CERA NEWS

News from Central Ealing Residents' Association

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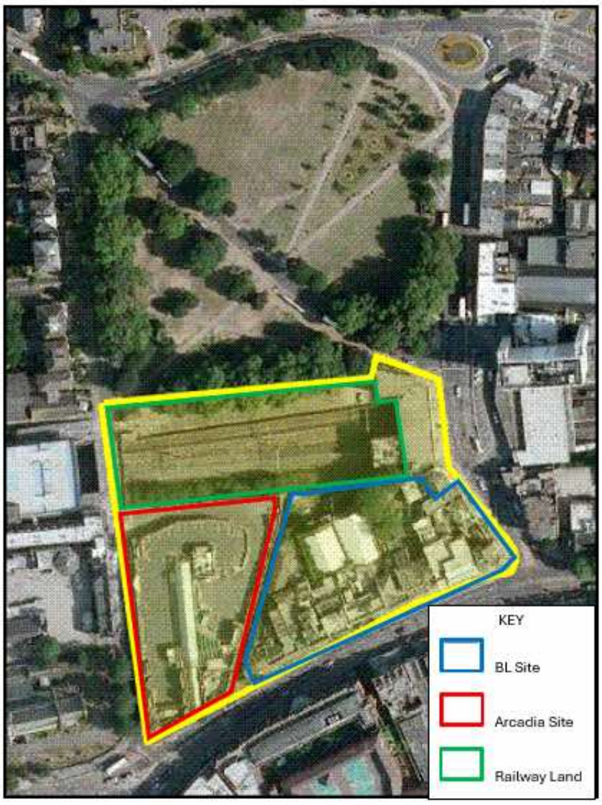
All change at Ealing Broadway?

The Arcadia site – the land between the Station and Springbridge Road – has long been a plaything for speculative developers, hungry to extract value out of our town centre. Each has come and gone without making any serious investment in Ealing, leaving this central site tired and run down – a dreary gateway for visitors arriving at Ealing Broadway Station.



British Land, once viewed as a long-term investor, is the most recent gambler to try its luck. First BL bought the Ealing Broadway Centre on the south side of Uxbridge Road, and then it acquired the eastern half of the Arcadia site, promising to turn Ealing into a major office location. Overriding Historic England's strong concerns, BL then bullied the Council into consenting to a massive development dominated by a 21-storey block of offices regardless of its impacts on the town Centre and Haven Green Conservation Areas.

The investment climate has now changed. BL is abandoning Ealing and has put its property portfolio up for sale. Its decision has heralded a new wave of developers trying their luck, perhaps with a development that would also include Morrisons, TK Maxx and MacDonalds. There is new talk of widening the site out by decking over the railway and linking development into Haven Green.

Once more, the Council is wondering how to respond. So far they seem only interested in getting to grips with the developers' ideas, but along with Ealing Civic Society and Save Ealing Centre, CERA says that such an important piece of real estate affects everyone in Ealing, and discussions with local communities should take place before any firm decisions are taken.

At a recent meeting, we explained that changes to the shopping centre and online shopping mean that people living nearby have little reason to spend money in it any more. We said that a broader range of attractions is needed and that more visitors would be attracted if our under-treat architectural and cultural heritage were protected and promoted. We also said that large numbers of student hostels are inappropriate for this important metropolitan centre.

CERA will be monitoring the situation as it develops.

Haven Green

After ten years of CERA campaigning LBE has removed the last of the cycle stands it unlawfully installed on the Common Land. This has opened out views across the Green, potentially making it a more pleasant place for people to enjoy. Less good news is that nature abhors a vacuum. The new space has encouraged still more e-bikes and scooters to be strewn untidily across the Green and the footpaths. It is now sometimes impossible for pedestrians, wheelchair users or mums with buggies to navigate the clutter between Springbridge Road and the station.

CERA has long campaigned against this. The best solution would be to use the empty shop unit in Ealing Broadway station as a bike park and cyclist cafe. Since it is the station that attracts all the cycles, the station should provide space for them, as happens in stations across the country. But even if TFL cannot be persuaded to accept any civic responsibility in Ealing, there are other ways to tackle the problem. The council has talked for years about using the car park behind the Shanakee pub as a cycle park. Beyond granting planning permission for a temporary bike park here in 2017 it has done nothing, allowing the consent to expire.

Ealing is not like other boroughs, which take action to sort out these problems. Islington, Brent and Richmond are just three who have warned e-bike providers that unless they get their act together the bikes will be banned altogether. Here, the council ignores the situation.

Waitrose

High inflation, weak economic growth and higher build costs ultimately scuppered Waitrose's plans to redevelop its West Ealing site with four residential tower blocks for build-to-rent flats. After Waitrose announced its decision, the Council approved revised plans previously submitted that would increase the number of flats to 463, from 428. However, this may be insufficient to overcome the problems of a scheme that JLP's advisors forecast would lose the company £78 million. JLP could now sell its site to another developer with the benefit of its planning consent, but this would lose it one of its best-performing stores so this looks unlikely. And without Waitrose's involvement any new developer would have to start from scratch with a lengthy and expensive new planning application. So the chances of realising a good price for the site seem remote in the current climate.

The most likely outcome, for now, seems that Waitrose will continue with business as usual, which will spare local residents the huge disruption to the neighbourhood that the massive scheme would have inflicted. On the other hand, the scheme's abandonment further increases the uncertainty about the future shape of Ealing that hangs like a cloud over the town centre – and will continue to until the Council takes better control of property developers' short-term whims.

School Streets

Ealing Council is proceeding apace with its introduction of School Streets. The latest is on St Stephen's Road by the new Notting Hill and Ealing High School, in a road already furnished with speed humps and a zebra crossing. School Streets for Fielding Primary and Twyford CofE High School were launched in January, bringing the borough's total to 50.

School Street and parking fines generated some £5.7 million for the Council in 2024 from 142,903 Penalty Charge Notices, marking a 30 per cent increase from 2023. This makes Ealing one of the highest-earning authorities in the country for parking enforcement, with parking-related income, including permits, exceeding £11 million since 2020.

The Victoria Hall

The 25 November Charity Tribunal hearing dismissed the appeal by the Friends of the Victoria Hall. This was not unexpected, as the Charity Commission has always backed the Council and clearly takes little notice of representations from the community. However, the court confirmed two important restrictions on Ealing Council's attempted disposal of the Hall to hotel developer Mastcraft, which now cannot proceed as originally agreed in November 2019.

First, the 2019 lease agreed by the Council with Mastcraft should be renegotiated; and second, the boundaries of the Trust property should be properly determined.

The Council has already claimed that its own opinion of where those boundaries lie is unassailable, and there are now grave doubts about how the Victoria Hall Trust advisory committee will observe the court's ruling on the renegotiation of the lease.