

Save Ealing's Centre Newsletter Summer 2018

Welcome to the Summer 2018 SEC newsletter highlighting the changes that are taking place in central Ealing. As regular readers will know, Save Ealing's Centre is an alliance of 27 Residents Associations and Local interest groups with an interest in the changes taking place in the centre of the Borough.



SEC seeks to provide a platform for local groups to engage with Ealing Council over issues that concern them, and to offer a channel through which the Council can feed news about developments back into the community.

Charity Commission considering the status of the Town Hall

Lawyers Bates Wells & Braithwaite (BWB), the UK's leading charity lawyers have written to the Charity Commission on behalf of Ealing Voice challenging the Council's plans to dispose of the Victoria Hall. Details [at Ealing Voice.com](http://EalingVoice.com).

The Council wants to dispose of the Hall as part of a bigger deal with hotel developer Mastcraft which wants to take over the whole Town Hall. BWB's letter challenges the disposal of the Hall this way. It says the Hall belongs to a Charitable Trust which is legally required to manage it for the whole Ealing Community and not just in the interests of the Council. The BWB letter goes on to allege that the Council has mismanaged the trust for decades, depriving it of the income from hall lettings which could be sufficient for the Hall to pay its way. The Charity Commission says it is examining BWB's letter and will be responding to it.

Meanwhile, Mastcraft has been busy [exhibiting its plans](#) which centre around a new 5 star boutique hotel with most of the rooms to be provided in a boxlike seven storey extension to be built on the rear of the Town Hall building. The plans have drawn objections from some heritage groups who say the design and materials would provide an inappropriate backdrop to the much loved Town Hall building.

Whether Mastcraft can proceed with its plans will depend very largely on how the Charity Commission responds to BWB's letter.

Abolition of the Borough Conservation Officer threatens Ealing's Heritage

SEC is deeply perturbed by news that Ealing Council is to abolish the position of Conservation Officer in order to reduce its wage bill. At a time when widespread redevelopment has affected all parts of the borough, the conservation officer has been a lone voice in protecting and promoting Ealing's heritage. The present officer has worked in the borough for many years and on numerous occasions she has helped to improve development proposals in the Borough and throw out plans that were out of sympathy with Ealing's architectural heritage.

Despite the Borough's 29 Conservation Areas and Ealing's fantastic architectural heritage, Ealing will become one of very few London boroughs without a person with expertise in or the role of caring for its heritage. SEC calls on the Council to see its heritage as fantastic asset that make the borough a popular place for investors and visitors alike. Rather than sweep away well-designed buildings or neighbourhoods, new development should build on the best of what Ealing has already. So much can be achieved when development is, in the regenerators jargon, '**heritage-led**'.

The Council justifies its decision on the grounds that its remaining planning staff have all attended design courses in their professional training. Unfortunately, however, these officers are already struggling to deal with a massive workload arising from the borough's ambitious housing targets. They have very little room to consider the complexities that heritage demands. Moreover, the very high turnover of planning staff means that newcomers lack any in-depth knowledge of Ealing's special historic qualities. Buying in external expertise to fill the gap is not a substitute for local expertise built up from experience.

The Council's decision has ignored advice from Historic England who say that a borough with such a wealth of heritage assets, including 460 listed buildings, needs to manage its assets properly. Historic

England say that Conservation Officers are qualified professionals with important expertise. They say that the idea that applications relating to heritage issues should now be delegated to generic planning officers devalues the importance that heritage has in the borough. Historic England say that it is not their role or that of the GLA (who do not have any specific heritage expertise in-house) to 'cover' for local authorities who, despite national heritage advice and guidance, do not have the relevant specialist heritage expertise. They cannot fill the gap that the borough's Conservation Officer plays as they are not consulted about most planning applications affecting Grade II listed buildings or on most developments in conservation areas.

Save Britain's Heritage, an NGO that has been fighting for threatened historic buildings and sustainable re-uses since 1975 is also urging the Council to reconsider its decision. They say that it sends out the message that Ealing Council does not value its historic buildings.

Save Ealing's Centre agrees. We think that Ealing people should write to their Councillors and MPs and tell them that we shall all be poorer if we neglect our history. Please ask them to call on the Council to reconsider its decision.

More news from [Ealing Civic Society](#)

The 1926 Woolworth's façade in West Ealing

West Ealing groups are fighting to retain the iconic art deco 1926 Woolworths façade which residents at a West Ealing Centre Neighbourhood Forum meeting want to preserve as a heritage asset. WECNF has asked for the façade to be added to the local heritage list but has had no response to its application. Separately, in March, A2Dominion submitted a planning application to demolish the façade and develop the site. Over 300 objections against this application have been submitted online. A date for A2's application to be considered by the Planning Committee has yet to be set. There's still time to [sign the petition](#) to save the Facade

Ealing Police Station is now closed

Ealing Police Station is now closed to the public. While the police themselves still use the building, the nearest station for the public to visit is in Acton at the Steyne Road Roundabout opposite Morrisons. Otherwise incidents should be reported on the 101 service which the police say is being greatly improved. You can also sign up to their new Neighbourhood Watch site, **OWL** (on-line watch website) at www.owl.co.uk, for news in the area.

Crossrail and Ealing Broadway Station – delays, delays and more delays

Shiny new Crossrail stations may be coming into operation across central and East London, but delays in the upgrade to Ealing Broadway station drag on and on. Crossrail and Ealing Council point their fingers at Network Rail who continue to miss deadlines to agree contracts with new contractors. It seems impossible now that the station works can be completed before December 2019 when the full Crossrail service is due to come into operation.

The truth is that nobody in power seems to know what is going on or to care about the delays. In any other sphere of life, there would have been some sackings by now. Before we all join in this damnation of Network Rail, spare a thought to the fanfare with which Crossrail and Ealing Council announced that work on the new lifts at the station would shortly commence.

New Local Development Plan gets into gear

Work is getting underway on a new Local Development Plan to replace the plan approved in 2012. On 19th July a long meeting of the [Local Development Plan Advisory Committee](#) discussed its programme for the new plan whose main purpose is to implement the Labour Party manifesto pledge to provide '2,500 new genuinely affordable homes at council, social and London living rents over the next four years'. The Committee gave much consideration to how the Council can improve its engagement with the public. A particular theme is to draw in more younger people than they have done in the past.

The new plan will closely follow the New London Plan with its target of 2,800 new homes a year in Ealing, (around 3 times more than the 890 per year in the present plan) many of them in town centres and on small sites. A request from SEC for the plan to include a strategy to manage the huge changes sweeping

through Ealing Town Centre was dismissed on the grounds that the Council has put 5 years of effort into the development of the Ealing Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan which was approved last year.