

Crowd funding initiatives by local residents who are trying to prevent Ealing Council's disposal of public assets in the town are on the rise. Hanwell Nature launched legal action against the Council in December 2019. It is raising cash to pay for legal advice to question the Council's inadequate (non-existent) environmental assessment in giving away 61 acres of Metropolitan Open Land to QPR. The Friends of the Victoria Hall (FoVH) is challenging the Charity Commission's 'Scheme' which would enable Ealing Council to donate Victoria Hall – which it does not own - to the hotel operator Mastcraft. Over £115,000 has been raised to support Acton Arts Project's bid to convert Acton Old Library into a cinema-based community arts centre.

LIBRARIES UPDATE

On 20 December 2019 Ealing Council announced which community groups had won the right to run Community Managed Libraries (CML) in the Council owned buildings in Hanwell, Northfields, Perivale and West Ealing. All these Ealing Public Libraries closed on 21 December 2019 and will remain closed until the CML operators have recruited and trained their workforces.

Hanwell

Ealing Law Service will only gain access to the delightful Carnegie building which houses Hanwell Library in early April. Efforts are underway to increase the number of committed volunteers to over 20.

Northfields

The Northfields Community Library organisation hopes to open the Northfields CML in April 2020. Apparently over 100 volunteers have signed up to help fund raise and run the CML.

West Ealing

Ealing Community Voluntary Services gained access to West Ealing Library in January 2020. It is working out its notice from its current A2Dominion owned offices at Lido House West Ealing.

Perivale

Perivale Community Hive was registered as a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in November 2019. The sole object of the CIO is to run the Perivale CML.

Pitshanger

Pitshanger Library was closed by the private owner of the building in December 2019, as Ealing Council failed to extend the lease. The likelihood of a volunteer run CML in Pitshanger is still on the cards and local stakeholders are in negotiation with Ealing Council.

Greenford

Greenford Library is apparently running, with some difficulties, on a hybrid basis with some Council staff and volunteers trying to work together.

Wood End

Wood End Library, also in Greenford, is running on a hybrid model of a reduced number of Council staff working with local volunteers.

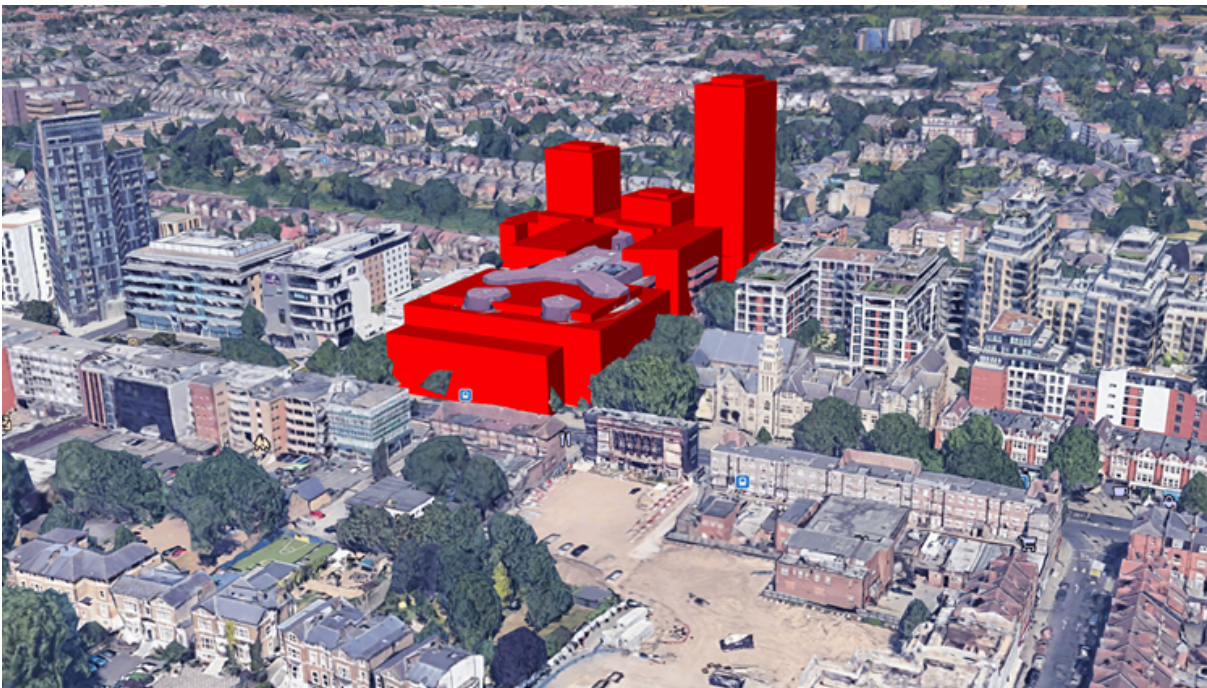
Local History

The Ealing Council Local History Centre, once located in Central Library and then West Ealing Library is now disgracefully located in a small loft room in the Dominion Centre in the always congested centre of Southall.

For more information, please email libraries@ealing.gov.uk

PERCEVAL HOUSE

More details have been disclosed on a consultation web site about what will replace the Council offices and hybrid public/Council Officers' car park. The Council is working in partnership with developer Vistry to replace this 39 year-old facility (apparently no longer fit for purpose). There will be new Council offices, a new Customer Centre and yet another new Central Ealing Public Library. Behind this to the north will rise 500 new homes including a 26 storey residential tower. The scheme design now seems set without there having been any meaningful public engagement in its preparation. Details will be unveiled at a two day exhibition in the Ealing Broadway Centre on Thursday 6th (3.30-7.30 pm) and again on Saturday 8th (10am – 2pm).



HANWELL NATURE

Since Ealing Council abandoned Warren Farm over 5 five years ago nature has taken the land back to its bosom and created a wonderful, unique nature reserve. These ecological warriors of Hanwell have mounted an impressive anti-environmental vandalism campaign. The group aim to thwart the Council gifting the nature reserve to QPR football club for 200 years. Legal action against the Council was commenced on 11 December 2019. The thrust of the campaigners' argument is the lack of environmental assessment by the Council of the 61 acres prior to the QPR deal being signed. After just 11 days its crowd funding target of £11,000 was exceeded on 23 January 2020. Its funding 'stretch' target is £35,000. Full details on the campaign, the nature reserve and how you can help at www.hanwellnature.com.

In January 2020 10 local activists attempted to block heavy machinery entering into the nature reserve. The operatives then mowed the whole 61 acres working well into the night under lights. Some might describe this as habitat destruction. Did the land owner Ealing Council organise this destruction of flora and fauna? Or was it perhaps the lease holder QPR? Or was it perhaps a joint effort?

FRIENDS OF THE VICTORIA HALL (FoVH)

Eight well established residents' and community groups formed this charitable organisation in September 2019. Its mission is to prevent Victoria Hall, Queens Hall and associated rooms owned by the Victoria Hall Trust (VHT) being gifted by Ealing Council to hotel operator Mastcraft. England's top charity lawyers Bates and Wells helped to prepare campaigners' 644 page critical response to the Charity Commission's 'scheme' to enable this allegedly 'illegal' disposal. More details on the history of the 1893 VHT charity, FoVH, details of the case against the Council/Charity Commission and how you can help financially at <https://savethevictoriahall.weebly.com>

TOWERS OF 10 STOREYS OR MORE IN EALING REACH 106 – IS THIS PLANNED OR UNPLANNED?

Sensible town planning in Ealing becomes more and more dysfunctional. An ongoing research project supported by Ealing Matters, Neighbours Paper and Exposurebox discovered on 23 January 2020 that the number of Ealing towers continue to grow. There are 106 towers of 10 storeys or more in Ealing having been built since 2015, being built now or are announced within the planning pipeline. If all these homes were to be occupied by 2030 then Ealing's population would increase by over 72,000 people. 25,000 alone would be added to Southall's population. Is such growth sensible or sustainable?

We have yet to see or hear about Ealing Council's formal response to the Planning Inspector's recommendation in November 2019 that Ealing Council should reduce its 2019 - 2028 housing target by 33%.

The 2012 Ealing Council Local Plan is both out of date and being ignored by Council Planning Officers and Planning Committee Councillors. There are rumours that an update to the plan is in process but any planned or actual engagement with local residents in the formulation of this update is yet to be detected.

Attempts to scrutinise face-to-face Ealing Council's planning processes by local residents' and community groups is being thwarted by Council Planning Officers. The Planning User Group hasn't met since 9 October 2019 and the scheduled meeting date of 22 January 2020 was cancelled at short notice with a possible new date of 3 March 2020 being mooted.

WARD FORUMS ARE CANCELLED - £460,000/YEAR LOST FOR LOCAL PROJECTS

In 2010 when the Conservative Party ran Ealing, Ealing Area Committees were replaced by Ward Forums. Each of the 23 forums had an annual budget of £40,000 to be spent on local projects suggested by local residents and approved by local, elected Councillors. In recent years of austerity the number of meetings annually was reduced from four to two and the annual budget was reduced to £20,000. As of 1 April 2020 the annual budget will be £zero and the number of Ward Forums will be zero. No replacement local public forums have yet been proposed by the Council.

£19 MILLION TO BE SPENT ON CHANGES TO CYCLING, WALKING AND LOW TRAFFIC INITIATIVES IN CENTRAL EALING AND WEST EALING

Under the brand 'Liveable Neighbourhood' (LN) over £9 million was won by the Council for central West Ealing in February 2018. Later in February 2020 the Council is optimistic it will win another £10 million for LN central Ealing, following a bid submitted by the Council in late 2019. The bid was lavishly illustrated with colourful charts and pictures. What the money would be actually spent on is as yet a mystery. The cash is coming from a Transport for London (TfL) £100 million LN fund.

LN progress in West Ealing has been painfully slow with seemingly endless poorly attended engagement events. However in Spring 2020, apparently, Dean Gardens will be closed, dug up and transformed. Included in the yet to be published final plan are a segregated cycle lane in the south, a community growing garden in the west, new children's play facilities, improved lighting and some art works. Probably the most contentious transformation is the planned removal of the 100+ year iron and brick fencing along Northfield Avenue and

Broadway. I'm sure also that many local parents and children will be dismayed at the closure of the playground for months or maybe a year. After all there is no other public playground/playspace in central West Ealing. Some details at: <https://livewestealing.org/>

NEW ELIZABETH LINE STATIONS FINALLY TAKE SHAPE – BUT EASY ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED AND THE ELDERLY IS STILL A CONCERN

Work has eventually begun on the new Crossrail/Elizabeth Line Stations at Acton Mainline, Ealing Broadway, Southall and West Ealing. However very little is still known about what Ealing Council might or might not do to make changes to enable easy station access for able bodied, physically challenged and elderly passengers.

Acton Mainline

Some public changes have already been made close to the station and at least one Council initiative abandoned because of objections. There is provision in the 2019 map/plans for a pick-up/drop-off lay-by on Horn Lane just outside the station entrance during the day –but it turns into a taxi rank in the evening. The Council-proposed no right turn into Emanuel Avenue has not been implemented, but the signalised junction has recently been replaced by a mini-roundabout. Traffic lights have been removed near the station and a new and dangerous pedestrian crossing introduced. Drivers approaching from both directions cannot see the crossing until it's too late and some drivers aren't stopping anyway – comments a local resident. Will this new road layout be adequate for the 12,000 residents and students expected to move into new flats in North Acton close by to the north west and some 2,000 new residents very close by at Friary Park?

Ealing Broadway

The very unpopular 2019 Ealing Broadway Station (EBS) public realm plans have been withdrawn. It has been mentioned that selected parties will be invited to a workshop on new EBS public realm proposals. It's rumoured that set-down/pick-up space will be allocated outside the station, which is a luxury not enjoyed by passengers for over a decade. Things had better move quickly, as if Network Rail/Crossrail/TfL are to be believed the new EBS will be completed by December 2020.

Southall

Details on potential public realm changes around the new Southall Station have proved impossible to obtain.

West Ealing

These is an undated map/plan of public realm changes proposed for the new West Ealing Station in Manor Road. Although this map shows two way vehicle movements at the east end of Manor Road the current badly signposted new, one way working is attracting fines for errant motorists. Set-down/pick-up space is shown immediately to the west of the station but it seems very short in length. To add to the potential confusion, Southern Grove has announced plans to build a 26 storey residential tower, housing 150 flats next to the new station. Should this tower gain planning permission and be built, room will have to be found for some 300 bike racks in and around a small footprint.