



8 February 2007
please send any reply to office@kxrlg.org.uk

To: Development Control, LBC
CC: Development Control LBI (West Area)

Dear Sir / Madam

Planning Application number 2006/3387/P
Listed Building Application number 2006/3394/L
National Rail: King's Cross Station western concourse etc

We write on behalf of the King's Cross Railway Lands Group in response to the above applications. The matter has been discussed at General Meetings of the Group and by its Management Committee, and both levels of the organisation have resolved that we should object.

Our objections are as follows:

1. Ease of access to and through the station. The proposals as they stand would create enormous barriers to movement by pedestrians and cyclists seeking to come or go to King's Cross station and to those using the re-located Thameslink and CTRL stations and to those simply trying to cross the area from east to west. For this last group there are already serious problems which the re-design of the area could and should remedy. For the other groups, the proposals make circulation much worse than they are today. The proposals are totally unacceptable as they stand.

These adverse effects of the proposals are often regarded as discriminating mainly against people coming and going to the East and North East of the station (the Islington side) but in fact they adversely affect the whole integration of the enlarged King's Cross area, including the Railway Lands, and is thus in breach of the Joint Planning Brief for King's Cross promulgated by Camden and Islington Councils. There has clearly not been effective joined-up thinking between the Argent and National Rail people in their briefing of the NR's architects but we do

not regard that as any excuse for this really bad proposal, the effects of which would last for decades.

It is not our job, and we do not have the resources, to put forward an alternative design which meets all the requirements for access, ticket control and safety. But we must point out

- (i) the potentiality for re-creating Wharfedale Road to the west of York Way (either for general traffic or just for pedestrians and cycles);
- (ii) the potentiality of a modernised pedestrian bridge, replacing the present one within the train shed and connecting through to the East side of York Way;
- (iii) the potentiality of a broader deck over the tracks at the station mouth on the lines of the universally-acclaimed Exchange Square at Liverpool Street (though the portals where the tracks go below the canal should remain visible).

Pleas that it can't be done simply will not wash.

2. Severe damage to Grade 1 Listed Building and its context. We are wholly opposed to the treatment of the southern and western façades.

The canopy proposed for the southern end makes nonsense of the admirable plan to remove the 'temporary' ticket office building by replacing it with what is already being referred to as a 'frill' or 'eyebrows'. If English Heritage were doing their job properly they would not permit these excrescences.

So far as the western side is concerned we are equally aghast at the domed structure proposed alongside and partly obscuring the western range. This is a very bizarre carbuncle (almost literally) on a fine neo-classical elevation and the only argument we have heard in its defence is that NR wishes to have a lot of retail floor space as well as the necessary ticketing and related services for passengers. In our view this is to let the commercial tail wag the conservation dog and is wholly unacceptable.

We should point out that a great deal of traveller-oriented retail space is already being developed as part of the St Pancras re-modelling, that there is more retailing in Regent's Quarter and a great deal more is to follow in the Argent scheme. Furthermore if a version of Exchange Square were developed at the mouth of the station (and perhaps partly within it) then further catering and retail opportunities would arise up there – with direct access to the King's Cross platforms. Finally – if all of these lavish retail provisions were regarded as inadequate or too remote – we have some sympathy with the suggestion by the Conservation Area Advisory Committee for a (temporary or permanent) arc-shaped building continuing the curve of the Great Northern Hotel to house yet more shops.

3. Indecent haste

Finally we should say that we do not consider that the 'Olympic imperative' provides adequate grounds for the Council to permit such a very inadequate scheme. The Olympics are supposed to have beneficial effects on regeneration in London, not to legitimate damaging and half-baked projects like this. Furthermore those attending the games will predominantly be using St Pancras and the underground network and will thus be fully provided with catering and retail services in St Pancras.

Furthermore, work on a pedestrian bridge or deck (Exchange Square – style) could begin without delay, in contrast to the multi-storey carbuncle in the application, work on which we understand could not start until the LUL northern ticket hall is complete. Our suggestion should thus make it easier, not harder, to meet the Olympic imperative.

For and on behalf of the King's Cross Railway Lands Group