

King's Cross Development Forum

Annual Review Meeting 7:00 p.m. 13 December 2017

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

1 Attendance

1.1 Present

Zannthie Bennett, John Chamberlain, Andrew Clayton, Helia Evans, Jim Humphris, Philip James, John Mason, Robert Milne, Herman Tribelnig and Ben Williams

1.2 Apologies

Andrew Bosi, James Dunnett, Mouna Hamitouche, Ivor Kamlish, Deklan Kilfeather, Jasmine King, Hugh Lake, Charles Manson, Norman Sheppard, Lucy Tamman and Malcolm Tucker

2 Previous meeting

2.1 Notes

The notes for the meeting of 11 May 2017 had been circulated and posted on the website and were formally approved.

2.2 Matters arising

Nothing was discussed.

3 Developments

3 Annual review

3.1 Report

Ben Williams drew attention to the annual review report. This had been a very quiet year, partly because few development plans had come forward and partly because various speakers had withdrawn from proposed meetings. The intention to engage fully with other occupants of King's Cross Central had still not be put into effect adequately. In these respects the year resembled the previous year.

3.2 Matters arising

Nothing was discussed.

4 Construction Impact Group

As agreed at the Annual Review Meeting of 2016 the Forum had asked Camden Council to revive the Construction Impact Group. It was indeed revived, but since then some meetings had been either postponed or cancelled; the most recent one was cancelled because the Argent representative was unable to attend. As the principal activity in the meetings involves reporting by Argent (on noise, air quality and complaints) this might indicate the importance that Argent now attached to the Group. A further indication is that the glossy newsletter on construction progress ceased publication in 2016. Argent appears to be holding the construction companies to account, and, as construction is reducing, the breaches of the thresholds appear to be becoming less common.

5 Design Panel and Access Forum

The Design Panel and Access Forum looks at plans slightly before they are mature enough to be put into planning applications. Probably the frequency of meetings has been declining, but there were still four this year. The one on Zone A (for Google) was followed by a Forum meeting on the same topic. Of the three other topics, two had been covered partly by the description of the open space policy summarised in the [minutes of the meeting](#) of November 2016, and the third concerned a fairly small office block described briefly in the [annual review report](#) and said at one time to be for the Aga Khan Development Network (north of Handyside Street and west of York Way).

6 Operations

6.1 The future of the Forum

Ben Williams initiated a discussion on the future of the Forum by noting that the Forum needed to review what it did and whether it should continue, especially as the current officers were intending to stand down and development was tailing off. The main plans that have not yet been presented to the Design Panel and Access Forum are those for Building P2 (on Cubitt Square for the Aga Khan Development Network) and fragments of Zone S (between Canal Reach and Cubitt Park).

In this context, members of the Forum should look at an earlier discussion of the topic, led by Hugh Lake and outlined in the [minutes of the meeting](#) of November 2013. Since then the Forum had continued to feel insufficiently effective: though it had tackled important topics, such as the reduction in affordable housing recorded in the [minutes of the meeting](#) of September 2015, its main meetings mainly just provided information. Its comments on buildings, such as [Zone A](#) and [Coal Drops Yard](#), during planning permission consultations had been brushed aside. Members of the Forum, and to a degree the Forum itself, had taken part in campaigns to save the [King's Cross swimming pond](#) and advocate the building of the [King's Cross foot bridge](#), but these had no effect even though one of them received widespread press and television coverage.

The Forum had responded to some plans for the wider area around King's Cross Central, most recently in its [response to the consultation](#) on removing the gyratory and the discussion outlined in the [minutes of the meeting](#) of November 2016. However, the Forum had not examined the Local Plans being redeveloped by Camden and Islington, or the London Plan; it simply did not have enough effort available to do so. Also, the Steering Committee had considered, but had decided against, holding meetings about the developments at the Regent's Wharf in All Saints Road and at the Royal Mail Sorting Office in Saint Pancras Way. The former of these had now been rejected by the Islington Council Planning Committee against the advice of their planning officers, following strenuous complaints by local residents and vigorous marketing by the developers.

The Construction Impact Group had evidently fallen in importance. The Design Panel and Access Forum, however, appeared to be holding up, with meetings on four topics during the past year (as reported in the [annual review report](#)). Though even it meets too late in the design cycle to have much effect, the architects are rather more receptive at its meetings than at the public meetings, and there is some evidence that the Development Forum has influenced, for example, Zone W (north of Randells Road and east of York Way) as described in the [minutes of the meeting](#) of December 2015.

Herman Tribelnig wondered whether development was tailing off, as the land on Freight Lane (between the High Speed 1 and Overground tracks) was still occupied by the transport depots and concrete works. However, London and Continental Railways and Exel Holdings sold the transport

depots to Camden Council in 2015. The concrete works serves much of London and is the second largest in the UK, because of its location, storage and ability to accept large trains; its site is safeguarded. Development does not seem likely soon.

Zannthie Bennett summarised the history of the attempt to set up a neighbourhood forum for King's Cross. The work was initiated by the Development Forum following discussions described in the [minutes of the meeting](#) of February 2012; the Development Forum gathered together the original team of participating organisations and people and prepared the first versions of the documents needed (which are collected on the [Neighbourhood Planning](#) page of the Development Forum web site). A later report on the neighbourhood forum is in the [minutes of the meeting](#) of March 2013. Even after much background work had been done there were difficulties in satisfying the local councillors and planning officers, particularly about finance, community engagement, and the boundary of the area (which finally stretched north-south from the Overground to Saint George's Gardens and east-west from Penton Street to Judd Street), so the referendum required to give the forum legal status was never held. However, the work provided information and experience that could usefully be passed on.

Because the neighbourhood forum for King's Cross was slow to make progress, the people of Camley Street, who were especially concerned about the future of the light industrial sites, decided to leave the King's Cross area and form their own neighbourhood forum. The resulting [neighbourhood plan](#) is now in its final draft form, five years after work started. Though for a very much smaller area than King's Cross, it gives an idea of the output from a neighbourhood forum that can have legal force when approved by the councils and an external inspector.

Helia Evans pointed out that there were other people on the Steering Committee and among the residents who might be asked to be officers. However people were too busy and had no burning local issues that they wanted to be tackled.

Herman Tribelnig suggested that a potential burning issue was the restoration of York Road Station. Yet, as others said, this could present difficulties: though nobody in the meeting had seen the evidence, TfL have said that the cost-benefit analysis (comparing the time lost by people travelling from or to stations further out with the time saved by people near York Road Station) does not justify it, and the closeness to King's Cross could lead to queues of stationary trains.

John Mason observed that there had been no proper evaluation of King's Cross Central. Though the scheme was originally expected to have social and economic benefits, there had been no assessment of what these had actually been. In a sense the work of the Forum would be incomplete without this.

Overall members of the Forum thought that its value lay in its contribution to the Design Panel and Access Forum and its participation in consultations on the area as a whole (on plans for removing the gyratory, for example). The first of these is tied to the Development Forum; the second could be done by another site occupants association, but the recent suggestion for such an association seems to envisage entirely different activities (and needs effort which, on current showing, might not be found).

Ben Williams then suggested that there were four possible futures for the Forum:

- Closing it now. This would be a pity if there were still one or two major planning applications to come forward or if wider area matters such as removing the gyratory deserved comment.
- Maintaining it for a while in support of the Design Panel and Access Forum and perhaps occasional meetings. The existing officers would be needed, as no others have offered to take

on the roles. The roles in the Design Panel and Access Forum are assigned to the Development Forum and are not obviously transferrable to other organisations, especially at this late stage of development.

- Continuing it in something like the form that it had been operating in over the past one or two years. This differs from the “maintaining it” option mainly by aiming to engage fully with other occupants of King’s Cross Central.
- Replacing it with a new body to resurrect the neighbourhood forum. There would be different officers, who would need to have sufficient energy, enthusiasm, time and skill. The [minutes of the meeting](#) of November 2013 reported on a discussion (in which Argent was very irate) of whether the Development Forum could usefully be converted into a neighbourhood forum and concluded that it could not then, but of course the time is different now.

The final decision was to continue for six months (or possibly more) while a working party examined whether a successor body would have suitable officers and would satisfy the two councils.

6.2 Community Infrastructure Levy

Nothing was reported outside the annual review report.

6.3 The allocation of Section 106 money

Nothing was reported outside the annual review report.

6.4 Use of funds

Jim Humphris noted that following the handover from Matty Mitford to himself as Treasurer he had been unable to access the account, because the bank required him to obtain relevant documentation from her. He would do this in the next two days (before she returned to the Netherlands, where she now lived most of the time). He reiterated his intention to cease being Treasurer then. The Forum accepted the offer of John Mason to be a second signatory of the account alongside Jim Humphris.

Jim Humphris explained that the funds had mainly been obtained by Hugh Lake from the charity associated with One Housing Group but that the Forum had not found a satisfactory use for them. He endorsed the suggestion (by Robert Milne) that they should now go to [Shelter from the Storm](#). This was a local charity (located in Brandon Street, off York Way) receiving no government support and providing free supper, bed and breakfast for homeless people every night, as well as help with doctors, lawyers, counsellors and courses.

Other people then put forward other suggestions for using the funds:

- Paying outside speakers on wider topics. These might be, for example, people who had assessed the social and economic effects of King’s Cross Central.
- Recording the history of the Forum, through those such as Michael Edwards and Una Sapietis. Michael Edwards is still producing an [excellent blog](#) that is relevant to planning policy in general and King’s Cross in particular, but its content is not primarily historical.
- Passing the money over to the neighbourhood forum for King’s Cross (if that came to life). The usual supposition is that a neighbourhood forum can be sustained ultimately by contributions from businesses and residents in the area.

6.5 Elections of the Chair, Joint Deputy Chairs, Secretary, Treasurer and other Steering Group members

Pending the outcome of discussions on successors to the Forum the following were kept in position:

- Chair: Deklan Kilfeather
- Deputy Chair: Ben Williams
- Secretary: Robert Milne
- Treasurer: Jim Humphris
- Other Steering Group members: Helia Evans, Jasmine King, Norman Sheppard and Malcolm Tucker

7 Future meetings

7.1 Date and place

Nothing was discussed.

7.2 Agenda

Nothing was discussed.

8 Any other business

The members of the Forum very kindly presented to the Secretary a splendid book, signed by all present, on Unseen London. Robert Milne expressed his gratitude but noted that over the years (for longer than he had even lived in the area) many people contributed to the Forum much more than he. Among them might be mentioned (in his time here) Michael Edwards, Angela Inglis, Hugh Lake and Geoffrey Roper.

9 Actions

The Steering Group to participate in discussions on successors to the Forum.

The Steering Group to continue support for participation in the Design Panel and Access Forum.

The Steering Group to consider how to archive the Forum and record the contributions of others.