



## OLD OAK NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Cllr Peter Mason  
Leader  
LB Ealing  
By email

Dear Councillor Mason,

### **Time running out to decide the future of the eastern part of Ealing**

We appreciate that you will have been busy in recent weeks as the new Leader of Ealing Council. But we felt that we must contact you before the deadline on the current OPDC consultation on the Corporation's *Post Submission Modified Draft Local Plan*. This date is July 5<sup>th</sup>.

From your former involvement as the LBE representative on the OPDC Planning Committee, you will be familiar with the background.

Since 2015 our Forum has been following the preparation of the OPDC Draft Local Plan. You will know that we see the Plan's proposals as a disastrous and inappropriate outcome for the eastern part of Ealing. There is now very little time for the three Boroughs to make their views known, in the consultation on the 'modified' Plan.

East Acton does not seem to have received the attention from the Council that it should, subsequent to becoming part of OPDC's responsibilities as planning authority in 2015. Whereas North Acton's 'regeneration' is seen as doing little to attract families and a stable community. The impact of HS2 works continues to be an ongoing nightmare for residents. The threat by OPDC of the insertion of further unconnected patches of high-rise housing, coupled with series of large data centres, is making many residents question why they would want to stay in the Borough.

Our Forum works closely with Ealing Matters, the Hammersmith Society, and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum in North Kensington. We welcomed your announcements on a change of approach, on more 'community led development' and specifically on

- *An immediate review of council policy on tall buildings, setting out where tall buildings are inappropriate in the borough*
- *Implementing town development plans, created with communities, setting out the vision and infrastructure needs of the borough's seven towns*

The timing of potential adoption of the OPDC Local Plan, already 4 years behind schedule, is highly unfortunate. The three Boroughs will have to live with long-term consequences, when OPDC ceases to exist. Just when London faces huge and unexpected uncertainties in terms of population trends, working and travel patterns, and changing aspirations on dwelling sizes and densities, the OPDC remains intent on serving up new development at locations with poor access to public transport.

Local residents who have picked apart the 'major modifications' which OPDC has submitted to planning Inspector Paul Clark have lost confidence in the Corporation as a planning authority. OPDC's consultation leaflet on its modifications claims that *the majority of the draft Local Plan will stay the same*. Those who live and work in East Acton know that this is not true, but we are finding it hard to convince Planning Inspector Paul Clark that the whole of the Local Plan needs to be assessed afresh. We are told we must focus narrowly on modified sections of text.

Local residents would like to know before the July 5<sup>th</sup> OPDC deadline:

- How LB Ealing will be responding to the OPDC consultation on modifications? Will you and your new Cabinet be taking a close interest? Will a LBE submission be considered by the 24<sup>th</sup> June Planning Committee, or be a matter delegated to officers?
- Will LBE be supporting the modifications and especially those for 3,100 high density homes at Channel Gate and Atlas Road, with this location now identified (implausibly) as *part of a major town centre* stretching through OOC station as far as North Acton?
- Does LBE consider that OPDC has met its 'duty to co-operate' in the long period since its Regulation 19.2 Draft Local Plan was submitted in October 2018. The Planning Inspector has told us that he is willing to look again at this matter. This is on the basis that the legal duty is a continuing one, on which OPDC has submitted no updated Statement of Co-operation.
- Does your Council think it makes sense for a Local Plan for the Old Oak half of the OPDC area to be adopted this year, when the planned operational date for Old Oak Common station is now forecast anytime between 2029 and 2033? Why not take the opportunity for a fresh start on an OPDC Local Plan alongside preparation of Ealing's new Local Plan? With a rethink and different approach to the renewal of the eastern part of the Borough in a hoped-for post-pandemic era for London?
- Do your planning officers accept that the scale of changes being made by OPDC can legitimately be classed as 'modifications' rather than constituting a 'revised' or 'replacement' Local Plan? This is a legal question we have raised with the Planning Inspector, and one which we will be continuing to pursue in depth and detail in the coming weeks and months of the continued Examination.

Our Forum has never understood why all major planning applications at North Acton have continued to be decided by LBE. This surrender of responsibilities by OPDC in 2015 (not widely understood by the public) has raised questions as to what exactly the Corporation has been doing for six years and at what cost? Under Ealing's previous administration, our perception was that public confidence in Ealing's planning department was also sinking fast.

With a new administration and new Cabinet leadership and direction, we hope for rapid change and the Scheme of Delegation to Ealing may become seen as an example that LBHF should follow.

We see no sign as yet of LBE reaction to entirely new proposals for Channel Gate/Atlas Road, as now promoted by OPDC as part of OPDC's 'Western Lands' strategy. We attend many online OPDC consultations but see no sign of LBE officers. Councillors Hitesh Tailor and Kate Crawford take an interest and often join the online meetings of our Forum.

Will we see some evidence of the Council's new direction in its response to OPDC and the Inspector on the current consultation?

Enclosed with this letter is the first part of representations which we have submitted to OPDC and the Planning Inspector, part way through the current consultation. The Inspector has provided brief responses, via the Examination's Programme Officer (also attached). His reply suggests that he is content that OPDC's proposals are 'modifications' of a kind that can lawfully be made during the 'examination stage' rather than the 'preparation stage' of a Local Plan. We see significant evidence to the contrary.

We hope that Ealing's new administration will be looking to the long-term future and will recognise that a fresh start and a much better spatial plan is needed for East Acton. The fate of North Acton has been largely decided, although two proposals for high density/high rise schemes are at pre-application stage (1 Portal Way and the Castle Pub site).

We will be writing to Cllr Steve Cowan at LBHF in broadly similar terms, and copying these letters and enclosures to Rupa Huq MP and to Andy Slaughter MP. As you will know, both MPs take a close interest in OPDC's plans and proposals. Time is now running short to make any impact on what happens next. We hope that you can respond on how LBE will be addressing the OPDC's current consultation – in time for our members to take this into account in their own representations.

Yours sincerely

Mark Walker and Henry Peterson  
Chairs of Old Oak Neighbourhood Forum and St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum

Cc Rupa Huq MP, Andy Slaughter MP  
Cllr Hitesh Tailor, Cllr Kate Crawford, Cllr Stephen Donnelly

Ealing Matters, Ealing Civic Society, Wells House Road RA, The Island Triangle RA, Wesley Estate RA

David Scourfield, LBE Chief Planning Officer