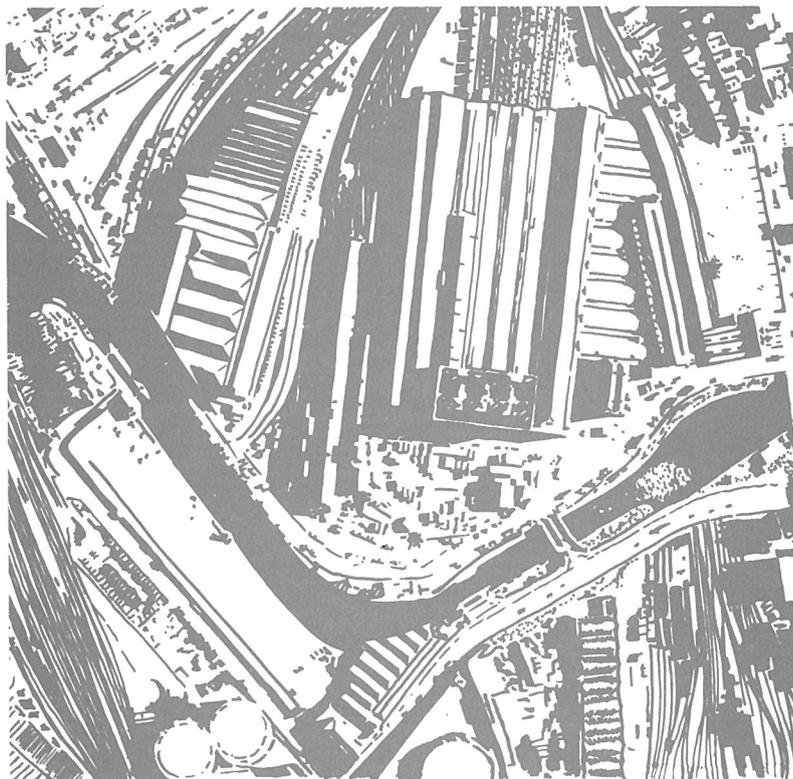


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THE  
**KING'S CROSS  
RAILWAY LANDS**  
*A  
Community*  
**PLANNING BRIEF**

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**PLANNING BRIEF**



London Borough of Camden  
Produced by the Department of Planning and Communications

January 1988

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## 1. A co-operative, comprehensive approach

- 1.1 The development of the Kings Cross Railway Lands provides an unprecedented opportunity for the local community, developers, land owners, the local authority and other public agencies to demonstrate how large scale, inner-city regeneration can be accomplished through co-operation not confrontation. Camden Council wishes to play its part as local planning authority in a positive, creative way. Its first step has been to produce this planning brief which provides a detailed planning framework against which any planning applications will be considered. The brief has been prepared after the most thorough-going consultation with the people who live and work in and around the site in both Camden and Islington and this involvement of the local community will continue throughout the planning process.
- 1.2 A primary aim of any plan for the area must be to secure long overdue improvements to the transport interchange at Kings Cross. It is their unique accessibility by public transport which makes the Railway Lands such an attractive development site. But the strategic importance of the site must not detract from its potential for meeting the needs of the local communities for jobs, housing, social and recreational facilities. A plan for the area must also ensure that local people are protected against any adverse social and environmental impacts of large scale commercial activities.
- 1.3 This brief invites land owners and potential developers to adopt a comprehensive approach to the development of the Railway Lands. Thus the uses the Council would be prepared to allow on any one part of the site would depend upon how they fit into a comprehensive package or master plan. A series of planning briefs for the sites in individual ownerships could add up to something very different from the comprehensive plan being encouraged here. Both community and commercial benefits could be substantially less. In pursuit of the greater benefits which a comprehensive approach offers, this brief is deliberately much more specific on the community requirements than on the quantity of commercial activities the Council would be prepared to accept. A strong incentive is thereby provided for the developer to come forward with a scheme which respects the industrial heritage of the site, which encourages diversity and which strikes a proper balance between the interests of strategic and local, community and commerce.

1.4 The structure of this document is as follows:

- \* a brief description of the site
- \* an account of the consultation undertaken with the public, local businesses and the various statutory bodies with an interest in the site
- \* a summary of the key planning issues which have been addressed in the preparation of this brief
- \* a statement of the Council's planning objectives for the site
- \* a detailed set of Council requirements against which any planning applications will be assessed. These requirements are expanded upon in a number of appendices which should be read in conjunction with this brief.

1.5 Finally it is important to note that this brief does not supersede any of the policies contained in the Statutory Borough Plan. The Plan's policies particularly in respect of housing and employment provide the statutory framework upon which this brief has been built. For brevity, the relevant policies in the Plan are not restated in the Brief but they must be seen as an essential part of it.

### The Site

1.6 The Railway Lands extend from the North London line to the north of the site to the two major railway stations of King's Cross and St Pancras at the southern end of the site. It is bounded on the east by York Way and on the west by the main line from St Pancras. The Regents Canal crosses across the site.

1.7 The area was largely established by the end of the 19th Century and contains the best group of early Victorian railway buildings in the London area. The historical significance of the area has been recognised through the listing of some of the buildings, including the railway stations and the declaration of Conservation Areas which cover most of the areas in the southern part of the site.

1.8 There are some 100 acres of land in the area, principally owned by British Rail, the National Freight Corporation, the British Waterways Board and North Thames Gas. Blight has resulted from uncertainty over future plans for the area and it now has a generally run down appearance. There are large tracts of vacant land in the Goods Yard and many buildings are under-used. The northern part of the site is used for importing aggregates by rail for processing into concrete, which is then distributed by road to building sites in central London. A number of temporary uses occupy other parts of the site.

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## KINGS CROSS RAILWAY LANDS



- 1.9 Surrounding the site are the residential communities of Somers Town and Elm Village to the west, Maiden Lane to the north, Thornhill, in the London Borough of Islington to the east and King's Cross to the south. The small residential community within the site is concentrated in and around Stanley Buildings. The New British Library development is adjacent to the south west corner of the site and Euston Road, with its commercial and office developments, including Camden Town Hall, borders on the southern end of the site.
- 1.10 The existing train sheds of St Pancras and King's Cross are clearly visible to the surrounding areas and are a major element in the strategic views south from Parliament Hill and Primrose Hill. The canal and the gas holders are other familiar landmarks which contribute to the character of the area as is the more recent development of the Camley Street Natural Park, based beside the canal and now viewed as an essential element in any long term proposals for the site. Despite the run down appearance, there is much of interest in the buildings and activities of the area which should be retained as part of its future (see Civic Design Assessment, Appendix C).

### Public Consultation

- 1.11 Local residents groups and businesses have had a key role in shaping the content of this Brief. The Council has pursued a number of different methods of consultation in order to ensure that a wide range of local views and requirements are included in the Brief. These included:
- \* a questionnaire survey of a sample of Camden residents to ensure that a full cross-section of views were obtained
  - \* a survey of local businesses at present based on the development site
  - \* five well attended public meetings (3 in Camden, 2 in Islington) at which people were invited to join one or more group discussions on specific topics. This maximised the opportunity for individuals to have their say. Every point made was publicly recorded and taken into account in the preparation of this brief.
  - \* an advertisement in local newspapers inviting people to express their views
  - \* letters to all local groups, area committees, and other interested bodies including LB Islington, inviting them to comment on the Draft Brief.

The detailed results of this consultation exercise are set out in Appendix A.

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1.12 The overall view which has emerged from public consultation is one of general support for the Council's broad aims but there is clearly concern about a number of specific issues, particularly traffic generated by development on the site, likely increases in local land values and the social consequences of such trends and the impact of development on existing local businesses. In considering proposals for the Railway Lands, the Council will seek to ensure that disadvantages to the local community are minimised and offset by other types of provision.

1.13 In the future the involvement of the local community must be an integral part of the development process. To assist this ongoing participation of both local residents and businesses and to provide a focus for local community activity, a permanent resources base should be provided at an early stage. It should incorporate facilities for small exhibitions, public meetings and permanent displays of information about proposals for the Railway Lands. It should be independent of the Council and developers.

## 2. Planning issues

### Jobs

- 2.1 The area is a significant source of employment. The Council's survey found more than 3,000 jobs in the area in 1984, mostly at the two main line stations. In surrounding communities in both Camden and Islington there are high levels of unemployment. For example the average rates of unemployment in Somerstown and Kings Cross Wards between October 1986 and October 1987 were 16% and 24% respectively. Where jobs are available they frequently do not match the skills of the local unemployed workforce.

### Housing

- 2.2 There is an extreme shortage of housing in the area, particularly low cost housing for rent. The children of existing families in the area are often unable to find local homes of their own. Council and housing association waiting lists are long and give priorities to families with children. The private sector, influenced by the proximity of the area to central London, is expensive. Single people and couples without children find it particularly difficult to secure accommodation. The Kings Cross area has one of the highest concentrations of homelessness in Greater London and the numbers are constantly rising.

### Community Facilities

- 2.3 Despite the existence of large communities in the area the level of provision of social, leisure and recreational facilities is poor. The area lacks a good local shopping centre. For their everyday shopping needs residents have to travel to the major centres of Camden Town and the Angel.

### Transport

- 2.4 Kings Cross Underground Station is one of the most heavily used in London; there has been a consistent increase in the number of passengers entering and leaving both the deep (Piccadilly, Victoria, Northern) and subsurface (Metropolitan and Circle) lines since the early 1980's. A large volume of rail passengers also use the BR stations - both long distance travellers and commuters - from a catchment area covering the east Midlands and the north east; opening up of the Thameslink in 1988 will lead to re-routeing of services from St Pancras to King's Cross Midland City station and through running of trains to southern region. The large numbers of passengers and other pedestrians using the subways emphasises the inconvenient interchange arrangements especially between tubelines, with the Underground concourse and adjacent subways in particular experiencing congestion problems. These pressures will sharply increase if the Stansted Airport and Channel Tunnel rail links are connected into Kings Cross.

- 2.5 While the "stations" area is highly accessible by public transport the surrounding road system is heavily trafficked and often congested. This congestion is caused in part because this road system forms part of the regional and national road network; Euston Road/Pentonville Road is a national trunk road. But substantial traffic is also generated by the transport interchange itself and the strategic activities which have clustered around it. All this results in severe conflict between traffic and the local environment as experienced by local residents and pedestrians in particular.

### Physical Environment

- 2.6 Many buildings on the site are of historical importance and architectural value and, whilst some of the site behind the stations is run down in its appearance, it contains a huge asset in the form of the canal and its environs which harbour a wealth of wildlife. The natural habitat of the area has to some extent been encouraged by its neglected nature - a development of any kind will pose a considerable threat to the ecological and historical significance of the site.

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### 3. The Council's objectives for the area

- 3.1 To encourage the comprehensive regeneration of the King's Cross Railway Lands by a diverse and innovative mixed use development which provides substantial benefits for existing and future communities and which is well integrated, both socially and physically with the surrounding areas.
- 3.2 To encourage all parties involved to adopt a collaborative, creative approach to the development of the area which in particular allows the local community to participate as fully as possible in the planning process.
- 3.3 To protect and develop employment opportunities, to establish training and retraining schemes and, in particular, to work towards a closer relationship between the jobs available in the area and the skills of the local workforce; to ensure that development is phased to respect the need for continuity of local business activity.
- 3.4 To provide a wide range of types of housing to meet the needs of the Borough's existing and future population, and, in particular, to meet the needs of existing local communities in the King's Cross area.
- 3.5 In conjunction with any housing development, to provide a wide range of leisure and social facilities to meet the needs of residents and the workforce both in the area itself and adjoining localities.
- 3.6 To protect and improve existing Listed and other interesting buildings and their setting within the Conservation Areas, to improve the overall environment of the area, particularly around the canal, and to ensure that extensive landscaping, including ecological areas, is included in the redevelopment.
- 3.7 To achieve a very high standard of architecture, townscape and design in both new developments and in the re-use of buildings, and to create an area with a unique and diverse character which relates to surrounding communities; to respect and enhance strategic views across the site to St Pauls and more local views to varied landmarks.
- 3.8 To encourage and promote the use of public transport modes through the improvement both of interchange arrangements and access to and by public transport throughout the Railway Lands.
- 3.9 To limit the traffic generation and traffic impact of new developments so as to minimise adverse environmental effects either within the new development or on the surrounding residential areas. In parallel with this, to both seek to obtain the most efficient use of the existing road space in accordance with the designated functions of roads in the area as defined in the Borough Plan, and pursue selective improvements where appropriate.

- 3.10 To ensure a safe and convenient environment for the movement of all users of the road and public transport systems, including pedestrians, both within and to and from the sites comprising the Railway Land itself, on the immediately surrounding road network and in the surrounding area generally including Islington.
- 3.11 To improve accessibility to and within the area for pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities.

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## 4. The Council's requirements

- 4.1 The Council accepts that any redevelopment of the site must include a commercial element. However, this Brief does not attempt to indicate preferred levels of office, retail or other types of commercial floorspace. Their scale and precise nature will, in part, be determined by the scale of community benefits provided by the development, the open market, the physical constraints of the site, the operational requirements of activities within the site and the Council's detailed civic design requirements. They will also be assessed in relation to the Council's existing policy framework as set out in the Borough Plan.
- 4.2 The Council considers that part of its locus is to secure for the local community, a wide range of interrelated facilities which both the Council and local community view as a fundamental part of any development in the area. These are set out in detail in the following paragraphs.

### Housing

- 4.3 Some parts of the Railway Lands offer ideal locations for housing and the Council therefore expects any proposals for the site to contain a substantial and wide ranging housing element, with particular emphasis given to those types of housing which will meet the needs of local communities.
- 4.4 The Council accepts that a wide range of housing provision must include some housing for sale or rent on the open market. However, the emphasis should be on low cost/low rent housing, available to, and designed for local people. Within the current climate Housing Associations are best placed to provide the type of housing required and the Council will actively support them in such a role. Some Council housing should also be provided. Appendix B1 gives an indication of the proportions of different types and tenures of housing the Council envisages on the site.
- 4.5 In general there should be an attempt to meet the needs of both families and non family households with particular provision being made for single people and extended families.
- 4.6. Housing should not take the form of traditional "estates" but should be integrated with other uses throughout the site. Housing Association and Council housing for both family and non family households should not be built over other uses, whereas this might be appropriate for single person housing for sale and hostel provision.
- 4.7 The density policies set out in the Borough Plan will be applied to new housing developments but design and integration with other uses will also play an important part in determining the built form of housing developments. Whilst high density developments are not generally suitable for families, the Borough Plan allows for a flexible approach in respect of density where other important factors need to be taken into account.