

Friends of Haven Green



Keeping Haven Green at the Heart of Ealing

The Planning Inspectorate

From Greg Phelan

Chair FoHG

Ref :Ealing Haven Green substation renewal of COM 43

Date 27th June 2014

Attn : Ms Naoual Margoum

We are writing to object to this application. First, however we want to list a number of queries about the information submitted. We shall then follow by explaining our objections.

QUERIES

Section A. Question 1. The CL Number is not CL11. We assume the Council is referring to CL111.

Section C. Question 5. The registered area is given as 17929.sq m This conflicts with the decision letter written by Mr Grimshaw – the last inspector - dated 13th May 2009. Mr Grimshaw stated that the common to be 1.982 hectares or 19820.sq m The indicated extent of the Common Land also conflicts with Plans accompanying two other current applications concerning Haven Green, COM 505 and COM 569, submitted by the Borough and currently under consideration by the Inspectorate.

This question needs to be resolved once and for all. There has been longstanding uncertainty about the extent of the Green, and this has confused people in the past including the Local Government Ombudsman who was unable to resolve a dispute about another encroachment because of the uncertainty over the Common Land Boundary.

Section D1 Question 9. Mr Grimshaw stated in his decision letter that the original application was incorrect and the dimensions of the substation enclosure are 5.7 x 4.2x 2.3.m. The present application thus repeats the original error and ignores Mr Grimshaw's findings.

Section D2. Question 15 As in D1 incorrect dimensions are provided.

Section E. Question 20. No copy of the planning permission referred to has been provided to us.

Responses to sections. Dimensions are at variance to statements in D1 9 and D2 15.

Section G. Question 24. The 'Yes' box has not been ticked. Details of the other buildings on the Common Land are incomplete. They should include the cycle hub that the Council has installed without the consent of the Secretary of State plus further cycle stands for 100 + bicycles for Ealing Broadway transport interchange.

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PLANS. The plan map accompanying this application is dated 2008. There have been significant changes to the area of common land since 2008 and new structures and installations have been added that encroach on the Common Land. Specifically a cycle parking area shown as a structure on foundations and cycle racking, neither of which have been approved to be built on the common .

OBJECTIONS

Haven Green is an ancient area of open land which has been enjoyed by the public since medieval times. It is the first thing visitors to Ealing see when they arrive at Ealing Broadway station, and provides a delightful transition between the bustle of the Ealing Town Centre and the attractive residential areas to the north – celebrated with the title ‘Queen of the Suburbs’ when Ealing developed in the 19th Century. Disturbingly, the common land is being subjected to increasing encroachment which is enclosing the prized sense of openness that existed here and damaging the historic character of the area.

The substation enclosure has been one such encroachment. It stands in a Conservation Area on a very prominent part of Haven Green and obstructs views into and out of the Common Land. It especially affects views of the shops, cafes and restaurants on the east side of the Green which are locally, and in one case, nationally listed buildings. Mr Grimshaw agreed in his previous decision letter that the enclosure has a significant effect on the Green. He found the substation is not a visually attractive feature and that even after screen planting matures it will still have some detrimental effect on the Green ‘s appearance.

Inspection of the site will show that the screen planting has indeed matured, but in doing so it is creating problems of its own. The foliage is out of keeping with other planting on the Green. It has bulked out to interfere with views and the feelings of openness to an extent considerably greater than 5 years ago. Worse still, it now provides sufficient screening to attract men who are caught short and need somewhere to relieve themselves. Removal of the substation, screen fencing and planting would eliminate opportunities for such disgusting behaviour in such a public place.

The substation and its enclosure were installed without any prior consultation with local people or the permission of the Secretary of State. Following local complaints, the Inspector granted just a five year temporary consent for it and refused to agree to the 25 years permission that the Council has sought. There has been no subsequent discussions with local groups, including the Friends of Haven Green, about the need to retain the substation or to come up with any alternatives.

Mr Grimshaw sought to balance competing objectives when he granted the 5 year temporary consent. He said his decision was difficult given the lack of information supplied by the Council about the recreational uses they claimed the substation was needed for. He felt the 5 years consent period would provide time for more information to be gathered surrounding

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the use of an ice rink and other events. The truth is that the ice rink was a failure, and only operated for a year after the consent was granted. As far as we know, other events have not used power from the substation, and the Council has not supplied any information to the contrary. The only information provided in the present application about the recreational purpose of the substation is a reference to a Council initiative called 'Love Your Space' apparently due to run in May 2014. This is a bit of a mystery to us. The Ealing Arts and Cultural Strategy, which we had not heard of previously, makes no reference to Haven Green or the need to obtain power for activities there. FoHG were not notified about any activities relating to the initiative in May this year, as we normally are for events on the Green and Googling 'Ealing Love your space' has drawn a blank.

As far as the Friends of Haven Green are able to determine, the main purpose of the substation is to provide power to the taxi cab hut and the cycle hub which were recently installed on the Green. These are not recreational uses at all as the legislation requires that they should be. Evidence of the use for this purpose can be seen through the trenchline leading from the substation to the cab hut in which the cables are buried. There is not any reason why these facilities should have to take their power from this substation, other sources are available nearby that would not entail the loss of the Common Land.

In conclusion therefore, the substation and its enclosure have, as the previous Inspector found, a significant effect on Haven Green. The Council has provided no valid justification for retaining it and **it should be removed.**

Finally, Friends of Haven Green thinks it is wrong for the Council to continue in its recent practice of making piecemeal incursions onto the Green, and then making separate applications to regularise them. These concerns were raised with Mr Grimshaw who acknowledged the problem, but could do nothing about them.

A separate Inquiry is due to take place in September into two other cases (COM 505 and 569) that affect the Green. Depending on the view the Inspector takes to concerns we have raised about other incursions, further action may be required to resolve these. All this places the Friends of Haven Green - we are unpaid volunteers - at an extreme disadvantage as we seek, under the legislation, to secure the integrity of the Green for future generations against the full powers of the Council's well-resourced department of lawyers.

It is our contention that the recent encroachments, plus those we fear may be in the pipeline, need to be considered as a whole through one separate Inquiry. This would save time and expense for everyone involved, not least the Inspectorate.

We therefore formally request PINS to determine all the matters relating to encroachments on Haven Green together.