

**Extracted Highlights of Sir Peter Hall's
Ealing Civic Society Annual Lecture -
'A Vision for Ealing'
Ealing Town Hall - 17TH June, 2008**

The Victorian/Edwardian reality of Ealing residential terraces fanning out from Ealing Broadway Station; commuters walking to the station; and frequenting the many shops on the way to work and back – is long gone. The arrival of the train and the tube were major drivers for this residential boom some 100 years ago.

Maybe the concept of Ealing being a Metropolitan Town Centre is now outmoded. In fact local development may not feature in Ealing's centre but in other parts of the town and the town's environs. There are and will be new drivers for development.

The Westfield retail park in White City opening in the Autumn will cast a huge retail shadow extending as far as Reading and High Wycombe. A new bus station is being built in the park and a new underground station.

Crossrail (cancelled once in the 1990s and still yet cancellable again because of the credit crunch) will get you from Ealing Broadway to Bond Street in 11 minutes.

There is tremendous development potential in the Chiswick Park/Acton Town area. However he felt that one of the most interesting areas for potential development was the Park Royal triangle, which was an unexploited confluence of rail and tube connections – with plenty of acquirable brown field acreage. The recently publicised proposed Orbital Railway also offered tremendous potential. (Suppose it were to pass through Ealing Broadway Crossrail Station?). He felt that the new London Mayor would want to make his mark in transport and commissioning more interchange stations might be on the cards.

On the subject of Ealing Broadway Station, Sir Peter said he'd very recently met the boss of Network Rail who had recently visited the station for the first time. He was horrified at the state of it and he's raised Ealing Broadway up the priority list for major upgrading - it's now the 3rd most urgent for upgrade in the country! (This could be bad news as NR will only be interested in the rail facilities and not the tube and bus hubs).

Sir Peter felt strongly that what Ealing centre desperately needed was an over-arching strategic plan. It also needed an enlightened planning department.

He felt that there were some good things in the Tibbalds Report, but because the consultants had accepted that the Arcadia/Leaf and Dickens Yard developments were to go ahead, they had missed an opportunity to take an overall strategic view of the whole of the centre. He also felt that September 2007 Arcadia/Leaf proposals represented overdevelopment. He also felt that Dickens Yard was somewhat more acceptable, but realised that there was considerable local opposition to it. He emphasised that the existence of the central Ealing Conservation Areas actually limited the central Ealing development area to a narrow ribbon.

On the retail front he felt that to reverse the decline of retail in central Ealing would take a lot of effort. He thought the arrival of Primark is not helping. Lessons could be learned from France where many towns and cities had managed to maintain their distinctive independent 'quality' shops in their centres and located their 'Primarks' on the outskirts of the conurbations.

Sir Peter was quizzed on the number of empty flats in the new blocks built over the last two years in West Ealing. He said that this was a concern and he stated that 'Voids' (ie unsold/unlet flats) in the centre of Leeds were 20% and in central Manchester (a staggering) 40%.

Eric Leach
(A student of Peter Hall in 1964)
18th June, 2008