

**MATTER NO: 2:1 Vision and Objectives**

Judy and Arthur Breens: Kingsdown Residents Association (KRA) Rep. No: 25

**2:1 Are the Vision and Strategic Objectives soundly based and appropriate for this Borough, consistent with national policies, *reflecting community views* and locally distinctive, and do they provide a sound basis for the overall spatial strategy and strategic policies in the Core Strategy?**

**We intend to focus on the phrase “reflecting community views”**

For nearly ten years Ealing residents including our residents association have been trying to influence Ealing Council’s policy on planning in central and west Ealing. Residents have vigorously participated in consultations and protests. Views have been largely been ignored (with some hard won exceptions)

**Here is a programme of events to evidence the views of Ealing people who have been forced for many years to spend endless time and trouble trying to defend their town centre.**

**1) 2002-4 Tram consultations** were forced on Ealing residents re a Council supported TfL plan to run a railway down the Uxbridge Road from Uxbridge to Shepherds Bush. This would force road traffic to our residential streets. **Innumerable protests culminating in a Petition of 11,000 signatures** delivered to Mayor Ken Livingston. Neither the Council nor the Mayor responded. £38 million was spent on this impractical project. In 2004 it was finally dropped with no reason and no apology to residents for the waste of both our money and our time.

**2) 5<sup>th</sup> Sept 2007 First LDF Meeting in Ealing Town Hall. Consultation Sept to October 2007.**

KRA responded, spending hours on a Strategy and Sites Consultation Response Form for “ **Local Development Framework: New Issues and Options for Planning your Borough**”.

Key points made; **“Our Vision for Ealing W5 and W13 is that as far as possible we would like it preserved as the leafy low-rise, largely Victorian and Edwardian suburb we know and love. We are uncomfortable with changes that seem to want to make it more “inner city”.** We requested *more conservation areas and to keep the existing Edwardian heritage lampposts.* (Latter request, after a very long campaign, was achieved when 800 lampposts were upgraded and retained in 2008/9)

**3) November 2007 Save Ealing’s Centre (SEC) formed** comprising 26 Resident and Community groups (total 12,500+ residents) to protect Ealing from the unwanted plans forced on us by the Council’s “Regeneration Team”. In November 2008 SEC produced a **Vision for Ealing Broadway Town Centre with alternative proposals.**

**4) June 19<sup>th</sup> 2008: Ealing Town Centre Regeneration Meeting 180 people** attended this meeting Preliminary plans of the later to be revealed LDF Core Strategy appeared. A Report of attendees views followed. Quoting from this Report; **“a holistic Ealing vision/plan needed”, “Policy for tall buildings to be maximum 6-8 storeys”, Buildings not “developer led” but following Ealings plan. “ “Metropolitan town centre status not viable should be more like Chiswick/Richmond” “ new focus for Ealing” “ enhanced leisure, culture arts rather than more shops”, “high rise buildings not wanted” “character of Town Centre to be kept” “ Integrated bus/train transport hub at Ealing Broadway and step-free access”.....**

**5) Nov 5<sup>th</sup> 2008 Dickens Yard Plans** passed despite massive objections from residents.

**The Dickens Yard Original 2004** brief showed a height of **8 storeys and 250 flats** together with community facilities. A public consultation took place and there was general resident agreement of the plan. However in 2008 revised plans increased height to **14 storeys and 698 flats**. There were **massive objections** to the new plan from Ealing residents but it was passed. Appeals to Boris and for a call-in to Government sadly failed. It is now being built. (Recent news reveals that half the current sales are to foreign buyers making nonsense of the claim these flats would be affordable or benefit Ealing residents.)

**6) Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 Arcadia plans approved by the Council.** This development proposed buildings up to 40 storeys, later reduced to 26 storeys, 567 flats and shops. 305 objection letters and 26 support letters were received (These figures were shockingly misrepresented at the planning meeting and only later after protest was the truth confirmed and “mistakes” admitted) After appeals to Government the plan was called in. **A Public Inquiry in July 2009 resulted in rejection by the Sec of State for Communities.**

**7) January 2009 Save Ealing's Centre public meeting** to discuss their alternative vision for the town centre re-development and launch SEC's Vision document for Ealing. 300 people are present.

**8) Sept to October 2009 Draft LDF2026 Core Strategy Consultation.**

Here was revealed that 14,000 new homes were proposed to be built by 2026: 85% to be flats on the "Uxbridge Rd Corridor" 12% on A40 corridor and 3% elsewhere in the borough. Not surprisingly residents in central/west Ealing were unhappy. The consultation was impossible for people without a planning background to access. It lasted 6 weeks only and the paperwork involved was impenetrable. Public meetings were poorly advertised. KRA's submission included **objecting to the densification of this small corridor rather than spreading new homes around the borough, "landmark tall buildings" and the lack of infrastructure plans.** We did not complete the non-user-friendly official forms. We relied upon Save Ealing's Centre admirable input to speak for the Alliance's 12,500 residents. **There were 60 respondents only in total. From the later report we assumed there would be little change to the LDF Core Strategy plan despite resident's opposition.**

**10) Feb 2010 Save Ealing's Centre pre-election public meeting** with prospective MPs and Party's Council leaders to debate priorities and policies on the Town Centre and answer questions. About 300 were present. A survey form completed and returned by 203 residents gives an idea of views: **"EALING TOWN CENTRE: Your Views"** to be passed to the Council. **SEC handed these in before the Nov 2010 deadline in hard copy form.** The Inspector should have a copy. **A summary is attached.**

- 1) The design of new buildings should reflect and respect the remaining Victorian and Edwardian Buildings **90% Yes 7% No**
- 2) Building heights should relate to the height of nearby buildings, particularly listed Buildings **95% Yes 4% No**
- 3) Conservation Areas should be retained and strengthened. **95% Yes 4% No**
- 4) The town centre will struggle very hard to cope with 2000 new homes (about 5000 more people) **90% Yes 8% No**
- 5) An integrated transport interchange for rail, tube, buses, taxis & minicabs on one weatherproof site is needed. **91% Yes 5% No**
- 6) Planning the town centre must take account of the constraints on daytime private car movements imposed by Ealing's road congestion. **82% Yes 7% No**
- 7) With an ageing population more priority should go on making developments accessible (Uxbridge has a good Shopmobility scheme – Why not Ealing?) **86% Yes 7% No**
- 8) More emphasis must go on Town Centre Arts and Culture. (Richmond has two professional theatres. The developers of Dickens Yard gave Kingston a 1,000 seat theatre but offer Ealing next to nothing) **94% Yes 4% No**
- 9) White City Shopping Centre is only 15 minutes away. To prosper as a shopping centre Ealing must offer different attractions. **92% Yes 5% No**
- 10) More frequent bus services connecting the surrounding area with the Town centre are needed. **65% Yes 21% No.**

**11) Oct to Nov 2010 Final LDF2026 Core Strategy Consultation.**

The Document for consultation was the same as the Draft and made **no changes at all despite residents' clear opposition to many points in 2009.**

The Council's consultation report now on line clearly shows the many residents who are extremely unhappy about the housing densification in central and west Ealing and the threat of tall buildings. Replies include from 150 residents and 28 community groups. This was an improvement on the previous consultation but we still question if it was an effective consultation since the population of the Borough is over 310,000 persons. In Chelmsford Essex 4,000 persons replied to their LDF Consultation.

**Was this an effective Consultation? The issues that concern us are:**

- Most residents of Ealing had not one clue that this important Consultation about plans to change the face of Ealing was going on. SEC and community groups informed many, otherwise it is likely there would have been few replies. KRA did not receive the Regulation 27 Consultation letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> Sept 2010 in appendix C despite replying to the Draft Consultation of 2009.
- The Council publication "Around Ealing" August and September 2010 articles were not very clear. The descriptive pictures of fortune telling and cooking trivialized and obscured an important issue.

The most important Infrastructure meeting listed had no address and was in a most inaccessible venue when we finally tracked it down. Not surprisingly only 20 other residents were there.

- At the public meetings it was not made clear how to access the complex consultation forms. Neither was it explained how to complete them. How could the average resident answer a question that asked if issues were “legally compliant or non compliant” or sound/unsound, justified etc?
- To complete these forms one needed the advice of a town planner. Also endless time was required to read huge amounts of information on London Plans etc. at a library. These tasks were not in the power of average white/UK born citizens let alone those with English as a second language in our multi-cultural borough.
- The forms mandated the completion of all the following: name, address, e-mail and telephone number and also stated it would be a public document. This offended data protection rules and could put off cautious people. After appeals and interventions from Ealing’s DP team, some explanations of the public document status were put on line but only after our complaint and for this we were not thanked but labelled “mischievous” in a public meeting.
- If the Council really wanted to engage with residents and discover their views they would have met them at an informal level, explained things simply and provided a simple questionnaire. No doubt this is why at Chelmsford there were 4000 respondents. (PINS website: Example of good practice)
- Ward Forums take place 3 times a year. Discussion of the LDF was strictly banned at these meetings. We formally applied to bring it onto the Walpole Ward Agenda but were refused. When we organized a meeting after the meeting had ended there was hostility from our Councillors. This conflicts with the SCI Para 3:35 where it states the LDF “may be taken to ward forums for information and discussions”
- Our Resident Association arranged a meeting to enable members to input. We used an approved adaptation of the official forms to cut down on paper. We took advice on how to answer the “legally compliant” type questions and about 20 people returned signed documents. These were not included in the Council official report. Only after a complaint with weak excuses offered did the Council photocopy the responses for the Inspector. These peoples’ names are still not on the report. West Ealing Neighbours received similar treatment. 86 respondents were excluded from the official report and only after complaints were their contributions photocopied for the Inspector. Their names are still excluded from the report, as are, SEC’s 203 survey respondents. See **10)** above
- Supporting evidence and information was late and constantly changing during the Consultation that ended 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010. It was impossible to keep track of things. This casts doubt on the validity of the whole process.
- There is no way that the policies in the Strategy document have been shaped to reflect community views in either the letter or the spirit of the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Nor was the consultation structured to make it accessible to all residents as the SCI demands in Paras. 3:4 and 3:5. In contrast the Council seemed to distance itself from real engagement from residents.
- The Report Part 12b is difficult to read being an Exel document. It is also impossible to print in order to read carefully. We could not fully check replies. However the residents’ message is clear. The summary Part 12a document admits that residents in “majority opposed tall buildings” and “several” oppose concentration on the Uxbridge Rd corridor (Curious use of “several” where it should be “most” or “all” on this point!) The same is true of the infrastructure plans to match the hugely increased housing planned for the Uxbridge Rd Corridor. Yet the report reinforces its claim that new development “**should be focused in town centres where existing and enhanced transport links and other necessary infrastructure can be easily accessed.**” We could well ask “what infrastructure?”

This last sentence sums up the Council’s attitude. Residents struggled to access the inaccessible consultation forms and impenetrable, constantly changing documentation. The fact that so many contributed is testament to their tenacity and determination. Many others would have contributed had it been easier to do so. The message is clear. There is no sound basis or evidence for insisting that this majority housing development must be in a limited part of the borough where there is manifestly not the infrastructure to support it, where public transport is already at capacity and congestion is frequent. It is also clear that the Council does not want to hear the residents’ voice of reason and commonsense. It prefers to listen to the unelected and unaccountable Regeneration Team apparently determined to destroy the green suburb of Ealing so loved by its residents. It is ironic that the Regeneration Team leaders are paid handsomely by Ealing’s tax payers yet they do not live in Ealing and seek to spoil the very town centre of those they claim to serve.