

## Crossrail & Ealing – the story so far

In our last article on 'progress' of the Crossrail stations (*CERA News*, Summer 2017), we reported that following re-tendering for the building contract, actual work was due to start in 'early 2018'. The procurement process for the new contractor is still ongoing, however, and although some foundations have been laid and the platform extensions done, there is little visible sign of station reconstruction.

No end date for the work has been announced by Crossrail, and it seems highly likely that the Elizabeth Line service out to Heathrow and Reading will be running (from December 2019) before the new station is ready. The increased passenger numbers will put even greater pressure on Ealing Broadway and other stations in the borough (Acton Main Line, West Ealing, Hanwell, Southall) and fears have been expressed that safety could be compromised by the the overcrowding.



When delivered, Ealing Broadway station will have redesigned staircases and four lifts, some with a maximum capacity of 16 people.

The ticket hall will be at street level and will be much larger than at present. The service will have six, rather than the previously announced four, London/Heathrow trains per hour and up to 12 trains per hour to central London.

The Elizabeth Line rolling stock is significantly lighter than what we have currently, and will have three double doors per carriage, facilitating faster passenger entry/exit times. The trains will be 200 metres long and accommodate up to 1,500 passengers, although only 450 seated. Crossrail has made improvements to track and signalling along the entire route in order to ensure a more reliable service, including the Acton 'dive-under' (underpass), which allows passenger trains to pass through this area without having to wait for slow-moving freight trains to enter and exit the depot.



## The Victoria Hall goes off to the lawyers

In March, the Council was determined to push on with the disposal of Ealing's iconic Victoria Hall as part of the deal to hand over the Town Hall to hotel operator Mastcraft. A re-established General Purposes Committee rejected 277 letters of objection to the deal without discussing any of them. It decided instead that the Hall should be handed to Mastcraft to run as a wedding venue for the next 250 years.

Their problem, however, is that the Council don't own the Hall, which was built with public donations and is managed under the terms of a legal trust. While the Council are the trustees of the trust they are legally required to separate the interests of the trust from their other activities and ensure all decisions about the trust are in accordance with the purposes laid out in the original trust deeds.

Campaign group Ealing Voice is instructing lawyers to object to the Charity Commission that the Council has mismanaged the trust for many years. It says that, in effect, the Council has taken over the Hall, which they are using as if it belongs to them. No accounts of the charity exist, and no one knows what has been happening to the income the charity generates when the Hall is let. When the Council advertised for the disposal of the Victoria Hall along with the rest of the Town Hall, the charity's existence was not mentioned.

Ealing Voice wants the Charity Commission to refuse to allow the deal with Mastcraft to go ahead. Instead it says, new trustees should be appointed to run the Hall for the purposes it was designed for. Watch the Ealing Voice website: [www.ealingvoice.com](http://www.ealingvoice.com) for further updates.

# CERA NEWS

## News from Central Ealing Residents' Association

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## The Ealing Filmworks site: another housing development

Back in 2007 the Council organised a large public planning session in the Victoria Hall. A big team from respected planning consultants Frances Tibbalds and Partners were there with a plan for improving Ealing Town Centre.

Tibbalds's most exciting policy was a new 'cultural quarter' in the area between Ealing's beloved cinema (still showing films in those days) and Pitzhanger Manor. Into this 'enlivened cinema/film quarter' would cluster new arts and cultural facilities, a new cinema, studios and media-related creative industries and spaces for outside screens and performances.

It's been downhill ever since. While a 2012 Council plan promised 'a new cultural and leisure offer for the town centre' they signed up giant developers Land Securities to develop the project and bit by bit Land Securities ditched the elements of Tibbalds vision they felt were insufficiently commercial – i.e. all the cultural bits – before securing planning permission for a new cinema shops, restaurants and a lot of flats.

Once planning permission was secure Land Securities sold the site, reportedly at a tidy profit, to St George, developers of the adjacent Dickens Yard scheme. As house-builders, St George soon replaced many of the commercial elements of the Land Securities plan with lots more flats and re-named it a 'lifestyle quarter'.

An exhibition in Dickens Yard showcases the new development. It's worth popping in to see the excellent model of the new development. It's hard to spot much of the Tibbalds cultural quarter in what now looks very much like the development of four blocks of flats. The main clue to Tibbalds's vision is that each block is named

after men (no women) who have been in films – (Humphrey) Bogart, (Laurence) Olivier, (Jack) Hawkins and (Graham) Chapman Houses.

Work on the long-vacant site is at last getting under way. First up will be the demolition of one of Ealing's most iconic cultural and leisure buildings, the locally listed 1906 YMCA on Bond Street. The Planning Committee was told this was necessary because of 'problems with floor heights etc'. The foundation stones by eminent sculptor Eric Gill will be salvaged and put in a museum in Sussex.



If it is ever built, the long-promised new cinema will be tucked out of sight behind what was the YMCA. The obvious place for this remaining 'leisure asset' was behind the facade of the old cinema, but this is where Bogart House must rise. Why 'Bogart' you may ask? His connection to Ealing – a brief cameo in one Ealing Film – is slim indeed.

Will the cinema actually open? The Council assures us it will open by 2020, but after so many delays many are sceptical. St George confirm they will provide a cinema 'box' to operators Picturehouse by the end of 2020. There is no guarantee Picturehouse will use it.

## Garden grabbing

Recently there has been a plethora of planning applications involving 'garden grabbing' where, for corner plots, housing development is proposed in rear gardens with side access. This has caused great concern for many CERA members and a large number of objections have been made to the Council. CERA has made objections to five such proposed developments over the last three months.

The scale and type of proposals vary considerably. Some applications are for single houses at the end of rear gardens (e.g. 88 The Avenue and 98 Denbigh Road), some involve major extensions (usually with basements) of existing houses, dividing the resultant enlarged house into many flats with much of the remaining garden then used for car parking (eg 77 Madeley Road and 59 Eaton Rise), or occasionally a complete redevelopment of the existing house and garden is proposed to be replaced with a large block of flats (eg 18 St Stephens Road).

Clearly there is a lot of pressure for more housing development in London due to the housing shortage and the growth of new households which has exceeded the growth of new housing units for many years. There will continue to be a lot of pressure for garden-grabbing simply because there is strong demand for more housing and an awful lot of money to be made.



59 (and 57) Eaton Rise elevation – before



59 (and 57) Eaton Rise elevation – after

The government is keen to see a big increase in house building, but is not, officially, in favour of garden grabbing. In 2010 they changed planning policy to discourage garden grabbing, but not ban it.

The definition of brownfield land, or previously developed land, which is where most new development was expected to occur, and which included back gardens, was changed so that it no longer included gardens. The then relevant Government Minister, Greg Clark, stated that "Taking gardens out of the brownfield category will dramatically transform councils' ability to prevent unwanted development on gardens where local people object and protect the character of their neighbourhoods".

The subsequent 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is explicit in stating that local planning authorities should resist inappropriate development of residential gardens where development would cause harm to the local area (paragraph 53). In Ealing this policy is reinforced by policy 1.1 of the Ealing Adopted Development (Core) Strategy 2012 which states that "development should protect and enhance suburban communities and should protect and enhance the pattern of green spaces." But all this sounds very vague, with no clear guidance.

## Garden grabbing...continued

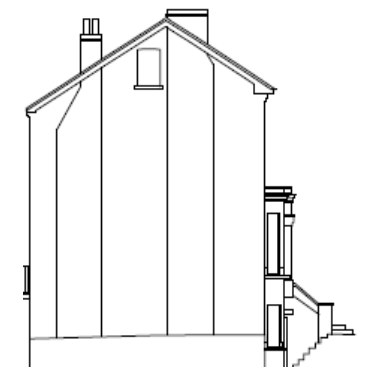
**What can be done about it and what are the key issues?** It is now easier, in theory, for LB Ealing to resist applications from developers to build in back gardens, but there are still a lot of pressures to approve proposals which will help to increase the annual number of new houses built. In particular the draft New London Plan encourages infill development within the curtilage of a house which is close to a Tube or Rail station (Policy H2) and there are rumours that proposed changes to the NPPF will relax planning controls on upward extensions to houses and 'infilling' of gardens'.

The key points that CERA residents (and LB Ealing) should be looking for when assessing a planning application are:

- Is the proposed development out of keeping with the nature, grain, form and scale of local development and does it significantly detract from the open landscaped character across the rear gardens of this and neighbouring properties to the detriment of the visual amenities of the street scene? If within a Conservation Area, will its character and appearance be affected to its detriment?
- If the proposed development is a single building is its height, width and appearance/design in keeping with adjacent properties? If the adjacent buildings are Victorian/Edwardian with a strong vertical emphasis a proposal which is very modern in appearance with large windows giving a horizontal emphasis would be in conflict.
- Will the proposed development cause a significant loss of trees, vegetation and wildlife?
- What will the effect be on the existing property and neighbouring properties of reduced daylight, outlook and privacy? To what degree will existing properties be overlooked?
- Are the type and colour of materials to be used for the walls and roof of the proposed development similar to those used in adjacent properties?
- Is accessibility and the effect on on-street and off-street car parking an issue?

The pictures illustrate some of the above concerns, showing before and after views of the front and side elevations of the 59 Eaton Rise proposal (still to be determined by the Council). This is in a conservation area and shows the widening of No 59, infilling the space between Nos 57 and 59, against the neighbour's wishes and ruining the street appearance of the two very attractive houses.

Also shown is the side elevation to Elmcroft Close, more than doubling the depth of the existing house (including a new basement) with nine new windows overlooking the houses in Elmcroft Close (whereas now there is only one small one). Also introduced are large balconies overlooking the rear of 57 Eaton Rise plus conversion of much of 59's remaining garden into a car park, further adversely affecting the outlook of a number of houses at the western end of Elmcroft Close.



Elmcroft Close elevation - before



Elmcroft Close elevation - after