

## Parking changes

Ealing Council's new transport strategy aims to vary the price of resident parking permits based on vehicle emissions, to encourage residents to use vehicles that are less damaging to the environment and health. The price of the permit will therefore reflect the type of fuel a vehicle uses and its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, so there would be a higher charge for diesel cars and a lower charge for electric cars.

The average permit charge is expected to increase by over 60 per cent. However, the fee increases are likely to be partially offset for residents in CPZs where there is a proposal to change spaces not directly outside residential properties to 'shared use'. This is a two-edged sword as it could attract commuter and holiday parking, thus undermining the purpose

of the CPZs – which are in any case mostly full.

A highly controversial part of the new strategy was to end free 'stop and shop' parking (30 or 60 minutes at no charge) in local shopping centres and parades. The aim was 'to encourage an increase in walking, cycling and use of public transport'. All very laudable aims, but much to the detriment of small businesses which rely on local and non-local car-borne customers.

So local centres would suffer from a fall in local trade on top of higher business rates and increasing online shopping. For this reason the Council has consulted with local residents and businesses and as a result it has stopped the move to end free 'stop and shop' parking.



# CERA NEWS

## News from Central Ealing Residents' Association

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### Victoria Hall planning decision

In May the Council's Planning Committee approved plans to convert the Town Hall into a hotel. Part of the Victoria Hall will be demolished to make space for a box-like extension for hotel rooms which will obscure the clock tower (see 'before' and 'after' photos below). Community groups including CERA strongly opposed the decision.

Regular readers will know that, having been paid for by public subscription, the 1893 Victoria Hall belongs to a charitable trust, not the Council. Since that time it has served as an important community venue. It has hosted political rallies, exhibitions and concerts and is a popular meeting place for Ealing's minority communities.

The Council has always managed the Hall as its trustee and in years gone by it was intensely proud of what it stood for. The Council provided the land on which the Hall was built and it took centre stage at the opening by the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII.

These days are sadly long gone, but charity law requires trustees still to act only to fulfil the Trust's

purposes, which are to provide a meeting place for local people. They must do this irrespective of any other interests including that of being in the Council's governing party. Even so, the Council committee that acts as trustees was never involved in the hotel plans and never commented on them.

Ealing's planning decision means the way now is open, legally, for the Council to commence operations to demolish property, some of which (part of the Victoria Hall) it does not own. That this seems to be the intention is demonstrated by the fact that the entire Town Hall building is being vacated, including all that which belongs to the Trust.

Effectively, therefore, a charity that has benefited Ealing for over 125 years has been shut down. There is no guarantee as to when or how its activities will ever recommence. The Charity Commission, which oversees the way charities operate, has still not approved the transfer of the Hall to the Hotel. The fear is that by the time they do they will be presented with a *fait accompli*.



Before...



After...

## Draconian cuts to Ealing's libraries

Ealing Council has announced that it will be effectively reducing the borough's 13 libraries to six unless volunteers step in to manage them. While the 'town centre' libraries (Ealing, Acton, Southall, Northolt) plus two branch libraries (Jubilee Gardens in Southall and Northolt Leisure Centre) will remain as they are, Greenford, Hanwell, Perivale, Pitshanger, West Ealing, Wood End and Northfields libraries are to lose all professional staff and become dependent on volunteers. Their opening hours would also be reduced.

Of the UK's 4,000 libraries, only 10 per cent are community-managed. However, 90 per cent of community-run libraries fail and are subsequently closed. There are fears that the current plans for Ealing are merely deferred closures, although the Council claims that because it would still support the community-run libraries with computer services and stock management they would have a better chance of survival than similar libraries elsewhere.

Council strategy on libraries has given us a drastically downsized Ealing Central Library, recently re-opened with a much-reduced book stock – a pale shadow of its former self now resembling a café with bookshelves.

It is widely recognised that libraries are a valuable resource for local people, supporting learning, child development, young people's educational needs, job-searching and community cohesion in a way that nothing else does. Once they are taken from us, we will never get our libraries back. Vigorous campaigning to save them is under way, but in all likelihood it is probably just a matter of time before the Council invites bids from developers to take over the sites.

A final decision will be made by Cabinet in July. To sign the petition to save the libraries, go to

[www.change.org/p/save-ealing-libraries-from-being-outsourced-from-being-managed-by-community-volunteers-save-library-jobs](http://www.change.org/p/save-ealing-libraries-from-being-outsourced-from-being-managed-by-community-volunteers-save-library-jobs)



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## Durston House School

The purpose-built new school proposed at Castlebar Field, Carlton Road (see *CERA News*, Winter 2018–19) is still under consideration by Ealing Council



following public consultation and a planning application in March comprising 166 documents.

Residents affected by the proposal, supported by CERA, have voiced concerns at the location and scale of the proposed school buildings and the harm caused to the loss of openness of the site, particularly to residents living nearby. New landscaping and tree planting will not compensate for the numerous mature trees to be felled.

The increased size of the school and its new location will generate volumes of traffic that will ...cont. page3

## Durston House School ... continued

escalate congestion on local roads, particularly in the mornings and late afternoons, and exacerbate pollution. The re-use of existing school buildings for flats, although welcome in principle, will result in overlooking to adjacent housing and affordable housing provision is absent, as a result of a flawed viability assessment.

The school has consulted on its plans and in response to feedback proposes a 'community use agreement' to secure community access to proposed multi-purpose recreational facilities outside school hours. A decision on the planning application is expected soon.

## Conservation Areas appraisal

Ealing Council has appointed a consultant to review all 29 of its Conservation Areas. No fewer than six Conservation Areas fall within CERA territory: St Stephen's, Montpelier Park, Grange and White Ledges, Mount Park, Haven Green and Ealing Cricket Ground (as shown on the map). For the past 15 years or so, Conservation Area advisory panels made up of local people interested in local heritage have been advising the Council about the acceptability of developments in each area.

The Council's review comes at an important time. London's new planning policies are radically increasing housing targets, especially on small sites. We are already seeing the effect locally with the rise in applications to replace houses with blocks of flats or to extend them excessively.

Streets within Conservation Areas are treated by planners as 'designated heritage assets' and planning rules require new developments to protect and enhance them. This means they should enjoy a measure of protection against the worst depredations of unsympathetic new development. So the local Conservation Area panels are recommending to the Review that the boundaries of our six Conservation Areas should be extended to include streets of similar quality but which have been excluded thus far.

They also want the current rules and policies to be much better observed than they have been of late. We await with interest the report of the consultant carrying out the review, due this summer. It will be up to the Council to decide what if any changes will be made to the Conservation Area boundaries, and what policies planners will apply in future.

