



Save Ealing's Centre

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1 June 2016

Open letter to the Councillors
London Borough of Ealing

By email to councillorsemal@ealing.gov.uk

Dear Councillors

**Re: 9-42 The Broadway, Ealing, London W5
Planning application P/2015/3479**

This planning application has been called in by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and there will now be a public inquiry. The second time that this has happened for this site!

As only around 10 applications are called in each year across the whole country it indicates something has gone very wrong with the decision making process here in Ealing.

What is going wrong?

Save Ealing's Centre has commented on a number of occasions that the regeneration and planning functions are too closely linked within London Borough of Ealing council (LBE). Our formal complaints about this and the operation of planning in general are ongoing, but rather like objections to certain planning applications they are repeatedly dismissed by officers.

We think that planners are far too keen to push through projects supported (or initiated) by the regeneration executive, notwithstanding the fact that planning is required to be independent, quasi-judicial and plan-led. Plan-led means based on previously agreed policies (such as the NPPF and the London Plan) derived from full professional discussion, public consultation and scrutiny. Planners are paying insufficient attention to these policies and the legislation governing planning applications – and dismissing objections about non-compliance with policy from both residents and specialist advisors such as Historic England.

What should you, as councillors, be doing about it?

As our democratically elected representatives you are ultimately responsible for this, and we ask that you act now to correct the situation.

1. As a first step planning functions must be separated entirely from the regeneration executive. LBE is not alone in having this organisational structure, but it is not working effectively in practice.

2. Secondly, you should instruct the planners that decisions and recommendations (including those during pre-planning) must be based on fair and balanced consideration of all relevant planning policy, legislation and guidance. Undue weight must not be given to those policies that conveniently support proposals and applications favoured by the regeneration executive. Scrutiny should monitor this closely until the planners demonstrate they are operating correctly.
3. We also ask that you instruct LBE not to employ a top planning barrister to participate in the public inquiry. At the Glenkerrin inquiry over £70,000 of public money was wasted on a QC to support a developer who cared only for their own profit. The planning inspector may have questions about processes followed by LBE officers and we believe these should be answered personally by those officers. Lessons which were clearly not learned by LBE after the previous fiasco need to be learned now and this will not be helped by hiding behind a highly paid QC.

This is not a party political matter

It is about following due process in planning, and listening to the considered opinions of others outside the council – particularly when those opinions come from central government national specialist advisors such as Historic England.

Please put aside political differences and act now – Ealing needs you!

Kind regards

Save Ealing's Centre