

Hello everyone. As the days get longer and spring is in the air, we hope that you are keeping well. As well as a round-up of what is going on across the borough, this issue highlights Ealing Council’s ambitious plans for Broadway Living, its wholly-owned housing development subsidiary, and the conflicts of interest involved particularly when it comes to development of council-owned land.

EALING COUNCIL BORROWS £400 MILLION TO FINANCE ITS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

Broadway Living is a Council owned residential property developer, whose first completed development was in 2014 at Eastcote Lane in Northolt. Broadway Living Registered Provider (BLRP) is a new subsidiary of Broadway Living. It will own and manage new affordable housing on behalf of the Council. In November 2020, Ealing Council announced a loan of £400 million to BLRP.

BLRP plans to build 1,192 ‘genuinely affordable’ homes (a mix of London Affordable Rent, London Living Rent and Shared Ownership as defined in the new London Plan), 178 Discounted Market Rent homes and 143 market rate homes for sale or rent on Council-owned land. With these developments the Council aims to fulfil its manifesto commitment to delivering 2,500 affordable homes and generate enough revenue to ‘develop a sustainable and long-term pipeline of genuinely affordable homes’ and ‘re-establish housing development as part of the Council’s core business’. The Council has already earmarked a number of unspecified school sites across the borough and land with potential for a further 6,000 new homes for this next stage.

Ealing Council will have to borrow to fund the loan to BLRP. Apart from the 50-year life cycle of the loan, this is a high-risk strategy for the following reasons:

- The plans rely on planning approvals for [18 sites](#), the two largest of which are Perceval House and Gurnell Leisure Centre, which have generated huge levels of opposition locally. Ealing Council’s assertion that this risk will be mitigated by ‘close working with the planning department’ is not reassuring. As the landowner, developer and planning authority, the Council is hopelessly conflicted. (The Arden Road and Dean Gardens Council car parks we highlighted in the last newsletter are also part of the plan, and planning applications for those were indeed recently approved.)
- The Council is under pressure to get started on these homes as more than a thousand of them have attracted £100 million of grant money from the Greater London Authority (GLA), which is built into the BLRP business plan. The terms of the grant require that they are started no later than March 2023.



Perceval House, Wood End Library and Gurnell Leisure Centre: all part of the BL masterplan

- According to the BLRP business plan, repayment of the loan will rely on the Council's ability to sell the Shared Ownership and market rate homes at a profit, which will be subject to prevailing economic and market forces.
- Other London councils, such as Croydon, Bexley and Merton, have got into financial trouble with housing delivery vehicles of this type. Again, it is not reassuring that one of the directors of Broadway Living is also a director of Bexley Council's housing company.

And if all this turns sour, who will pay for it? As the sole shareholder in Broadway Living, that would be Ealing Council, i.e. you and me.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Where are we with the Local Development Plan?

Since the last newsletter there have been two Local Development Plan Advisory Committee (LDPAC) meetings, but little progress. Following Councillor Peter Mason's resignation, Julian Bell, the Leader of the Council chaired the first of these, which took place on 1 October 2020 and looked at the implications of the Government White Paper 'Planning for the Future' and gave an update on Ealing's Strategic and Local Infrastructure Delivery Plans. A further meeting took place on 2 December 2020. This was chaired by the newly appointed Cabinet portfolio holder for Housing, Planning and Transformation, Councillor Mik Sabiers, who has moved from Environment and Highways. The main subject of this was also infrastructure. See Ealing Matters' [Guide to the New Local Development Plan](#) for links to the documents from these meetings.

After some reluctance on the part of the Council, a representative of Ealing Matters spoke at the end of the December meeting to ask for a revised timetable (called the Local Development Scheme) for the Local Development Plan (no answer forthcoming) and to chase once more the elusive Authority Monitoring Reports (see below). The draft minutes said only that Ealing Matters 'raised some issues which were not regarding the main agenda item'. [Judge for yourself](#) whether you think these issues were relevant or not.

Next LDPAC: Authority Monitoring Reports (AMRs)

Those of you who have visited our website recently may have read about [the ongoing struggle to get Ealing Council to fulfil its statutory duty and publish Authority Monitoring Reports](#) (AMRs) for the years 2014/15 to 2019/20. In the fast-changing world of planning, it is essential for planning authorities to assess regularly the implementation of their Local Development Plan against its objectives and adjust accordingly. Ealing has not done this since 2013/14 and we can see the results all around us. To date there have been 28 requests that we know of for this information dating back to September 2016. A letter from David Scourfield, Chief Planning Officer, in answer to our recent Stage 2 complaint stated that AMRs covering 2014-20 'should hopefully be published before the end of March 2021'. This did not happen, and we have now escalated the complaint to Stage 3 (internal review).

LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS (LTNS)

In December 2020 Ealing Council released [an interim assessment of the nine LTNs](#) installed between July and November 2020 using Experimental Traffic Orders (ETOs). The feedback received has led to a number of changes to the schemes:

- The replacement of bollards with camera enforcement
- An exemption from camera enforcement for Blue Badge holders within the LTN where they live (subject to registration)
- An exemption for Council authorised vehicles transporting people with a mobility impairment where there is camera enforcement
- A review of advanced warning signage
- Specific actions in LTN 20 (West Ealing North), LTN 48 (Adrienne Road)

Some of these changes required a modification to the ETOs, with the effect of re-setting the 6-months consultation period to a new date of August 2021. Campaigners are furious about this, not least because they were part of a multi-borough legal case (with Hackney, Hounslow, Lambeth and Camden), which came to Court on 11 February. This was dropped at the eleventh hour following the Council's decision to revoke the original Orders and to make new ones. While the Council has agreed to meet the campaigners' legal costs, not for the first time it is using local taxpayers' money to pay for its mistakes.

Campaigners are not happy:

- During the first ETO Elthorne and Northfield councillors made a public commitment to support the removal of LTN 21 should residents come out against it after six months. The interim assessment shows that residents reject the scheme consistently across three different consultation methods. More than 1,750 residents have emailed said councillors criticising their failure to remove the LTN as promised.
- Acton residents were told that no further LTNs would be introduced before definitive conclusions had been reached about the first set, but the Council is trying to go back on this agreement in their area.

Now for a round-up of news from around the borough.

CENTRAL EALING

Perceval House, 14/16 Uxbridge Road

The Council's controversial plans to replace its Perceval House offices with new offices, a new public library and 477 flats in tower blocks up to 26 storeys high have stumbled shambolically in recent weeks. To the surprise of all, after two hours of heated debate the plans were deferred by the 17 February Planning Committee, which was unhappy about the affordable housing proposed. The scheme was sent back to a specially convened Committee meeting on 10 March. While it was approved after four hours of discussion, YouTube failures meant that the public was unable to witness the vote, forcing the Council to annul the meeting. Following an unprecedented third meeting convened on 31 March, and after almost three hours of presentation and debate, the scheme was passed by eight votes to four with one abstention.

The plans, proposed by the Council in partnership with the Vistry Group, were condemned by more than 2,300 objectors, who say it will cram too much onto a very cramped site. They say the resulting development will do serious harm to Ealing's historic character and several key listed buildings, particularly by setting a precedent for a cluster of high buildings in central Ealing, and by depriving surrounding homes of their natural light.

The application now has to go to the GLA for approval by the London Mayor and then to the Government who can 'call it in' to decide at a public inquiry.

Dr Rupa Huq MP and ward councillor Seema Kumar spoke against the plans at all three meetings and both are expected to maintain their opposition. The delay complicates things seriously, particularly for the Council's Broadway Living project, which is dependent on the scheme going ahead. The row also looks likely to get caught up in the campaign for the Mayoral election in May. Parties from all sides of the political divide will be inundated with objections to the plans from its critics.



Planning Committee: lockdown spectator sport

CP House, 87-107 Uxbridge Road

The March 17 Planning Committee approved a massive redevelopment of CP House, a 1960s office block on the south side of the Uxbridge Road almost opposite the fire station. The existing 50,000m² offices will be replaced by a large 235,000m² block bringing forward the building line and raising the height effectively by three storeys. Views from Walpole Park will be considerably impacted, and the development will visually dominate the homes on Mattock Lane. The developers say they want to open a new pedestrian route between Uxbridge Rd and Mattock Lane. While this would improve permeability, it would need to be done very carefully to avoid harm to the Ealing Green CA.



Dwarfing the Hampton by Hilton hotel next door

Victoria Hall

The saga of Victoria Hall looks likely to drag on. Back in 2017 the Council agreed to hand over the Hall to hotel developer Mastcraft as part of a deal to dispose of the whole Town Hall complex for just £2.5 million. At the time they did not realise that the Hall did not belong to them, but that they were just the trustees of a charitable gift to the Ealing community to celebrate Queen Victoria's jubilee.

The Council has now spent the past two years trying to get the Charity Commission to approve their deal in the face of opposition by the [Friends of the Victoria Hall](#) (FoVH), who want to keep the Hall for the community to use as was intended. For most of this period the Council has kept the Hall shut down, denying the community use of it. They admit that they have already spent almost the entire £2.5 million they hope to receive from Mastcraft on fees and other costs incurred for the disposal, so little if anything at all, will be left for any future trust activities.

In March, and in the face of FoVH's continuing opposition, the Charity Commission wrote to say it would allow Ealing's deal to go ahead. FoVH holds that giving away a philanthropic gift this way is against charity law. They are expected to challenge the deal in the courts. Their case is presented in this entertaining [12-minute-long video](#) featuring several local personalities.

HANWELL

Warren Farm

With QPR pulling out of its plans to use the Warren Farm as a training ground last year, attention has switched to finding a better use for this precious nature reserve. The Brent River and Canal Society (BRCS), has [published an enticing vision](#) which would include bringing together the neighbouring areas of green space into a nature reserve. [A petition](#) calling on Julian Bell and Sadiq Khan to take action to safeguard Warren Farm for wildlife and for people has attracted over 7000 signatures. Why not add your name to it?



Warren Farm Nature Reserve: space to breathe

SOUTHALL

Turning a community into a building site

Having to put up with the catastrophic atmospheric pollution caused by redevelopment of the Southall Gasworks site, Southall residents are coming to terms with the reality that their town has become a massive building site in which they struggle to live their lives. A walk through the centre soon reveals the horror of it. All five senses are overwhelmed. The noise and disruption of building works never stills, and neither does the traffic congestion, especially over Southall's only railway bridge. Pneumatic drills and paving stone grinders vibrate throughout your whole body. Dust and debris hang in the air and get into your mouth and up your nose.

Things will only get worse in the years ahead. While 3,750 homes are scheduled for the Gasworks Site, more than 8,700 are planned or approved in other sites around the town - mostly in giant blocks of flats rising up to 29 storeys high. Even when all the disruption is over, few Southall families are expected to enjoy them. Most of the new flats will have just one or two bedrooms which makes them unsuitable for families with two children of different genders. A full 63% of the new homes will be provided at market prices and just 13.5% of the new homes will be 'affordable' at London Affordable Housing rents.

What's in a name?

[We have written before](#) about the Berkeley Homes development, aka Southall Waterside, on the site of the old Southall Gasworks. Imagine our surprise to find that the development has now been rebranded as Southall Green Quarter. Could it be that news of the air and soil pollution connected with the site, as reported in our last newsletter, has seeped out to East Asian buyers, or is it a ploy to try and revive flagging sales by making it look like a new-to-market development?

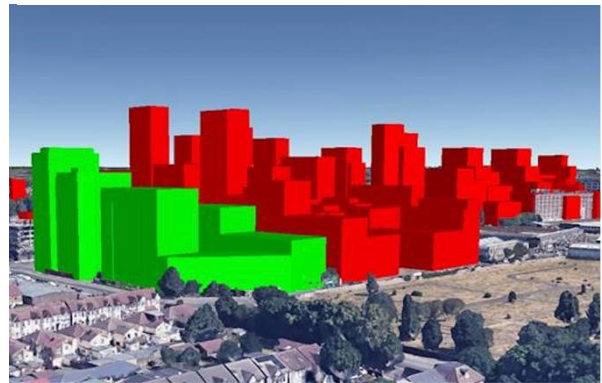
WEST EALING

51-56 Manor Road and 53-55 Drayton Green Road (corner site next to West Ealing Station)

Developers southern Grove are appealing against Ealing's October 2020 Planning Committee' refusal of a 19-storey tower outside West Ealing station. The October 2020 decision was a major victory for the [Stop the Towers](#) (STT) campaign group, and the 2,359 individual objectors including Local MP James Murray, who had opposed it as inappropriate in this location. STT has sprung into action to fight the scheme for a second time at a virtual public inquiry to be held later this year. STT is appointing an expert barrister to argue their case against the scheme, whose scale and density the Council has acknowledged would harm the character and appearance of the low-rise surrounding area.



Merrick Road corner:
development so far (in green on the simulation) and
what is yet to come (in red)



55 West: developers to appeal refusal

The case is important, not just for the immediate area, but because, if it goes ahead, it will establish a precedent for ever larger towers all along the railway west out of Ealing. STT needs support to help pay their legal costs. [Click here](#) if you would like to make a contribution.

Leisure Centre victory secures a future for Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) at Gurnell

[To widespread delight and surprise](#), Ealing's 17 March Planning Committee on 17 March, voted by 10-1 to reject the Council's plan to redevelop Gurnell Leisure Centre, which has been closed since the beginning of the Covid pandemic. The plans were opposed by around 1,700 objectors and Planning Committee member Cllr Ray Wall criticised it as looking 'like a warehouse with two chimneys plonked on top of it'.

The scheme involved what the Council described as a 'facilitating' development involving the construction of 6 huge blocks of flat up to 17 storeys high on Metropolitan Open Land, which is protected by the London Plan in the same way as Green Belt. The flats are part of the Broadway Living Registered Providers business plan, and the risks associated with Broadway Living applied here - not least because the scheme's own consultants said it would be built at a financial loss for them. Add to that the ballooning cost of the replacement leisure centre within this hybrid scheme and flooding of the site last autumn, and Ealing's Planning Committee members could see that the whole project constituted a very risky bet.

Gurnell Leisure Centre's many users are petitioning the Council to reopen the centre, which has been closed since the Covid lockdown began. You can [add your name here](#).

Majestic Wine Warehouse site, 41-42 Hastings Road

The housing association, A2Dominion, announced plans for 183 flats (at least 64 at London Affordable Rent, the rest private) housed in blocks rising from three to 25 storeys on this site diagonally opposite the Manor Road tower. Since then silence, no doubt as A2Dominion wait to see what happens with the Manor Road site. Stop the Towers is also fighting this development, not least because the proposals bear no relation to the policies for the site contained in the Council's Local Plan.

With thanks to Eric Leach for his contribution to this latest issue. Contributions that you think would be of interest to the Ealing Matters member groups are welcome.