

Probity in planning decisions

The last issue of CERA News raised concerns that, to ensure transparency and fairness, Ealing Council needed to amend current planning procedures so that agreed grounds of refusal are identified and minuted at Planning Committee meetings. This would leave only the detailed wording of refusal reasons to be agreed subsequently by officers in consultation with the Committee chairman.

CERA wishes to ensure that if a development is considered unacceptable important refusal reasons are not omitted from decision letters thereby putting residents at a disadvantage when revised proposals are subsequently submitted. CERA wrote to the Council on 23 November, but so far reassurance on this point has not been forthcoming from the Council.

Filmworks site

Apparently, according to press releases, construction of the Filmworks development, started in December 2016 with the long overdue new Picturehouse cinema due to open in 2019. As yet there is little sign of any new construction. The demolition of the Walpole House office block in Bond Street was due to occur last summer, following demolition of Flava's Bar on Mattock Lane, but although Walpole House is boarded up it is still standing. When will construction actually start?

Why is it that all major developments in Ealing are subject to such long delays? 10-40 The Broadway (opposite the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre) has been in limbo for a decade, Ealing Broadway and West Ealing stations should have been redeveloped by now but work hasn't even started and few occupants have been announced for the large number of new shops in the soon-to-be-completed Dickens Yard scheme.



CERA NEWS

News from Central Ealing Residents' Association

CERA hotline: 020 8997 7131 - email: info@cera.org.uk - web: cera.org.uk Winter 2017/18

Victoria Hall

The outcry over the Council's plans to dispose of the Victoria Hall rumbles on. The Hall and its associated rooms were built as part of the Town Hall in 1893 as a place for public gatherings. They were paid for by public subscription and have been run ever since as a charitable trust.

The Council's plans to dispose of the Hall, together with the rest of the Town Hall complex, to Mastcraft for a hotel development on a 250 year lease are being challenged by the Charity Commission which has insisted that key stakeholders be consulted first. The consultation has triggered a tsunami of objections from the public questioning the Council's right to dispose of these community owned assets.

Objectors complain that the Trust has been mismanaged over many years. Proper accounts have never been kept, and too little is known about the extent of the Trust's assets and how the Council plans to compensate the Trust for their disposal. The Council twice extended the consultation to give it time to produce information that objectors are calling for. It then

increased the uncertainty by announcing a fresh consultation with a new set of questions, even though many of the most important details remain unavailable (more information: www.ealingvoice.com).

A General Purposes Committee has been set up by the Council to decide what to do next and Council officers will report to its first meeting in March. The row has forced the Council to announce it is putting back its plans for closing the Hall and the public will be able to continue to hire it now until the end of October.



Perceval House

Plans to redevelop the Perceval House site, adjacent to the Town Hall, creating new homes, smaller council offices and a new, very small library, have also been pushed back by eight months to allow more time to plan the affordable housing element and the ways that the Council can achieve best value from its land ownership of the site. Public consultation on these plans is now expected in early summer.

This is a complicated site and the original plans by the Council's chosen partner, Galliford Try,

were in danger of trying to cram a quart into a pint pot, with very high-density housing at the rear of the site, including a 20 storey tower block of flats on Longfield Avenue, facing the old fire station and the railway. This appears to conflict with policies in the new Central Ealing Neighbourhood Plan, although arguably it may be more in line with the thinking of the draft New London Plan which is out for public consultation.

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Perceval House ...continued

Key to the original plans was that half the new homes would be affordable. The Council wants its new wholly owned company, Broadway Living, to purchase these new flats but this would create a complicated financial equation, also involving the cost of its new offices and library and the value of the site which it owns freehold. This large and complex scheme will take some time to plan successfully and to agree financially. Furthermore, the Council will be judge and jury over the scheme.



Meeting of Ealing residents' groups

There is growing concern about proposed new developments in Ealing, the autocratic attitude of the Council to residents' objections and the difficulty of getting our voice across to the powers that be. A survey of local groups at the end of 2017, was followed by a meeting at the end of January of many local groups and voluntary organisations from Central Ealing, West Ealing and Hanwell to look for ways of working together to make ourselves more effective.

There were presentations of the results of the survey and an outline of the New London Plan and its implications for Ealing. There was then a discussion about what issues were most important, how we can support one another and how we could get our concerns across more effectively.

A follow up meeting in late February/early March is planned and there was general agreement that the first step should be to form a steering group with direct links to all local groups, as a conduit for information and discussion.

The New London Plan

The Mayor of London's draft New London Plan is out for consultation until 2 March. All planning decisions should follow London Plan policies and it sets a policy framework for Local Plans across London. It sets out how London will grow from 8.9 million to 10.8 million people over the next 24 years.

The annual rate of housing completions over the next 10 years is planned to be double current rates in London, with Ealing expected to be one of the fastest growing boroughs, increasing its housing stock by over 20%. The main reasons supporting this, apparently, are land availability and high passenger transport accessibility.

So this means strong pressure on central Ealing due to unrivalled accessibility at Ealing Broadway Station after Crossrail starts.

Higher-density development is expected, but with a 'design-led approach' - the Plan says the impact of tall buildings must be considered from a visual, functional and environmental perspective. For small sites (1-25 homes), there will be a presumption in favour of redevelopment or infill in the curtilage of a house in high accessibility areas. New development must be approved unless it would cause an unacceptable level of harm to residential privacy or designated heritage assets.

Central Library update

The collapse of Carillion, the company to which Ealing Council outsourced the running of its libraries some years ago, will be familiar to our readers. Carillion's management of Ealing Central Library was all to do with cost-cutting: it got rid of the professional librarians and the reference library, not to mention further outsourcing any actual work to companies at cut-price rates that would enable Carillion, the middle men, to keep the resulting profit. Few library users will be aware that new books are chosen by booksellers, who themselves are influenced in their buying practices by the amount of discount they are able to obtain from publishers.

While Hounslow ended its contract with Carillion some time ago when its failings became apparent, Ealing failed to do so. But now, after a petition to try to prevent outsourcing to any other private company, the Council has announced that it will bring the service under the direct control of the Council, with effect from 1 February 2018.

However, Carillion or no Carillion, the Central Library's space occupancy is to be radically

reduced ahead of the eventual move to the rebuilt Council offices on the site of Perceval House, where the central library for this large and rapidly growing borough will be little bigger than a mobile library; the local history section will be confined to a minute area in West Ealing library, with its holdings consigned to 'deep storage' and hence virtually lost to the community this facility should serve. The timescale for these changes is unlikely to be confirmed before the upcoming Council elections.



10-40 The Broadway

British Land has had a preliminary meeting with the Council about its ideas for its shopping, office and residential site opposite the Ealing Broadway

Shopping Centre. A meeting with Save Ealing's Centre is expected soon. Stanton Williams has been appointed as architect and is expected to be producing draft plans within the next few months.

Senior director and joint founder, Alan Stanton, will be directly involved in the design. His highly regarded small firm has been and is involved in many impressive and striking new buildings at Kings Cross, Great Ormond Street Hospital, the proposed new Museum of London at Smithfield Market, and Oxford and Cambridge colleges for example. However, none of these buildings is in suburban London or involves a multi use development with a major shopping component.

