



## **GATEWAY WEST (BETTER KNOWN LOCALLY AS STATION ROAD NORTH)**

When so many High Streets are seriously struggling in Britain, the Egham Residents' Association is very pleased that so much thought and time is being devoted to the regeneration of our town centre.

But is the Gateway West scheme the right one? Yes and No. It is like the curate's egg. It is good in parts.

On the plus side: 1) We are pleased about the proposed retention of retail space. 2) We are delighted, indeed thrilled, about the inclusion of a cinema. 3) We like all of the ideas for the use of 'Station Road North Square' (which must be given a better name). 4) We recognize that this scheme is a big improvement on the previous version. 5) Further to the last point, we are pleased that there is a reduced massing of the buildings, that the proportion of student/non-student accommodation has been changed to 50:50, and that the student block would be away from the main square.

On the minus side: 1) We are concerned about the car parking implications of the scheme, and insufficient information about this was provided on your 'boards'. 2) Notwithstanding the comment made above about building mass, we are much troubled by the height of the 'southern building' (that includes the proposed cinema) and the 'SW residential building'. We understand that at least one of these buildings would be seven storeys high, but this was also glossed over on your 'boards'. Buildings of such height would stick out like sore thumbs in low-rise Egham. 3) Notwithstanding the point made earlier about student accommodation, we are unhappy about the proposed provision of a large block of student accommodation. There is a conspicuous absence from the Runnymede Draft Local Plan of an Egham-specific town centre planning policy addressing the student accommodation issue in the town. We think there is a case for some student accommodation in the town centre; but we cannot support the student block in this scheme when we have no idea how many other student block proposals will come forward in the future. 4) We are dismayed about the proposed design of the new buildings. One of your 'boards' states that "the town's unique heritage is a key design consideration and the proposals will respond to the surrounding heritage assets and conservation area to ensure the development complements and enhances the existing local character and is truly unique to Egham". Another 'board', on "local materiality" talks of ensuring that "the external appearance of each building responds to both the local context and wider landscape setting of Egham". These words are made to look like utterly misleading PR or marketing guff by the proposed designs of the 'southern building' and the 'SW residential building'. They make no attempt whatsoever to reflect the character of Egham and its conservation area; indeed, they are straight from Woking and Addlestone. And the design of the 'northern residential building' (inside the conservation area) is not a great deal better. It all makes the general design and conservation areas consultations currently being conducted by Runnymede Council feel like hot air. Furthermore, the conservation area boundary that runs across Gateway West should not be treated as a convenience for trying to get away with inappropriate design just outside it. In its design Gateway West should be treated as whole, and as if all of it were inside the conservations area. 5) The talk of improved access from the Grange Road area is also utterly unconvincing.