

Welcome to the second of three closely spaced Ealing Matters updates on changes transforming our borough. Our [last newsletter](#) looked at boroughwide trends. The next, due in December, will summarise the Council's consultation on Ealing's new Local Plan with some suggestions about how to respond.

This issue takes a look at some major projects underway or in the pipeline across the borough. We hope you find it helps place the schemes you are concerned with into the wider framework of the way planning is done in Ealing. The same themes arise everywhere. Across Ealing they've led to over large boxes crammed onto inappropriate sites regardless of the communities they affect.

A PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF TALL BUILDING



The wider impacts of West Ealing's [Manor Road public inquiry](#) last year are now taking effect. Not only did the Council lose the appeal against its decision to refuse the scheme, but the inspector awarded the developers their costs against the Council. These ran into many hundreds of thousands of pounds.

This, and another adverse costs award for a development at Stanley Gardens in Acton, is terrifying Council planners who are desperate not to incur similar penalties elsewhere. So they're telling the Planning Committee that the borough's inability to show it can meet its housing targets with a 5-year supply of available sites means that they must adopt a 'tilted balance approach' in favour of developers – effectively a presumption in favour of over-development.

Ealing Matters knows of no other London Council that has this problem, so why does Ealing? The answer must lie in the Council's broken planning systems, with its obsolete Local Plan and its failure for years to report, as it is required to, on developments in the borough, especially those to do with house building.

You might expect the economic downturn to temper the appetites of profit hungry developers since rising interest rates add big costs to projects funded on borrowings. West London's electricity supply uncertainties must also deter them as their developments might not connect to the grid till 2035. Yet while new starts may have stalled major schemes keep coming. October's Planning Committee alone approved 2,178 homes. How many will actually be built soon is another matter. For many developers the game now is to maximise the value of their sites by securing planning consent for as much as they can bully Ealing into granting them. They can either 'bank' these until calmer times or else sell them on at a profit with the 'benefit of planning'. The last thing on their mind is building the 'much needed homes for local people' we keep being told about.

On that note, here is a round-up of what is going on around the borough.

ACTON

Friary Park, North Acton (221747HYBRID)

Our September 2021 newsletter described the redevelopment of the 1980s Friary Park Estate near Acton Main Line Station. Advised by officers to adopt the aforementioned 'tilted balance approach', Ealing's October Planning Committee approved the expansion of this development to provide a further 155 luxury flats. These, it seems, are designed for markets in the Far East and Middle East with not a single extra flat

allocated for the social housing Ealing urgently needs. Some so-called 'affordable' housing is included but this is unlikely to come at a price affordable for many in Ealing who are seeking such accommodation.

The scheme now goes for a final decision to the Mayor of London, who has already raised serious questions about it. Sadiq Khan is particularly concerned about the deficiency of open space in the area, with nearby open land proving unavailable either for legal reasons or because it is earmarked for the developments at Park Royal. Campaign group [Cap the Towers](#) have released a series of hard-hitting videos highlighting other inadequacies of the development and the way it has been handled.

OPDC (NORTH ACTON AND PARK ROYAL)

The North Acton (Park Royal) area is facing the most rapid change in the borough. One symbol of this is a new 56-storey tower now visible from across the Borough and a long way beyond.

The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) under the Mayor of London was made the planning authority for Old Oak and Park Royal in 2015. Around a third of OPDC's area lies in Ealing, including several major potential sites. LBE's Planning Committee has delegated authority to decide smaller planning applications in the OPDC area, but the largest sites are decided by OPDC's board. The community based [Old Oak Neighbourhood Forum](#) (OONF) are questioning OPDC's purpose. They think on balance that deciding how places develop is best left to elected local Councils to decide.

Imperial College, 1 Portal Way (216834OPDCOB)

The biggest of OPDC's current schemes is Imperial College's proposed forest of seven towers at the 'North Acton Cluster'. Three further towers will be 50 storeys or more. Buildings like these are known to be energy intensive and require high levels of embedded carbon to construct. The Neighbourhood Forum has asked Imperial why a university with a global reputation for work on climate change is pursuing a speculative development like this. They've been told it's an 'investment' by the College Endowment and has no academic or university related content.



Atlas Wharf, Atlas Road (215389OPDCOB)

OPDC decides soon on Pocket Living's application for 436 homes at 'Atlas Wharf' beside the Grand Union Canal. Three blocks are proposed, one of 29 storeys. OONF objected that this would conflict with OPDC's draft Local Plan which said building heights fronting the Grand Union Canal should be 6-8 storeys. Curiously, just before OPDC finalised the Plan they amended it without public consultation to fit Pocket Living's scheme

CENTRAL EALING

Perceval House, 14/16 Uxbridge Road (20327FULR3)

At a High Court hearing in May, Mrs Justice Lang refused to grant Save Ealing's Centre's application to judicially review the Council's scheme to redevelop their offices and put up blocks of flats including a 24-storey tower. This decision ends a long campaign led by SEC against a scheme that conflicts with many of the policies in Ealing's own Local Plan which the public had objected to in overwhelming numbers. In effect the decision signals that, when it comes to planning, the Council is free to 'mark its own homework' in a way not open to other developers. The message to Ealing's communities is that, no matter what planning policies exist or what they think, the Council is free to do what it wishes in its own narrow interests.

There's been no news about the project for some months, so speculation is growing as to its progress. We may learn more at LBE's Cabinet meeting on 7th December when it is due to be discussed.

9-42 The Broadway and 1-4 Haven Place (223774FUL)



British Land's 21 storey offices in central Ealing

British Land (BL), owners of the Ealing Broadway Centre, have made a planning application to redevelop their 9-42 The Broadway site opposite Ealing Broadway Station and overlooking Haven Green. Previous redevelopment schemes have fallen away over the years, notably Glenkerrin's development refused by a planning inspector in 2009. The Council has already committed to using a Compulsory Purchase Order to assemble the part of the site outside BL's ownership.

Unlike previous developers, British Land seem genuinely committed to Ealing. They say high quality office space is key to the Town Centre's future, and so, in contrast to previous residential schemes, BL's plans are 'office-led.' This gives hope to the town centre which has suffered years of unplanned drift and steep decline. Elements of BL's proposals are attractive. There would be a landscaped central square, with a new pedestrian route running from opposite the station to the entrance to Ealing Broadway Centre. Ground level units facing The Broadway would be mainly shops, while those inside would probably cater for leisure uses like restaurants and bars. A new home for the Ealing Club would be provided, and some, but not all, of the more interesting historic frontages on The Broadway would be retained.

But to accommodate the office space BL say they need, their development requires a bulky 21-storey tower that will dominate views from all directions, including Haven Green. This would fly in the face of the Glenkerrin inspector's findings and Historic England advice, and change the character of Ealing forever.

Victoria Hall

The long-awaited legal hearing into Ealing's plan to dispose of the Victoria Hall drags on. For those new to it, the saga began in 2016 when Ealing Council signed an agreement to grant a 250-year lease on the Town Hall buildings to a hotel developer. Included in the deal was the Victoria Hall, built by public subscription to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee and owned since 1893 by a charitable trust, supposedly for the benefit of the local community. For the past four years the [Friends of Victoria Hall](#) have objected to the disposal on the grounds that the buildings are not the Council's to sell. They say the Victoria Hall has been well used for over 125 years, and that there's no reason to sell it off to a commercial developer. A three-person tribunal involving a judge and two lay members will hear the case, probably at a three-day hearing. After two last minute postponements the hearing will not now happen before mid February. It will probably be heard 'in person' rather than through video link.

Ealing Studios (223616FUL)

With so many poor developments proposed for Ealing recently, it is good to report one we think will contribute very positively to the borough. Ealing Studios, the world's oldest film studios, plan to modernise their facilities by replacing the obsolete central blocks with a single new building that will house a sound stage, workshops and production space. The studios use an attractive Art Deco design reflecting the studio's heyday as a by-word for British cinema. While a little taller than the buildings they replace, the architects' designs respect the scale of the Ealing Green Conservation Area in which they sit. The Grade II listed stage buildings within the site will not be disturbed.

Haven Green

The Construction Compound on Haven Green has at last gone. Crossrail is now responsible for restoring the Green to its former glory, with LBE certifying it's done properly. While much of what needs doing is Crossrail's responsibility, other problems also need fixing. They include removing unlawful installations on

the Common Land including the bike racks lining the diagonal path across the Green and the electricity substation which a planning inspector said in 2015 must go. The bus layby opposite Lewis Pharmacy is also to be returned as common land from which it was unlawfully excised. More from [Friends of Haven Green](#).

Twyford Abbey, Twyford Abbey Road (222341FUL)

Disregarding a protest on the Town Hall steps, the October 2022 Planning Committee approved a major residential development in the grounds of the Grade II* listed Twyford Abbey. The historic 19th century gothic mansion stands on 5.4ha of Metropolitan Open Land just off the North Circular Road. The site has lain vacant for over 30 years, and a 2017 planning consent to convert the property to a school has not been implemented.

The latest plans propose 326 flats in seven separate blocks on the MOL land. The GLA has told Council planners that this constitutes inappropriate development, the massing and scale of which would negatively impact on the openness of the MOL. The scheme's proponents argue that there would be a public benefit in opening up the closed gardens on the undeveloped areas of the site to public access, but local objectors remain concerned about the wider impacts. The argument looks now to be moving back to the GLA.

GREENFORD

Park View Place, Greenford Road (213378FUL)

The loss of safeguarded Metropolitan Open Land features in revised proposals to build eight blocks of flats on MOL at Sudbury Hill, two of which will be 11-storeys high. These will be built on Grove Farm, a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and a Grade I Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). In the middle of the Nature Reserve will be a new playground. Set apart from the suburbs that have grown around it, local objectors say Grove Farm remains a haven for biodiversity and that the development will lead to the loss of woodland that forms a wildlife corridor.



HANWELL

Warren Farm

Left fallow for over ten years, Warren Farm is a re-wilded gem and a sanctuary for a stunning variety of flora and fauna. But although a consultation over the summer found strong public support for the site's biodiversity and open green space, the future of this rich habitat is uncertain. Discussions at a Council scrutiny meeting in August suggested LBE may be leaning towards developing a 13ha sports facility on the Farm, taking more than half of the re-wilded area.

[Warren Farm Nature Reserve](#) say a sports facility of this type would be at odds with Ealing Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy and its biodiversity commitments. They think it would cause an irreversible loss of biodiversity, including rare plant species that cannot be simply offset by 're-wilding' other areas. It would also render the remainder of the site untenable for the only breeding skylarks in Ealing.

You can join WFNR's growing list of supporters including CPRE London, the Barn Owl Trust, and London National Park City by signing [their campaign petition](#) now with over 13,000 signatures.

SOUTHALL

The Southall Reset

LBE is responding to criticisms by Southall's communities of the impacts on them of recent developments with an exercise it calls the 'Southall Reset'. Heralded 'a community-led approach to regeneration' Southall

people were surprised only to learn they were being Reset after a [Town Briefing](#) or ‘high-level insight into the socio-economic character and performance of Southall’ was unveiled to July’s Cabinet.

They were more surprised when they learned that Southall has had a ‘planning policy framework’ since 2014. This Opportunity Area Planning Framework (OAPF) was endorsed by Boris Johnson and ex Council leader Julian Bell, and promised to ‘ensure a comprehensive approach to revitalising Southall’. The OAPF aimed to provide 6,000 homes by 2034, ‘primarily for local people’. The new homes would be mainly mansion block-type flats of 6-8 storeys with a mix of unit sizes, types, tenures and affordability.

The full OAPF has strangely disappeared [off LBE’s website](#), but things have turned out very differently from what it promised. The large majority of the 12,000 new homes since approved are small 1 or 2 bed flats, mainly in giant towers and mostly for private sale. With the existing OAPF having been so hastily junked, Southall people might be forgiven for asking what faith they should have in the plans now being drawn up on their behalf as the ‘Southall Reset’ into which they have so far had little input.

Even while the first Reset papers were being written, a long standing commitment [to widen Southall Railway Bridge for a bus lane](#) was being shelved. Heavy traffic on the bridge clogs up the area. With the nearby Gasworks site’s 3,500 new homes set to add to the problem, developers St George agreed a Section 106 payment for the new bus lane. This will not now be provided and the £9.3m allocated will be spent instead on encouraging active travel. LBE has begun by giving 1000 free bikes to people in Southall.

Southall Green Compulsory Purchase Order

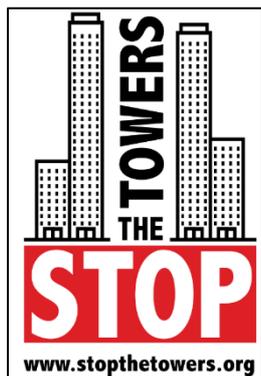
A two-week public inquiry in October examined the public interest case for the Council to compulsorily purchase properties at The Green, including the Council-owned Dominion Car Park. This would assemble the site to build out a recently approved development of seven tower blocks up to 19 storeys high to provide 564 flats.

There was strong community opposition to the proposals. Objectors argued that the CPO was not in the public interest, complaining there had been no meaningful consultation with communities in this culturally and ethnically very mixed part of the borough. They said that the design of the development bears no relationship to the 2014 OAPF and that it will undermine community cohesion in Southall whose diverse communities interact with one another through regular street-level contacts. The objectors also opposed the loss of Southall’s only car park, as it has a vital role in the local economy and for visitors to Southall’s regular cultural events. [Save the Green, Southall](#) have published a day by day account of the inquiry.



WEST EALING

51-56 Manor Road and 53-55 Drayton Green Road (corner site next to West Ealing station) (202231FUL)



As described earlier, in 2021 a planning inspector upheld an appeal against the Council and granted permission to developer Southern Grove to build their 22-storey tower next door to West Ealing Station. Worse for the Council and for Ealing Council tax payers, is that the inspector awarded costs against the Council.

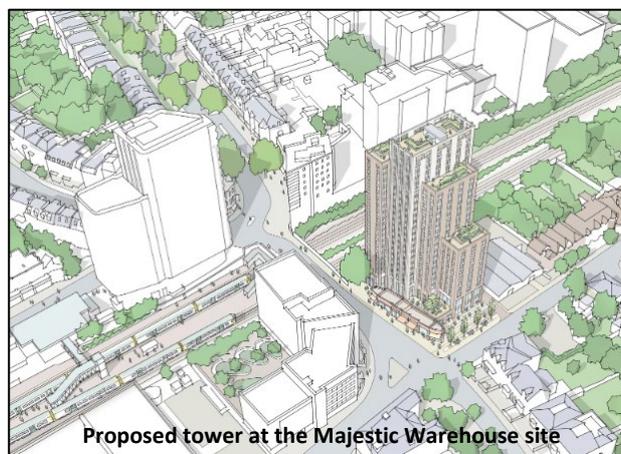
This hugely disappointing decision has awful ramifications for the Borough as a whole and especially for West Ealing. It establishes the principle that 20+ storey towers are appropriate in this part of West Ealing, even though there is no provision for them in the Local Plan. As we report below, developers at nearby sites at Hastings Road and Waitrose have already begun to consult on similar sized projects of their own.

Back at Manor Road, site clearance halted in March when a retaining wall threatened to collapse onto the GW Railway. Work has resumed, but once it is complete, Ealing Matters expects the site to be mothballed over the present economic downturn. Very likely Southern Grove will now trouser their profits from their planning consent and sell on the site to a new team of developers to develop when it suits them. For the latest news visit [Stop the Towers](#).

Majestic Wine Warehouse, Hastings Road

Plans for a 22-storey tower on the Majestic Warehouse site at Hastings Road were published in September.

The developers, Tide Construction, specialise in building large rectangular boxes by stacking up modular units made off site. Their scheme would create 408 student flats in a part of the borough where a shortage of student accommodation has not previously been a concern. In their publicity documentation, Tide Construction use the Manor Road consent to claim that West Ealing is now an 'emerging tall building cluster'.



Waitrose, Alexandria Road

In July Waitrose unveiled plans to redevelop its West Ealing store and build a major residential development on its car park. Waitrose were vague about how many new flats they want to put onto their site, and how big the resulting buildings would be. They suggested only that they would be taking their cue from nearby schemes – including for instance the newly consented tower across the railway at Manor Road.

Waitrose's plans highlight a trend towards ever shorter life cycles for buildings in Ealing. The existing store is just 18 years old and was built to replace one on the site that existed for just 14 years. Climate change experts warn that this 'slash and burn' pattern has serious sustainability implications and that it is generally better to refurbish the buildings that already exist. Materials like steel and cement that buildings are made of consume considerable energy. Demolition of those buildings means that that energy is wasted, while whatever they are replaced with requires yet more energy to build.

Gurnell swimming pool and leisure centre

Ealing's major Leisure Centre at Gurnell has not reopened after its 2020 COVID imposed closure and the refusal in 2021 of a high-rise housing led redevelopment scheme. LBE has now set up a Sounding Board for community and leisure stakeholders to work with them in discussing how Gurnell's facilities can be made available again. Since starting in May, the Board has held a number of meetings and a Vision Workshop.

Finances and options have been discussed. They suggest it is unviable to refurbish or retrofit the existing centre, leaving demolition and rebuilding as the only option. Indicative costs were put at an eye watering £55-£60m but then reduced to £43-£45m once the specification was refined. With only £12m ring-fenced for the project, there would be a significant funding shortfall. The Council think this could be resolved by 'an enabling development' of up to 500 homes on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), which is protected from development in the same way as the Green Belt.

Two development options are on the table. The first is similar to the one refused in 2021 and hardly seems serious. The second would occupy more MOL land by relocating the leisure centre to the meadow next to Stockdove Way and building a lower rise scheme right across the existing leisure centre and car park site.

The project team is now assessing both options, and plan to take a proposal to Cabinet, probably in December. Concerned about some of the implications [Save Gurnell](#) and other community groups involved say they want to work with the council constructively but will challenge plans where appropriate to ensure community views are fully represented.