

SEC Newsletter Winter 2021



Save Ealing's Centre

Welcome to SEC's winter newsletter. Covid has interrupted life for many of us over the past 12 months, but the pace of change in Ealing doesn't seem to have eased off. Here is an update of major events. If you've can't study it all, please at least look at the Perceval House proposals. There's still time to object.

Perceval House Plans

Council plans to over-develop its Perceval House offices have attracted over 800 objections, including from SEC. People are particularly critical of the height and bulk of the 26 storey tower and its impact on the town centre and nearby Conservation Areas.

The Government's advisers on the nation's heritage, Historic England, say the scheme will harm Conservation Areas and nearby listed buildings and wants the scheme reduced in height. HE is most critical of the impact on the view from the Grade II* listed bridge in Walpole Park. They say: *This view along the serpentine lake is one of the key designed views within the park and is terminated by Soane's early 19th-century bridge and the later layer of mid-19th-century villas that surround the park. ... This view tells the story of the former rural village setting of the Grade I*

listed Pitzhanger Manor and the adjacent 19th-century development of low-scale buildings and trees that sought to emulate and cherish this rural character. The proposed tall building imposes a central London scale of development and highly urban form that would sit directly on the axis of the designed view and is at odds with the predominantly semi-rural character of this part of the conservation area.



The Council and its development partner Vistry responded, not by reducing the height of the tower, but by changing the materials it would be clad with! They claim a colour change will 'reduce the visual contrast of the elevation'.

As many people as possible should object to these changes as being derisory, even if you have already objected. To do so follow the link [here](#) and click on Comments. It is not too late to register other objections if you have not already done so. Go to the [Stop the Towers Ealing](#) website for help on what to say.

We don't know when the Council will decide this application. As the planning authority it is supposed to assess proposals against its planning policies and should refuse this one as it conflicts with so many of them. But it's also the site owner and scheme developer with huge financial, political and legal interests in the project. So at some point soon we expect the Council's self-interest to win out against the objections of so many people in the community and the planning committee will rubber-stamp the plans. If this happens SEC will lobby hard for the case to be 'called in'.

Corinne Templer (1929-2020)



SEC is deeply saddened by the death of our Treasurer, Corinne Templer. With the Glenkerrin and Dickens Yard developments looming in 2007, Corinne was one of the driving forces behind SEC's formation and has been our guiding light ever since.

By that time Corinne already had a long history of fighting for Ealing. In the 1970s with a friend she led the successful campaign against the Council's plans to sort out Ealing's traffic by ramming a dual carriageway bypass along Mattock Lane, and to replace most of the town centre with one of the giant concrete shopping malls popular at the time.

Corinne remained engaged in matters Ealing to the end, encouraging and supporting the rise of new generations of campaigners fighting, like her, to preserve what is good in the borough. She will be sorely missed, not only as an inspirational campaigner, but also as a friend.

New directions for Ealing Town Centre?

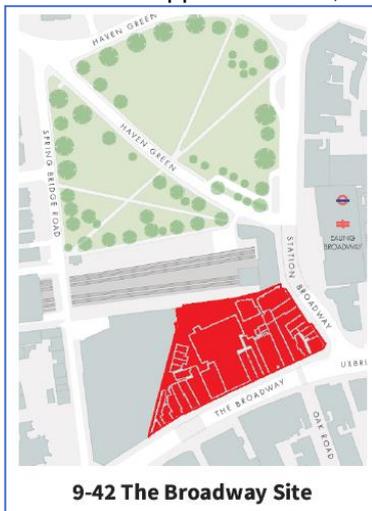
Since its inception in 2007, SEC has urged the Council to develop a more strategic approach to managing changes in the town centre so that it better serves everyone who uses it, be they resident, landowner, business operator or visitor. The decline in Ealing's prosperity over recent years made it essential for all Ealing's different stakeholders to work together on this.

2020 promised us some encouraging progress. The Council announced it was starting work to update the Local Plan, with one of the key topics a review of the role and fortunes of its town centres. With high streets across the country under pressure due to the Covid lockdown a number of regeneration webinars declared an intention to widen Ealing's offer beyond its out-dated focus on retailing. The Local Development Plan Advisory Committee which prepares the new local plan then sprang into action, commissioning some interesting research on key topics including Ealing's economy, its local character, heritage and conservation policies, and on what Ealing's future identity might be. SEC and other local groups were invited to participate in the discussions that ensued. The papers and discussions are all on the [Ealing Matters website](#). They are well worth checking.

Recent political upheavals within the Council has slowed this work. But SEC hopes the work can continue once things settle down.

News from British Land, Ealing's most powerful commercial operator.

Also key to Ealing's future is British Land. As owners of the Ealing Broadway Centre and the 9-42, The Broadway site opposite Ealing Broadway Station, BL is Ealing's major commercial landowner and so its most influential player. BL have been briefing SEC on its ideas for our town centre. They say London's changing commercial market and the arrival of Crossrail make central Ealing highly attractive for commercial office development. More office jobs in Ealing will boost shopper numbers, attracting more shops with higher quality occupiers and that's why they invested in it.



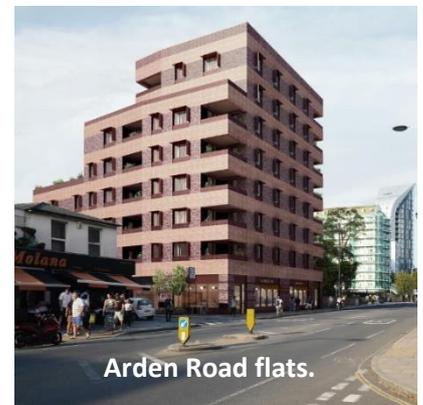
Reflecting this confidence, BL are drawing up plans to redevelop their 9-42, The Broadway site, aiming to submit them as a planning application later this year. Other BL investments in the pipeline include the refurbishment of International House which fronts the High Street, and the Crystal House offices fronting the Uxbridge Road.

Before these, however, BL hope a new tenant will take the space vacated by the discredited LA Confidential and Karma night club units on the High Street. Subject to planning permission and a lease agreed with BL, the occupier will be the Really Local Group who specialise in introducing or restoring cultural uses to shopping centres that lack them. The RLG has several successful projects in centres in and around London, each of which boast a 3 or 4 screen cinema, live music and comedy, community space, coffee shop/bar and 'Pop up' stalls for local food. These are some uses Ealing has lacked for far too long. A planning application has been submitted so we will learn more details shortly.

Other major proposed town centre developments

Two Council schemes to build flats on car parks in West Ealing at **Arden Road** (8 storeys) and **Dean Gardens** (3 blocks from 4 to 8 storeys) were approved by the December 2020 Planning Committee meeting in the face of much local opposition. Objectors were concerned about the excessive height and bulk of the flats, their boxlike designs and the loss of essential shopper car parking. As has become the practice in recent years Councillors waved aside all these concerns and rubber stamped the approval.

In a rather surprising departure from Ealing's remorseless drive to over-develop the town centre, the October 2020 Planning committee refused consent for the 20 storey **Manor Road** tower opposite West Ealing Station, after ferocious lobbying by [Stop the Towers](#). The reasons given for refusal were that inadequate provision was made for affordable housing and that the scale and density of the development was excessive. Does this mark a change of heart by the Committee which has previously gone along with officer recommendations?



An early indication could be what happens at next door's **Hastings Road** 25 storey tower. Last year's planning application also drew huge objections but it has gone very quiet.

[Plans are well advanced](#) to redevelop **CP House, in the office corridor at 107 Uxbridge Road**. A large new building of 235,000m² will replace the existing 50,000m² 1960s office block. The new offices would bring the building line forward over the existing parking area and raise the building height by 3 storeys, impacting views from Walpole Park. The developers also hope to open a new pedestrian route between Uxbridge Rd and Mattock Lane. While this will improve permeability, it will need to be done very carefully to avoid harm to the Ealing Green CA.

The Victoria Hall Saga

The never-ending saga over the Council's disposal of the Town Hall drags on. The sale to hotel developers Mastcraft includes the venerable Victoria Hall which, while attached to the rest of the Town Hall doesn't belong to them at all. The Hall belongs to a charitable trust and the Council through its General Purposes Committee is just the trustee, acting on behalf of the beneficiaries, the people of Ealing. The Charity Commission has refused to approve the sale agreement without major changes to the terms. The Council won't accept most of the Commission's rulings and is pressing on, hoping the Commission will give way. See the [Friends of the Victoria Hall](#) website for latest news.

The Hall has been opened intermittently this year, including for use as a Covid vaccination centre. But with no business plan or management strategy, it is Council officers who call the shots, not the trustees. As the Council delays, the people of Ealing are denied the use of a fantastic asset. It could be brought back into real community use easily as this terrific [CEPAC video](#), featuring local personalities, demonstrates.