

## CENP - decisive vote to approve

In a referendum held on 12 October the Central Ealing Neighbourhood Plan (CENP) was approved by a large majority of residents (2,616 votes/92.4%) and local businesses (54 votes/91.5%). Ealing Council will now adopt the Plan, hopefully before the end of the year.

This will give the local community - businesses and residents - greater democratic influence on

planning decisions and on various projects that can now be taken forward. It will also give landowners and developers more detailed guidance about what proposals would be acceptable. Thanks are due to CERA members who supported the plan and helped to ensure a large (92.4%) vote in favour.

## Filmworks site

As mentioned in our summer newsletter, St George proposed changes to the consented Filmworks scheme, replacing the commercial floor space in Mattock Lane and Barnes Pike with flats and adding an extra 48 flats in total by increasing the height of the development. St George argued that the proposed changes were minor material amendments and that a full planning application was not required. CERA disagreed but the amendments were approved unanimously by Ealing Council in September.

Shortly afterwards the adjoining site owner

threatened to apply to the High Court for a Judicial Review of this decision. It has a residential planning application on the adjacent site on the New Broadway, which the Council, apparently, has been sitting on for two years. The site owner's proposal provides a new master plan for the wider area with extra residential units and has the benefit of keeping the heritage cinema in its original location on New Broadway. However, this proposal would delay any redevelopment and the Council is determined that more delays are unacceptable.

## Longfield Avenue

The controversial road trial banning left turns from Longfield Avenue into the town centre and right turns into Longfield Avenue from New Broadway is to be made permanent. Ealing Council says that results from an 'independent review' showed a marked improvement in congestion and road safety, with no accidents occurring over the trial period.

This is hardly surprising considering the large reduction in traffic using Longfield Avenue as a result of the trial changes. But what appears to have been ignored is the increased congestion on other roads, particularly St Leonard's Road south of the mini roundabout on Gordon Road. During the rush hour this roundabout has seen a large increase in traffic and is very congested and dangerous, with St Leonard's Road acting

as a direct replacement to Longfield Avenue for traffic going into and out of the town centre.



## AGM: how developers can distort visual impact of schemes

At CERA's recent AGM our chairman briefly explained the work undertaken over the last 12 months. A major item of work was contributing to the Save Ealing's Centre (SEC) proof of evidence for the 9-42 The Broadway public inquiry, which was cancelled a few days before it was due to start when the site was sold by Benson Elliot to British Land. CERA had a major input into the preparation of the Evaluation of Visual Impact of the proposed scheme.

This involved a critique of the developer's presentation of what the proposed scheme would look like from various viewpoints, many of which were north of Uxbridge Road in the heart of CERA's territory. The two photos below illustrate how the developer presented the visual impact (in its Townscape and Visual Impact document) and how CERA/SEC presented what the public would actually see on the ground. This shows how developers can distort images to lessen the apparent visual impact.

In the photo below the appearance of the proposed development was shown by the developer in wireframe outline only. This under-

represents the impact of the development as the buildings appear to be transparent and almost invisible, blending in with the sky behind. They do not reflect the much darker colour of the proposed buildings so this has been 'corrected' in the CERA/SEC photo below.



The developer's photo was taken with an ultra-wide angle (24mm) lens, which makes the development appear far away and small. Our photo used a standard (50mm lens), which is normally considered to give a representative view of what the human eye would actually see in terms of distance from an object and hence gives a more accurate impression of impact.

Clearly the two images look very different even though they were taken from the same viewpoint. We felt it was important to show what the proposed scheme would actually look like on the ground and hence its true impact. As the developer withdrew its evidence (after our evidence had been submitted and seen), the proposed scheme will, thankfully, never be built, but see the next article over the page for the latest news.



## 9-42 The Broadway: latest news

A new chapter in the long-running redevelopment saga of the 9-42 the Broadway site between Carphone Warehouse and Morrisons starts shortly. New owners British Land, which also owns the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre opposite, says it has appointed architects and will be consulting on fresh development plans this winter.

Together with previous site owners, Benson Elliot, British Land has now reimbursed SEC for the cost of appointing a barrister and two expert witnesses for

the inquiry that was cancelled at the last minute. £20,000 has also been donated to local charities nominated by SEC in recognition of the abortive work SEC put in to preparing its detailed proof of evidence.

In contrast, long after the deadline expired for doing so, Ealing Council was saying it was still considering whether to claim back the £74,350 of public money it had incurred. Such sums seem of little importance to the Council.

## AGM: guest speaker from University of West London

The guest speaker at this year's AGM was Jenny Tait, the Outreach Team Leader from the University of West London, who works with the local community and local schools and Further Education colleges. She gave a very interesting, informative and well received talk about the University's past, present and future.

The university has 11,000 students with an age range of 16-90 and 71% are mature students. Most students come from Ealing, Hounslow and surrounding boroughs. The choice of subjects is huge, with eight academic schools covering film, media and design; music; law; business; hospitality

and tourism; computing and engineering; social sciences; and nursing, midwifery and healthcare.

For the future the university is looking to have even greater engagement with local groups, a wider variety of short courses, Saturday degrees, more student volunteering in the community and a new community gym, which is under construction. Greater links with the community are a major objective for UWL and the public are encouraged to go to plays and theatre productions and to the award winning training restaurant (Pillars), shown below, run by students from the College of Hospitality and Tourism.



## Central Library

Every month the plans for Ealing's central library seem to change. In the summer the proposed Perceval House redevelopment had provision for a new library and before that there were plans to move to a smaller location opposite the present location in the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre. But now a planning application has been submitted to redevelop the existing library, keeping it where it is now, but drastically reducing its size.



## Probitry and planning decisions

Most planning decisions made by local councils are taken by council officers using delegated powers. Decisions on larger and often more controversial developments are normally taken by a committee of local councillors after considering a written report by officers. Such reports usually contain a recommendation to approve or refuse planning permission. On occasions an officer recommendation to approve is voted down. In such cases reasons for refusal are drafted by officers in consultation with the Committee chairman.



The plan is to reduce it to a third of its present size (with a 64% reduction in books), move the frontage forward so that it is more visible from the Town Square, and give it 'a fresh and open, retail look, consistent with other units in the centre' and 'offering a solution to cater for the digital age'. The Planning Statement refers to the new facility being a cross between an Apple Store and a library and that 'the reduction in floor area would not be detrimental to the service provided'!

Not long ago the library was refurbished by the Council at a considerable cost of £2 million. The new refurbishment will be at no cost to the Council, although in return the Council will lose two-thirds of its space – space which costs it nothing in rent, but which the shopping centre owners hope to let to Decathlon for a huge new store selling sports and leisure goods. This first floor store will have a ground floor entrance utilising two currently vacant ground floor shops.

CERA has had drawn to its attention cases (e.g. at 33 Amherst Road shown below) where Ealing Council's planning committee has not insisted that the precise grounds of refusal are identified at the meeting voted upon and minuted. As a consequence of this there is a risk that decision letters are issued omitting important refusal reasons. This gives developers an advantage. Upon appeal or resubmission of a development scheme to the Council they need only to amend the scheme in ways that overcome the refusal reason(s) given, for example by changing the appearance of the scheme and not by reducing its height or proximity to neighbouring buildings.

In the interests of transparency and fairness, therefore, Ealing Council needs to amend its procedures so that in all cases grounds for refusal are minuted at committee and only the precise wording of the refusal reason(s) is left for agreement at a later date.