

Mr Bob West  
Culture and Environment Directorate  
5th floor  
Camden Town Hall Extension  
Argyle Street  
WC1H 8EQ

18 April 2007

Dear Bob

### **King's Cross station redevelopment**

As you know, we have worked hard to find the right scheme to upgrade the station so that it can meet the challenge posed by millions more passengers using it in coming years. We have taken care to embrace the sometimes conflicting needs of passengers, the local community, and those with an interest in the history of this Grade I listed building.

After eight years of development, review, and consultation, we are now confident that our plans for King's Cross offer the best possible solution to a very complex challenge. We will create a station which can accommodate high levels of growth, a far superior passenger environment, and will create huge improvements to the surrounding area. The result will be a station which residents of Camden and Islington will feel justifiably proud, and which will be appropriate to sit alongside its sister station St Pancras, providing an impressive introduction to Camden and the UK for visitors from Europe.

The period of delay between our initial committee hearing and the final hearing on 19 April has given us time to reflect on whether there is anything further we can do to meet individual objections from residents to the north east of the station. I will come on to this shortly but first, I think it is worth being clear that the central objections fall into two broad areas: one concerns links between Islington and Camden; the other access to the station from the north-east and east of the station.

#### **Access from Islington to Camden**

King's Cross station has created a physical east/west barrier since it was built over 150 years ago. In this respect it is not untypical of the other mainline terminus stations in London. Our proposed scheme does not create any additional barrier to east/west transfer for residents of either Borough.

We would point out that the creation of the Southern Square, and the proposals in the Argent development to construct the new Boulevard from Goods Way, will contribute to improved east/west journey times. The combination of these improvements will make pedestrian journeys between

these parts of Islington and Camden an unrecognisably more pleasurable experience than at present.

We appreciate that the Argent development makes provision for a footbridge from Wharfdale road to the new Boulevard. We appreciate that there would be possible benefits to the accessibility of St Pancras in particular, but this is well beyond our remit. This bridge would offer no tangible benefit to rail passengers using King's Cross station, however we have offered engineering assistance to any developer (for example, Camden) wishing to investigate further the practicability of a bridge. This is a valuable offer given the technical challenges of building over the throat of a major station.

#### **Access to King's Cross station from Islington**

We have given much consideration to the issue of access for members of the public from Islington once the unofficial entrance to the station is closed off to its north east side. The decision to close this entrance was not taken lightly and is driven by a simple need to increase capacity at the station, and is part of our wider strategic commitment to implement over £2.4bn of enhancements to increase rail capacity across the network over the next two years alone.

Platforms at King's Cross currently operate at full capacity, which makes it difficult to deal with any service disruption and provides no scope for improving services into the station. The creation of a new platform is essential and is the only way to improve capacity. The only possible location for this platform is beneath the Eastern Range offices, which not only necessitates closure of the informal north east access point, but also requires a new retaining wall to be built very close to York Way. This work prevents pedestrian access (as illustrated by the enclosed images).

As you are aware, this section of work takes place entirely within the footprint of the current station and is something which Network Rail could undertake through permitted development rights (including the closure of the north east access point), and listed building consent for incidental works. However, we have responsibly incorporated this work into the overall application to allow Camden BC to review this essential redevelopment in its entirety.

#### **A new link bridge over platform Y to Platform 1**

Any link into the station over the new platform must be built in a manner which meets operational requirements. That is, it must: be accessible for disabled passengers; provide room for controlled ticket gates (with attendant staff facilities); be sensitive to heritage needs; and not create a dangerous contra-flow of people onto the platform itself.

We have looked at this issue in some detail. It is our view that to achieve these objectives within a very small space envelope, whilst maintaining critical access to the signal box and track maintenance points within immediate proximity of the disused York Way tunnel, precludes a simple engineering solution. We strongly feel that the best operational solution, and the best use

of public funding, is therefore to improve the York Way environment. The benefits of this improved environment will be available to all Islington and Camden residents, not just those with a train ticket.

We fully acknowledge the depth of feeling amongst some local residents who object to our proposals. We are anxious not to alienate anyone in the local community, even when considering the massive positive benefit we believe our scheme will bring, and are genuinely committed to making every effort to assess whether a viable opportunity exists to overcome this issue.

As a result, we propose to fund and commission an external consultant to look at the feasibility of a bridge between York Way and Platform 1, taking into account all of the operational, heritage, and engineering matters referred to earlier.

We will commit to further pursue the creation of a bridge if in our view a practical, cost-effective, and affordable solution emerges from the study.

#### **Walking via York Way & its surrounding environment**

The distance an individual would have to walk if access to the station from its north and east is closed does not change significantly to either underground, suburban or long-haul train services. Indeed it is improved in some instances when one factors in the new Boulevard which forms a central part of Argent's proposed development. (See illustrations of pedestrian analysis).

As we have stated previously, it is therefore our view that the most important issue which needs to be addressed is the state of the environment people must walk along. In this case, the key area of concern is York Way itself. Improving this road presents an opportunity to genuinely enhance the area for the local community. It is an opportunity which, in our view, has failed to be taken by past developments along the route, and is something which we believe could make a great difference to the area.

We have backed up our stance with the offer to contribute £750,000 towards such improvements. I enclose illustrations of how we think York Way might look if it were improved using the funding we have offered.

However, to make sure work is carried out in a way which provides maximum benefit for local people and engages all relevant parties (recognising that we are not the only agency that would have to engage in this), we further propose that York Way is added to the GLA sponsored design competition for the Southern Square. Not only will this make sure the resulting design is world class, it also will secure a tangible opportunity for people from Islington and Camden to influence the final solution. We would also be happy to act as facilitator with the other agencies to ensure that the improvements could be delivered at the very earliest opportunity.

As a further demonstration of our commitment to residents from Islington and the east of the station, if we cannot find a practical and cost effective solution

to the north east access bridge, we propose to extend our financial backing for improvements to the local environment by £250,000. This will take the total fund to £1 million for local environmental improvements, in addition to the £6 million we have already committed to fund a major new public square to the south of the station. We believe that this is a substantial commitment to the local community by any standard.

In conclusion may I reinforce the message that the station redevelopment is both urgent and vital to meet growing demand in passenger numbers. In this respect we would draw your attention to the letter that the DfT have recently sent to your Chief Executive emphasising their support for this scheme, confirming funding, and their desire to see the concourse operational before 2012. We are not sponsoring these works with any profit motivation, as a commercial developer might, but we do recognise the important role the station plays in its surrounding area. We believe we have responded to local concerns with proposals which address them directly, and will deliver tangible benefits for a great many people, in addition to the millions of passengers who use the station each year.

I hope the committee will give us the opportunity to take forward these plans so that we can deliver the massive benefits our scheme brings at the earliest opportunity, and to allow the facility to be available for visitors in time for the London Olympics.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Fry', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Ian Fry  
Programme Director, King's Cross station

Enc. Walking distances analysis  
Indicative York Way improvement visuals  
Visualisation of impact on access from platform Y