

Spring 2001 Newsletter

Message from the Chairman

Please note that the newsletters contain un-edited extracts which have not been updated

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2001, a year likely to bring several important issues to the fore. First, Ealing Town Centre Forum will be bringing forward proposals for the future of Ealing, including West Ealing, for public consultation, following over two years of discussions in which the Society has been extensively involved. No doubt this will create a lively debate!

Second, discussions will continue on the proposed redevelopment of Ealing Studios. The Society has welcomed the continuation of film-making at the studios and is pleased that it is proposed to retain at least some of the historic studios, dating from the early 1930s. But we are not convinced that the replacement buildings are of sufficiently high quality, nor that the traffic circulation proposals are sufficient to minimise disturbance to local residents. We hope to be able to influence the outcome.

THE URBAN WHITE PAPER

The Government has now produced its White Paper in response to Lord Rogers' report 'Towards an Urban Renaissance'. It costs £28 and looks like a holiday brochure. It is subtitled 'Delivering an Urban Renaissance' - rather like delivering a pizza.

The Opposition claimed that the White Paper implemented only fourteen of the 106 Rogers recommendations; the Government claims it is implementing all but six. Many of these policies, however, are imprecise or immeasurable and it will be difficult to know whether they are happening or not.

Although the White Paper is entitled 'Our Towns and Cities of the Future', the suburbs are not entirely neglected. Indeed the Deputy Prime Minister in his Foreword refers to 'pleasant suburbs'. The White Paper cites a recent report that showed that 55% of those living in the suburbs were 'very satisfied' with their area compared to 35% in cities.

The White Paper does not focus on the suburbs as such, and many of its proposals relate primarily to urban problems, but some of the proposals are relevant to places such as

Ealing, notably those relating to curbing loutish behaviour in town centres, juvenile delinquency and street crime. The police are to have new powers to close rowdy pubs. There are also welcome proposals for improving and maintaining public parks and open spaces.

There is far less emphasis than in Rogers' report on higher housing densities, although the need to make full use of under-used land and buildings is stressed. We can expect a continuing flow of planning applications to cram new flats and houses onto small sites.

There is much in the White Paper on the need to enhance the urban environment and it is easy to endorse these objectives but much more difficult to achieve them. The White Paper recognises that local amenity bodies (like our Civic Society) have an important role to play in promoting and supporting local initiatives. Amid much that is rhetorical and aspirational, the White Paper points in the right direction.

John Delafons

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