रत्यक्ष बैठकांचे आयोजन करणे हे आमचे उद्देश्य आहे. स्थानीय नागरिकांच्या, कामगार, व्यापारी आणि नागरिक समाजाच्या हितक्षेत्रात काम करणे हे आमचे उद्देश्य आहे.
- आम्हाला 1987 च्या वर्षी आमच्या उद्देशाचा भाग म्हणून एकत्रित करणे हे आमचे उद्देश्य आहे. आमच्या उद्देशाचा भाग म्हणून एकत्रित करणे हे आमचे उद्देश्य आहे.
- आम्हाला कामगार, व्यापारी आणि नागरिक समाजाच्या हितक्षेत्रात काम करणे हे आमचे उद्देश्य आहे. आमच्या उद्देशाचा भाग म्हणून एकत्रित करणे हे आमचे उद्देश्य आहे.
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## Kings Cross Railway Lands Group

- Waxaan nahay koox xaafadood ka kooban kooxo ka tirsan bulshada iyo xubno dagan ama ka shaqeeya xaafadda Camden iyo Islington.
  - Ujceedadayadu waxay tahay inaan si fir fircoon uga mid noqono qorsheeynta iyo fulinta horumarinta ku saabsan dhulka Kings Cross Railway iyo agagaarkiisa si aan u hubino inay faa'ido u leedahay dadka xaafadda dagan, kooxaha bulshada iyo ganacsatada.
  - Tan iyo markii aan dhisanay ee 1987 waxaan si joogto ah u dabagalnay arrimaha ku saabsan raarka iyo talooyin kale ee la xiriira horumarinta aagga (area), anagoo isla markaas ka wargalineynay kalana tashacynay dadka xaafadda dagan amuurahaas.
  - Konsofoda Camden iyo Islington waxaan ka matalnaa danaha bulshada ee dhuuca wareysiga dadweeynaha iyo barlamaanka.
- Hadii aad dooncyso inaad ka mid noqoto kooxdaan, fadlan soo dir warqadda yar ee hoos ku dhagan.**

Network is published by King's Cross Railway Lands Group, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX Tel: 020 7837 6824, email [office@kxrlg.org.uk](mailto:office@kxrlg.org.uk), website at [www.kxrlg.org.uk](http://www.kxrlg.org.uk). **Articles and comments are welcome.**

**EDITED BY DIANA SHELLEY. DESIGNED BY ARTLOUD. PRINTED BY EXPRESS PRINTING, 3 MILNYARD SQUARE, PETERBOROUGH PE2 6GX**

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