

EALING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Working to preserve and improve our Borough



Founded in 1967

President: Prof. Sir Peter Hall Vice president: Corinne Templer

www.ealingcivicsociety.org

Member of

**CIVIC
VOICE**

Summer 2013

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

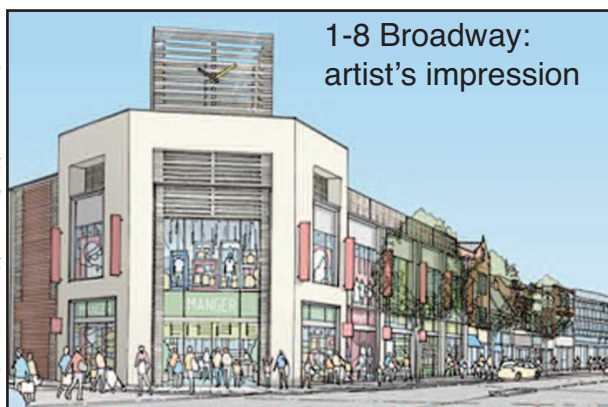
Welcome to the summer 2013 newsletter. We continue to be preoccupied with the Arcadia and cinema sites (see below) but increasingly the work of the neighbourhood forums is taking our attention. Although both Ealing and West Ealing town centre forums have been formally recognised by the Council, progress has been slow partly because of the difficulty in financing various initiatives that have been mooted. Although the Council was awarded frontrunner status with £20,000 funding for each of the two forums last year, it has so far been reluctant to part with the money. We hope that progress will now improve with the appointment of Tony Burton, former director of Civic Voice (who addressed our AGM last year), to assist with the process (see page 3). We look forward to seeing you at the annual public lecture in June which has been renamed the "John Delafons Lecture" in honour of the late vice chairman of the society who was a very distinguished public servant involved in the drawing up of the legislation in the 1960s on conservation areas amongst many other related issues. We hope his widow, Sheila Delafons, who is also a member of the Society, will be able to attend the event.

New Plans for Arcadia

Benson Elliot Capital Management have released plans to convert the Arcadia Shopping Centre from 25 small shopping units to three large retail units. They claim that the site will be "comprehensively transformed inside and out". Three large stores will face The Broadway and the exterior

will be radically redesigned. Morrisons will open a 'new concept' store in the basement, TK Maxx will expand into the entire upper floor and McDonalds will take a new ground floor corner unit (formerly occupied by HMV). The refurbished building will be renamed 1-8 The Broadway. A planning application was submitted to Ealing Council in March 2013. Benson Elliot have also acquired 12-14 The Broadway and are expected to begin consulting on proposals on the rest of the site later this year.

We have concerns about the proposals for the Arcadia Shopping Centre redevelopment: although we have no objection to the removal of the internal arcade (which has never worked successfully in practice), we think that the design proposals for the external recladding, in particular the corner feature with clock, are unsympathetic to the character of the town centre. We hope that we can persuade the applicants to improve their design and incorporate more traditional materials into it.



1-8 Broadway:
artist's impression

Empire Cinema

This saga is getting ever more complicated. We thought that things were moving forward with the start of construction in late 2012 and piling was even started in early 2013. But our hopes were dashed a couple of months ago when it emerged that the Irish bank (itself in receivership) called in its loan to Empire Cinemas because Ealing Council had placed a CPO on the Ealing site. The bank was concerned that a CPO would reduce the value of the land and decided to dispose of it as soon as possible and at the same time asked the Council to back off from the CPO in order

Ealing Civic Society Events 2013

John Delafons Lecture Tuesday 25th June 7.30pm, Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall, Speaker: **Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles**, local resident, former diplomat and Chairman of the Pitzhanger Manor Trust

ECS Annual Awards Ceremony 19th November 7.30pm, The Queen's Hall, Ealing Town Hall. Speaker: **Toby Young**, journalist, author and blogger.

Coming events

Civic Day 22nd June.

Libraries Local History Talk: 12th September Robert Gurd: "Ealing's Architectural Gems".

Open House London 21/22nd September

not to prejudice the value of the site (and their security). Empire Cinemas' Irish owners failed to pay back the loan and attempted to thwart the process by taking High Court action but this did not succeed. We understand that Land Securities, LBE's preferred partner to redevelop the cinema site, was negotiating directly with the bank's receivers (Allsops) to try to reach an agreement over a purchase price but the latter have now asked for the CPO to be lifted completely. The Council has apparently set a deadline of July for negotiations to be completed on the land purchase otherwise it will progress the CPO. In the meantime, Empire are out of the picture and work on site has stopped.

Pitzhanger Manor

Following successful bids for the HLF and Parks for People funding work is underway on restoration of the Park, starting first with the Old Rickyard area. Preparatory work on more detailed plans for restoration of the house and gallery has been going on following the appointment of a new trust headed by Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, an Ealing resident. Further consultation will take place in June (see p.4) and hopefully we will hear more about these plans from him when he addresses us at the public lecture on 25 June. The second round bid to HLF for the House is planned for the end of 2013 with a decision in 2014.

Improvements in central Ealing

The former Town House public house in the Broadway (site of the Feathers Coaching Inn) has been recently converted into flats above the ground floor. A new Metro Bank "shop" is due to open in June on the ground floor. We were approached about helping find an historic photograph of the locality which would be displayed in enlarged form in their new premises. We pointed them in the direction of the Ealing Local History library which has an extensive



The Feathers 1972

collection of photographs available to inspect on appointment. The picture shows one of the photographs of this site available in the library.

New Broadway shops and flats

The 1930s flats on the South side of New Broadway have recently been renovated after decades of neglect. Work has included re-pointing (unfortunately in a rather bright white mortar) and repainting of the traditional Georgian style sash windows has greatly improved the appearance of this landmark block. All we need now is for its twin on the west side of the cinema site to be similarly renovated with enforcement action taken in relation to the unauthorised replacement of some of its Crittall windows with out-of-keeping plastic window frames.

Robert Gurd

AGM April 30 2013

The Liz Cantell Room was packed for our AGM, drawn in no doubt by the guest speaker, John Goldsmith, Crossrail west area communications manager. First, Robert Gurd led us through the society's annual business, reviewing the past year's activities, successes and not-so successes. We bade farewell to Jen Henley who has sadly stood down after a number of years' devoted service. The executive committee stalwarts were re-elected and we were happy to welcome new members Jonathan Norris and William Hardman, both architects. The search goes on for a minutes secretary. Let us know if you are interested.

John Goldsmith showed himself an adept flak-catcher and there was a lot of flak to catch. After introducing



A Crossrail drilling machine

us to all the questions of tunnelling, rolling stock, disposal of earth, green issues and much more throughout the whole project, he turned to Ealing Broadway and stations west. The audience, heated more than a little, wanted to know about step-free access, escalators, provision for bicycle parking. There is no problem with the tunneled section east of Paddington, he said, where all the stations are new-builds, but the troubles begin where the trains surface and track and stations are shared with Network Rail.

Ealing Broadway will not get escalators (unlike the meanest station on the Paris Metro). Money is apparently not the issue – the decision was based on modelling projections about needs and use. The audience were not convinced that two lifts moving 16 upright persons would be up to the job (especially if they are switched off in the evening when the staff go home). Much attention was also centred on the Grade II listed Hanwell Station, which will rightly be barely altered, but certainly not gain step-free access.

Your Chairman was firm in letting John complete his talk and moving on to a session of lively questions.

Tony Williams

Neighbourhood Planning inches forward

Genuine local community involvement in planning our neighbourhoods has come a step closer. Both Central Ealing and West Ealing Centre Forums are now officially recognised as able to create binding plans for their respective areas. A further forum is being started in Hanwell and is preparing an application for designation of the town as a recognised local planning area. Discussions are also going on in Acton.

Ealing lags behind some other “front runners”. In the last few months, three plans have gone through the whole process of formation, official public examination and final approval by referendum of local people. Exeter St James and Thame (South Oxfordshire) have followed the trail blazed by Upper Eden in Cumbria. But Ealing is more complex, and both centres are designated as “business areas”, which means that local business rate payers as well as residents must agree any proposals which emerge.

Nevertheless we have reached a critical point. What both forums now have to do is to engage with all sections of the local community, to let everyone know what we are doing and to encourage ideas to come forward on how the centres might develop. These can range from simple projects capable of implementation by the forums themselves, such as minor changes to public areas, to more significant and potentially visionary concepts. Involving local people in contributing to the formative stage before plans become set into formal proposals is what is so new to the planning process.

To make it work, we would like to involve every member of the Civic Society. You can find out what is happening and contribute ideas through the web sites at www.improvealing.com and wecnf.wordpress.com.

Tony Miller

John Compton plaque unveiling

A Civic Society green plaque to John Compton, organ builder, was unveiled on Monday 20 May at 37 Audley Road, W5 by one of his granddaughters by adoption, Suzy Perkins (far right in picture). The unveiling was followed by a celebration at the nearby Church of the Ascension, Hanger Hill, which contains an early Compton Electrone organ ostensibly dating from 1947 but containing some elements of an earlier organ installed when the



John Compton plaque unveiling

church was first built in 1939. Talks were given by speakers about the John Compton Organ Company which was located in North Acton and which went out of business not long after John Compton's death in 1957. Anita Compton (lower centre) talked about her recollections of her adoptive grandfather. The event ended with a short organ recital given by celebrated international organist Richard Hills. The event was attended by around 70 people including the Deputy Mayor Cllr Tej Bagha.

Robert Gurd

Gunnersbury update

There have been a number of developments at Gunnersbury Park since the announcement of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Development Grants last year. In March Ealing Council announced that the preferred bidder to redevelop the Grade II listed Small Mansion is the Alpha Plus Group, which owns a number of private schools. The company is looking for a new home for the Falcons School for Girls which is currently located on Gunnersbury Avenue near Ealing Common. According to the Council press release, both Ealing and Hounslow Councils “had been looking for a partner that could restore the small mansion to provide increased community access and a use which would give the building long term sustainability”. Public consultation has not yet begun, but there is some concern over the use of the building by a private school, the amount of traffic it would generate, the extent of the community use which would be on offer, and other issues.

Meanwhile there have been several very positive developments. Funding from Ealing and Hounslow Councils,



Gunnersbury Park - Small Mansion

joint owners of the Park and its many listed buildings, is required to ensure the release of Heritage Lottery Funding if the bids due in February 2014 are to be successful.

Ealing has already agreed match funding of £5 million and Hounslow has recently agreed to allocate £2.3 million towards the restoration. Hounslow has also allocated funding for repairs to the Stables in order to make them watertight and secure. They can then be used to store the contents of the Museum. This will enable the repairs and refurbishment of the Large Mansion to go ahead if and when further funding is obtained. Another positive development is the survey being undertaken by Museum of London archaeologists in order to create a record of the history of the Park prior to its restoration. A family archaeology day will be arranged later this summer to enable local residents to learn more and join in. Finally, the large playground is being transformed thanks to funding from Hounslow. The project is due to be completed by June, resulting in a large adventure play area for children.

To learn more and keep up to date join the Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum.

Philippa Dolphin

Do we have your email address?

To receive regular communications from ECS on matters of interest and news updates please ensure we have your email address. Just click on the box on our website or email info@ealingcivicsociety.org with your name and preferred email address to ensure you get the full benefit of your membership.

Planning Issues

The Environment sub-committee has commented on a wide range of larger planning applications: three in central Ealing which included Barclay's Bank and the Arcadia centre; redevelopment of a church and vicarage in Perivale, to provide new ones together with flats; A 47-room "apart'hotel" in Greenford; 2-10 Western Rd Southall; and an application which involved creating basement accommodation in Acton.

In addition two major developments were recently permitted by the Planning Committee. These included St Bernard's Hospital where a large redevelopment was submitted as three separate applications involving demolition of listed buildings, over 600 housing units with no public open space provision and locating an energy centre with a 20m chimney just south of Meadow House hospice and Ealing Hospital.

The second large scheme was to build a huge set of buildings for QPR Sports Academy at Warren Farm. The largest was the equivalent of six storeys and Warren



Farm is on land high above Hanwell that has been school or public playing fields in the Brent River Park for many years. The land is owned by the Borough and would be leased to QPR for 200 years. London Plan Policy allows only minimal development on Metropolitan Open Land like this but the report to the Planning Committee argued that these were exceptional circumstances. We thought the buildings would dominate Hanwell and that the scheme should be reduced, especially the height of the tallest building, and that stark outlines should be landscaped with banks and trees. Both these large schemes have to be confirmed by the GLA so we have sent letters of objection to the Mayor of London.

Work continues for the hearing into the Local Plan and the dates are 4-6 June and 11-12 June 2013. We are particularly concerned about the loss of status for the Brent River Park; and the long-standing protection provided by the UDP against building close to open spaces.

Judy Harris

Ealing Civic Society is on Facebook

Pitzhanger Manor

Public Exhibition, 21 June - 21 July

From **Friday 21 June** to **Sunday 21 July** there will be a public exhibition on the restoration plans for Pitzhanger Manor House and Gallery in the Eating Room, Pitzhanger Manor. The opening hours of the house are:

Sunday Tuesday-Friday 1pm-5pm **Saturday** 11am-5pm.

Public Consultation Meeting, 22 June

On **Saturday 22 June** there will be a public meeting to discuss plans for Pitzhanger Manor's renovations and you will have the chance to ask questions. The meeting is at Ealing Green Church, The Green, W5 5QT at 2 pm.

Subscriptions

If you pay your subscription by cash or cheque, early payment will save you from receiving reminders.

The amount due for the calendar year 2013 is £12.00. Your cheque payable to Ealing Civic Society should be sent to:

Robin Roads, Hon Treasurer, Ealing Civic Society

2 North Lodge Ealing Green, London, W5 5QU

Members who pay by standing order pay £2.00 less. If you would like to change your method of payment please download a form from our website. Alternatively e-mail me: Robin@robinroads.co.uk or Tel 8579 5910.

Robin Roads

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The ECS Newsletter was edited by Tony Williams. Contributors were Robert Gurd, Judy Harris, Philippa Dolphin, Tony Miller, Robin Roads and Tony Williams.

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