

Spring 2002 Newsletter

Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2002. This is likely to be a year of challenges for the Society for two reasons. First, consultation on the latest proposals for redevelopment of the town centre has just started; and, second, the Council's proposed revisions to the Unitary Development Plan have just been issued for comment. The proposals for redevelopment of the town centre contain many of the points put forward by the Society in the earlier consultation exercise. In particular, the emphasis is on evolutionary rather than revolutionary development and the likelihood of a large store development has lessened. But there are still key questions over the future of the Dickens Yard site (at the rear of the Town Hall) and the traffic implications of any proposals, which could be crucially affected by the results of the recent consultation exercise on the Uxbridge Road rapid transit proposal (where the tram appeared to be the clear winner).

The UDP may seem rather dry in comparison with the town centre proposals but it is an important document because it affects planning policy for the next five years at least. The latest version is out for consultation until the middle of March (although late comments may still be accepted). It is a much clearer document than its predecessor and represents an evolutionary process of improvement. But there are some important new points raised in particular in relation to parking standards and housing densities. The Society will be commenting on the document and we will include our views in the next newsletter.

Finally some thanks are due. First I would like to thank John Templeton for acting as newsletter editor for the last two years or so and wish him well for the future; and second to Margaret Gold for taking over from John as editor.

Bob Gurd

Consultation on lighting columns in conservation areas

The council has recently issued proposals for possible designs of lighting columns in conservation areas. This is in preparation for relighting schemes in the borough for which new capital money has recently been made available. However, most of the money is earmarked initially for areas where street lighting is poor and crime is a problem. In practice, this excludes relighting most of the borough's conservation areas in the short term. However, the idea is to have an agreed set of designs that can be implemented as and when the money becomes available. Various patterns of column are proposed which are variants on the current widely employed former gas columns fitted with swan-necks

(see Newsletter Autumn 2001). There is also a proposal for columns with traditional square gas lanterns (as found in Ealing Green). If you would like any further information on the various designs please contact Rachel Felton on 020 8758 5510. Incidentally, you may have noticed that the existing lighting columns are becoming shabbier and shabbier. This is because no regular maintenance, including re-painting, has been carried out for at least five years due to lack of money. As a result, corrosion will set in leading to a reduction in the life of the columns. If you, like the Society, feel strongly about this please write to your local councillor pressing for the re-painting programme to be reinstated.

Plan for the environment - Ealing's UDP

A new plan to provide policies to guide built development and land use throughout the borough is now available at all public libraries and at Perceval House. Members are urged to read it and to send comments to the Council by the deadline, Friday 15th March. Council officers at Perceval House are readily available to help with inquiries.

The new plan is more than the existing UDP, but this makes it more difficult to identify changes. The text does, however, follow a similar pattern to the old one, except that some tables relating to policies have been removed to the last chapter rather than being close to the relevant policy.

A few points that may be of special interest to members stand out immediately:

The Civic Society is particularly pleased that the number of locally listed buildings has been increased significantly. This is largely due to the efforts of Society members in undertaking a survey of potential buildings and their detailed inspection and general support by the Council Conservation Officer. Unfortunately the list is not given sufficient prominence but hidden at the back of the plan with other site-specific tables

Housing density, back land, garden space, outlook and privacy policies have all been relegated to 'guidance', which provides much less certainty than previously

Off-street car parking requirements have been reduced, making it inevitable that the street will become more congested by parking and hence more dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. Additional CPZs will be required to manage this but currently they do not deal with the problems of evening and weekend street parking.

Brian Harris

Civic Society Website relaunched

Our website has been relaunched thanks to the efforts of our new web master, Simon Hay. The website was originally launched in 1999 and was hosted by Ealing Council. They revamped their own website last year and indicated that they would no longer be able to host ours. Simon very kindly agreed to redesign the website and undertake the hosting of it. The new design which, incorporates pictures, is a great improvement on the

old and we recommend that you visit if you have access to the web in order to keep up to date with events. Its address is ealing.gov.uk/civsoc.

West Ealing Revival

West Ealing is benefiting considerably from the work of the Ealing Town Centre Partnership. In recognition of the area's special needs, a working group was established for the area of West Ealing Broadway and the Uxbridge Road eastwards to the fire station including the Green Man and Sherwood estates. With strong financial backing from the Council Regeneration Unit, a firm of consultants (Town Centres Limited), the eminent urban designer Colin Davies and a firm of architects, were appointed to produce a strategy for the area. The resultant plan was greeted with enthusiasm in subsequent public consultations and adopted by the Partnership and the Council as a basis for action. Funding then became available from the Council and the Groundwork Trust (a national charity), which recognised West Ealing as a priority area in west London.

Already, the Partnership, Groundwork and the Council have upgraded the surroundings of St. John's School, involving an artist working with school children. Now, work has begun on upgrading footpaths between Felix Road and the Broadway, lighting and play spaces on the Green Man Estate. The latter involves creating a third and larger play-space for younger children and consideration a new facility for teenagers on co-operation with the tenants. Consultants have also begun work with the Sherwood residents and W13 Youth Centre on the improvement of Dean Gardens and pedestrian routes into it from the south. Along the Broadway-Uxbridge Road attractive and brighter new street lighting has been ordered and should be in place by May, whilst all other street furniture has been repainted. Pavement improvements are planned and the location and nature of pedestrian crossings will be reviewed. Groundwork Trust is funding a pilot scheme for shop front improvements and is also funding a consultant to advise small shopkeepers on better window displays and shop layouts. Meanwhile, the establishment of a regular Farmers Market in Leeland Road has attracted a growing trade and general public acclaim and is increasing the turnover of nearby shops. Recently closed shops are being recycled and half the Iceland site has planning permission for a new branch of Weatherspoons and a retailer is negotiating permission to rebuild Marks & Spencers with flats above.

On a larger scale, Town Centres Limited identified four 'landmark sites' for redevelopment. The Gosai Cinema is the subject of a detailed proposal for new offices for Ealing Voluntary Services Council with flats above. Two other landmark sites along the Broadway have also attracted the interest of developers along with the 'Northern Gateway' site opposite Waitrose, whilst discussions continue on the further development of the Waitrose site itself.

Transport issues remain to be resolved. The proposed demolition of the Singapore Road

multi-storey car park has met with opposition, while the ground level car park along the road has been enlarged. The proposed Shepherds Bush-Uxbridge tram is unlikely to emerge before 2007-10. Transport for London has identified West Ealing Station as the location for an enhanced train/bus/taxi/ interchange, and improvements to services are expected quickly but major change awaits the development of Crossrail by 2010.

Brian Harris

Civic Society Annual Awards 2001

There were six nominations for the 2001 Awards: the Acton Waterwise Garden at The Vale, Acton; Southall Young Adults Centre in Park View Road; Launders Gate - a housing development behind 172 Avenue Road Acton; the Salvation Army Citadel in Leeland Road, West Ealing; St. Andrew's Church Centre in Mount Park Road W5; the Brook Coombes House at 52 Mountfield Road W5.

The entries were judged by architects John Scott and Jan Bienkowski and Janet Anderson a landscape planner. The judges were unanimous in giving the award to the Brooke Coombes House which was felt to be 'environmentally good, but it also happens to be a good piece of architecture that works. It is a modern building that manages to stand well in a conservation area where many of the other houses are a lot older'. A commendation was given to the St. Andrew's United Reform Church Centre. This scheme comprises a remodelled church and community centre with a two-storey building connecting the existing halls and church to a number of offices and rooms used by both the church and local charities.

The awards were presented on 11th October at a ceremony in Ealing Town Hall by Max Lyons, Senior Partner of Lyons, Sleeman and Hoare Architects who have been responsible for the redevelopment of the Hoover/Tesco Building, the remodelling of Marks & Spencer Ealing Broadway and the current refurbishment of the Ealing Broadway Centre.

A President for Ealing Civic Society

The Society has not had a President for many years. The Executive Committee now perceives merit in such a position and would like to make an early appointment. The necessary constitutional amendment for such an appointment is item 9 on the AGM agenda. Such an amendment must be passed by two thirds of members present and voting at the AGM.

If the Society is in agreement with the Committee on this issue, then we would like to invite Sir Peter Hall, Ealing resident and internationally renowned expert on town planning and the urban environment to take up the post.

A vision of Greenford

Our speaker for the Society AGM on Tuesday 9th April is Frances Hounsell, author of Greenford, Northolt and Perivale Past. She will be discussing the growth of this area and its transformation in the 20th century and demonstrating that there is still evidence visible in the landscape of an earlier Greenford. Copies of her book will be on sale after the talk for members inspired by her account of this often neglected part of our Borough.

Ealing Civic Society member Leonard Lean writes from Milton Keynes, looking back at nearly 46 years as an Ealing resident and active involvement in the Society concerning a number of campaigns on planning issues in the Borough.

'Perhaps the prod that made me take a relatively active part in local affairs was the plan to widen Boston Road into a two lane dual carriageway with a flyover for north to east traffic at the river Brent bridge/Viaduct Inn; followed almost immediately by the Greater London Council's River Brent flood relief scheme. This envisaged a concrete channel about 100 feet wide and vertical 10 foot high sides. One result anticipated zero flooding of the several golf courses in the area! Soon after I joined the Civic Society and also the Brent River and Canal Society, lambasting by letter most of those whose utterances raised my hackles on transport and local planning matters; and attending Council meetings if practical on the day. More recently I attended the Terminal 5 Public Inquiry for 457 out of the 525 sitting days'.

Leonard and his wife Jenny moved to Milton in 2001 to be closer to their son, David but not before depositing a significant number of documents relating to Ealing and Hanwell in the Hanwell Archive.