



Save Ealing's Centre

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Martin Smith
Chief Executive
London Borough of Ealing

By email to: chiefexecutive@ealing.gov.uk

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Dear Martin Smith

Re: Planning decisions in LB Ealing – P/2015/3479 & others

We are writing to ask for a formal investigation in accordance with the complaints procedure into the operation of the planning department and committee, with specific reference, but not limited, to P/2015/3479.

We believe that breaches of regulations and protocol in connection with points 1 & 2 below are leading to decisions which are ultra vires and not in the public interest.

1. The planning committee is required to act quasi-judicially in accordance with local, regional and national plans, legislation, policy and guidance, and to be independent of political or executive control.
2. Planning is statutorily required to be 'plan-led' and officers' reports should give a clear statement of the facts and policy/legislative background without bias.

In the case of P/2015/3479 we have noted a number of departures from required procedure, which we will detail below. This, coupled with a lack of transparency in decision making, leads us to suspect that pressure is being applied by third parties, and we trust that you will endeavour to locate those individuals involved and bring them to account.

Further to this, we are most concerned that the planning department is contained within the regeneration directorate – notwithstanding that these two functions may have conflicting priorities. **This structural problem within Ealing council should be addressed immediately to avoid undue influence and potential impropriety in future.**

Specific issues:

- i. The planning officer's report to committee dismisses the objections of the government's specialist national advisors, Historic England (HE), and others, that the proposed scheme is not in accordance with local, regional and national plans, policy and legislation. The report also misrepresents the position of HE, as stated by their planning director for London, Nigel Barker.
- ii. The stance described above was maintained by planning officers during their briefing and presentation to the committee and in answers to questions from committee members.
- iii. The neighbourhood plan, produced by the Central Ealing neighbourhood forum (CENF), and currently in published draft form, was dismissed by officers – even though clear guidance exists to state that such plans are a material consideration even at an early stage of development. Again, this misrepresentative stance was maintained even after a question from a committee member.
- iv. The chair of the planning committee, Cllr Karam Mohan, effectively directed the committee by voting first and in favour, notwithstanding the matters above, opposition from all three ward councillors and balanced discussion by the committee itself. In doing so he voted to support assertions on compliance with national policy made by non-specialist local council planning officers against the strong recommendations of the government's specialist national advisory body.

In the event that you are able to confirm that the planning department and committee have not been operating properly then the decision taken with respect to the above, and other recent, planning applications must be re-assessed. We believe that the only fair and proper way to do so is to hold independent inquiries for all major strategic planning decisions taken whilst the current executive director of regeneration and housing, chair of the planning committee, and council leader have been in post.

Copies of this email are being sent to the Secretary of State, Historic England and councillors. Please confirm receipt and give this matter your urgent attention.

Yours sincerely

Julian

Julian Smith
For Save Ealing's Centre