

King's Cross Development Forum

Planning reference number 2017/3133/P

“Reserved matters in relation to Zone A for erection of 7-11 storey building for use as offices (Class B1) with ancillary staff facilities including a cafe, gym, pool, Multi Use Games Area, events centre and landscaped roof garden; retail at ground floor level (Class A1) and two levels of basement incorporating a loading bay, 4 x accessible parking spaces, mechanical plant; and works to public realm in Battle Bridge Place, King's Boulevard and Goods Way as required by conditions 6, 9,10,12, 14, 16-23, 26, 27, 28, 31, 33-38, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50A, 51, 56, 60, 64-67 of outline planning permission reference 2004/2307/P granted 22/12/06 subject to a S106 agreement for a comprehensive, phased, mixed-use development of former railway lands within the Kings Cross Opportunity Area.”

Response by the Forum

The King's Cross Development Forum was set up so that people living or working in King's Cross could have a say in the future of the area and the development of the old railway lands. Its composition can increasingly represent the occupants of the King's Cross Central development site now that is becoming occupied; for example, already more than half the members of its Steering Group live there. This response reflects the views expressed at a meeting of the Forum before the submission of the planning application.

The scheme appears to have been carefully worked through at several levels; the landscaped roof is a particularly noticeable feature. The diagonals of the façades seem to be tied convincingly to the internal circulation arrangements and to the tapered shape, with the reduction in height and width towards the historic buildings and public space in the south.

The Forum notes that the scheme appears to be very inward-looking, with (for instance) its own gym, pool and Multi Use Games Area. There are the following respects in which the Forum would like to see changes and which could be expressed in conditions on the planning consent (if granted).

1. The brief for the architects is said to have made no mention of the possibility of reinstating the bridge over the railway lines. The building could be configured to permit a future passage through to the bridge, most likely between cores 3 and 4 of the building.
2. The designers are proud of the urban greenery offered by the roof top gardens. There is talk of opening the gardens to the public once or perhaps twice per year. The Forum considers that the gardens could be opened much more frequently than that (at least monthly, say). Other buildings elsewhere in London have done this for many years; 1 Poultry is an obvious example. Resolving any risks to security and confidentiality should be well within the capabilities of these designers.
3. There has been mention of occasional events in the auditorium being open to the public. The Forum would like to see a regular programme, perhaps akin to those being set up by the Francis Crick Institute and the Institute of Physics. Though Google is a commercial organisation, not an educational institution, the contributions from the people in this building and its other two buildings in the neighbourhood should enable it to offer more than marketing presentations. They could start with courses in coding, statistics and setting up companies (for example).