



EALING MATTERS' RESPONSE TO EALING COUNCIL'S DRAFT CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY STRATEGY

Ealing Matters is a borough-wide alliance of more than 60 residents' associations and community groups. Our aims are to raise awareness of how Ealing is changing and to help local people shape these changes and enhance their quality of life.

Ealing Matters is very pleased that the Council has been considering its response to Climate Change. For very many of us in the Borough this is the most urgent and intractable issue of our time. It is one for the entire population to address.

The Council's commitment to make the Borough of Ealing carbon neutral by 2030 is an ambitious one. Clear and well thought through strategies will be required.

Disappointingly, the strategy document on which the Ealing community is being consulted fails to provide the level of clear thinking necessary to put the Council's bold commitment into effect. For this reason, Ealing Matters feels unable to respond to the specifics of the proposals. Instead this response highlights some of the main areas where we think the strategy needs to be strengthened. These areas are broadly linked and need to be considered in the round.

1. The Council provides no base data. It should be self-evident that without any idea of the Borough's carbon footprint now, it will be impossible to devise meaningful strategies to cut it.
2. No evaluation of areas the Council can influence. The things the Council could be considering relate to the areas they can influence. One of these areas, not even mentioned in the strategy document, is its role as the planning authority, and its ability to grant or withhold planning permission for the development of land.

In this regard we would note the RetroFirst campaign championed by the Architect's Journal. This shows the very clear advantage of refurbishing buildings over their redevelopment. The AJ campaign explains that over 50% of a building's lifetime carbon use is expended before its first occupation. The Council's strategy needs to take such information on board. With the Local Plan now under review how can Ealing's planning decisions be more climate friendly?

3. No consideration of priorities. The consultation document identifies four areas around which it proposes targeted actions. Apart from offering no reasons for choosing these particular four areas, it gives no indication of their relative priority.
4. No indication of how outcomes are to be measured. It is a well understood principle of management that the success of new initiatives needs to be measured. As management guru Peter Drucker puts it: 'What gets measured gets done'. It is unfortunate then that the strategy is very weak on how the initiatives are to be managed, let alone the extent to which they will enable the Council to meet its 2030 carbon neutral target.

5. No provision for reporting. Apart from managing the targets, provision also needs to be made for reporting their performance so that initiatives can be modified, strengthened or even abandoned if necessary. It is especially important to establish where the responsibility lies for the success of the programme. Ealing Matters believes that climate change is not a party-political matter. It is far more important than that. The whole community needs to be involved in the response to climate change, and the reporting systems relating to this strategy need to reflect this.
6. Lacking a community engagement strategy. This is a point of principle that should be central to the development of the strategy as a whole. Ealing Matters is disappointed that the strategy on which we are now being consulted was drawn up without any prior discussion with the people of Ealing who will implement it or at least be affected by its consequences. A significant majority of the community must be brought on board to own the changes that will be required to achieve a carbon neutral state by 2030. This means that there must be full engagement with the community from the outset. Otherwise there is a very significant risk of creating confrontational opposition which works against the strategies rather than for them.

The recent experience with Low Traffic Neighbourhoods offers a very good example of what can happen if things are not addressed this way. The LTN programme is in principle a good one that could achieve positive outcomes in reduced rat-running and car use generally. Unfortunately, the current programme has been clumsily introduced. Neighbourhoods have come together in opposition to the programme, and views on either side of the argument are becoming unconstructively entrenched.

The Council needs to find a better way to develop strategies like this - methods that involve people from the start and avoid areas where conflicts can be anticipated. As an umbrella groups of local residents' associations, Ealing Matters is well placed to contribute to debates constructively.

An interesting model, to which we would refer the Council, is the Local Agenda 21, a programme set up after the 1992 Rio de Janeiro sustainable development summit. This called on local authorities around the world to consult with their communities to produce their own local agendas for sustainable development. Under Cllr John Cudmore's leadership, LA21 blossomed with groups across the borough actively engaged. While it may not have achieved all that it originally promised, it did open the way to better communication between councils and their communities, leading to farmers' markets, new green spaces, innovative approaches to awareness raising and much more. The Council could do much worse than dust down its LA21 programme and relaunch it to address the current climate change emergency.

Wil French

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