

CERA NEWS

News from Central Ealing Residents' Association

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51–56 Manor Road tower block approved

The Planning Appeal Inspector has given permission for a 20-storey tower to be built next to West Ealing Station. He concluded that:

The proposal would deliver 144 units of much-needed affordable housing in a tall building of exemplary design that would have no harmful impact on the character or appearance of the area, or the setting and thereby the significance of heritage assets.... Moreover, it would provide reasonable living conditions for its occupiers, and have no detrimental impact on the living conditions of existing residents of the area... The evidence shows that the proposal would have no unacceptable impact on the living conditions of existing residents of the area through loss of sunlight or daylight, visual impact, overshadowing, overlooking and resultant loss of privacy, or anything else.

Not surprisingly, local residents find this very hard to accept, but a leading planning QC's opinion is that there are no reasonable grounds for challenging the report via a Judicial Review.

Costs of the appeal

In another far-reaching decision the Inspector awarded full costs to the developer, which we estimate may well be about £250,000, payable by the Council (i.e. ratepayers). The reason was that Ealing Council had refused planning permission for the proposal (contrary to the advice of its officers) without taking into account a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Such unreasonable behaviour, in the Inspector's view, resulted in unnecessary expense by the applicant, hence the justification for a full award of costs.

The Council should have produced annual monitoring reports (AMRs) examining the five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, but no monitoring reports have been produced since 2013/14, which has caused unnecessary expense to the applicant and favoured the applicant's analysis in the Inspector's eyes.

However, according to the recently published interim AMR, net housing completions were actually 13% above Ealing's target for the period under the London Plan and Ealing's five-year



Proposed Manor Road tower block adjacent to West Ealing Station

housing land supply now appears to be well in excess of target. Sadly, this information was not available for the Manor Road Public Inquiry and has only been issued since.

Implications of the appeal

These issues show how vulnerable Ealing now is to excessive development, especially tower blocks, as a direct result of the Council's out-of-date planning policy and negligent failure to provide basic data on housing supply.

The approval of the Manor Road scheme could open the door to similar schemes in Ealing and those diagonally opposite at Hastings Road and south and west of the Manor Road site on both sides of the railway.

Crossrail, Ealing Broadway Station and Haven Green

There have been at least four separate public consultations on changes to the land around Ealing Broadway Station in readiness for Crossrail. LBE has at last published its final plans, which somewhat improve on the widely condemned proposals in the most recent consultation. Traffic outside the station will *not* be channelled into a single lane, creating tailbacks around Haven Green; there *will* be set-down and pick-up space for around four cars; and buses waiting to turn right on to Uxbridge Road will *not* have to force their way through queuing traffic quite so sharply as previously suggested. But these latest proposals are still disappointing.

The most obvious weakness is a failure to provide sufficient parking for all the bikes expected to be left at the station. Elsewhere, developers must set aside space *within their building* for parking any bikes their development might generate. So why not at Ealing Broadway Station – the biggest generator of demand in Ealing?

Instead, much of the additional pavement space will be cluttered with cycle racks. In some areas, such as outside the Metro Bank, these look likely to block the busy flow of pedestrians, forcing many of them to step on to the carriageway.

Beyond the station, Crossrail's occupation of Haven Green (see photo) is set to drag on for many more months. Assurances given in the summer that the construction site would be gone



by now have proved false as problems have been found on the old station roof that need fixing. As far as we can see, this has nothing to do with what Crossrail is allowed to do under the legislation, but sad to say no one feels able to challenge it.

We have been reassured, however, that when finally Haven Green is given back to us, all the other encroachments on the Common Land will also be removed. These include the bus lay-by opposite Lewis Pharmacy, the electricity substation, and the cycle racks on the diagonal footpath, as well as the three-storey office building and storage site. The Friends of Haven Green are keen to work with the Council to ensure that the green space is then properly rehabilitated to make it a place once again for Ealing people to enjoy.

Perceval House update



Our last newsletter reported how the Council disregarded 2,400+ objections to grant itself planning permission to re-develop its Perceval House accommodation and create new offices, a new library and many blocks of flats, including a 26-storey tower. We feared then that the Government's refusal to intervene gave a final green light for the scheme to go ahead irrespective of public opinion, but a recent complication has emerged in the form of Environmental Impact legislation that could very well delay the project for some time to come.

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In 2019 the Council issued a ruling to say that the size and scope of the project were such that it required an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), but it is now clear it had little idea just what this entailed. Government legislation sets out special procedures for dealing with planning applications that require an EIA. These procedures are different from and more onerous than the rules for most planning applications and it now looks like the Council did not adhere to them.

The rules require the Council to publish promptly a report on its decisions on the EIA and send it to the Secretary of State. No such report has yet

appeared, and his recent letter to the Council indicates that the Secretary of State has not yet seen it either.

This may be deeply significant as it keeps open future avenues to challenge Ealing's decision. The overwhelming public criticisms of the development make it highly likely that challenges will be made.

At the very least it looks probable that the matter will need to be referred back to the Planning Committee for an embarrassing fourth time, unleashing again the public dissatisfaction that the Committee experienced earlier this year.

The Victoria Hall: now we're funding the Council's plan to sell off our heritage



The Friends of the Victoria Hall are challenging at Tribunal the Charity Commission's decision to approve the Council's disposal of this charitable trust property to a hotel developer.

Having supplied their evidence to the Tribunal, as required, by 14 October, the Friends were informed a few days later that Ealing Council had asked to be 'joined' with the Commission in the case. This was agreed, and the Council appointed a barrister. All the Council's legal costs, likely to be well into six figures, will of course be funded by Ealing ratepayers.

Not only that, but this intervention potentially causes further delay to the hearing. Meanwhile, the Council is using the Victoria Hall for its own meetings. Charity law does not allow trustees (the Council) to benefit from a trust's assets: we must therefore assume that the Council has been paying the charitable trust for use of the Hall. However, we cannot know this, as the Council has failed to

produce audited accounts for the charitable trust for several decades.

The Victoria Hall is a community asset, and a Grade II-listed heritage building. It was paid for by public subscription and stands on a separate footprint from the rest of the Town Hall. **Now the people of Ealing, for whom this amenity was built, are paying through their taxes for the Council effectively to steal it from them, as part of the deal made in 2016 to lease the entire complex to a hotel developer.**

The Friends' fundraising appeal, to cover the legal fees, is ongoing at <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/save-the-victoria-hall> while the short video at <https://youtu.be/gvk0oLXB7o> shows how the Victoria Hall could be re-purposed as a modern community centre for today's multi-ethnic community, whose need of such facilities has never been greater.

Shaping Ealing Centre

Ealing Council is asking residents and others to influence the Borough's emerging local plan. The plan will be published in draft form in the summer of 2022 and will affect planning and development decisions for at least 15 years. If you are concerned at some of Ealing's recent planning decisions, for example, permitting the random scattering of high-rise buildings in inappropriate locations, now is the time to make your views known. Otherwise the character and

appearance of Ealing town centre will continue to erode and will be transformed from a place worth visiting to a jumbled mass of overscaled buildings.

The '**Shaping Ealing**' online survey is now live. More information can be found in the Council's magazine website – aroundealing.com – under the Leader's Notes section about 'Good jobs, shaping our borough and more' (near the end of the item mentioning the launch of the Shaping Ealing survey).

The future of the Twyford Abbey site



The Twyford Abbey site is not within CERA's area but CERA's members might be interested in knowing more about the proposals to restore the Grade II-listed Abbey and open up the parklands to the public. The site is located in Ealing Borough in the north-west area of Park Royal. It is a very large parkland site with the derelict abbey at its centre. The site owners are launching a consultation on their proposals to save and restore Twyford Abbey as part of a low-density residential development with about 35 per cent affordable housing.

The site owners would now like to share this

vision with local communities at two online webinars, offering an opportunity to view the proposals and have a say in shaping a significant local development. More evolved plans will then be presented in early 2022 and there will be a further chance to comment on the proposals before a planning application is submitted.

The public **webinars** are open to everyone and will be held on Monday 13 December and Tuesday 14 December (6pm–7.30pm). To register attendance and to get a weblink to the meeting, visit the website, www.twyfordabbey.co.uk, where following the webinar the presentation will be published.