

## EALING OFFICE MARKET CHECKS-OUT

Frogmore Real Estate Partners has ditched plans to refurbish the Seifert-designed 1960s-built Westel House, at 32-38 Uxbridge Road, W5, as offices.

Instead, it is hoping that next month Ealing council will approve its plans to demolish and start again on the 1.1-acre site, which it bought in late 2006 for £20.5m, with a £57m mixed-use scheme.

Three towers will house a 50,000 sq ft, 111-room, four-star hotel and 131 residential apartments, which could be completed in late 2013 or early 2014.


"The phasing has not yet been fixed, but the residential is likely to start before the hotel," says Frogmore's planning & technical manager, Hanne Puttonen.

The fortunes of the block contrast with Neptune Land's and Standard Life's nearby 135,000 sq ft Ealing Cross development at 79-89 Uxbridge Road (pictured), which was completed in 2009. While one floor has let, the rest is

still touting for tenants at a quoting rent of £30 per sq ft, a large hike from the sub-£20 per sq ft rents being charged for surrounding secondhand space.

David Cuthbert, partner at niche agent Hanover Green, points out that Ealing Cross is the only large building in the area offering grade A space so, once it goes, there will be no similar buildings for occupiers.

He says: "Until new development starts, the focus will be on refurbishment of existing blocks. One benefit of these is that they have a much higher car parking ratio than new-builds."



Southall Gasworks: National Grid is searching for development partners to take on the mixed-use scheme that will surround the gasholder

Around 25% of the residential units, plus some retail, is scheduled to appear in the first of three five-year development phases set out in the planning consent. But DTZ believes this could change by the time the site is ready to receive the first buildings, and retail uses may benefit as a result.

A "limited amount" of retail is specified to be built by 2015, and the food retail is not scheduled until the second tranche, between 2015 and 2020.

Whitworth says: "What may well happen is that the foodstore and other retail are some of the first uses to appear, along with a batch of affordable housing, at the northern end of the site."

Sadly for the iconic blue gasholder, however, its days could be numbered. Although there are no plans to decommission it at present, Edwards says that changes in the energy distribution network may well make it redundant.

"I'd guess it's likely to come out during the latter course of development," he says.

