



CERA NEWS



News from Central Ealing Residents' Association

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December 2022

CERA's AGM 17 October 2022

The first half of the meeting concentrated on the major issues of ongoing concern to CERA, such as the major developments in central Ealing and around West Ealing Station. Detailed presentations, summarised in this newsletter, preceded an overview of CERA's annual accounts and membership.

The following talk by Cllr Peter Mason, Leader of the Council, addressed the Council's future plans for

Ealing and their likely effect on its centre, particularly the amount of high-rise residential and commercial development and the conversions of family homes into small flats, often with large new basements.

Finally, we draw attention to the second consultation period on the new Local Plan, which has now begun and which include proposals to pedestrianise some shopping streets.

Broadway Connect: 9–42 The Broadway

British Land submitted its planning application for Broadway Connect in September. This major scheme opposite Ealing Broadway Station and the Broadway shopping centre is largely for offices, with some replacement and some new retail. While redevelopment of the site is long overdue and the usage appropriate for this prominent town centre location, CERA has concerns regarding the scale, density and height of the scheme. We have conveyed these to the Council's planning department.

The scheme would benefit Ealing by bringing in new commercial activity, with a potentially large increase in office workers benefiting town-centre shops. The historic Ealing Club would be replaced in a new building in its present location, and many older, heritage retail buildings along the Broadway would be retained. The latter would link into a new town square, creating a new pedestrian route through the site to and from the station.

However, the overall scale, density and height (21-storey tower) of the scheme far exceed all other buildings in the heart of the town centre. This massive scheme is inappropriate for a site located in one Conservation Area and adjacent to another. The buildings would be highly visible from viewpoints such as Haven Green and the quality of architecture of the office towers is a further concern.

Such a large amount of office space (net floor



area of at least 25,000 square metres) in one development in the town centre is neither desirable nor necessary. A smaller office scheme of 15,000 square metres would create a suitable critical mass opposite the station, and close to other major office schemes in central Ealing, helping to transform Ealing into a prime west London office centre and attract major occupiers.

Demand for office space has fallen since Covid and many office workers are now working from home on average two days a week, so a smaller office scheme should reflect this market change, and would be more appropriate in this town

centre location. A lower maximum building height of, say, 12 storeys would still be able to accommodate major office tenants wanting large floorplates and the resulting scheme would have sufficient critical mass to be successful.

Taking into account all the above, CERA has objected to the scale and height of the proposed scheme and considers that it should be refused unless some important changes to the scheme's height and scale are made.

West Ealing Station development proposals

The consequences of West Ealing's Manor Road public inquiry last year are starting to materialise. Not only did the Council lose the appeal against its decision to refuse the scheme, but the inspector awarded the developers costs against the Council that ran into many hundreds of thousands of pounds. All this is encouraging other speculative developers to bring forward their own projects and Council planners are now desperate not to incur similar penalties elsewhere.

The latest proposal for the 'emerging tall building cluster' around West Ealing Station is a 22-storey tower on the Majestic Wine Warehouse site at Hastings Road. Tide Construction, the developer, specialises in stacking up modular units made off-site to create large rectangular box-shaped buildings. Its scheme, unveiled in September, would create 408 student flats in an area where a shortage of student accommodation has not previously been a concern.

Across the railway from Manor Road, Waitrose is

another potential contributor to the emerging West Ealing cluster. Although Waitrose has not said how many new flats it wants to put on the site, above its new store, or how high it intends to build, it will be taking its cue from nearby schemes including Manor Road.

Waitrose's plans, published in the summer, have not been updated, possibly because rising interest rates which add significantly to building costs are putting a brake on development. Signs of a slowdown are apparent across the borough, with a discernible falling-off in building starts. This is unlikely, however, to stop speculative developers putting up towers wherever they can in the longer term. Their ploy now is to maximise the value of sites they have acquired by getting planning consent for as much as possible. They can either 'bank' their consent until calmer times or else sell-on their site at a profit with 'benefit of planning'.

This may be what happens at Manor Road, where site clearance is ongoing. With their huge costs awarded from the Council (our money!), developers Southern Grove are well placed to ride out the storm. They can either leave the site vacant until interest rates fall, or sell it on with its planning consent to another cash-rich developer to work on later.



Left: visualisation of West Ealing Station area, with Hastings Road (Majestic) site on right of bridge, Manor Road on left, with the Waitrose site bottom left.

Help us boost CERA's membership

If you think CERA does a good job in keeping you informed of what's happening in Ealing, and representing your views, do tell your Ealing friends and neighbours about us, perhaps by

forwarding this newsletter. Our website, www.cera.org.uk, has a membership form that can be emailed back to us, plus details of how to subscribe. New members are always needed and will receive a warm welcome.

The (over)development of Ealing

Our AGM guest speaker Cllr Peter Mason, Leader of Ealing Council, focused on the Central Ealing built environment issues that concern so many of us at present. He said that although he is not an advocate for growth *per se*, the pressure on the Council, in a borough with 10,000 on the waiting list for accommodation, is considerable. With house prices averaging £650,000 (rising to £3.5m) and new central Ealing flats commanding up to £1m (e.g. at Filmworks), affordable homes are few and far between.

The consequence of the pandemic is a realignment of how people work, and more infrastructure is needed to support different working practices. More infrastructure means higher land values and ever-increasing house prices, affordable only by people earning high salaries in central London. It is an inescapable fact that London is the centre of all industry, government and entertainment.

None the less, Cllr Mason would like Ealing to be a destination in its own right rather than a dormitory town for commuters. Its position has been defined over many decades by factors such as the Uxbridge Road turnpike, the Grand Union Canal, the railway, the Great West Road and Heathrow Airport, but its 'Queen of the Suburbs' reputation has been in decline of late. In recent years, much traditional retail has disappeared,

largely replaced by food outlets, as high rents and internet trading have ousted many bricks-and-mortar businesses.

Ealing needs new jobs and new residential centres. Its population has recently declined by 3 per cent, and it also has an older population, reflecting the challenge of house prices for younger generations.

While a few decades ago 50 per cent of housing was built by local authorities, now it is private developers who produce 98 per cent of it: they make the decisions on what should be built, and these are largely determined by land values and viability. As a block of flats containing ten units will yield far more profit than a single semi-detached house, the trend for building flats is unlikely to disappear.

Ealing has valuable Conservation Areas, heritage and built assets but a high volume of planning applications are for house conversions to flats, the latter because too few buyers can afford, say, a £3.5m property, so these homes inevitably become susceptible to conversions to flats by developers.

continued on page 4

Below: Perceval House development. Council-owned, Council-developed, yet the Council had 'no powers' to limit the oppressive size and bulk of these buildings, according to Cllr Mason.



Then there is the issue of power supply. Ealing is a particular focus for data centres, such as the one at 22 Uxbridge Road next to the Premier Inn. A transatlantic power cable runs along the Uxbridge Road, which makes it a prime location for such installations. Data centres, which service internet trading, consume vast amounts of electricity: one centre can use the same amount of power as a whole town. There are 14 of them in the borough on SSE's books, but no indication of when the required infrastructure will exist. Current power consumption is such that other competing uses, such as new residential or office buildings, may have difficulty connecting to the grid. SSE expects the government to pay for the necessary infrastructure. Meanwhile, the threat to the power supply will not inhibit new development.

Overall, it is Cllr Mason's view that planning is now entirely market-led, driven by the government's aim to increase new housing numbers regardless of

other factors. While there is some truth in this, CERA is of the opinion that the Council should not always give in to market forces. It should have up-to-date planning policies and strive to defend them and the interests of local residents.

Cllr Mason said he believes, as a politician, in compromise, and has to make compromises every day. However, his assertion that he has little power to stop the over-development of Central Ealing is at odds with his pledge, when newly elected as Leader just a few months ago, to 're-set the Council's relationship with developers' and put local people, not developers, in control of the areas where they live. He also promised an 'immediate review' of the tall buildings policy, but all the evidence points to the continued development of a Croydonised central corridor of towers along the Uxbridge Road, including the Perceval House scheme and the cluster of high-rises around West Ealing station, with scant regard for sustainability or the environment.

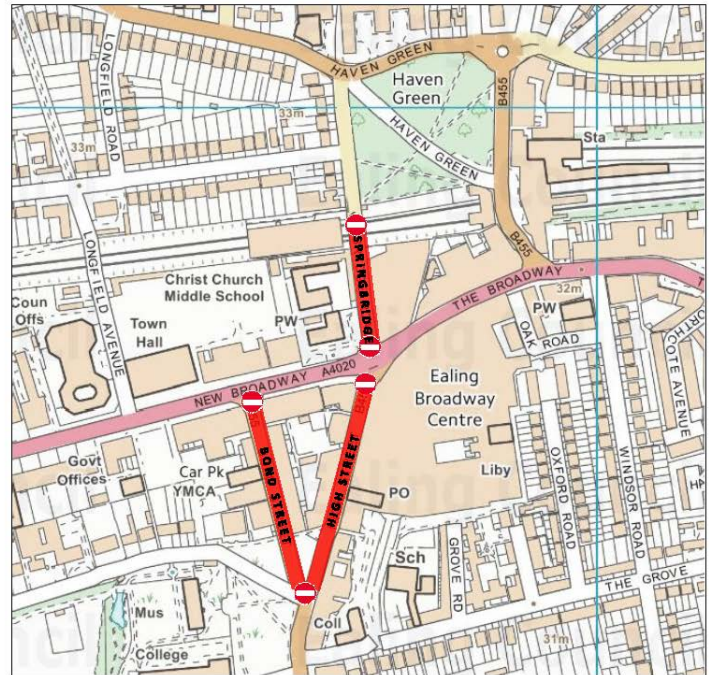
Local Plan: pedestrianisation schemes

A key aim of the new Local Plan, which contains proposals that would affect the borough of Ealing for the next 15 years, is to make the streets safer for cyclists and pedestrians, creating more cycle lanes, reducing on-street parking and introducing traffic calming measures on several busy roads in central Ealing.

Traffic consultants Arup have just published proposals to promote walking, cycling and public transport across the borough to improve the town centre environment, including air quality.

One proposal is to pedestrianise High Street, Bond Street and Springbridge Road.

This would certainly improve central Ealing as a shopping centre, but would have a big impact on traffic along New Broadway and Uxbridge Road and residential roads north and south.



STOP PRESS: Local Plan consultation

Just as this edition of *CERA News* went to press the Council published [a consultation on the new local plan](#). This sets out the new policies for managing development in the borough. It covers all types of development including new house building, town centres, open space, industry and employment, with policies for tall buildings, how the Council will safeguard the borough's heritage, and how it will protect neighbours' amenity.

This consultation runs only until **25 January 2023**. It is the *only* chance for the community to try to get

its voice heard as the plan preparation progresses. An enormous volume of documentation needs to be studied to ensure responses are properly made. Once CERA has had a chance to digest this we will send you more information.

Note that the Council is organising consultation events around the borough, plus, on 9 December:

- an Ealing Town Walking Tour 1–2.30pm, and
- a Town Plan Workshop 5.30–7.30pm in the Town Hall.

To reserve your place or find more information [go to Ealing's 'consultation events' website](#)