

SAVE EALING'S CENTRE

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Ripping the Heart out of Ealing

The development that would destroy an entire town centre conservation area.

For a while now, the game in London has involved building boltholes of box-like towers for hot overseas money on the sites of torn down buildings that people grew up with and loved. In Ealing, things are set to go a step further with a development that could cause the extinction of an entire historic Conservation Area. As the Government has reassured us of its determination to look after the national heritage through its planning policies, Ealing's developers and planners have other ideas.

20 years ago, conservation policies carried some weight. Back in 1994, Ealing Council designated the Ealing Town Centre Conservation Area for a very large chunk of the centre of Ealing. After careful consultation with locals and national heritage advisers, they then drew up a detailed character appraisal and management plan to look after it. These documents, and their later revisions spoke of "the dense commercial core" of the centre, "the very distinctive corner features" of 35 Broadway (Carphone Warehouse), the "fine remains of the earlier (Victorian and Edwardian) grain" of the Broadway, their "very prominent front gables", and the key views of the "prominent spire of Christ the Saviour Church and its striking architectural presence".

Fast forward to summer 2015 when plans were unveiled for complete demolition of commercial buildings in a major part of the Conservation Area (CA) and inappropriate redevelopment for new flats with scant regard to the character of the CA. Historic England the Government's advisors on the nation's heritage were highly critical of this destruction of Ealing's Victorian and Edwardian heritage.

The developers responded by tweaking the application by retaining one of the fine Edwardian building and the facades of two others. These were to stay incongruously plonked in front of high rise glass and steel, city centre type high-rise "modern" replacement blocks.

Locals and Historic England (HE) were not convinced. HE wrote to Ealing Council to tell them that if the plans were not amended significantly it should refuse the application entirely. It went on to warn that should consent be granted and the development take place, the Ealing Town Centre Conservation Area 'would no longer merit its status' and it would recommend its de-designation.

Is this acceptable? How can it be possible for a developer and council to be in such close alliance that the heritage of a whole conservation area can be swept away and a wholly alien character imposed?

Corinne Templer, who has worked for many years to restore Ealing to its days of glory says grimly: 'This isn't localism. This is vandalism'.

Notes for Editors

- [Historic England has responded](#) to revised plans to redevelop 9-42 the Broadway in damning terms.
- The plans and revisions are can be viewed on Ealing's [planning website](#). The key documents to look at for the original application are:

- The non technical ES summary (as far as I can see, Vol 1 and 2 are the same)
- The Design and Access statement
- Townscape assessment
- Heritage statement
- Planning statement

The revisions are on page 2 of the website and describe the changes to the original application.

- The site at the very heart of Ealing Town Centre last hit the headlines in 2009 when the Government overthrew Ealing Council's planning approval of a development by Irish developers Glenkerrin because the bulk, massing and design of that scheme would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Town Centre and Haven Green CAs.
- Glenkerrin subsequently went bust and new developers, Benson Elliot acquired the site. After refurbishing half of it BE submitted plans by architects Allies and Morrison to redevelop the other half. While less ambitious overall than the 2009 plans, Benson Elliot's scheme is still more comprehensive in that it would clear the entire site while Glenkerrin would have retained the prominent Carphone Warehouse site.
- These plans were criticised by both local and national objectors because their extensive demolition included 8 buildings the Council's Conservation Area appraisal says make a positive contribution to the character of the area. In their place an 18 storey residential tower was proposed and other buildings rising up to 9 storeys in a part of town centre where no buildings rise above 4 storeys.
- Last December BE responded by saying it would retain one building and the facades of two others. Historic England was not impressed: in its 5th February letter to the Council it said the scheme would still cause substantial harm to the conservation area and the Council should either seek significant amendments or else refuse planning permission outright.
- More strongly still, Historic England told the Council that if it approved the scheme the loss of so many buildings that contribute to the special historic and architectural character of the town centre would justify de-designation of the conservation area.
- Local amenity groups Ealing Civic Society, Save Ealing's Centre, and local conservation panels are now urging the Council to take on board Historic England's advice and secure some improvements from BE or else refuse the application. They say HE's advice is very firmly rooted in Government planning policy which demands great weight be given to conservation of a heritage asset like Ealing Town Centre.
- Heritage assets are irreplaceable and any harm or loss requires clear and convincing justification. Nothing the developers have said to promote their scheme justifies the loss of the remaining heart of one of London's earliest suburban town centres.

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