

Ealing is becoming one of the most over-developed boroughs in London. Ealing Matters research has found that 85 tower blocks over 10 storeys were built in the borough recently, are being built or are in the pipeline. Of these towers, 26 are 20 storeys or higher and eight are 30 storeys or more. Why has Ealing, traditionally a low-rise residential borough, been singled out for such treatment when seven London boroughs have no high-rise towers and have no plans to build any?

Some 38,000 new homes (virtually all flats) will be crammed into Ealing over the next 10 years. If all the flats are sold/rented/occupied the borough will be home to 76,000 new residents. There is no joined-up planning. Against this population growth, we suffer two to three week waiting times to see our GP, continued financial and service cuts at Ealing Hospital, all our Primary and Secondary Schools are at full capacity, town halls and other civic buildings are being sold off, two children centres are being closed, seven Council Libraries downgraded and Ealing and Southall Police Stations have closed.

Opposition to this extreme form of town cramming is growing, and with it mounting criticism of the Council leadership driving it. However, we can look forward to a pause now to further schemes being announced for the next couple of months lest it affects our voting decisions at the upcoming election. But once the elections are over expect things to revert to their current course unless there's a serious property crash.

NORTH ACTON SET TO BECOME THE DENSEST RESIDENTIAL SUBURB IN THE UK

With 27 tower blocks over 10 storeys, 13 of these with 30 or more storeys and 7 with 40 storeys or more, North Acton looks like becoming the UK's densest suburb by 2030. There will be some 5,000 new flats and almost 2,000 new student flats. If all occupied the 12,000 residents will flood the streets, buses, tube and rail station during term time.

OLD ACTON LIBRARY ON THE VERGE OF BEING SAVED BY AND FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Acton Arts Project (AAP) has been trying to take over the repurposing and management of this massively unused asset since 2014. AAP is a group of trustees formed to create a cinema and a creative working space in Acton. On 15 October Ealing Council Cabinet approved the selection of AAP as the preferred occupant. Provided AAP passes financial and non-financial assessments they will be given a 24 year lease.

AAP has set a funding target of £100,000. Over £46,000 has already been raised. Crowdfunding at: www.spacehive.com/a-cinema-for-acton

FRIENDS OF THE VICTORIA HALL FORMED: FEARS THE HALL WILL FALL INTO PRIVATE HANDS

Ealing Council and its development partner Mastcraft still continue to behave as though nothing is amiss in their plans to convert most of Ealing Town Hall into a hotel. The Council wants to 'gift' Victoria Hall, Prince's Hall and some adjoining rooms to Mastcraft. However these facilities are not owned by the Council but by a Charitable Trust established in 1893. Over two years ago the Council applied to the Charity Commission for permission to change the 'objects' of the Trust in order to facilitate disposal to Mastcraft. In spite of expensive legal action by the Council and Save Ealing Centre and other community groups, the Commission has yet to announce its decision.

Whatever the Commission decides, local community groups have got together and formed a new group called 'Friends of The Victoria Hall'. FoVH will campaign to save the hall for the community as a performing

arts, exhibition and meeting space. The founding groups are Central Ealing Neighbourhood Forum, Campaign for an Ealing Performance & Arts Centre, Central Ealing Residents' Association, Ealing Arts & Leisure, Ealing Civic Society, Save Ealing's Centre and West Ealing Neighbours. An informal public launch of the group will take place at 7:30 pm at 'The Forester' pub, 2 Leighton Road, W13 9EP on Thursday 14 November 2019.

MOL AT GURNELL, WEST EALING UNDER THREAT

612 new homes are being promised by Ealing Council on protected Metropolitan Open Land currently occupied by the Gurnell Leisure Centre (swimming pool largely), its car park, the skateboard park and public green space. Six residential tower blocks have been proposed – 17, 15, 15, 13, 10 and 6 storeys.

MOL AT WYNCOTE FARM, HANWELL IN BRENT RIVER PARK UNDER THREAT

Wyncote Farm, owned by the Earl of Jersey in the 19th Century, has been owned by Mr Kashmit Chand Tack since 1990. It was for many decades a wooded area of many acres. To the north and east the land is bounded by the Grand Union Canal and to the south by the Brentford Branch Line single track railway and the M4. It has been designated MOL and Public Open Space for years but has been fenced off and used for a range of unapproved purposes for many years. In recent years large amounts of soil have been excavated and piled tens of metres high on the west bank of the canal. Ealing Council issued an Enforcement notice on 15 March 2017 but for some reason this has still not been prosecuted.

PERCEVAL HOUSE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING APPLICATION EXPECTED IN FEBRUARY 2020

In 2017 Ealing announced plans to redevelop its Perceval House Council offices by building 471 new flats with the tallest 20 storeys high. By the start of 2019 the number of homes had increased to 500 and the tallest tower to 26 storeys. Now we hear there will be 510 homes with a tower of 28 storeys. Who knows where it will end? That'll be up to the Council as the planning authority to decide, acting as they do both as judge and jury.

The Council's development partner Galliford Try promise to consult on their plans in January 2020, after all the details are fixed. The current development 'menu' includes a new Public Library (no bigger than the current one in Ealing Broadway Centre), new Council Offices (50% of the existing floor space) and a first floor Customer Centre which hopefully will have step-free access.

PLANNING USER GROUP (PUG)

The Planning Users Group is the only chance local people have to find out how planning is done in Ealing. Its latest meeting took place on Wednesday 9 October 2019. Unfortunately the Ealing Council Officers running the PUG had failed to produce minutes of the previous 4 June 2019 meeting and they only distributed their agenda 24 hours before our meeting. A familiar story of failed Council Officer actions peppered the meeting. Users in previous meetings had flagged up a range of planning process changes and web site changes which were needed. None of the changes had been made. Some users became quite upset about this. The day after the meeting the PUG Chair, Chief Planning Officer David Scourfield announced that some users' behaviour had been unprofessional and he was minded to put the next PUG meeting on hold.

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