King's Cross Development Forum

Annual Review Meeting 7:00 p.m. 4 November 2011

Committee Room 1, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

1 Attendance

1.1 Present

Zannthie Bennett, Andrew Bosi, Paul Braithwaite, Malcolm Campbell, Ben Campkin, John Chamberlain, Alice Dickerson, Michael Edwards, Helia Evans, John Hartley, Anne Howeson, Angela Inglis, Jean James, Philip James, Hugh Lake, Robert Milne, Matty Mitford, Ben Myring, Geoffrey Roper, Rebecca Ross, Norman Sheppard, Lisa Tang and Herman Tribelnig

1.2 Apologies

Jeannie Burnett, Jim Humphris, Diana Shelley and Sophie Talbot

2 Previous meeting

2.1 Notes

The notes for the meeting of 22 September 2011 had been circulated and posted on the website and were formally approved.

2.2 Matters arising

Nothing was discussed.

3 Planning Response Team

3.1 King's Cross Square

Stephen Hadley and Tom Shell, the architects from Stanton Williams, along with Donald Homer and Jaswinder Rupra, from Network Rail, and Mike Crabtree, from Transport for London, described the plans for King's Cross Square. The plans had been outlined in a consultation to which several members of the Forum had responded; since then there had been various changes, partly in response to comments on the earlier plans, and the planning applications had been submitted for approval.

In the changes to the plans:

- Two new rows of trees are introduced (despite possible detriment to the view of the Station).
- The canopy is smaller and further from the bus stops; the Transport for London belief is that a bigger canopy will not be used by people waiting.
- The contrast in colour of the striped granite paving is reduced.

- The colour of the York stone paving leading to the ticket office is made warmer.
- Two possible locations for public art are mentioned (despite possible impediment to walking through the Square).

In reply to questions and comments from members of the Forum, the presenters stated that:

- Signs were omitted from the plans at the request of the planning officers, though the architects and the client had opinions on where signs would be, and appreciated that without signs the design was incomplete and the views were misleading.
- The road crossings had not been considered because they were the responsibility of Transport for London as highways authority.
- The coverings of the stairs closest to the Station had not been integrated into these plans for the Square and had been designed in a different manner, by different architects, because English Heritage regarded them as very close to the Station (though they are no closer than one of the vent shafts).
- The coverings by the taxi rank could not be extended to meet the nearest vent shaft because National Grid required them to be demountable over the gas main.
- Bicycle stands would obscure the view of the Station (according to English Heritage) and would leave too little space for people to walk though the Square.
- Fumes from smokers would pass out from the canopy more easily than at present because it was taller and narrower.
- Bins would not be provided as Network Rail would perform cleaning continuously.
- Escalators would require more space than was available, even on the south side of Euston Road (where they would interfere with the envisaged route of Crossrail 2).
- Green roofs would obscure the view of the Station (according to English Heritage) and would be hurled around dangerously in the event of a blast.
- Green walls would need to stand some metres away from the three vent shafts (so air could flow through the walls) and would leave too little space for people to walk though the Square.
- Green floors would be obliterated by the heavy pedestrian traffic.

Members of the Forum pointed out that the fact that the Square was becoming an arrivals concourse that was short of space and of encouragement for people to linger resulted from the bad design decisions by Network Rail some years ago to allow entry to the Station only from the west and to remove the bridge at the rear of the Station.

4 Design Panel

Nothing was reported.

5 Construction Impact Group

Nothing was reported.

6 Access Forum

Nothing was reported.

7 Annual review

7.1 Report

Hugh Lake drew attention to the annual review report and thanked everyone for their contributions over the past year.

7.2 Matters arising

Nothing was discussed.

8 Operations

8.1 The role of the Forum in the proposed new planning system

There is some debate about whether the absence of a Neighbourhood Forum would allow an arbitrary development to proceed, as the borough plans and the London plan might act as safeguards, if they were got right. In the meeting there was a widespread view that the Forum was well suited to becoming an official Neighbourhood Forum because of its experience and coverage; the King's Cross Conservation Advisory Committee was perhaps the obvious alternative the Forum in this respect but was thought unlikely to take the role. The meeting agreed that the Co-ordinating Group would investigate and report back on the desirability and feasibility of becoming an official Neighbourhood Forum.

Michael Edwards observed that the Localism Bill contains various other provisions that could make fundamental differences to planning; in particular it permits automatic changes of use class from business use to residential use, with the possible effect that in London employment will diminish.

8.2 The allocation of Section 106 money

The Section 106 funds were being distributed in ways that were not fully visible to the Forum. The Forum had asked to be told about the plans for the funds more than two years ago. The meeting noted that the Co-ordinating Group would investigate and report back on the allocation of the Section 106 funds.

8.3 B3

The Camden Development Control Committee meeting approved the planning application for Building B3 (the new Camden Council office block). In that meeting the comments by the Forum on pedestrian and cyclist access and the Section 106 funds, and related comments by the King's Cross Living Streets Group and the King's Cross Railway Lands Group, were

ignored, on the grounds that the planning application was concerned only with the design of the building, not with access to it.

8.4 Use of funds

Nothing was reported.

8.5 Elections of the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and other Co-ordinating Group members

The officers and other members of the Co-ordinating Group were re-appointed unopposed.

9 Future meetings

9.1 Time and place

7:00 – 9:00 Thursday 19 January 2012

Committee Room 2, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

10 Actions

The Planning response team to submit a response about King's Cross Square taking into account the questions and comments by members of the Forum.

The Co-ordinating Group to investigate and report back on the desirability and feasibility of becoming an official Neighbourhood Forum.

The Co-ordinating Group to investigate and report back on the allocation of the Section 106 funds.