



# THE EPPING SOCIETY - NEWSLETTER

Extraordinary Edition March 2011

## EXTRA, EXTRA READ ALL ABOUT IT

**A reminder that the guest speaker at our Open meeting on WEDNESDAY 6<sup>th</sup> APRIL is Tricia Moxey from CPRESsex at PELLY COURT, HEMNALL STREET 7.30 doors open for 8pm. Because of the importance of the St Johns Site to us all, her talk and presentation will be followed by an OPEN FORUM Session on the latest updates on the proposals for the St Johns site. We are inviting our local Councillors and Eleanor Laing our MP, to attend this meeting. It is important that the Epping Community be kept informed and participate at all stages of the Development process.**

### ST. JOHNS SITE – LATEST NEWS

In our January 2011 newsletter we drew your attention to the lack of further information on the plight of the old Epping Primary School in St Johns Road (referred to as the ST JOHNS SITE).

Since that newsletter we have discovered two very revealing reports published on the EFDC website. The studies have indicated that four alternative proposals might be forthcoming (see page 3) but from the evidence we have gleaned, it seems that we might possibly only be offered one proposal on which to give our view during the public consultation, namely the supermarket and residential option.

As to whether any of the proposals includes the demolition of the old school/Centrepoint building fronting on to St Johns Road, is unknown. We would like, if its economically viable, to see this old building preserved in some way such as being used as a community centre, perhaps also with a new leisure centre being built on the additional land thus bringing community involvement into one central area. Obviously we have to believe that the retention of certain buildings like St Johns Church, the listed cottages, the Methodist Church etc. are inviolate.

We feel strongly that, as a Society, our members and indeed all residents of Epping should be given the opportunity to have a say on the future of this major site. The area highlighted is approx 7½ acres and is likely to be the largest site to be developed in the centre of Epping in the foreseeable future.

We ask that all four options be put to public consultation not just the one. Is another supermarket what we want for our Town? What alternatives would you like to see? The street scene of St Johns Road could be radically different. The very large size of the site could provide a lasting, well thought out legacy for our community. We rely on the officers and councillors at the EFDC to provide the Epping Community with clear and understandable design objectives for each proposal. We believe the EFDC should present them at a Display in the Town

Council's offices alongside professional advice ahead of the Public Consultation.

**You can contact the EFDC at:  
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[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy)  
Or contact your Local Councillor**

We the Committee hope that this newsletter has brought planning for our town to your attention. Apologies for the length but we felt it was necessary to illustrate where our information has come from hence the following Summary Extracts. It appears that the future of our town, not just its visual aspect but its business needs for the foreseeable future is contained in these highlighted documents. We felt that it was important that members and residents should be made aware of what is being planned for us. We are also aware that the age of many of our members is such that we do not embrace change readily. This is yet another reason why we are requesting a public display ahead of the public consultation, as we cannot assume we know what the younger and next generation of residents of our town would like to see developed on this major site. **Allow us ALL, the young and the old to have the opportunity to have some input into our town's future.**

**When you have read this hand it onto your neighbours - let our Town's residents understand this important issue which will affect us all.**

## **SOURCES OF REFERENCE**

EFDC commissioned a Town Centres Study in 2009 completed in 2010 and undertaken by consultants Roger Tym and Partners. The study looks at retail and leisure in the six main districts of EFDC - Loughton High Road, Waltham Abbey, Loughton Broadway, Chipping Ongar, Buckhurst Hill and Epping. It provides information for the future of retail and leisure requirements for each district.

Interestingly several significant facts emerge from this study vis-à-vis the St Johns site and the potential for an additional supermarket. There is a plan highlighting the whole potential redevelopment site which shows the extent of the area involved including the Library and Epping Town Hall and separately for potential redevelopment the Epping Sports Centre, the Hemnall Street Social Club and the CAB site as well.

The Town Centres Study's proposals for the 7 ½ acre St Johns Site is perhaps clear with the statement (see paragraph 6.92) **"there is a qualitative opportunity to provide a larger foodstore"**

### **1. TOWN CENTRES STUDY**

This is a 1024 page document - the full text can be found on the EFDC web site: [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/Council\\_Services/planning/forward\\_planning/LDF/Town\\_Centres\\_Study.asp](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/Council_Services/planning/forward_planning/LDF/Town_Centres_Study.asp)

The downloaded content is 31.3 Mb with a total of 31 files.

We include below an Extract of this document in order that you can make a judgment for yourself.

### **A Verbatim Extract from the Town Centres Study relevant to Epping**

**"6.91** Our assessments indicate that all centres have a good representation of convenience goods retailers and with some of them (such as Waltham Abbey, Chipping Ongar and Buckhurst Hill) it is mostly provided by smaller multiples and independent retailers alongside one major foodstore operator. However, there is also expenditure leakage from the district to larger foodstores outside the district."

**"6.92** Examining this matter further, there appears to be evidence of a gap in foodstore provision within Epping itself. Although there is good representation with a Tesco and a Marks and Spencer, Epping's home zone (i.e. zone 1) loses over half its convenience trade. This is a function of the Tesco being a relatively small store and people travelling to larger stores in Harlow and Loughton to undertake their food shopping. Therefore, there is a qualitative opportunity to provide a larger foodstore to enable more food shopping to take place locally".

**"6.94** The foodstore shopping in Epping Forest is dominated by Tesco and Sainsbury's and both are effectively 'mid-ranking' foodstore operators.

Although both these operators sell discount brands, there is a clear absence of the generally accepted lower ranking supermarkets that focus more on price competitiveness, such as Asda or Morrisons (other than Loughton High Road), or any deep discounters. While a Lidl store opened in Waltham Abbey in February 2010, there is still a qualitative deficiency for an alternative lower ranking supermarket operator in the district to improve consumer choice."

**"8.20** Epping is currently designated as one of three principal centres within the district and we recommend that it is defined as a town centre within a revised hierarchy. Epping's MHE Index ranking has fallen from 829 in 2003 to 896 in 2008. Despite this, our health check revealed a vital and viable centre. Epping benefits from a good range of national multiples and independents, a low number of vacancies and in recent years has benefited from increasing rents. However, Epping is a linear centre and to some extent suffers from a lack of depth and a natural retail circuit. This means that frontages at the periphery of the centre may suffer."

**"8.21** Since Epping is one of the two largest centres within the district, it should be the planned location for any larger scale town centre uses that have been identified. However, in relative terms Epping is a much smaller centre than some nearby competitors such as Harlow to the north and Romford to the south. Furthermore, opposed to other centres in the district there has been no recent major investment in the retail stock of Epping town centre. There is an opportunity to improve the quality of the retail floorspace stock in the centre to meet some of the published demand from occupiers. Therefore, we consider it important that Epping reinforces its role and accommodates its local, rather than subregional, needs and improves the quality of the retail units in the centre."

**"8.22** Epping's natural comparison and convenience catchment is confined to our survey zone 1, although there is strong competition from Harlow to the north. The population of zone 1 is forecast to increase by some 2,552 persons between 2009 and 2021. We have forecast some £50.9 million of comparison expenditure growth in zone 1 to 2021 and some £11.4 million of convenience expenditure growth. Whilst we appreciate that Harlow will have a claim on a proportion of this additional expenditure, there are sound planning reasons why Epping should provide for its own locally generated needs during the plan period."

### **"Table 8.4 Options for the future of Epping**

#### **Option 1: No Significant Change**

- There is a potential for and risk of further decline in Epping's retail ranking, with potential short term increases in the vacancy rate

- There could be a dilution of the retail offer .... becoming more prominent over time
- The retail function of the centre will shift towards a smaller service orientated centre, with a leisure and service offer rather than any substantial retail offer

#### **Option 2: Modest Redevelopment**

- A modest expansion, improving the retail and leisure offer would consolidate the role of the centre and claw back expenditure
- Provision of further retail and leisure floorspace will encourage linked trips between the new uses and existing businesses
- New development can be used to fund improvements in local infrastructure and the public realm"

#### **Development Potential**

"8.23 Under Option 2 above, we consider there is an opportunity to achieve additional floorspace within the town centre and reduce expenditure leakage from Epping's catchment and the district as a whole. Thus we have suggested a potential long term strategy for Epping as set out below in Table 8.5. (SEE WEB LINK FOR THIS TABLE). This arises from the opportunity afforded the St John's Road site (explained below) and results in Epping claiming a larger proportion of the comparison quantitative need than other centres due to its position at the top of the hierarchy (with Loughton High Road)."

"8.24 Focusing on the requirement to 2021, we have estimated that a total floorspace of 12,600 sqm (gross) could be accommodated within Epping, including some 8,600 sqm (gross) of comparison floorspace. ....Importantly, we have made an allowance for 2,500 sqm gross of additional superstore/supermarket floorspace within Epping in order to improve competition with the Tesco store and relieve over trading. Although ambitious, we consider a development of a similar scale is necessary in order to deliver a step change in shopping patterns and reduce expenditure leakage from the district. However, if an increasing market share is preferred, this should be delivered through a town centre scheme rather than any out of centre floorspace."

## **2. LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN West Essex**

All local authorities are required to produce a Local Investment Plan (LIP) in order to qualify for further funding in respect of affordable housing and infrastructure in their area.

<http://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/Published/C00000623/M00006213/AI00028702/WestEssexLIPAppI.pdf>

The following options are set out in the January 2011 EFDC Draft publication:-

#### **Verbatim Extract relevant to Epping**

##### **"4.1.2 St John's Road area, Epping**

St John's is set in the area of Epping centred around a historic church, the town centre with some retail elements, listed buildings, the library, County offices and a school site. The County decided to reprovide that school on existing nearby site and there have been some concerns that this site would be developed for purely housing.

The Council is working on a development brief to look at that area and a number of options have been considered. Officers are now looking at a significant retail-led scheme (but issues with impact on other businesses and access) with housing, and better pedestrian links. This could involve significantly altering the library building.

The other option is to reprovide the existing council sports centre which is in another location in Epping but is arguably not fit for purpose.

There is support for re-providing the sports centre but a sports led scheme could be less viable. It is possible that a retail/sports combination may be more deliverable.

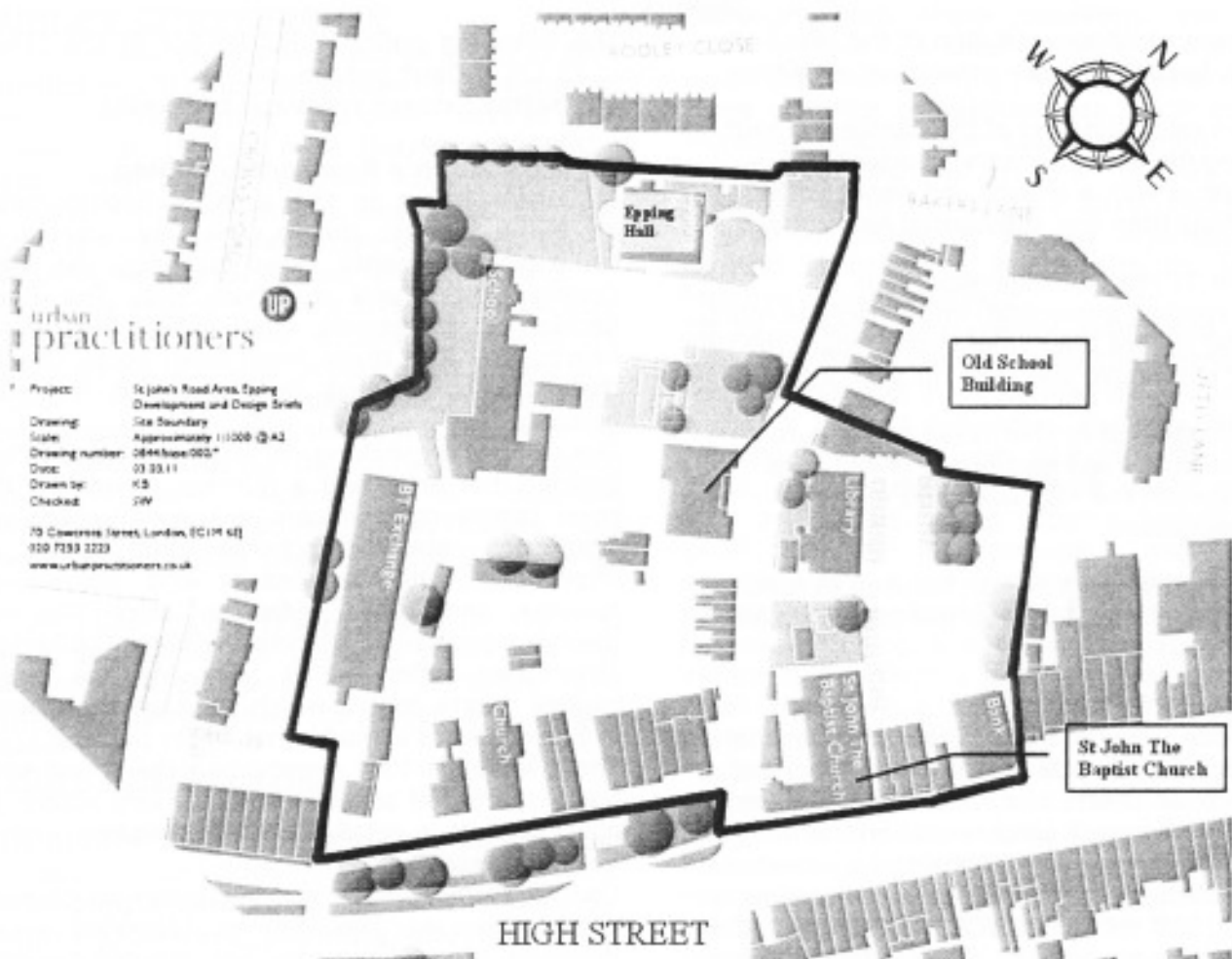
Council Members are not yet ready to go out to consultation on the options identified so far. However, most of the sites are in public ownership and so not in a fragmented position. The area offers some exciting opportunities for a mix of uses including affordable housing.

If the sports centre is re-provided on St John's site, a large site for housing could be freed up on the former sports site which is owned by the Council.

The main difficulty with St John's area is timing, as the Council has yet to identify the **preferred option**. (*Indicative we might only be presented with one Option?*) The St John's situation is more complicated than Broadway, as there is more uncertainty over what the preferred option will be. Some viability assessment work on the options has been undertaken but this work is ongoing. Since the proposed Design and Development Brief is still at an early stage, and has not yet been subject to public consultation, the numbers of new homes to be provided within the regeneration area has not yet been agreed.

#### **4 options are currently under consideration:**

- **retail-led option with residential accommodation**
- **a leisure-led option with residential accommodation**
- **a combined retail and leisure-led option, with residential accommodation**
- **a wholly residential accommodation option"**



## VERY LATEST UPDATES

Minutes of the Local Development Framework Cabinet which met on February 7th 2011 indicated that following a review of the Town Centres Study and the Local Investment Plan the following omissions/factors ought to be included:

### LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN OMISSIONS

"(i) Transport issues and in particular the Central Underground Line within this District. It was highlighted that the Central Line operated at full capacity during peak periods, and that there was insufficient parking provided at London Underground stations within the District. This could be a significant constraint on any future potential development within the District and it was agreed that this issue should be added to section 3.2 – Transport & Infrastructure – of the Plan.

(ii) Section 4.1.2, which dealt with the regeneration of the St John's Road area in Epping, did not make any mention of the proposals for community use that were being considered as part of the Development Brief. It was agreed that this was an oversight and should be included in the relevant section.

**It is proposed that the LIP be adopted by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011**

We thank those members of the committee who took the time to trawl through the EFDC website to find, read digest and summarise these documents so that we might have some idea of what was being proposed.

A big thank you is in order, to our postmen and postladies who have the task of delivering this extra edition of the Newsletter to you. Without their time and effort we would be unable to update you our members.

Thank you also to the benefactor who wishes to remain anonymous who financed the cost of our January edition.

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