

# **Save Ealing's Centre**

## **A VISION FOR EALING TOWN CENTRE** Save Ealing's Centre Alliance



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# 1 Introduction

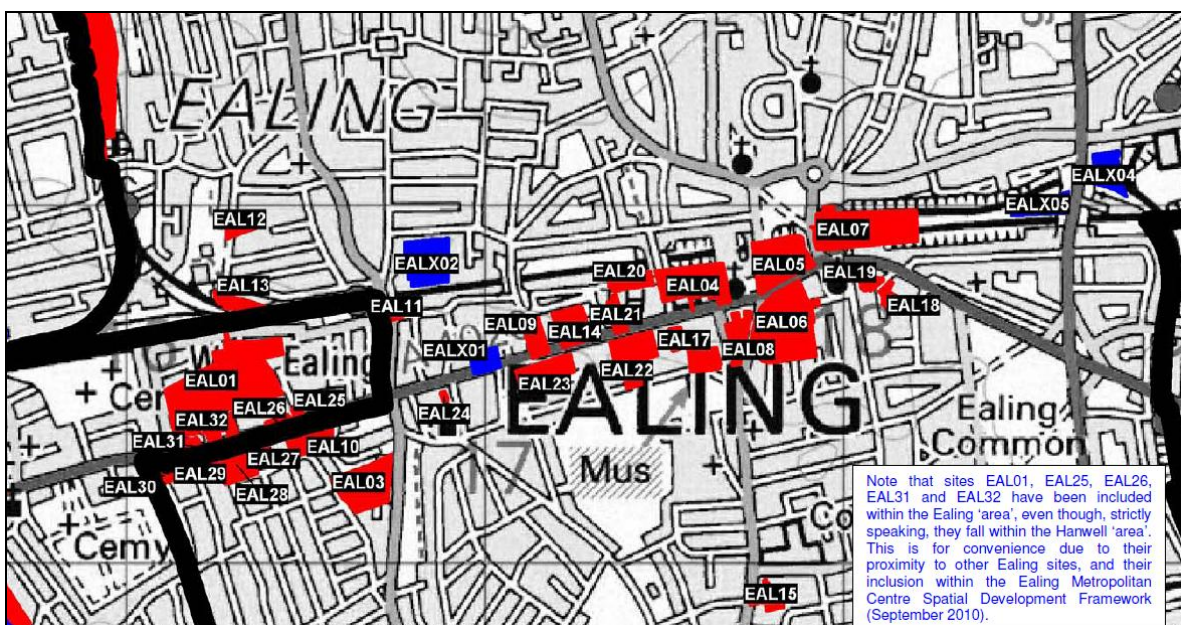
Ealing Town Centre is changing.

Since its early days as the heart of a prosperous suburban community, Ealing town centre has been regarded as metropolitan scale centre the London Plan thinks should be serving a catchment that that extends over several boroughs and into parts of the wider South East region.

Changes in shopping behaviour are challenging established retail centres throughout the country and they have hit Ealing especially hard. The huge Westfield centre was a massive shock to the Ealing economy as many of the biggest high street names closed their stores. Other activities usually located in major town centres have also declined. Leisure uses In particular have moved away and there are few significant sports facilities.

Crossrail, which is due to open in 2019 creates new opportunities for the town centre, but some possible problems too. These need to be carefully managed.

The Council's Core Development Strategy is for Ealing to be 'regenerated' through wholesale redevelopment. In the next 14 years 2,580 new homes, 90,000m<sup>2</sup> new office space and 50,000m<sup>2</sup> new shopping floor space are planned. Draft proposals published in 2010 show the extent of what is envisaged. Each shaded site in the plan below is considered a 'development site' that will contribute to these targets.



How will this change take place? What kind of place will Ealing become?

It falls to Ealing Council as the Local Planning Authority to decide on the strategies to manage changes in the area. But Government planning regulations and the London Plan place a duty on the Authority to involve local communities in the way their neighbourhoods are shaped. The 2012 Localism Act provides for Neighbourhood forums of local stakeholders to prepare neighbourhood plans that set a vision for their areas and enable

communities to say, for example, where new homes and offices should be built, and what they should look like.

### Some Words about our approach

This document offers SEC's Vision for the future of Ealing. It is based on Ealing's huge underlying strengths and the opportunities that the global and regional economies are creating.

It is an update of a Vision for Ealing Town Centre prepared by SEC and launched in 2008 at a packed meeting in the Town Hall. A lot has happened since our first edition and this document seeks to reflect the changes there have been.

We have taken as our starting point existing national, regional and local statutory plans and policies, although that is not to say that we always agree with them. For instance, our Vision covers the full length of the Metropolitan Town Centre which the London Plan insists extends over 2km from Ealing Common to the furthest reaches of West Ealing even though everyone knows it is a nonsense to pretend this constitutes a single centre.

Having sought without success to persuade planning inspectors at a number of public inquiries to recognise that Central Ealing and West Ealing are separate centres, we have accepted the best way forward is to divide the Metropolitan Centre into two parts – Ealing and West Ealing – to develop separate Neighbourhood Plans for each of them. The following sections therefore begin by setting a Vision for the two centres together, and concludes by flagging some of the matters that are special to West Ealing alone.

Our Vision is not a blueprint for the future but the starting point for a debate with Ealing's many other stakeholders. Ealing is a hugely complex place and everyone sees it differently so as many people as possible need to get involved in a discussion about its future which the coming of neighbourhood planning will demand.

It is high time such a debate began. This will allow all those who are most interested in Ealing whether residents, businesses, landowners or potential investors a better understanding of which way the Ealing Town Centre is heading and how to make the most of its first rate assets.

This is our opening contribution to that debate.

*October 2012*

## 2. What is Ealing For? – A New Vision for the Future

Ealing’s West London location and excellent transport links made it an important centre serving a large local population. But changing shopping patterns mean Ealing needs new ways to attract the customers its businesses depend on. The town centre needs to redefine itself by exploiting better its great strengths and the opportunities that global, national and local changes are creating. Ealing’s strengths and opportunities can be summarized thus:

Strengths:	Opportunities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent accessibility to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Central London</li> <li>– Heathrow</li> <li>– SW England &amp; the Midlands</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Attractive Built Environment</li> <li>• Green spaces</li> <li>• Recent investments in new hotels</li> <li>• Rich heritage in Film and Music</li> <li>• Local catchment population</li> <li>• Home to one of London’s top catering colleges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing visitor numbers, especially from East and Southern Asia</li> <li>• London Plan promotion of strategic cultural and tourism areas</li> <li>• Poor/expensive mid-market hotel provision particularly for families elsewhere in central London</li> <li>• Underused commercial premises</li> <li>• Crossrail</li> <li>• Underdeveloped cultural scene in West London</li> </ul>

Happily, the strengths and the opportunities of its unique location provide the key to Ealing’s future prosperity. By developing and marketing its accessibility and its unique attractions, Ealing can supplement its role as a centre for the local Ealing community by establishing itself as **a special destination for the West London sub-region and as a place for visitors to London and the South of England to locate themselves.**

This new role can produce some significant benefits:

- The best characteristics of the town will be valued as assets and enhanced.
- A new customer base would be established for local businesses
- The evening economy would broaden to cater to the new visitors
- A new customer base for leisure and the arts would evolve.
- New facilities will provide a better offer to the existing population.
- The benefits would be enjoyed locally and not just by distant investors.
- It would establish new opportunities for young West London entrepreneurs.
- It is deliverable during the present economic slowdown.

The Key steps for achieving this Vision should include:

- Identifying assets that make Ealing an attractive place for visitors and then developing strategies and planning policies to enhance them
- Marketing Ealing to tourism advisors, international press, trade fairs etc
- Encouraging new hotel provision – aiming particularly at the mid market.
- Expanding non retail investment – especially leisure, culture etc
- Consolidating office uses and identifying opportunities to promote it
- Working with the BID co to encourage them to refocus their offer

The following pages consider the essential SEC believes are required to transform the town’s prospects by embracing this new role.



### **3. Town Centre Attractions: shopping and more**

#### **CONTEXT**

The London Plan categorises Ealing as one of London's top tier Metropolitan centres, but its ability to attract shoppers from a wide sub-region has been tested in recent years.

Changes in national shopping behaviour are challenging shopping centres throughout the country:

- Shoppers increasingly prefer larger centres for their comparison shopping
- The proportion of spending done on line is growing steadily.
- Good access to regional road networks and large and easily accessible car parks are important for attracting the biggest spenders.
- Retail consultants predict that the 15 year growth in consumer spending up to 2008 has now ended. The prospect is for flat or declining expenditure in the years ahead.

These trends have made it increasingly hard for smaller and less accessible centres to compete. Ealing has found itself hit especially hard:

- With over 300 stores selling all the latest brands, the Westfield Centre in White City is just a 15 minutes by underground from Ealing and a very strong competitor,
- Other large centres in the sub-region including Brent Cross, Uxbridge, Kingston and Richmond dominate neighbouring boroughs and draw customers from many parts of Ealing.
- The local road network makes Ealing difficult to reach by car. Its effective catchment for car-borne shoppers is Acton in the East and the Brent River to the west.
- Constraints of its site have proved it is unable to compete with nearby centres that have been better able to adapt to changes in shopping behaviour.

#### **ISSUES**

These changes have caused many major retailers to leave Ealing over the past 20 years and the centre has adjusted by moving down market. Where Ealing boasted 4 department stores in 1970 there are now none at all. Lower end stores that cater to customers arriving by public transport have helped to replace many of the departing stores, but the process has led to a sense of disconnection between the town centre and the established residential population who were once its core customers. These people visit the centre increasingly infrequently and travel elsewhere for their higher end goods. Government sponsored research has highlighted threats such disconnection creates for long term prosperity.

It is not just retailing that has been in decline. Other visitor attractions have also disappeared. All three of Ealing's old cinemas have closed their doors (there is a longstanding planning consent for a multiscreen complex to replace one of these but there is little sign that it will be implemented), and little night life except for a few pubs, though even these are not as crowded as they were a few years ago..

Landowners and retailers who remain in Ealing are understandably concerned what this means for them and all that they have invested in the town centre. Their concerns have led policies to 'regenerate' Ealing through its wholesale redevelopment. The argument is that new homes will attract new residents who will provide the new customer base that will revive retail prospects.

However, as this strategy did not succeed in reversing Ealing's decline at a time of rising consumer spending can it do so at time of greater austerity? Most of the new homes are

not designed for families, but they will be expensive and so attractive to London commuters who will have little time for comparison shopping in Ealing. How much new custom will the new residents bring to the town centre?

Perhaps it is time to consider what new approaches that could revitalise the town centre more successfully in a way that could benefit all those who run businesses in the centre or who live around it and depend on it.

## **AIMS**

The town centre's fortunes can be transformed only by finding new customers to replace those who no longer shop here. Ealing needs to find a new purpose. It can be more than just a shopping centre. While retaining its primary role as a centre serving people who live and work nearby, Ealing can prosper again by becoming THE stay-over location for short term visitors to London and the South of England and promote itself accordingly. It must also build on its heritage, particularly in culture, the media and in music.

The first step to reversing the town centre's long period of under-performance lies in understanding its unique strengths and opportunities and developing a strategies to exploit them.

## **PROPOSALS**

Achieving these aims therefore calls for a new approach to 'regeneration'. SEC thinks we should:

- Find a niche for Ealing that makes it different from other centres in West London and gives people a reason to come here.
- Identify the assets that make Ealing an attractive place for visitors from further afield and develop policies to enhance these assets. Some ideas for this might include:
  - Marketing Ealing to tourism advisors, international press, trade fairs etc
  - Encouraging new hotels to locate here – aiming particularly at the mid market.
  - Exploiting the opportunities the University of West London's highly rated catering college.
  - Expanding non retail investment – especially leisure, culture etc. See next section

## 4. A Focus on Arts & Leisure

### CONTEXT

There are longstanding proposals for extending the town centre's role as the borough 's cultural centre by establishing a Cultural Quarter in the centre. The idea is to attract new visitors into Ealing, improve business opportunities and enhance the quality of life here.

The Cultural Quarter would reverse a period of stagnation in cultural and leisure activity in Ealing. In the 1940s and 1950s, the internationally renowned Ealing Studios became a byword for the British cinema industry, specialising particularly in comedies. The studios subsequently evolved to producing BBC drama and then to becoming an independent film studio with ancillary film-related offices and education. Reflecting its cultural importance three cinemas served central Ealing.

At the same time, the town centre helped give birth to modern popular music. The Rolling Stones and the Who first performed at the Ealing Jazz and Blues club opposite Ealing Broadway Station. Other regulars at the club were Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart, Manfred Mann and founding members of the Animals. Together, these musicians made Ealing as internationally important as Liverpool's was for the Beatles.

The importance of the town centre as a cultural destination has declined in recent years. All Ealing's cinemas have closed leaving just remains on a site with an unfulfilled consent for redevelopment. And while Liverpool's Cavern Club continues to attract thousands of visitors each year, the Jazz and Blues club is remembered now only by a blue plaque recently installed above an Estate Agent.

But a strong cultural tradition remains in Ealing that that can provide the foundation for its renaissance. Key assets include:

- The annual Ealing Summer Festival in Walpole Park, draws large audiences each summer for a fortnight of comedy and jazz, blues and classical concerts.
- Pitzhanger Manor, Sir John Soane's Grade I Listed Building within Walpole Park, with its 1940s extension, has variously housed the Borough's central lending and reference libraries and its collection of Martinware pottery. It is now an exhibition gallery for contemporary art and a museum.
- Thriving amateur and community based activity. Questors Theatre is the largest community theatre in Europe and stages regular productions that quickly sell out.
- The Ealing OPEN arts centre has been pioneering project involving a social housing developer and the local artistic community.

### ISSUES

Despite the identification of a "cultural quarter" in Ealing's development plan, there remains no high quality performance venue for professional events in central Ealing, nor an arts centre. Arts training and performance is forced to take place in church halls, other hired accommodation or highly priced council premises – many of which are unsuitable.

Growth in the number of youth-orientated pubs and clubs has introduced some social disorder and discouraged other citizens from using the town centres' food and drink facilities. This in turn has lowered the quality of the leisure offer and narrowed the range of customers who visit the centre in the evenings. There is an urgent need for a wider range of more creative and sport activities catering particularly for young people in the evenings.



A wider range of facilities for the arts can exploit the centre's excellent public transport facilities and help to establish Ealing as a leisure and cultural destination attracting customers from far afield. These facilities need not necessarily be provided in a single building, but between them they should encompass a selection of activities normally found in an arts centre, such as:

- An auditorium in Ealing Town Centre which would be an adaptable space that can be used for professional as well as amateur performance of music, dance, literary and other cultural events featuring local, national and international artists, and which would include conference facilities;
- A major contemporary art gallery which will attract people from across all of West London and beyond. This could be in Pitzhanger Gallery & House.
- A community art gallery to enable local artists and schools to exhibit their work. This could also be in Pitzhanger Gallery & House.
- Studios for artists to hire for dance and exercise, music, film and photography etc;
- Modern, flexible rooms and spaces for hire by a wide range of community groups including for talks, teaching, meetings, and rehearsal;
- A small auditorium designed for art-house films, lectures and talks;
- The engagement of a professional arts administrator to organise programmes of events and activities which reflect the diverse nature of the borough, encompass all sections of society and all ages, and which appeal to both local residents and those from further afield; and
- Small scale indoor and outdoor sports provision.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To broaden the attraction of Ealing town centre with a wide range of cultural and leisure facilities to encourage residents to stay in the town and visitors to come into it.
- To fill the gap in the provision of high quality arts, culture and leisure facilities in West London by providing them in Ealing.
- To support local grass roots initiatives by creating suitable venues.
- To create an arts centre appropriate for a Borough of over 300,000 citizens
- To work with all local cultural, artistic and media organisations in developing a Cultural Strategy for the borough as a whole and Central Ealing in particular.

## **PROPOSALS**

The key proposals are to:

- Develop plans for a flexible, multi-purpose space in central Ealing incorporating an auditorium for performance with conference facilities and ancillary uses.
- Develop other arts and sports facilities in and around Ealing Broadway.
- An early start on replacing the demolished Empire Cinema in Uxbridge Road.
- Support the recommendation to the Council to appoint an Arts Officer for Ealing.
- Support the recommendation to the Council to develop a coherent lettings policy for the Town Hall, in order to introduce more facilities for arts and culture, notably in Victoria Hall.
- Consider using the Council property at 20 Bond St for cultural and arts purposes.

## 5. Reinvigorating the Business and Employment Sector

### CONTEXT

Thanks to its good transport, Ealing town centre has been an important commercial centre for many years. Office uses are heavily concentrated in larger buildings to the west of the town centre between Ealing Broadway and West Ealing along the Uxbridge Road on what is known as the “office corridor”.

A number of small professional office uses are located above shops in the Victorian and Edwardian buildings along the Broadway and The Mall, and on the upper floors of The Broadway Shopping Centre, and they have an important role in providing services to the local businesses and the community generally. A few workshops remain within or on the edge of the town centre. An important commercial activity with which Ealing has long been associated is Ealing Film Studios which front onto Ealing Green.

Some new areas of economic activity can be seen. For instance, private education facilities catering to overseas students particularly involving management and training colleges and language schools are establishing themselves in underutilised office buildings. And while for many years the town centre has lacked hotel facilities, the sector has recently started to attract new investors in the low and medium end of the market.

Ealing has some substantial assets that could form a very strong foundation onto which to build an interim regeneration strategy that would make Ealing’s wealth work harder. These assets include:

- The economic strength of the local community in Ealing. Yet only 35% of local expenditure takes place in Ealing;
- The strength of community organisation and cohesion in Ealing which can mobilise a support for local development initiatives and then maintain the key links between businesses and the community required for long term sustainability. As an example, recent increases in the West Ealing populations are starting to encourage a cosmopolitan, largely food-based economy to emerge, complemented by the successful weekly farmers’ market in Leeland Road which attracts shoppers in to West Ealing from some distance away
- Expanding tertiary education opportunities;
- The number of small businesses across Ealing
- Ealing is a cosmopolitan place with many national and international linkages.

### ISSUES

The economy of central Ealing has stagnated in recent years. Commercial office growth was especially strong during the 1960s with new office building stretching along the Uxbridge Road almost as far as West Ealing. Since that time, however, office and other non-retail commercial investment in the town centre have declined and with it the numbers of people employed in this sector.

A significant amount of office space in central Ealing now stands vacant or underutilised. Property consultants ascribe this to the lacklustre performance of Ealing as a retail and leisure destination, competition from more attractive locations in other boroughs, the sub-optimal location of the existing stock some distance from Ealing Broadway and West Ealing stations, insufficient car-parking and the obsolete condition of much of the existing stock. Views vary over the potential for the sector to recover in the longer term.

With the exception of the recent expansion of hotel construction, the present strategy for regenerating the town centre through attracting large scale inward investors has been patchy and the uncertain short to medium term economic outlook makes it unlikely that this will change for some time. Assuming that there is no further slippage in its arrival in Ealing Broadway and West Ealing, opportunities provided by Crossrail will no doubt provide a fillip towards the end of the decade, but in the meantime, Ealing Town centre seems destined to continue its downward drift. Crossrail could in any case prove to be a two edged sword making it easier for people to travel to other centres even more than they do now.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Ealing must promote sectors that are demonstrating growth potential in recent years. First and foremost, this should include encouraging the recent investment in hotel facilities catering to mid range visitors to Ealing. If Ealing can exploit the improvements in its connectivity that Crossrail will provide it can become a centre for visitors to the south east region. This will bring valuable new business opportunities to local business and it help to stimulate new leisure activities that the whole Ealing community can benefit from. A related sector that can bring new business to the town centre is the provision of education services – especially those that cater to overseas students.

Ealing must also examine the potential to promote sectors of the economy that have grown neglected but where, in the past, it appeared to enjoy some natural economic advantages. Media industries offer perhaps the best example. There may be considerable untapped potential for building on the legacy Ealing Studios have created which could also develop into an important visitor attraction. Also within this category are market research activities which remain in Ealing, but without the international importance they once had..

But during what promises to be a period of low growth nationally, an interim strategy is also required to kick start economic development, employment and wealth creation in the local community. Ealing must aim to enhance the local economy without depending so strongly on seeking out major inward capital investment. Some well established approaches based on “plugging the leaks” concept to stopping money flowing out of a local economy, have been developed in US and Europe to increase the proportion of local consumer, commercial and government expenditure that is spent on locally on goods and services. These need to be pursued in Ealing.

In more recent times there has been a growth in locally inspired, community-based food initiatives such as West Ealing Neighbours’ Abundance project (to make use of surplus fruit); Ealing Transition’s initiatives (to source and distribute locally grown produce through box schemes); Cultivate London’s recently launched project (to use derelict local land to grow and sell herbs). There are other grass roots food-related initiatives from local residents and organisations which clearly confirm the trend .

## **PROPOSALS**

Careful thought is required as to the best locations for new commercial activities in Ealing. Key considerations should include:

1. Exploiting the increased accessibility of the town centre Ealing Broadway and West Ealing created by Crossrail, through high quality mixed-use development
2. The various potential redevelopment sites in the town centre which offer an opportunity for new commercial space within easy walking distance of Ealing

Broadway and West Ealing stations. Traditional office employment is best concentrated close to the stations where it is most accessible to commuters arriving by public transport. For example at:

- Villiers House and the Ealing Broadway station site: a significant, well-designed building of up to 30m (8/9 storeys beside a new bus/rail/underground interchange) could replace the present empty 9/10-storey Villiers House. This would create a landmark building in conjunction with the station development for Crossrail, incorporating retail space as well as improved links to the Arcadia centre.
  - The Arcadia site is ideally located as a centre for commuting. Redevelopment of the site might therefore comprise a significant quantity of commercial space over retail units fronting The Broadway and Springbridge Road.
  - Other town centre locations (Broadway Centre, Lamertons and cinema sites) could also be developed to provide office units and cultural facilities.
3. The Uxbridge Road office corridor should continue to cater for current business occupiers wherever the demand for this exists. After allowing for some conversion to residential and provision for community use, unused commercial space on the office corridor should be turned over to hotel or educational and training purposes, Such development should be combined with the provision of small retail facilities to serve the offices (such as restaurants) and increased nearby housing.
  4. The least accessible units could then convert to residential accommodation
  5. Other commercial uses also need to be provided for. In particular:
    - ensuring adequate provision of smaller good quality commercial units as incubator space for new start-ups local entrepreneurs.
    - ensuring expanded provision of cultural/leisure and conference facilities.

## **6. Introducing New Homes**

### **CONTEXT**

The town centre is the geographical heart of a large Borough. Since establishing itself around the railway station in the 19<sup>th</sup> century its primary function has been as the retail, civic, culture and leisure centre for the community that lives around it. This community mostly lived within walking distance of the facilities that served them, in low rise, medium density housing with gardens or communal open space, typical of a family-based suburb.

Recent changes in West London have undermined this long established pattern. High house prices and Crossrail are attracting developers into Ealing who are keen to exploit its links with Central London, Heathrow etc. National and London wide policies for new homes intensify these pressures. The result is unprecedented demand for new homes town centre involving developments at densities never known before.

The new homes are being widely marketed and attract overseas buyers who see Ealing as a stable long term location in which to invest surplus capital. The high costs make Ealing unaffordable for many people with longstanding local ties who would like to live here. Very few affordable homes, or social homes for rent are being built and their high service charges put even these outside the reach of many local people.

These trends are moving Ealing away from a traditional family suburb. The challenge for Ealing's future will be to manage the pressures that result in a way that can best retain the vital central place role of the town centre and the elements of the built environment which give Ealing the character people value.

### **ISSUES**

Issues arising from the increase in population that are likely to affect the prosperity of the town centre and its central place role include:

1. The displacement by residential uses of key town centre functions such as employment/offices, leisure, civic, community and conference facilities that the major town centre of London's third largest Borough would expect to provide.
2. The change of character of the town centre into a densely populated residential area featuring high rise buildings that do not relate to the character or the pattern of existing developments.
3. The impact of on the town centre of concentrations of small 1 or 2 bed flats with little or no family accommodation. It is likely these will attract buyers and tenants who spend time and money outside the town centre rather than supporting the local economy or engage with the local community.
4. The paucity of affordable homes within the price range of key workers or the children of long term residents who wish to remain in Ealing.
5. Gated communities and areas of privatised public space curtail individual freedoms and can introduce a sense of separateness between the existing community and those who move in here.

6. There are insufficient sites to provide the infrastructure, needed to support such a rapid rise in new residents, especially sites for schools, medical facilities, and open space.
7. Many buyers expect parking spaces which puts pressures on the local road network which is already at capacity and on and local CPZs. Underground provision increases building costs which add to pressures for higher building densities.
8. Environmental factors, such as poor air quality and high noise levels demand closed windows and forced ventilation. Such apartments are environmentally unsustainable.

## **OBJECTIVES**

It will simply not be possible to find satisfactory solutions to all these issues, and it must be accepted that choices must be made between them. It is important the issues are recognised and that some priorities are agreed.

SEC's priorities are:

- To retain and enhance the diversity of Ealing town centre's central place role.
- To insist that major new residential developments in the town centre are compatible with what is already established here. In particular this means that building must be of a height and massing that respects Ealing's suburban character and that gated communities are not appropriate.
- To encourage mixed use developments with new homes built above other uses that more fully reflect and strengthen the town centre's central place role.
- To ensure that necessary social infrastructure is provided as well as new homes.
- To incorporate sheltered and genuinely affordable housing within Ealing town centre.

## **PROPOSALS**

Achieving these objectives will require some clear demands of new developers:

- While they may provide new residential uses, developments in the town centre should be required to contribute meaningfully to the overall aim of revitalising the town centre as a place that attracts new businesses and visitors. They must therefore be genuinely 'mixed use'.
- New homes should be marketed within London, and not to overseas purchasers.
- All new developments should comply with GLA policies for affordable housing.
- A good mix of sizes of homes of different tenures should be provided in each development.
- Where new homes are located close to transport interchanges with good access to public transport, limited off-street parking should be provided. Car clubs should be provided in new developments.
- The provision of underground car-parking should not be a reason to defray the cost by increasing a development's bulk or height.

## **WEST EALING**

A number of very large residential developments are proposed for West Ealing : including the redevelopment of the Green Man Lane Estate, (now underway) and the forthcoming redevelopment of the Sherwood Close Estate (Dean Gardens Estate). This means that over the next 10 years West Ealing will see well over 1500 more people living within 100 metres of the heart of West Ealing where infrastructure deficiencies are already apparent.

It is important for these new residential developments to be effectively integrated with West Ealing Town Centre to re-establish the role of the centre as the heart of the community.



## 7. Community Facilities

### CONTEXT

Ealing town centre serves the community in many different ways. It is the location of the Town Hall and Perceval House, which provide local government services to the 300,000 people living between Southall and Acton.

The Borough is divided into 23 Wards. Each ward has three elected Councillors who engage with their constituents at ward forums held three times a year. Five wards cover the Metropolitan Centre – (roughly speaking) three in Central Ealing and two in West Ealing and each ward forum has a modest budget for local improvements.

However, most of the services that the Council and other providers deliver are organised at the corporate level and targeted at individual neighbourhoods. Ealing and West Ealing tend to be treated by these providers as separate neighbourhoods as they are two very distinctive areas. These services include:

- police
- healthcare
- education
- parks/open space
- sport
- information and advice
- meeting rooms of varying sizes for use by community groups and private events
- crèche and playgroup services
- and for the increasing elderly population, drop-in cafes and organised lunch clubs.

### ISSUES

In both Ealing and West Ealing neighbourhoods, existing services are utilised pretty well to their capacity and there is little to spare for supporting large numbers of new residents. Both areas are intensively developed and there is very limited space for additional provision. Any significant increase in the resident population will place greater strain on available facilities many of which struggle to cope with existing demand.

1. **Perceval House.** As the centre of Council activities, Perceval House attracts hundreds of visitors every day. Their experience is often not a very good one. Public reception facilities are usually chronically overcrowded and very impersonal. Overworked frontline staff obviously struggle to do their best, but long waits are the norm even for very simple matters.
2. **Police and Public Safety.** Central Ealing's Police Station in is recognised as inadequate. There are no custody cells and poor facilities for public reception. It presently houses several Safer Neighbourhood Teams, most of which operate outside Ealing centre, and should in or near their own wards. The Borough Commander has been seeking unsuccessfully to find more suitable premises near the town centre.
3. **Healthcare.** GP provision in Ealing centre is already at capacity, and there seems no space for expansion. The Primary Health Care Trust (PCT) considers a significant increase in the resident population will require a new practice and space for this is needed. The Ealing Community Group will take over responsibility for NHS

healthcare in Ealing in April 2013. NHS Northwest London is considering closing Ealing Hospital as a major hospital with A&E and other vital services.

4. **Education.** There are no open-entry state primary or secondary schools in the Ealing Broadway area. An infant school and a junior school within 800m (1/2 mile) of The Broadway, are Church of England controlled which restricts access to them. New provision will be needed in the near future to cater for the growth in the existing population, but possible sites in the area for expansion are being lost to other uses.

All the secondary schools within 1,500m of the centre are over-subscribed, despite the area having a relatively low percentage of secondary age children. An increase in the relevant population in the town to anything like the average of the rest of the borough “will become even more of an issue”.

5. **Parks/open spaces.** Parks and open spaces in the town centre are the most intensively used in the Borough and the centre of Ealing is seen as an area of “moderate deficiency” for local public community and open space. Haven Green in particular has come under growing pressure from the encroachment of bus stands and public utilities.
6. **Sport.** There are no public sporting facilities within a ten-minute walk of the town centre. Tibbalds has noted that “there is a distinct lack of informal space for older children to play”, with the nearest sports centre over 800m away. There are four private gyms in the area (one with a small swimming pool), and a members’ squash club.
7. **Information/Advice.** The Central and West Ealing libraries have recently been refurbished and re-purposed as more of a study centre than previously. There is no Citizens Advice Bureau or similar service in central Ealing.
8. **Affordable space for family and community events.** Space for private functions is limited. Town Hall facilities are available but they are busy and expensive, and in general not of the quality many people expect when they want to celebrate events like weddings. Local churches offer halls for community use, but these spaces may not always be suitable or appropriate for people with differing faiths – or no faith at all - and they may have restrictions on the nature of usage.
9. **Crèche/playgroup/child minding facilities.** The 2001 census tells us that there were 3,642 children aged four or less in the wards of Ealing Broadway, Cleveland, Hanger Hill, Ealing Common and Walpole. Whilst only a proportion of these live within the immediate centre, any significant new housing would create a demand for appropriate facilities which do not exist at present.
10. **Community facilities for elderly people.** The 2001 census found 8,180 residents of 65 years of age or over in the Wards of Ealing Broadway, Cleveland, Hanger Hill, Ealing Common and Walpole. However, other than the Polish Centre in Windsor Road there are no publicly available drop-in cafes or lunch clubs for the elderly in the centre of Ealing.

## AIMS

Wherever residents live in the borough they need ready access to the range of services available in other communities across the country. The services to be provided in central

Ealing must be tailored to meet immediate local needs as well as the requirements of the wider borough.

All developments that increase demand on the existing services must be matched by providing the necessary resources – most especially funding and dedicated space - to maintain existing service levels at the very least to the levels that now exist. This will be particularly important in catering to the impacts resulting from the large numbers of numbers new homes that are planned for Ealing.

## **PROPOSALS**

The growth in the residential population already in the pipeline means that new facilities need to be provided now to ensure that standards of service provision in Ealing do not decline. Additional residential units should not be approved until firm provision is made to provide the additional services that new residents will expect.

Discussions involving all sections of the community need to be held with service providers to reveal forward plans for the provision of the following community services:

1. A fully functioning Police Station convenient to the main public areas, with proper counter service and all main public support functions.
2. A new GP practice.
3. Additional primary and secondary school sites
4. Improvement plans for public open spaces in the central area and new public realm for arts, cultural and entertainment uses.
5. Public facilities must be provided in the centre of Ealing for both indoor and outdoor sports activities.
6. Establishment of advisory services such as a Citizens Advice Bureau for local residents and the wider surrounding area. This could be based in a refurbished Town Hall.
7. Day Nurseries should be provided in all major new residential development in the centre.
8. New developments in the centre of Ealing should make provision for suitable space for drop-in centres or lunch clubs for the elderly.

Some of the above could be provided in the underutilised Town Hall or by building and managing a new Central Ealing Community Centre.

## 8. The Built Environment

### CONTEXT

The special architectural and historical interest of Ealing's town centre derives from growth as a commercial focus for the Borough in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, following the arrival of the railway in the 1832.

A special feature is the relationship between the Edwardian/Victorian buildings and open spaces in the centre of the town, in particular the common land at Haven Green, Ealing Green and Ealing Common, all incorporated in their own conservation areas. These green spaces have helped to establish Ealing's distinctive character as a suburban centre.

*'Ealing is arguably unique in the scale and coherence of these (Victorian and Edwardian) Areas and the limited degree to which they have been altered over a century or more since they were built.'*

Professor Sir Peter Hall. Evidence to the Arcadia Inquiry.

Almost all the historic centre is covered by the Town Centre Conservation Area which contains some important nationally and locally listed buildings and buildings of facade value. Except to the west, it is surrounded by other Conservation Areas that influenced its historical development and still comprise Ealing's immediate setting. These, and the main railway line to the north, provide strong boundaries that mark its limits and restricts its spread.

The main shopping area along the curve of The Mall and The Broadway is characterised by distinctive frontages that are locally listed as being of special interest. These are typical of the late Victorian/Edwardian three and four storey developments that demonstrated the prosperity of suburban town centres in those days. Both Haven and Ealing Green shopping parades have buildings of group or facade value, each with a Grade II listed shop.

This fine suburban grain and scale has been broken in the later 20th century by a number of poor quality buildings, both along the main east-west axis and by blocks such as Villiers House. These developments have disfigured the town centre because they have failed to relate to their surroundings and did not use materials traditionally employed in Ealing, where the prevalent architectural language of the centre remains red and stock brick and stone.

Commercial buildings further west along Uxbridge Road outside the Conservation Area have a different style and are visually separate from the historic centre. Many are poorly designed and out of keeping with the Conservation Areas and they give a poor impression of the town centre when approached from the west. They also create a clear division between Ealing Broadway and West Ealing, marking the latter as a district centre with its own architectural character.

### ISSUES

The amended London Plan expects high density developments in town centres but explains that high density does not need to imply high rise. It says that tall buildings ie those that are substantially taller than their surroundings should only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by its scale, mass or bulk. It goes on to say tall and large buildings should be part of a plan-led approach to changing an area.

The Secretary of State agreed with his planning inspector when he decided Glenkerrin's Arcadia development should not proceed primarily because it was out of keeping with the Conservation Areas in which it lay. Other schemes approved by the Council eg at Dickens

Yard and Westel House have been for heights significantly exceeding those prevailing in the town centre. This approach has been inconsistent and creates uncertainty that risks undermining the characteristics with which Ealing has long been associated. A clearer approach is required.

## **AIMS**

Ealing's foremost attraction is the character of its built environment, and the way that it relates to its green spaces. To attract the new visitors the town centre needs to ensure its continuing prosperity, Ealing must make the best possible use of these attractions.

The Council has prepared Management Plans for the Conservation Areas within and around the centre and these need to be maintained and developed. These plans provide an important guide for assessing all proposals for new development whether modest new shop fronts or major site developments and their provisions should be closely adhered to.

The Management Plans provide particularly important guidance on establishing appropriate building densities and massing to reflect the local context. They describe:

- why heights of new buildings should respect the historic scale of the town
- the design principles and materials that reflect those prevalent in the area.

## **PROPOSALS**

Future developments in the centre should:

1. Preserve and enhance the existing townscape and historic character of the town and its Conservation Areas, and respect its scale and open spaces.
2. Preserve key views and landmark elements of the townscape. New buildings close to significant existing buildings or façades should complement them and contribute to their historic interest.
3. Be attractively designed in their own right and of a scale, proportion and massing that respects the Victorian/Edwardian structure of Ealing. In line with London Plan Town Centre policies that development proposals should be in scale with the centre, this means that:
  - Building heights should reflect Conservation Areas and protected facades. The following maximum heights should generally be observed:
    - Shopping road 3 -4 storeys;
    - Public open space 2 – 6 storeys;
    - Internal blocks 6 – 8.
    - Offices in the commercial area – consistent with existing.
  - Building densities should reflect the current densities in the town centre with a plot ratio of around 2:1 and around 70-260 u/ha
  - High quality contemporary styles would only be acceptable if they remain sympathetic in context of neighbouring buildings, particularly in choice of materials and finishes (which should generally be brick and stone).
4. Create new communal space for relaxation with public realm that is welcoming rather than intimidating to the visitor at any time of day and night.
5. Ensure new buildings reflect the distinctive character of the area.
6. Replace buildings and other elements that currently have a negative impact upon the centre, in particular unsympathetic modern additions.

## 9. Transport & Movement

### CONTEXT

Ealing town centre is an important West London transport hub that is used by all those who live or work in or pass through the town centre regularly.

Ealing Broadway Station lies on the Great Western Railway and provides regular services to Paddington, London Heathrow Airport, the Midlands, South Wales and the West Country. Two underground lines terminate there, making the station an important interchange. Ealing is also an important bus interchange with 15 different routes passing through the centre or terminating there.

Though much less busy than Ealing Broadway, West Ealing Station provides a useful entry into the western part of the Metropolitan centre. Just 2 bus routes pass close by the station and neither of these come from or go to areas south of the Uxbridge Road.

Public transport demand is expected to increase heavily following the completion of Crossrail. Both Ealing Broadway and West Ealing Stations will enjoy greatly enhanced services.

The busy A4020, the Uxbridge Road, which runs from east-west through Ealing is the borough's historic spine. Two north south distributor roads cut across the A4020 – the B455 which passes through Haven Green and the B452 which crosses at the Lido Junction. Both routes are heavily trafficked, they are regularly congested and a cause of high levels of atmospheric pollution.

The Victorian street pattern provides good pedestrian and cycle access into the town centre.

### ISSUES

Transport arrangements in and around Ealing town centre cause many problems and redevelopment proposals provide opportunities for addressing them.

#### 1. Walking and Cycling

- There are many points of conflict between vehicle, cyclist and pedestrian movement, i.e. where buses and other vehicles cross the path of cyclists and pedestrians.
- The only major pedestrianised areas are within Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre and Arcadia. New pedestrian space is to be provided in the Dickens Yard development, but the quality of this has been eroded following changes to the scheme originally approved.
- The footways are too narrow in many places. This is often exacerbated by street traders, A- boards and street furniture.
- There are few cycle routes separated from busy roads.

#### 2. Public Transport

- Ealing Broadway station handles a very high number of passengers, being both a terminus for two underground lines, and a stopping place for up to eight trains per hour on the heavily utilised Paddington line. The station entrance is overcrowded and dangerous at peak times, with no step-free access to the booking hall or platforms from street level. The station will be modified to meet the needs of Crossrail to include



an enlarged booking hall and some lifts to the platforms, but no escalators or other significant enhancements.

- Access to Ealing Broadway station for car-borne passengers is very poor. The only drop-off and pick-up facility for passengers in private cars is inadequate. The taxi rank cannot be reached without crossing a busy road. There are no “legal” pick-up and drop-off points for mini-cabs and instead informal pick up points add to congestion on the Mall around the corner.
- The bus stops are not concentrated outside the station but are also spread out on and around Haven Green, The Broadway and The Mall. There is no bus station even though nine daily bus routes terminate in the vicinity.
- North-south buses encounter the congestion of the Uxbridge Road corridor
- The planned redevelopment of West Ealing (mainline) station for Crossrail is unsatisfactorily relocating the entrance on Manor Road which will make access for passengers arriving from the south longer.

### 3. Access roads and parking

- The main access roads into Ealing town centre are very congested even outside peak times and there is no scope for adding new road capacity.
- Heavy traffic can affect the centre of Ealing at most times of the day. Some is caused by the one-way system on the east and west sides of Haven Green; some by heavy volumes of east/west traffic.
- Traffic heading to and from the town centre car parks from the north or east has to pass through the town centre,
- There is inadequate off-road parking for delivery vehicles.

## FUTURE DEMANDS

Arrival of Crossrail and a significant increase in residential units, shops, offices, cultural and community facilities in central Ealing will have important effects on transport and movement.

- More pedestrian activity
- Increased demand for public transport
- More vehicle movements resulting from additional provision for parking for residents, shoppers and deliveries
- Additional up-market retail provision which relies on car-borne customers
- Crossrail anticipates the number of people using Ealing Broadway station will increase by 40% by 2026.

## AIMS

SEC's priorities for improving transport are to:

1. Develop a more integrated transport system which improves interchange between transport modes.
2. Improve ease of walking and cycling throughout the centre of Ealing,
3. Reduce the number of vehicles in and around the centre to engender a more pleasant and safer environment
4. Improve traffic flow and access to car parks.
5. Support transport initiatives for improving air quality.

## PROPOSALS

### 1. Walking

- Giving the needs and safety of pedestrians the highest priority in areas that are primarily pedestrian spaces, like Haven Green.
- Widening footways
- Ensuring step-free pedestrian routes within new developments
- Eliminating pedestrian/vehicle conflict in new developments
- Improvements to pedestrian crossings
- Considering the possibility for pedestrian bridges if they can fit into the existing built environment.

### 2. Cycling

In our cash-constrained times investment in cycling is good value for money compared with investment in other modes, brings substantial health benefits and has important environmental benefits. Most specifically, cycling can be a good way to overcome the lack of orbital transport in west London.

SEC supports the aims of the Ealing Cycling Campaign, especially for:

- Better recognition of the existing cycle route network, with priority for maintenance and better signing
- A network of all-weather Greenways, to allow new and returning cyclists to practice their skills before tackling busy roads, as well as for leisure cycling,
- Removal of vehicle parking from the Uxbridge Road cycle lanes to improve safety,
- Improved facilities for cycle parking within the town centre.

### 3. Public Transport

- An Integrated Transport Interchange that provides safe step-free transfers between trains, buses and taxis. This should be under cover and without any need to cross a road.
- Support investment in an orbital travel. Better north-south links could drastically reduce journey times and improve employment, commercial and social prospects across West London. A proposed West London Orbital Tube from Brent Cross to Surbiton would cut the journey time from Ealing Broadway to Wembley Park to 6 minutes.
- Relieve demand at Ealing Broadway by making better use of West Ealing Station.
- North/South bus routes need reassessment and improvement

### 4. Traffic volumes

- Demand for vehicular access to and within the town centre needs to be more actively managed.

### 5. Car parking, access roads and deliveries

- A study of the local highway network is required to explore options for rationalising it. This should be done as soon as possible at a time during the present economic downturn.
- Access to existing and proposed car parking (residential, commercial and public) must take into account arrivals and departures from all directions.
- Access to major new developments within the town centre should be from distributor roads. Existing local roads are not appropriate for this purpose.
- New development must include off-road delivery and servicing provisions.

## 10 Conclusions

Ealing town centre is the administrative, commercial and social centre of the borough and beyond. The health and prosperity of the centre and the linked area of west Ealing affect every resident, worker and visitor.

The Localism Act is an important step forward in the way that local communities and businesses can get more involved in shaping the future of their towns. Central and West Ealing centres have been recognised as potential “neighbourhood areas” within which local forums will have a large say in how they develop, through neighbourhood planning,

SEC’s Vision is part of that process. We want the centres to revitalise themselves in the face of the demographic and economic challenges confronting them, to retain them and their residential hinterlands as prosperous and pleasant places to live in and work.

### **Our Vision is that in 2026 Ealing will be a major centre in the region which**

- has reinvented itself as the focal point for the Borough’s residents and as a base for visitors to the wider region.
  - No longer seeking to compete on unequal terms with larger metropolitan centres, Ealing will have rediscovered its role as the centre of the local community and will be earning its way as a cultural and artistic centre and as a popular base for visitors to London and the South of England from all over the world.
- will have become a major leisure and cultural destination. Business, leisure and cultural facilities will complement quality retail to provide economic prosperity.
  - The Town Centre will be a dynamic, interesting venue with a variety of arts, leisure and sporting activities, attracting those of all ages. Commercial enterprises and social providers will benefit from “spin offs” into retail, leisure and business activities.
- has a plan for its regeneration that allocates sites for their best uses and connects these to other sites in Ealing and the Borough with an overall integrity of design and function.
- maintains and enhances its unique and distinctive historic character.
  - Our landmark buildings and green spaces will be Ealing’s defining elements.
  - The height, style, mass, spacing and quality of new developments will be in harmony with the surrounding townscape
- is easier to access by all modes of transport.
  - A fully re-developed Ealing Broadway station will have a step-free transport interchange for trains, underground, buses, taxis and car drop offs, with the capacity to handle the ever larger numbers of people who will use it.
  - Road access into the town centre will be concentrated on main roads. Existing routes will be rationalised to make use of underutilised space and reduce congestion.
- is more pleasant to move around, particularly on foot, or by bicycle.
  - High permeability with footpath and cycle paths linking key destinations will encourage non-vehicle movement around the Town Centres.
- is renowned as a beacon for sustainable development.
  - Ealing can exploit its good public transport to minimise travel. Main uses clustered around a new Crossrail interchange mean people can do many things in one visit.
  - Buildings will minimise energy consumption and maximise “green” energy.