

Councillor Julian Bell
Leader of Ealing Council
Ealing Borough Council
Town Hall
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London W5 2BY



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by email

11 July 2018

Dear Councillor Bell,

Proposed Loss of Ealing's Conservation Officer Post

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been informed about Ealing Council's plans to abolish the principle conservation officer post in the borough – the only post with specific heritage expertise. We understand that this proposal was discussed at the Council's Cabinet meeting on 10th July as set out in the agenda papers (pages 199 and 200).

While we understand the pressure to reduce expenses across the local authority and become cost neutral, the loss of this vital skill set within the Council is an alarming concern to us. We consider the implications for Ealing, the 29 conservation areas and the more than 600 designated heritage assets to be very serious.

We are concerned that the future of the borough's heritage, including listed buildings, heritage assets, demolition and development in conservation areas, will be in the hands of planning officers who do not have conservation expertise. Heritage and conservation are specialist disciplines that cannot be replaced by one off training sessions and continued professional development opportunities. Conservation Officers provide skilled expert advice on specialist topics such as urban historic development, historic building materials and policy issues and have in-depth knowledge of the borough and its heritage.

Furthermore, following changes to Historic England's statutory duties in 2015, the body's remit is limited to "works in respect of any grade I or II* listed building and only for relevant works in respect of any grade II listed building"; and no longer has a remit to comment on development proposals that could affect the setting of Grade II listed buildings. This leaves a vast amount of nationally important historic buildings and the totality of Ealing's locally listed buildings in the responsibility of planners, who do not have the necessary conservation expertise.

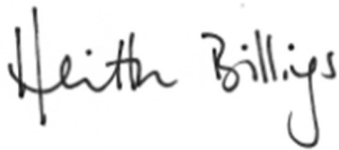
The announced revision of Ealing's Development Plan and the borough's approach to 'local listing' in the agenda papers (page 199) is equally worrying and we urge Ealing Council to maintain the protection of non-designated heritage assets.

We are concerned that Ealing intends to seek support from the Greater London Authority on heritage matters. As the agenda paper states (page 200), the GLA deals with major applications only and does not cover specialised local heritage issues.

Ealing is exposed to unprecedented development pressure triggered by the need for housing and the arrival of Crossrail, which combined will put historic buildings and spaces at risk. These types of buildings, including statutory listed buildings, conservation areas and locally listed buildings, must be protected as assets – not only for their social and community value, but for their economic importance through tourism, jobs and economic growth and their contribution to local identity and character.

The decision to abolish the conservation officer post sends the message that Ealing Council does not value its historic buildings. We urge Cabinet not to support this plan and ensure that Ealing continues to have a rich and deep built, natural and material heritage highly valued by residents, visitors and potential investors.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henrietta Billings". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Henrietta Billings
Director
SAVE Britain's Heritage