CEPAC response to Mastcraft planning application for Town Hall Ealing.

CEPAC objects to the proposal for development on the north side of the Town Hall, in particular the demolition of a large part of the Grade II listed Victoria Hall. This would conflict in several respects with the provisions of the Central Ealing Neighbourhood Plan (CENP), adopted by the Council in December 2017 as part of Ealing’s development Plan.

Relevant policies are HBE1 (Quality of Design) and HBE2 Policy HBE2 (Protecting the townscape). In addition, Ealing Town Hall is recognised (CENP para 5.2.9) as a significant heritage asset and landmark within the Neighbourhood Area. In particular, the adjoining Victoria Hall which is a separate structure to the north covered by an 1893 Trust Deed constitutes an important part of that asset, notably by reason of the regular neo-Gothic frontage of some eight bays with decorative windows at each end. The rose window at the eastern end in particular provides an important visual element to the Conservation Area and has a consciously ecclesiastical reference to the roughly contemporary Christ the Saviour Parish Church.

**CENP Policy HBE1 (Quality of design)** provides that:

Development should:

i. enhance the special character and design interest of the area's historic architecture and achieve the highest standard of sustainable urban design and construction;

ii. in Conservation Areas, be of a scale and design quality which preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Area and is in accordance with the relevant Conservation Area management plan.

**CENP Policy HBE2** **(Protecting the townscape)** says:

Development should:

i. complement the historic grain, character and scale of existing green spaces and streetscapes;

ii. demonstrate that special regard has been paid to opportunities for preserving or enhancing attributes of local landmarks, including measures to improve their context and surroundings;

iii. preserve or enhance the setting of heritage assets….

Further, Ealing’s **Development Plan Document *Development Strategy 2026,*** **Policy 2.5(e)** says its aim is to “protect and enhance the quality of the existing townscape and historic character including

* To enhance historic buildings and frontages that contribute to the character and appearance of the town centre including removing/mitigating aspects of the built form that have a negative impact”.

Contrary to the applicant’s Design and Access Statement (Part 2) para 3.11, which says in relation to the north-facing façade that "this façade is contemporary but designed to complement the Grade II listed building", the proposed north frontage extension would detract from that of the Victoria Hall by reason of its conflicting style.

CEPAC therefore objects strongly to the loss of the eastern section of the Victoria Hall which formerly housed the organ and is part of the original construction of the Hall. Any development should enhance this external visual feature rather than, as proposed, destroy it. Re-siting the window internally is not a satisfactory substitute, as it would not be visible in its original context, losing its point of reference. This part of the proposed development should therefore not be permitted.

A further factor is that The Hall, with its accompanying spaces, belong to the Victoria Hall charitable Trust. The Trust Objects are that the Halls should be maintained for public use including hire, which requires easy ingress and exit.

Ealing **Policy 6.2 (Social Infrastructure)** notes a requirement as follows:

• Culture, Sport and Leisure: Enhance buildings and spaces through developments that enable cultural activity to take place for the benefit of its community.

The proposed development would make it difficult to maintain and encourage such use, by closing off any direct access from the public way to the north and integrating the areas into the proposed hotel. In particular, the proposal to turn the Princes Hall into a gym and leisure centre would destroy rather than enhance cultural activity. It would also adversely affect the integrity and cohesion of the Halls as a unit, making them less available for their original purpose of spaces available for the general public to hire. There is no indication of how the applicant proposes to protect the current provision to community groups of reasonable, affordable access to the other parts of the building governed by the charitable Trust.

 In summary, not only does the proposal involve unwarranted and damaging demolition of part of the Grade II listed structure of the Victoria Hall, it also impinges of the area of the charitable Trust property and would reduce rather than enhance community cultural use. It should therefore be rejected.