Policy 2.5 Regenerate Ealing Town Centre, and especially parts (a) to (d) of it are unsound as they are unjustified.

Reasoning:-

The descriptions in part (b) are misleading. The split between Ealing Broadway and Ealing Green looks strange and local people would have great difficulty knowing where a line between them would be drawn. The description for Ealing Broadway fails to mention the large number of eating places and significant numbers of offices, pubs and nightclubs, all of which characterise the area. It also suggests that it is a high quality retail destination, whereas it is very mid-market with a trend to move down market. There is no sign that it will ever serve a catchment area wider than the borough.

There are several reasons why other parts of the proposed strategy are unsound:-

- The office market in Ealing has struggled for many, many years. This has little to do with the recent recession. Much of the office use is inherently linked with local services being provided to the borough. This includes Ealing Council, the police service and social housing organisations. Other employers include those like Dunnhumby who are there because their founders had a house in Ealing. One of the largest blocks (Westel House, part of site EAL14) was used by the TVU for many years and has been empty for the last 4 years. Other “office” blocks are now occupied by the London School of Business. I think there must now be over 200,000sqm of spare office space. The owners of Westel House plan to knock it down and replace it with a hotel and flats, as they don’t see any demand for offices. Ealing Council effectively accepted this argument when they granted planning permission for this redevelopment (PP/2010/4585), despite this being contrary to the UDP and the strategy proposed in the draft LDF. The owners of 22-24 Uxbridge Road (site EAL21 with permission P/2007/3971 for a hotel and office block) later gained approval for a hotel/data centre because they saw no demand for offices. Building work on the new hotel/data centre is well underway.

- The office quarter is a bad location for a headquarters building. Such buildings typically attract staff from a wide area. Travel from some remoter locations will be by car, but there is limited capacity on the roads to get into central Ealing and limited parking capacity (none at Ealing Cross) for those who struggle there. The main rail access is just on an east-west access, although Crossrail will extend it to much of central London. Many of the office buildings are a 10 minute walk from the station, or an extra 20 minutes a day on top of the rest of the daily commute. The only ready way of getting more cars to the centre of Ealing is
from the North Circular Road, whose capacity has just been increased with the rebuilding of
the bridges over the railway lines.
• It is not a great location for lower value, e.g. call centre, work. This is the most prosperous
area of Ealing and so there may not be many potential employees who live locally.
• Putting residential very near to the station is designed for people who want to travel to
central London for work. Having offices next to the station will encourage people to come
into central Ealing to work.
• There has been strong demand from the educational sector and this is likely to continue.
TVU (now University of West London) only expanded at Brentford because Ealing Council
would not provide space locally. They had very much wanted to stay in Ealing. The London
School of Business and various language schools have established themselves in Ealing.
There have been recent successful planning applications to convert part of Walpole Court
(P/2010/1441) and part of Flavas (P/2010/0388) into training centres. The character of
Ealing is very attractive for further education/training and the well-educated local
population provide a ready pool of lecturers/trainers.
• Good quality student accommodation is in high demand within London. Locating this near to
further educational establishments substantially reduces journey times and environmental
impacts.
• There has historically been a shortage of hotel accommodation (of any type) in central
Ealing. There is now strong demand for building new hotels and for converting offices to
hotels.

Current trends and commercial pressures would suggest a quite different strategy is
more appropriate, namely:-
• Modest increase in retail floorspace to serve the local catchment area.
• Little increase in the number of flats within 400m of Ealing Broadway station.
• Increase in the office space within 400m of Ealing Broadway station
• Consideration of an additional access road from the North Circular
• Reduction of traditional office space within the office quarter and replacement with further
education and training establishments, along with student accommodation.
• Increase in hotel space in line with emerging demand.
• Retention of facilities for local commercial services, e.g. garages, DIY stores. Some expansion
of the wide range of eating places and retention of the pubs and nightclubs that add to the
economic vigour of the area.

Richard Chilton  (Chair of The Park Community Group)