# Shaping the Future of the Kings Cross Area



A plan for the wider Kings Cross area including: Somers Town, Camley Street, Agar Grove and Maiden Lane

# Engagement on Key Issues October 2010



#### Introduction

Kings Cross is an important and vibrant area within Camden. It is changing all the time and is undergoing significant regeneration which raises a number of opportunities and challenges, both for the people and businesses in Kings Cross and across the wider area. It is one of nine places in the Borough where we are looking to shape the overall vision for the area, reflecting local issues and priorities and ensuring that all parties can make the most of future investment and service improvement through a plan.

As part of this process we would like to hear from local people and groups about what they think are the most important issues that the plan for Kings Cross should address, so that we can improve the area for those that live and work here as well as visitors.

# What are we doing?

We are preparing plans for nine Camden places and doing so there is an opportunity to think and act strategically about future investment decisions and service improvements that will really make a difference to people in each of the areas. It is about ensuring that the Council's ambition for making our places a better place to live, work and visit is realised. We will be considering local services as well as physical changes to ensure that they meet the identified needs, resources and local concerns of an area.

We will also aim to set out the improvements that can be achieved in the area through working with partners and developers such as enhancing streets and open spaces, improving the shopping offer on our high streets, delivering better homes for people, investing in our community spaces or securing local jobs and training opportunities for local people.

Kings Cross is the second area for which a plan is being prepared. A plan for the Camden Town area was recently completed and plans will also be prepared for Euston, Gospel Oak, Swiss Cottage, West Hampstead, Kentish Town, Kilburn and the St Giles/Holborn area in consultation with local communities.

# Why are we doing this work?

This process is about making sure that future development and change in an area delivers services, facilities and a public environment that works for the communities who live in the area. In order to achieve this we are preparing plans for the nine areas to ensure that the particular needs of these important places are looked at in a comprehensive way. The plans will identify the key issues and set out what type of place an area could be in the future through articulating an overall vision and a set of objectives for each area. They will also include an action plan so there is a clear set of actions drawing together the input from a range of partners, including the Council. By having a clear overview of the actions that will make a difference to the people in an area we will be able to work with others to make these places better for the people who live, work and visit.

#### What will the plan for Kings Cross cover?

The plan for the Kings Cross area is intended to have its main focus north of the Euston Road, where much of the planned change and investment in the area is occurring and where the main opportunities will arise. It is intended to cover a relatively wide area which includes the station area on Euston Road, Somers Town to the west, the Camley Street area to the north-west and Maiden Lane estate to the north. It's important to consider such a wide area because of the likely impacts and opportunities of Kings Cross investment for all of these neighbourhoods.

The plan will cover a wide range of issues that affect these different sub-areas as well as crosscutting issues that are important for the whole Kings Cross area such as pedestrian routes, community safety, economic development and sustainability.

# What is this consultation asking?

Some background work has already been carried out to inform this consultation. This draws on the work of the Council across a wide variety of services and takes into account what previous consultations with people and groups in the area have told us about local priorities.

From this we have identified a series of key issues that the plan could address. The purpose of this engagement is to provide an overview of the issues already identified and to check whether there are other issues that are important locally.

In order to do this the consultation is aimed at community and voluntary sector groups we know are active in the area and who represent range of views and interests. Important stakeholders in the area like the police, health service and major land-owners, businesses and developers will also be included in the consultation.

We recognise that there are a diverse range of views and perspectives, and we don't expect everyone to agree on everything. But we do know that if this work is really going to make a difference to our existing and new communities we need to hear a wide range of voices and work hard to balance competing views in the emerging vision and plan.

Questions are posed throughout the document to draw out views in relation to various topics, but the main things we would like to hear the views on are:

- Whether the issues we have identified are the right ones to be given priority?
- Whether there are other important issues we have missed?
- What the overall vision for the area should be?
- What kinds of actions the community would like to see included in the final plan to address the identified issues?

#### How to contribute

This document is intended to stimulate debate and comment on what are viewed as the most important issues locally and how we should seek to address these through the proposed plan.

As part of this process we would like to invite all of the contacted groups and organisation to send representatives to attend workshops to participate in discussion about the most important issues for the Kings Cross area. Two workshops have currently been arranged and the details are below:

 Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October at the British Library (Meeting Room 4), Euston Road NW1 2DB 9.00am (for a 9.30 start) until 12.30pm

and

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October
 at Maiden Lane Community Centre, 156 St Paul's Crescent NW1 9XZ
 9.00am (for a 9.30 start) until 12.30pm

The workshops will be run by an independent facilitator who will summarise all of the points and comments made at the sessions in a report that will be used to inform the preparation of the plan itself.

We are also happy to receive any written contributions and comments you may wish to make. These can be sent to:

Post: Placeshaping Team

London Borough of Camden

Room 302a

Town Hall Extension

Argyle Street

London WC1H 8EQ



# Context

Kings Cross is a complex area which is undergoing significant change and investment, with more planned over the short, medium and long term. It is an area with a large residential population and a wide range of local businesses that contribute to a thriving local economy, alongside well known attractions and transport connections.

It is a high profile area which is important to Camden and to London as a whole. In particular the major transport hub at Kings Cross – St Pancras is of national and international importance and some of London's best known institutions and attractions are on the area's doorstep (e.g. the British Library, British Museum, UCL). Work is also underway on development of the railway lands (Argent site) which is one of Europe's largest regeneration projects. However, what is less well known to visitors and those passing through the area is that the Kings Cross area is home to established resident communities - many with high levels of relative deprivation and is also home to wide range of businesses including offices. creative industries and



concentrations of more traditional industrial premises. The changes and investment occurring in the area present a range of opportunities to improve the lives of local people.

The purpose of the plan we will develop is to draw together the various strands of work that affect the area around a single vision and to set out a series of actions which the Council and partner organisations (such as the Metropolitan Police and NHS Camden) can make to improve the area for residents, businesses and visitors.

As mentioned in the introduction, the main focus of the plan will be north of Euston Road as this is the area where the majority of current and planned change is taking place and has historically been an area where there has been less investment, although this is now changing. The effects of major change in the area will be quite wide and therefore the plan will include the area around the major stations on Euston Road as well the wider 'hinterland' and residential communities around the Argent site including Somers Town to the west, Camley Street and Elm Village to the north-west and Maiden Lane estate to the north.

The range of issues in the area is complex and the preparation of a plan provides an opportunity to clearly set out what the priority issues are locally and to develop a clear set of actions address them.

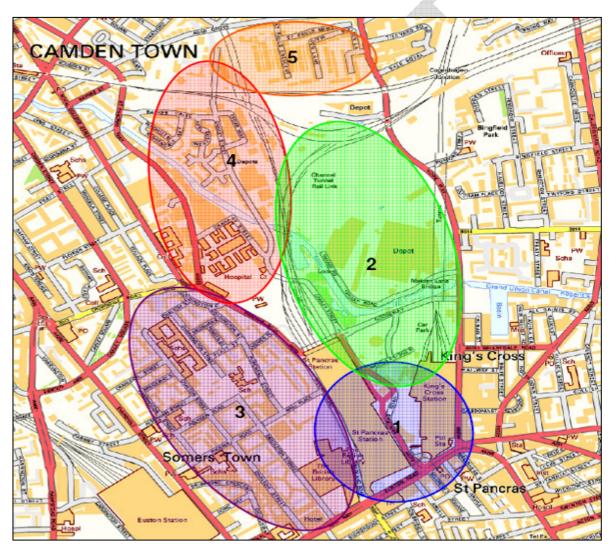
# **Key Issues**

This section sets out the main issues identified from the Council's existing knowledge of the area and from previous engagement and consultations with local people and groups.

One of the important characteristics of the area the plan will focus on is that it is made up of a number of quite distinct 'sub-areas', which are not always well connected with one another and each of which has its own particular set of issues.

While improving integration between the sub-areas to form a more coherent place with better access to new opportunities is one of the aims of our work, we have identified the issues that affect distinct parts of the wider area in turn before focusing on the crosscutting issues that affect the whole of the Kings Cross area.

The main sub-area areas that have been identified are shown on the map below:



- 1) Station Hub
- 2) Kings Cross Central
- 3) Somers Town

- 4) Camley St area
- 5) Maiden Lane

#### Sub Area Issues

This section sets out the main issues that have been identified so far for each of the subareas shown on the map. We would like to hear views on the issues we have identified for these parts of the wider area and whether there are others, to provide a sound basis on which to prepare the plan itself.

#### Sub-Area 1 – The Station Hub

The area around the main stations is highly important to Kings Cross and Camden as a whole as a major transport hub and an arrival point where many visitors gain a first impression of the borough. This importance is heightened in the context of the 2012 Olympics and the role of the area as a gateway to the games, while there is also a need to maintain and improve accessibility for local people as the area develops. Key issues identified in this area include:

- Gateway to Olympics The area will be a 'gateway' to the 2012 games with the planned high speed Javelin service from St Pancras to the Olympic Park at Stratford. This will involve many thousands of additional passengers using the area every hour, and further work is likely to be needed in order to meet this challenge.
- Public realm Significant improvements to the public realm around the stations are underway and planned, but there are also gaps and not all of the planned works will be complete by the time of the Olympic Games when there will be large numbers of additional visitors.
- Major roads and pedestrian crossings Navigating the area can be difficult for
  pedestrians and road crossings are often convoluted and not very user friendly. This
  is a general issue for the area with added importance and urgency in the context of
  the Olympics.
- General image/appearance The general appearance of the area has improved significantly but issues remain such as some poor quality/boarded-up shopfronts and poor appearance of buildings like the Lighthouse.
- Visitor Information The availability of information for visitors in the area is mixed, with mismatched signage inside and outside stations. The extension of the Legible London scheme to the area will help, but further work may be required to improve information for arriving visitors.
- Ongoing construction work The area has been undergoing development for a number of years and this is set to continue. Managing the impacts of ongoing construction on local residents, businesses and visitors will be an ongoing challenge.
- Crime The transient nature of station area means street crime has been an issue in the past. The situation has been improving but perceptions can be slower to change and there is a need to ensure that opportunistic crime does not increase with additional visitors during the Olympics.

Question: Are these the most important issues for the station hub area and are there other issues that should be prioritised?

# **Sub-Area 2 - Kings Cross Central**

Kings Cross Central is the largest development planned in the area and will deliver a significant number of new homes and jobs as well as community facilities over the coming years.

Outline planning permission has been granted for the development masterplan and so the nature of the overall development and the land uses do not form part of this consultation. However, given the current financial climate it is important that the development progresses to deliver much-needed housing, employment and community facilities. Improving linkages between this development and surrounding communities to integrate the development into

the wider area and ensure access for local people will be fundamental to the success of the whole Kings Cross area. Key issues identified for this sub area include:

- Impact of recession The economic climate has already had an impact on the timing of delivery of parts of the scheme and consideration is needed of how the Council and its partners can assist to ensure the development continues.
- Possible Council office relocation The potential relocation of services form the Town
  Hall Extension to a new facility in Kings Cross Central emphasises the need for good
  pedestrian links with surrounding areas and provides opportunities for improved
  services. This will also provide an opportunity to redevelop the existing site on the
  south side of Euston Road, although the impact on neighbouring sites including Argyle
  School will need to be carefully considered.
- Benefits to existing communities Work to date indicates that surrounding communities do not yet see the benefits of Kings Cross Central and the delivery of planned community facilities and pedestrian and transport links is important to ensure the development integrates with neighbouring areas.
- Camley Street Natural Park the park is an important green space for biodiversity, recreation and education and is likely to have an increasingly important role as the surrounding area is developed in the future.

Question: Are these the most important issues for Kings Cross Central and are there other issues that should be prioritised?

#### Sub-Area 3 - Somers Town

The Somers Town area sits between Kings Cross and Euston and, while it adjoins both, it has a strong identity in its own right. Because of this context, local groups will be consulted on both the Kings Cross plan and the future plan for the Euston area, as the future development of both these areas will be important to the lives of people in Somers Town which suffers from higher than average levels of deprivation and overcrowding.

Key issues identified for this sub area include:

- Housing The area is predominantly social housing with high levels of overcrowding.
  The plan can look opportunities to address this through future developments in the
  wider area including housing opportunities that might arise from the planned review of
  Council property in the area.
- Impacts of development The area is close to current major developments and major proposals including the planned medical research facility in Brill Place (UKCMRI) and redevelopment of Euston station. The plan is an opportunity to set out priorities for managing potential impacts and securing benefits for the local area.
- Limited connections Currently connections through area and with emerging opportunities nearby, particularly east-west routes for pedestrians, are limited. This is a barrier to physical and social integration with surrounding areas and limits movement between the Kings Cross and Euston transport hubs.
- Community safety There are a range of community safety issues in the area including anti-social behaviour and visible drug dealing. The plan is an opportunity to set out priority actions to address such problems.
- Property review A review of Council-owned property in the area has not yet taken
  place but might raise opportunities for re-organising Council services and fresh
  thinking on how they can be delivered, as well as improving provision of community
  facilities. It may also identify opportunities for new housing and other facilities.
- Schools The Council's schools improvement programmes (primary and secondary) have been looking at a range of planned improvements in the area. The Building

Schools for the Future (secondary schools) programme was recently reviewed by the Government and it has now been confirmed that the project for South Camden Community School (SCCS) will proceed. However, the extent and nature of improvement works to primary schools is unknown until the government's capital funding priorities are clarified at the end of 2010. Because of this uncertainty, alternative proposals may need to be examined.

Question: Are these the most important issues for Somers Town and are

there other issues that should be prioritised?

#### Sub-Area 4 - Camley Street area

Land on the east side of Camley Street north of the Regents Canal is the main remaining industrial location in the Kings Cross area. However the Employment Land Review prepared for the Council in 2008 questioned its viability for industrial use in the longer term. The development of the wider Kings Cross plan is not intended to resolve the detailed planning of this area but can identify the steps and further work that may be needed to agree a vision for the future. Key issues that have been identified for this area include:

- Council land ownerships Camden is the freeholder of much of the industrial land in the area, but individual sites are subject of commercial leases of various lengths. The Council is a key player in how area evolves, but influence is limited where sites are on long leases.
- Masterplan Some change in the area is likely to occur as leases come to an end, but there may be potential for a masterplan to be prepared to guide change in a more structured way. This could set an overall vision for how the area is to evolve and how issues such as access can be resolved. A masterplan could also cover other opportunities in the surrounding area such as the St Pancras Hospital site.
- Property review A review of the Council's landholdings in the area has not yet taken
  place but is likely to identify additional opportunities as well as barriers to change and
  there is an opportunity to co-ordination this work with a masterplan process. This may
  also identify opportunities to improve the quality of buildings and the physical
  appearance of the area.
- Accessibility the area is currently difficult to access from the rest of the Kings Cross
  area. Improved routes including connections with the Kings Cross Central site will
  need to be considered if land uses are planned to change and sites be redeveloped in
  the future.

Question: Are these the most important issues for the Camley Street

area and are there other issues that should be prioritised

here?

#### Sub-Area 5 - Maiden Lane

Maiden Lane estate is on the northern fringes of the Kings Cross area and is physically separated from much of the area by railway lines on two sides. However, it is a deprived community very close to the major regeneration of the railway lands and there is potential to improve the linkages with the opportunities arising from Kings Cross Central. The key issues identified so far for Maiden Lane are:

Housing issues – Maiden Lane estate is largely a single tenure estate with problems
of under-investment in the stock and housing needs issues such as overcrowding.
The estate has suffered from serious crime and anti-social problems in the past.
There is a need for investment in much of the housing stock on the estate and options

are currently being examined to develop new housing that will generate funding for estate refurbishment, help meet local housing shortages, and address some of the physical separation of the estate.

- Physical separation Currently the estate is cut-off from its surrounds and while potential for new links is limited by adjoining railways etc, access to wider area could potentially be improved. For example, development on the York Way frontage could improve permeability from the east and improvements to street lighting and the public realm could make this a more attractive route. The pedestrian bridge link across the railways to the west could be improved in conjunction with longer term change in the Camley Street area and improvements to bus services can be explored with TfL.
- Community safety In addition to community safety issues on the estate itself there are also longstanding concerns on routes into and out of the estate such as the pedestrian bridge to the west.
- Community facilities Existing community facilities on the estate such as the
  community centre require investment. Some funds have been secured from Section
  106 agreements on other developments in the area, but there may be potential for
  further investment to be secured as a result of development in wider area.

Question: Have we identified the most important issues for Maiden Lane and are there other issues that should be prioritised?

#### Crosscutting issues

In addition to the specific issues that are relevant to different sub areas, there are a number of important cross-cutting issues and themes that are relevant to the whole of the plan area. We would like to hear your views on the issues we have identified and whether there are others that should be addressed in the plan.

#### **Transport routes and linkages**

Many of the sub-areas referred to previously are poorly connected and the area as a whole suffers from a lack of effective routes and connections, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. This contributes to a lack of integration across the area and can be a barrier to local communities accessing opportunities. Particular issues that have been identified include:

- East west links The choice of routes between Kings Cross and Euston is quite limited and alternatives to Euston Road tend to be disjointed and illegible. Studies have been undertaken in the past to look at potential options and a long-term strategy is now required, particularly given government proposals for a new high speed rail terminus at Euston.
- North-south links There is also scope for improvements to north-south pedestrian
  and cycle routes through the area, where Euston Road can be difficult to cross and
  longer distance routes to nearby areas like Camden Town are not as clear as they
  could be.
- Euston Road The road itself is a major traffic route and is often seen as a barrier, both physically and psychologically, between areas north and south. Crossings are often difficult to negotiate and not in the most logical place but this can be hard to resolve given the levels of traffic and that TfL are responsible for the road and its crossings.
- Regents Canal The canal is an important link between the Kings Cross area and Camden Town as well as an asset for recreation and biodiversity. A clear vision for the future of the canal is required including how to maximise its potential as a pleasant

alternative route between Kings Cross and Camden Town which can assist in taking pressure of the Underground between these areas.

Question: Are these the most important issues in relation to routes and connections in the area and are there others?

#### Housing

There are a number of important housing issues in the Kings Cross area including:

- Overcrowding This has been identified as a particular issue in Somers Town but has
  also been raised as an important issue in previous consultation and engagement in
  the Kings Cross area more widely. While solutions to this issue are likely to be
  challenging, it appears to be a relevant issue for the plan to address given the impacts
  of overcrowding on the quality of life of residents.
- Housing conditions There is a large proportion of Council housing in the area, and
  investment is required in a number of properties to ensure an appropriate standard of
  accommodation. The delivery of improvements as part of the Council's investment
  programme will be important to the quality of life of residents in Council homes in the
  area.
- Affordability In common with many parts of the borough there is a shortage of affordable housing options in the area and identifying opportunities for a range of kinds of affordable housing is important, including through reviews of the Council's land and property in the area.

Question: Are these the most important housing issues for the Kings Cross area and should we be addressing others?

#### Supporting a employment and a diverse economy

The wider Kings Cross area is home to a wide variety of businesses including shops, food and drink premises, offices, industrial space, and a significant entrepreneurial and creative sector. Many of the businesses in the area serve the local community as well as Camden and London more generally, and provide employment for local people. Significant business and jobs growth is envisaged by the Mayor's London Plan and Camden's Local Development Framework (LDF) but it will also be important to consider impacts on existing businesses. Key issues identified so far include:

- Jobs Levels of worklessness in the area tend to be relatively high and while a large number of new jobs are expected as development progresses in Kings Cross, it is important that there is appropriate training for local people to enable them to access employment.
- Supporting business The area contains a wide range of businesses, including
  important local shopping streets. Supporting small businesses in these areas,
  particularly through the current recession, is important to the economic and social
  well-being of the area.
- Creative industries These form an important part of the area's character but there is
  a challenge to ensure this sector is protected and can continue to grow in the face of
  planned change in the area.

Flexible space – Consideration is required on the scope there may be to secure
additional space for small creative businesses in the area. This is an issue for
consideration not just for Kings Cross but also for the borough more widely.

Question:

Are these the most important issues in relation to jobs and the local economy in Kings Cross and are there others we should address?

#### A safe and healthy community

Community safety has been identified as a major issue for residents in a number of consultations and surveys in the Kings Cross area. There have been significant improvements in parts of the area with reducing incidences of street crime etc. However, the wider perception of the area has not reflected this and problems persist in some areas. The preparation of a plan for Kings Cross represents an opportunity to reflect on the positive ways in which the area is changing, while recognising that there are a number of issues that continue to affect people in the area. These include:

- Working together There are a wide range of interests in and responsibilities for community safety in the area (including the Met Police, British Transport Police, Islington as well as station operators and major developers such as Argent).
   Continuing to work together and building on existing joint work is important to ensure community safety issues are effectively tackled.
- Community views The views of the community can vary on important issues such as access through housing estates, which means that a clear strategy for listening to views and decision-making is required.
- Development There is a need to work with landowners and developers to minimise the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour during major development.
- Health On a range of measures, health appears to be an issue for local people.
   Tackling this issue is complex and involves a range of agencies, but the plan can contribute in terms of prioritising opportunities for people to lead healthier lifestyles.
- Leisure There are a range of leisure facilities in and around the area, but the plan
  can consider the accessibility of these to local communities and any gaps in provision
  that should be prioritised.

Question:

Are these the most important community safety and health issues in the area and are there others we should seek to address in the Plan?

#### **Environment and sustainability**

Sustainability is important to all of the Camden's work across the borough but there are some particular issues in the Kings Cross Area such as:

- Energy networks Combined heat and power (CHP) led energy networks are key to reducing carbon emissions and networks are planned as part of the Argent development and in Somers Town to serve existing estates. The Council is also working with others to investigate potential future extensions to these networks.
- Air quality Particulate concentrations are high in the area, particularly along Euston Road. There are a range of ways in which this can be addressed over time including measures like improved walking routes, cycling facilities and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

- Transport Encouraging walking and cycling as an alternative to other modes of transport and improving conditions and routes for pedestrians and cyclists can contribute to the sustainability of the area.
- Open Space This is an inner city area with a limited number of open spaces. The
  plan could look at ways of improving access to open space within the area and
  beyond as well as the new open spaces planned within Kings Cross Central.

Question: Are these the most important issues in relation to

sustainability in the Kings Cross area and should we be

addressing others?

# **Olympics**

While the much of the focus up to and during the Olympics and Paralympics will be around the station hub area where there will be the most arrivals and departures and where there are immediate needs in terms of pedestrian routes and public realm, there are wider issues including:

- Increased numbers of visitors There will be particular pressures on the station area during the Games but there is also a need to look at how the wider area can cope with increased visitors as well as the opportunities to encourage people to linger in the area, use local shops and restaurants and visit the area's institutions and attractions.
- Capitalising on opportunities There will be an important opportunity to 'sell' the area
  and its range of attractions around the Olympics, particularly in month leading up to
  games when much of the international media will already be in place. This links with
  the need to present the image of area in the best light (which could include 'dressing'
  unsightly buildings and shopfronts, public art works etc).
- Legacy There is a general need to take forward the Council's agreed legacy proposals in the wider Kings cross area including increased participation in sport and physical exercise.

Question: Are these the most important issues in relation to the

Olympics and the impacts and opportunities for Kings Cross

and are there others?

# Next Steps: Developing a Vision and an Action Plan

This stage in the preparation of the plan is about identifying what key issues and priorities should be covered in the plan and ensuring these reflect local view across the Kings Cross area.

Once we have heard what issues are important locally following this engagement and the workshops, we will begin developing an overall vision for the area, which will form the basis for the plan. We will also be developing an action plan which sets out all of the intended actions we plan to take to respond to the identified needs and priorities and deliver the vision.

#### **Vision**

The vision will be a key part of the plan. It will be an overarching statement that reflects the issues that are most important in the Kings Cross area and makes clear the kind of place we would like the area to be. The vision will also be the statement from which the key objectives for the plan will flow and that the actions we include are aimed at delivering.

We would therefore like to hear any views you may have at this stage on what you think the vision should be.

Question: Do you have any suggestions on what the vision for Kings Cross should be?

#### **Action Plan**

The action plan is a key part of the document we will be preparing, to set out the actions and interventions that are proposed in order to deliver on the agreed vision and objectives. The actions are intended to be deliverable and measurable steps which the Council and its partners will take and against which progress will be monitored.

The action plan will be developed alongside the vision and objectives but please let us know if there are any priority actions that you would like to highlight at this stage

Question: Are there any important actions that you would like to highlight at this stage for inclusion in the plan?

#### Conclusion

Hearing the views of local people and groups is critical to ensuring that the plan reflects local needs and priorities. We therefore hope that your group will be able to send a representative to one of the workshops that have been arranged for:

 Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October at the British Library (Meeting Room 4), Euston Road NW1 2DB 9.00am (for a 9.30 start) until 12.30pm

and

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October
 at Maiden Lane Community Centre, 156 St Paul's Crescent NW1 9XZ
 9.00am (for a 9.30 start) until 12.30pm

It would be helpful if you could RSVP using the contact details below, so we have an idea of numbers attending each session.

If you or your group is unable to attend we would still like to hear your views in relation to the questions posed throughout this document or any other comments you have in relation to placeshaping generally or this proposed plan.

Question: Do you have any other views or comments to make in relation to our

approach or in relation to the proposed plan for the Kings Cross

area?

If there are any queries please contact the Placeshaping team on 0207 974 2681 or by email at <a href="mailto:placeshaping@camden.gov.uk">placeshaping@camden.gov.uk</a>