



### Perceval House



The Council's plans to replace its Perceval House offices with new offices, a small public library and 477 flats in tower blocks up to 26 storeys high are set to lurch on for a while.

The plans, produced in partnership with the Vistry Group of developers, are opposed by over 2,300 online objectors. Rupa Huq MP and ward councillor Seema Kumar are particularly outspoken critics. Objectors say the scheme tries to cram far too much on to a small site, seriously harming Ealing's historic character and its key listed buildings and depriving nearby homes of their natural light, their outlook and their privacy. They also fear it will set a precedent for a cluster of very high buildings in central and West Ealing.

To the embarrassment of the Council officers behind it, the first two attempts to push this hated scheme through the Planning Committee failed. A third had to be speedily convened for 31 March. As this was during election 'purdah', when nothing

that might be politically controversial is supposed to happen, the Council needed an expensive barrister to confirm it was even legal.

After almost three hours of presentation and debate, the scheme was passed by eight votes to four with one abstention. But this is not the end of the matter. It next has to go to the GLA for the Mayor of London to approve it. Objectors are therefore surprised to learn that after the Council's urgent efforts to ram the scheme through the system in March, it will not now send it to the GLA for the next two months, giving objectors a chance to campaign against it during the elections.

And even if it gets the Mayoral sign-off, it must then go to the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, who can 'call it in' for a public inquiry. If this happens, the way the Council has negotiated the scheme with the developers would have to come into the public domain. It could all be highly embarrassing and could prove to be a latter-day Ealing comedy if only the outcome weren't so serious.

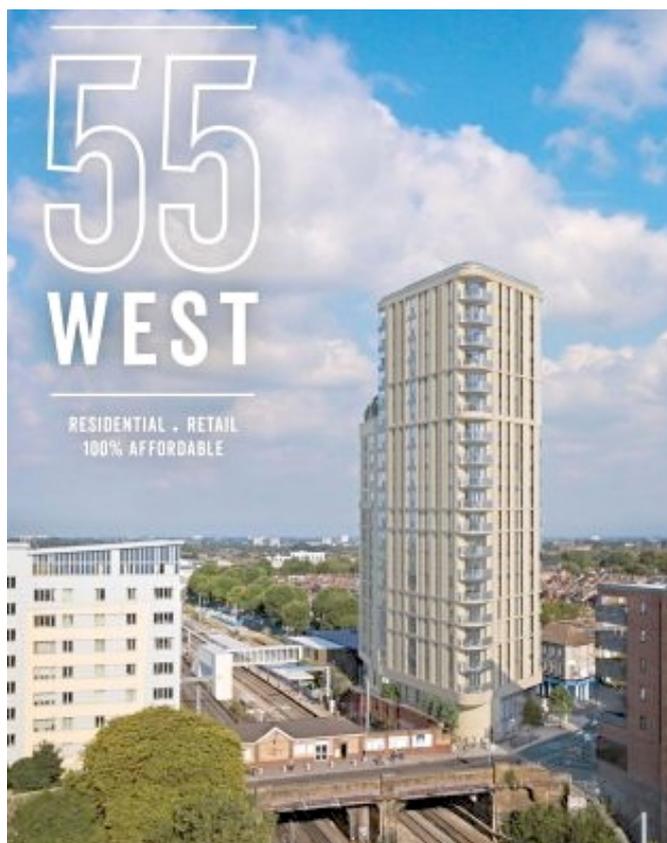
## Manor Road site, West Ealing

Thankfully, the 14/20-storey Manor Road/ Drayton Green Road scheme was refused planning permission at the 28 October planning committee meeting, despite Council officers recommending approval. Even with 2,600 objections from local residents and the three local MPs, it was a close decision. Now the developer, Southern Grove, has appealed against the decision and the appeal will start on 13 July. It will be a virtual appeal, with the Inspector, barristers and witnesses (including those of Stop the Towers) in different rooms and buildings.

The reasons for refusal were the development did not propose an adequate provision of affordable housing and it would be 'of the scale and density that would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area'. The Statement of Case submitted by the developers argues against this latter point, claiming that the site is located within an existing cluster of tall buildings and that the site's prominent location within the cluster of taller buildings reinforces the spatial hierarchy of the Metropolitan Town Centre location as a main centre of activity.

This is highly misleading and inaccurate. It ignores the low-rise residential streets close to the site and the site is not located *within* an existing cluster of tall buildings: it is on the edge of the small cluster of buildings at the southern end of The Avenue and western end of Gordon Road, none of which are anything like as tall as the proposal or in a similar location in terms of low-rise residential surroundings (as the Southern Grove picture shows). The proposal would also not reinforce the spatial hierarchy of the Metropolitan Town Centre (MTC) location as a main centre of activity. It is located at the very northern edge of the MTC, some distance from its heart, which is well to the south-east and south-west along the Uxbridge Road.

The developer's Statement of Case also argues that the proposed tower 'strengthens the legibility of West Ealing by highlighting the station'. Is this believable, let alone necessary or desirable? West Ealing Station is a brand-new building, with no need to be highlighted. Its users will know where it is! If it needed



highlighting this would not justify a 20-storey development next door, as a new building of a quarter of that height could achieve that and would then avoid all the other adverse factors caused by high density and scale, overshadowing, loss of light and loss of privacy –which the developer considers is not a problem and is therefore acceptable.

CERA's very strong concern is that if this development is approved it would help to justify the designation of this part of Ealing as a 'tall building cluster'. This will then trigger more proposals for completely unjustified developments in the overwhelmingly low-rise West Ealing residential area. This inappropriate proposal must not, therefore, be approved.

As the developer has hired heavyweight barristers and planning experts this must be matched by the Council and Stop the Towers, who have now appointed a barrister to argue their case and represent the community. This will be expensive so financial help is needed. CERA has contributed but if any individual members also want to help please go to their website: [www.stophetowers.org](http://www.stophetowers.org) and click gofundme.

## New offices

In the last newsletter we mentioned plans to improve Ealing as an office location, which will hopefully attract more office workers to Ealing, with spin-off benefits for shopping facilities. As a result, Uxbridge Road has been the focus of numerous office and hotel proposals, as is the heart of the town centre.



The replacement of CP House by a large 12-storey office block at 97–107 Uxbridge Road now has planning permission. It faces Exchange Plaza, where planning permission was achieved in 2019. This site has now been cleared. The CP House

replacement is adjacent on its west side to the recently completed Hampton (Hilton) hotel, as shown in the photo (left), and on its east side at 91–95 Uxbridge Road to a proposed 3-star plus hotel, replacing Dawley House which was demolished in 2015. This 12-storey hotel was also granted planning permission recently.

Refurbishment of the Crystal Office building next to The Broadway shopping frontage at the core of the town centre has now been completed by British Land and has been let to one public sector organisation. Design work is progressing on the International House offices above the shopping centre, with access from High Street. British Land's plans are well advanced and a planning application is expected shortly. The external appearance is likely to stay broadly unchanged except for an additional upper-floor roof extension; internally, the two large atria will be reduced in size but improved to further increase the amount and quality of office space.

Finally, British Land is re-starting design work on the large site opposite the Shopping Centre, on the north side of The Broadway and extending up to the railway line. The draft plan is to increase the amount of shopping space, but keeping some of the older, more attractive shops, with a large new office centre above and opposite the new Ealing Broadway Station. British Land is keen to involve the public in its plans for Ealing town centre and has set up a website to facilitate this: you can send your feedback on the 'Have Your Say' page at [www.ealingcentral.co.uk](http://www.ealingcentral.co.uk)

## Campaign to save the Victoria Hall

In March the Charity Commission approved a 'Scheme' for the Victoria Hall Trust which allows the Council to dispose of Trust property and effectively make it unavailable to the community that paid for it. There will be no change in the way the Hall is run, as once again the Council has put itself in charge, with a handful of 'independent' trustees appointed in a purely advisory capacity. The Commission has signally failed to address this conflict of interest.

The Friends of the Victoria Hall will continue their fight to stop this flagrant injustice. In a few days' time, with legal support, they will lodge an appeal to the Tribunal. Much of the evidence previously submitted to the Charity Commission



appears to have been overlooked or ignored, and in particular the Commission has not recognised the gross abuse of the Trust's beneficiaries inherent in the 'Community Use Protocol' it has set up.

The latter not only bans the community from using the Victoria Hall at weekends, the key time for local groups to get together for anything performance-related, but imposes hire fees that are even greater than the unaffordable rates it was previously charging. Moreover, this will be for a Hall with severely compromised space, because the developers will be inserting a concrete cube at the stage end to contain

hotel bedrooms – hence, no stage and insufficient capacity for performers and audience. The Friends of the Victoria Hall submit that the Trust can be self-sustaining if properly managed, but the Council has dismissed proposals from community groups that show how this could be achieved. The video at <https://vimeo.com/457474916> shows how the space could be used for the benefit of the community, which has no other arts or leisure facilities in central Ealing.

To support this costly tribunal appeal, go to <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/save-the-victoria-hall/>

## Notting Hill and Ealing Primary School plans

The school is planning to redevelop its existing primary school buildings at the south of its site, facing St Stephen's Road. The school invited CERA, alongside other residents' organisations, for an early view of the plans, prior to applying for planning permission.

It aims to demolish the two existing primary school buildings and build two new ones in much the same footprint that are better tailored to the current and future needs of the school. As the school does not plan to add any additional pupils the proposed new buildings will be similar in overall size and height to the present ones.



The plans look reasonable and we are pleased to have been consulted at this early stage in the development. We will take a close interest in the final plans. Meanwhile, if any residents have other views, do let us know at [info@cera.org.uk](mailto:info@cera.org.uk)

## Council's 'Cultural Renewal' forum

This online meeting, held on 30 March, invited a wide range of local organisations to input ideas for the 'cultural renewal' of Ealing post-pandemic.

The meeting considered the current 'offer' and what the way forward might be, with reference to what other local authorities have achieved.

Although Ealing has a rich film and music heritage, Council decisions have done much to stymie cultural endeavour over the years, and it was clear by the end of the session, despite a lot of talk about inclusiveness, diversity, relevance and enabling, that any cultural renewal would have to be led, maintained and paid for by voluntary groups.

## Proposed changes in Gordon Road

The Council's recent proposals to improve walking, cycling and bus services in Gordon Road include new zebra crossings close to the junctions with St Leonards Road and Longfield Avenue, converting the mini-roundabout at St Leonard's Road/ Gordon Road to a standard junction with priority for Gordon Road traffic and prohibition of a left-hand turn for vehicles from Spring Bridge Road to Gordon Road. Having asked for local residents' views, more refined proposals are expected to be published.

CERA was asked for our views, which are:

- Support for the proposed zebra crossings and pedestrian crossing points, at the locations proposed, (additional zebra crossings at the western end of Gordon Road would also be beneficial). However, the proposed pedestrian crossing points need careful design to ensure that traffic speeds are actually reduced. Ideally, these crossing points should incorporate zebra crossings to reinforce speed reduction.
- Support for a standard junction at St Leonard's Road/Gordon Road to replace the dangerous mini-roundabout but concern about the proposed changed priority between St Leonard's Road and Carlton Road. Encouraging road traffic along St Leonard's Road north of Gordon rather than Carlton Road works against St Leonard's

Road being a key stretch of the cycleway from the Broadway to Pitzhanger Park. For cyclists, this would make St Leonard's Road and nearby roads, which are currently quiet, much worse than they are now.

- Prohibition of a left-hand turn for motor vehicles from Spring Bridge Road to Gordon Road would be attractive to pedestrians and cyclists and the general street scene at this end of Gordon Road, but the impact of increased traffic on nearby roads would outweigh any benefits. Vehicular traffic that currently turns left from Spring Bridge Road into Gordon Road would have to carry on along Haven Green and Castlebar Road and then turn left along Longfield Road prior to turning left or right along Gordon Road. This increased traffic would affect the E1 bus route and affect residents in Longfield Road in particular, as well as increasing overall levels of pollution.
- Turning bans at the southern end of Longfield Avenue and New Broadway have increased road traffic up St Leonard's Road and generally force traffic to and from the Town Hall, Dickens Yard and Perceval House into the road network north of the railway. Whatever the claims by the Council, this looks set to increase considerably if developments at Perceval House and the Town Hall go ahead. This has been ignored in these proposals.
- Improving the road surface on Gordon Road and removing bumps and pot holes, which are highly dangerous for cyclists, would be a great benefit, as shown by work done in Madeley Road.



Spring Bridge Road/Gordon Road, with kerb built out to prevent left turn