



CERA NEWS



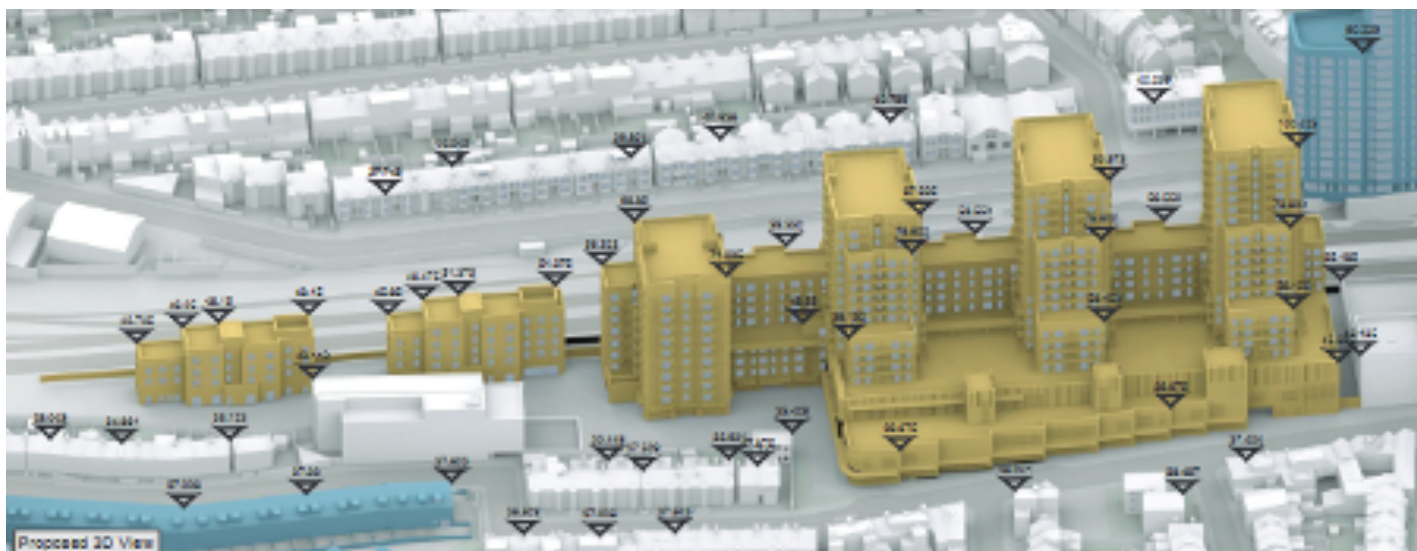
News from Central Ealing Residents' Association

Email: info@cera.org.uk

Website: www.cera.org.uk

August 2023

Waitrose plans revealed



Waitrose has now lodged its long-awaited planning application to redevelop its West Ealing store and build 428 new homes in a series of tower blocks rising to 20 storeys close to the junction of Drayton Green Road and alongside the railway.

If approved, the development would be Waitrose's third on the site in less than 30 years, which strongly conflicts with the Council's recently announced policy on sustainability favouring the refurbishment of existing buildings over redevelopment.

The application, 233076FUL, is supported by 190 pages of densely technical documentation. CERA will in due course be examining the whole application.

What is beyond doubt is that it will raise a lot of issues of concern to CERA members and we shall try to reflect these in our comments. However, the extraordinarily mean consultation deadline is given as 31 August.

If you feel this is unreasonable, do write to the planning case officer, Gregory Gray (GrayG@ealing.gov.uk), to tell him so.



Developer's visualisation of the new Waitrose site

42 Hastings Road: Majestic Wine Warehouse site



The latest proposal for the emerging tall buildings cluster around West Ealing Station is the large student housing scheme at 42 Hastings Road, the Majestic Wine Warehouse site very close to the huge high-rise Waitrose scheme reported on in this issue.

The 42 Hastings Road scheme had a public consultation in September 2022, since when the scheme has been revised slightly. A new public consultation was held in mid-July, no doubt to be followed shortly by a planning application. Tide Construction, the developer, states that changes to the height and massing of the proposed building are substantial since the first public consultation. However, Tide has ignored most of the comments from last year's consultation, especially on height.

Despite the draft Local Plan limiting the height of proposed developments around West Ealing Station to 8–13 storeys, the Hastings Road scheme appears to have been reduced only to 20 storeys (65 metres) at its highest point from the previous proposed height of 22 storeys. This is clearly contrary to Local Plan guidance and will still dwarf the existing two- and three-storey houses in Hastings Road. This is not acceptable. It raises concerns about other proposals that might ignore Local Plan guidance and also the number of new

student housing schemes proposed in central Ealing.

With rising interest rates challenging the conventional housing market, the Majestic scheme of 'student housing' can be seen as a subset of a more general type of residential development which developers are now proposing in their search of a profit.

Their business model involves building large blocks of 'co-living' units – usually on sites like Hastings Road that have proved difficult to develop in a more conventional way. Similar to university halls of residence, these co-living units provide residents with their own small room and a shower with some communal kitchens, as well as ground-floor space for residents to socialise.

The latest site proposed for a co-living development is the long-vacant land at 58 Uxbridge Road, on the corner of St Leonard's Road and opposite the Fire Station. Planning permission was granted in 2017 to replace a 1960s office building with a much larger one that, we were assured, would attract high-quality commercial tenants. This literally never got off the ground, because of changing market conditions, according to the developers. Instead, they are turning to a co-living scheme –

which in this case they say would be ‘high-quality purpose-built student accommodation’.

Another example of co-living has been approved for the site at Sandringham Mews (see photo on right), to replace the pleasant row of existing shops on the High Street, in the Town Centre Conservation Area just opposite the Ealing Broadway Centre.

Quite how developments of this kind are expected to help address the Borough’s long-acknowledged shortage of affordable family housing is unclear. Co-living units are designed to house mainly young and transient occupiers with little long-term attachment to the borough.



Local Plan update



explain just what these are. Some people fear that 20-minute neighbourhoods herald an attempt by the authorities to herd communities, levy fines and reduce personal freedoms, but their exponents, including the respected Town and Country Planning Association, see them as helping people access their daily needs through a 20-minute walk – something that most people in CERA territory can already do.

A public consultation on what 20-minute neighbourhoods might mean for Ealing and Hanwell has recently been launched with little publicity. Perhaps this is because the questions are very poorly designed and have little relevance to the long-standing needs of Ealing Town Centre.

Follow this link to give your views:

https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201042/current_consultations/3209/ealing_and_hanwell_20-minute_framework_consultation

CERA will be interested to learn how, if at all, the results of this survey will feed into Council policy-making. In fact, we have similar concerns about what the Council does with all the other responses it receives from its consultation exercises.

Too often in recent years public consultations have served little purpose other than to enable the Council to tick a box. Whether that is the case here will become clearer at the start of next year when the Council revises its Plan ahead of its public examination.

Our April newsletter included CERA’s comments on the Council’s consultation on the new 500-page draft Local Plan. The scale of new development in the borough has been unprecedented in recent years and the new Plan will set out the planning policies that govern new developments. It will be hugely important, touching, as the Council says, on every aspect of everyday life in the borough.

The draft new Plan attracted a lot of public interest. The Council says it received an unprecedented 6,000+ responses. It needs to study these carefully as it has to respond to each one when the Plan is examined by an Inspector. From what we hear, the biggest area of concern relates to plans to remove more of Ealing’s undeveloped green spaces in the remorseless drive to build more blocks of flats.

Plans to introduce **20-minute neighbourhoods** across the borough have also raised concerns, many of these arising from the Council’s failure to

The state of the residential market

Weak economic growth coupled with high inflation and high interest/mortgage rates has, not surprisingly, adversely affected the housing market. There are fewer transactions and prices have fallen. Land Registry data shows that in Ealing house prices continued rising throughout much of 2022, with growth rates peaking in September, since when house prices have fallen slightly by just over 2 per cent over the eight months up to May 2023. Interestingly, detached and semi-detached house prices have fallen by about 4 per cent while prices of flats have been static.

With interest rates continuing to increase and a mild recession likely, the housing market is unlikely to improve in central Ealing this year. However, agents such as Savills anticipate some improvement next year, helped by the effect on demand from the Elizabeth Line, widening central Ealing's catchment area to include areas like Islington as travel times to the City from central Ealing have shortened considerably.

With the huge amount of flats development that has occurred in Ealing in recent years, due in part to transport improvements, it is perhaps surprising that we are repeatedly told that London has a big housing deficit and needs much more new development. What effect has this new development had on overall housing need?

According to Savills, the majority of these flats in places like central Ealing are sold to overseas



buyers off-plan, which reduces risks for developers, encourages viability and urban renewal and increases affordable housing payments.

But how much do these developments actually benefit local residents or increase the supply for Londoners?

Most new flats in central Ealing tend to be bought by overseas investors, then sub-let and occupied, but many go to a sub-set of the rental market in central Ealing, mainly at high rents to professional firms or their employees, not as part of the general rental market. Analysis of supply and demand is, therefore, not straightforward.

Heathrow Airport expansion update



Heathrow Airport today

The expansion of Heathrow Airport via a third runway is temporarily on hold pending consultation with the UK Government, the Civil Aviation Authority and investors. However, changes to increase capacity are afoot irrespective of whether a third runway is constructed.

The 'Heathrow Airport modernisation programme' is intended to increase flight capacity and reduce fuel costs/travel times, but to achieve this multiple concentrated and low-landing flight paths are needed, with arrivals commencing in the early morning from around 6am.

The airport's location and the predominant westerly wind mean that 70 per cent of all aircraft movements are directly over central London, including parts of Ealing. We await news of the precise impacts on noise/air pollution and will alert CERA members when more is known.

Haven Green and surrounding area



Crossrail's construction compound may have gone but CERA remains acutely concerned about the unfinished state in which Haven Green and the Ealing Broadway Station public realm next door have been left. The problem has been to get anyone in authority to fix it.

So when CERA committee member Will French came across the Mayor of London, Sir Mark Rowley (Metropolitan Police Commissioner), Cllr Onkar Sahota and Rupa Huq MP plus about eight other members of the force on the Green he thought he'd ask them.

Although the al fresco meeting concerned important matters to do with neighbourhood policing, Will used the opportunity to ask the Mayor what he could do to sort out Haven Green and Ealing Broadway Station. He was shooed away fairly fast by the assembled dignitaries, but not unkindly and not before Rupa Huq had agreed to investigate.

Separate initiatives are under way to encourage Rupa Huq to convene a meeting of the key parties and CERA hopes Will's intervention may encourage her to do so. Watch this space for news.

The Victoria Hall tribunal

No verdict has been announced and none is now expected until the autumn.

Meanwhile, on 13 June the Liberal Democrats moved a motion calling on Ealing's Labour administration to scrap the £3m Ealing Town Hall hotel scheme and to work with residents towards a new community-led use for the Victoria Hall.

The scheduled agenda item was however cancelled 50 minutes into the Council meeting, by means of an obscure procedural device called a 'closure motion'.

A petition has been launched to put pressure on the Council to hold the planned debate:
<https://www.ealinglibdems.org.uk/victoriahall>
 Whatever your political leanings, please support this campaign to allow public debate on a community asset.