



EALING MATTERS NEWSLETTER

5 December 2018

ISSUE 3

Welcome to the third Ealing Matters newsletter. We are a network of 62 residents' and community groups throughout Ealing which is attempting to hold the powers that be to account and to maintain and enhance quality of life for Ealing residents. As ever planning issues and Council engagement issues dominate resident groups' concerns.

EALING MATTERS MEETS WITH RUPA HUQ AND JULIAN BELL

Ealing Central and Acton MP Rupa Huq met with Ealing Matters on 23 November 2018. We discussed resident groups' concerns and she responded by saying she was constantly inundated with residents' complaints about planning in Ealing. She receives more of these complaints than any other MP she knows. She said she was keen to set up a meeting in Westminster to discuss Ealing planning issues. We plan to meet our two other MPs later this year.

On 17 September 2018 we met with Ealing Council Leader Councillor Julian Bell. We presented the results of our survey of resident groups' concerns. He was surprised at the level of dissatisfaction with planning and Council engagement. He said that the results of our survey were in contrast to recent Council surveys. He promised to send us copies of the results of recent resident surveys carried out by the Council. None has, as yet, arrived at Ealing Matters. He promised to meet with us again.

ARE EALING COUNCIL'S PLANNING AND REGENERATION SERVICES 'BROKEN'?

Work is seemingly underway on updating Ealing Council's Local Plan. The current plan published in 2012 outlines development intentions up to 2027. Many local stakeholders worked tirelessly in 2010/11/12 to influence the content of the Local Plan - but few of us had any success. Since 2012 we have had changes to The London Plan, revamped national planning guidance (the NPPF – published in 2012 and revised in 2018) and the emergence of two Ealing Council Neighbourhood Plans.

Over recent months Ealing Matters has been inundated with complaints about the Ealing Council's planning and regeneration services. Common issues include failure to upload planning application comments on the Council's web site, the Council's disregard for Conservation Area and Common Land designations, and planners' dysfunctional report writing, factual errors, asset disposal, heritage and conservation processes. Sites involved include Goldsmiths Arms W3, 29 Castlebar Road W5, 31 Woodville Road W5, 144-156 Uxbridge Road W7, 8 Twyford Crescent W3, 18 St Stephens Road W13, 9 Gordon Road W5, 43 Creswick Road W3, 59 Eaton Rise W5,

96-102 Broadway W13, Ealing Squash Club, Southall Town Hall and Ealing Town Hall. We understand that because there have been so many complaints about Council planning services, the Council has set up a planning complaints unit! Contact the unit at RegenHousingComplaints@ealing.gov.uk.

EALING MATTERS PLANNING USER GROUP?

At Ealing Matters' meeting with Council Leader Julian Bell on 17 September 2018, we suggested that before the Local Plan update was updated, a review of the 'performance' of the current Local Plan should be undertaken. We also suggested the re-instatement of the Planning User Group, which for a number of years previously provided a vehicle for local residents/Planning Officer engagement. Two months have passed with no response from Councillor Bell. Ealing Matters is now discussing whether it should set up its own planning User Group amongst its 62 resident groups and community groups. Council Planning and Regeneration Officers will also be invited to participate.

TEN YEARS OF EALING CENTRE REGENERATION: THE SEC PERSPECTIVE

The origins of SEC

Save Ealing's Centre (SEC) was formed in 2007 as an umbrella group of 28 resident associations and community groups from Hanwell to Acton. A new Council policy to regenerate central Ealing startled local people who never imagined regeneration was what their town centre needed. Ealing had grown a bit sleepy perhaps and it needed to respond to the new Westfield Centre which prompted favourite stores like Bentalls to close. But it was a shock to learn that regeneration meant comprehensive redevelopment with overlarge blocks of bland architecture replacing landmarks like the Empire Cinema and the YMCA.

The Council had hitherto used well-established consultation processes to tell people about its plans. So when SEC began it thought it could act as a forum through which the Council would explain its new policies and local people could feedback comments. Launched at a packed public meeting in the Victoria Hall, SEC's Vision aimed to trigger debate about Ealing's future as a place for everyone.

Some successes and some failures

Things didn't turn out as expected. A new hunger for development at any cost saw the Council cosy up to developers, leaving SEC and its supporters at the margins. Instead of constructive debate, the only way to influence anything seemed to be negatively – by objecting, campaigning, legal challenges or at planning inquiries. In this SEC found much public support including from members of all political parties. People gave generously when called on and SEC has now a healthy reserve for future campaigns.

Lacking the Council's powers and resources, many SEC campaigns haven't succeeded, leaving Ealing a poorer place.

Still, there have been some great successes - the greatest being the defeat of the hideous Glenkerrin scheme opposite the station. Through SEC's efforts a government inspector overthrew the scheme Council planners approved.

But it's not just bricks and mortar. The bigger question is whether Ealing is a better town centre than it was 10 years ago when 'regeneration' commenced. There are certainly some positives. New businesses and a buzz has returned to a centre that was full of empty shops after Westfield opened. Yet the shops are more down market - Bentalls has given way to Primark - and there are

fewer of them and more cafes. Nobody now pretends that Ealing draws custom from the wider sub-region. It struggles even to hold on to its natural catchment from the W5 and W13 postcodes. The idea Ealing can compete with Westfield is now laughable.

It's not just the shops. The past 10 years have seen the loss of other traditional town centre activities; the cinema, the police station, a proper post office, a heavily downsized library. The Town Hall is for sale. There is even discussion about relocating the Council offices.

SEC must look forward

And what now? The fate of many sites has been decided. Is it time SEC disbanded? SEC doesn't think so. Some very big sites remain unresolved, with 9-42 the Broadway and Perceval House the largest. SEC will remain as an outlet for public comments. More important however is that central Ealing remains the heart of the Borough. Its growing communities will need a town centre to serve them. How best can it do that? The fact that so much of it is owned by two huge property companies whose first concern will be with their shareholders makes it more important than ever that other voices can get the airing SEC provides.

SEC must change too. It has to look forward rather than always backwards as its critics accuse it of doing. And SEC needs to find ways to work with the Council and the big landowners, not just against them. Things are a little more auspicious now. SEC has responded positively to the Council's 'Future Ealing' listening exercise to re-engage with Ealing communities. An exciting embryonic project called the 'Ealing Walk of Fame' has brought landowners, the Council and the university together with local groups like SEC to establish a new image for Ealing and a new economic purpose for the town centre to replace its obsolete regional shopping centre role. With a new and common sense of purpose this could just offer a way for all Ealing's stakeholders to rebuild trust with one another. It's still early days but watch this space.

EALING COUNCIL AND TFL CONSPIRE TO DEGRADE THE ACTON 404 BUS SERVICE

During the summer holidays of 2017 Transport for London (TfL) ran a public consultation on bus route changes. Ealing Council Officers were notified and the proposed changes were advertised at bus stops for passengers to respond. The changes to the Acton 440 service were to encourage people from Chiswick to travel by bus to the Elizabeth Line at Acton Main Line.

Despite Neighbourhood, Community groups and persons currently using this service to access schools, medical centres and supermarkets responding vehemently against this change, their concerns were not heeded. This was compounded by our Council Transport Planners responding to the forty page consultation with three paragraphs including the statement "*We particularly welcome the improvements for north-south orbital links in the Acton and Northolt areas.*"

They had not bothered to consult the users in Acton, not listened to the objections from South Acton Ward councillors and received no response from Acton Central councillors. The residents of Acton who use this service are most unhappy with the changes.

The Council could have emailed Neighbourhood Associations and Community Groups for their views. With a little co-operation from TfL one email could have been sent to all Oyster Card and Freedom Card holders in the affected postcodes. The bus routes may not be of importance to the Officers, but they are to the people who use them.

The north/south route serves four schools, three supermarkets, three Underground stations, the 24/7 Walk-in Centre at Central Middlesex Hospital and the medical centres at the south of the

route. The consultation suggested axing this route in favour of a bus from Chiswick to the Elizabeth Line at Acton Main Line (four trains an hour). It is faster to catch the District Line to Ealing Broadway where there are 12 trains an hour, and no snarled traffic through Acton. The fact that it could cost an extra 40p a day was TfL's concern.

Our complaints are largely aimed at the paucity of Ealing Council's response to TfL and its lack of consultation with Acton residents thereby not supporting their travel needs.

How do we get our Council to be more accountable to the electorate? Not just on bus routes but all the other important decisions regarding our assets. How do we find out what is going on? Neither 'Ealing Today' nor the 'Ealing Gazette' publicises the Ward Forums, or consultations and the Council's website is difficult to navigate.

CROSSRAIL/ELIZABETH LINE STATIONS 'DELAYED'

As spring 2018 turned into summer, then summer into autumn and with winter now here, the long promised improvements to Ealing Broadway Station forecourt seem as distant as ever. Crossrail has been in the headlines recently for its cost overruns and other delays but they continue to hold out the prospect that the new Elizabeth Line service will be operational by the end of next year. They admit however the other improvements at Ealing Broadway Station will be far from complete and their occupation of Haven Green will drag on deep into 2020.

Crossrail say that the station is 'under technical review by Network Rail as part of the contract letting' (whatever that means). With this in mind we look forward to confirmation that it will be built according to the 2014 approved designs. The forecourt and the space around it are LBE's responsibility and they promise that once the station itself is agreed they will consult further on these public realm details, probably in the New Year.

Since it got its green light back in 2008, Crossrail's works across the Borough as a whole have been a total shambles. Unlike the central and eastern sections nobody has taken the lead in planning how it would be implemented and how it would fit into the existing environment. The buck has been passed between TfL, Crossrail and Network Rail. Promises and deadlines have been broken repeatedly while LBE has remained a spectator unable or unwilling to intervene. When the Elizabeth Line finally opens expect that 4 of the 5 stations (the exception is Hanwell) will prove poorly designed and interface badly with the neighbourhoods they serve.

Other news from around the borough:

ACTON

Over 150 people turned up at the Churchfield Community Association AGM on 21 November 2018 at which the main topic was the future of Old Acton Library. The building has lain 'future-less' for five years. The Acton Arts Project (AAP) is the only overt bidder to want to take over the building. Doug Carnegie explained the project's plans, which do involve a committed local developer. An 85 seater cinema, a cafe and community and commercial space use are all in the plan. LBE say it will 'market' the building in January/February 2019. This may or may not happen as LBE promised this activity in September 2018 and December 2018 but it's failed to materialise. 30 local people are now actively involved in developing the AAP.

Nearly 2,000 people have signed a petition to save the Goldsmiths Arms in East Acton. The pub is 200 years old and it closed in 2017. Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing wants to demolish

the pub and build a block of flats with a bar on the ground floor. The Goldsmiths Residents Association is leading the campaign to save the pub.

The impending closure of Acton Nursery is concerning parents as plans for its replacement seem to have fallen apart. Fingers are being pointed at the South Acton/Acton Gardens developer L&Q, whose promise of a new community centre housing a new nursery is now being questioned.

HANWELL

We have the prospect of South Hanwell's first tall, residential block. In Trumplers Way MHA Bellward (Hanwell) wants to replace a collection of industrial units with 213 new homes rising to 12 storeys. 142 'Market' homes and 71 'Affordable' homes – of which 31 are 'Social' homes – are specified. There would be 125 car parking places (mostly in a basement) and 360 cycle racks. There are two indoor industrial units planned for much of the ground floor. Ref: 184014FUL.

SOUTHALL

The 88 acre Gas Works redevelopment, approved in 2010, continues to court controversy. The 25 year development began in 2017 and its primary goal for the developer Berkeley Group is to build 3,750 new homes. Many residents are complaining of bad smells and atmospheric pollution which the massive site decontamination exercise is causing.

Ealing Council's botched disposal of Southall Town Hall has led to the local Hindu Temple, who thought they had acquired the building, demonstrating publicly and vigorously about its loss.

WEST EALING

Land owners Binfield have submitted an unusual Planning Application to develop an eight storey residential block in the Chignell Place cul-de-sac behind the in-construction WLIC mosque in West Ealing centre. 61 of the 63 flats to rent will be very, very small – in fact measuring just 6 metres by 4 metres. You will get a kitchen, a shower, a toilet and a bed which when not being used can be folded up against a wall. In the building are small laundry rooms, a café, a residents' lounge, meeting rooms and bike racks on most floors. The Draft New London Plan Policy H18 – 'large scale purpose-built shared living' encourages this kind of communal living approach, but the Chignell Place plans fail to meet policy needs in the lack of a shared kitchen, an incomplete management plan, a missing housing needs assessment and a lack of outside communal amenity space. More in 184490FUL.

A2Dominion's plans to demolish the 1926 art deco Woolworths façade on Broadway and replace it with 120 flats rising to 15 storeys are now seven months old and are unlikely to be on the Council's Planning Committee agenda until 2019. A2Dominion has finally allowed West Ealing Neighbours to carry out an inspection of the state of the façade. This is scheduled for 5 December 2018.

THE NEW OPDC BOARD: LOCAL RESIDENTS EXCLUDED

The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), launched in April 2015, is the UK's largest regeneration project. Covering over 1,606 acres it is its own Local Planning Authority with ambitions to build 25,500 homes. It includes land in three London Council areas – Brent, Ealing and Hammersmith & Fulham, with Ealing having the largest share. The OPDC will house a new, national transport hub as a large new station will be built where the Elizabeth Line meets HS2.

It became clear in November 2018 that the new OPDC Board would no longer have a seat for a local resident. OPDC claims that with the three Council leaders having seats on the Board this will provide adequate local stakeholder input.

Regards,
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