



THE EPPING SOCIETY - NEWSLETTER

ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS THE PRICE OF CONSERVATION

August 2012

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This year has been a disappointment in the protection of our Town particularly at the north and south ends where the gateways into Epping begin. An overly high and bulky development of flats has been granted permission on the site of the old Wintry Park Service Station (and they have started constructing already at a great pace!). The EFDC failed to notify us that the permission had been granted following an Appeal, even though we were 'noted' objectors, so it was with surprise and dismay we saw the builders had commenced!

We have also seen permission granted for the demolition of the Half Moon (aka Billy Jeans), to be replaced with another overly large construction consisting of flats, parking and an A3 space (restaurant) at ground level bringing the building right up to within a pavement width of the main road. Both these buildings are at the entrances to the main High Street running through Epping and both are visually over-significant relative to the rest of the Town's character (in our view).

The owners of the old Pearce's bakery site (208 High St) have been given permission for the demolition of the existing building, to be replaced by yet another block of flats, plus change of use of ground floor shop (A1) to (A3) restaurant. Not just a loss of a historic building and retail units but how many restaurants do we need? Even the ex West End furniture shop adjacent to Latham's has applied for permission to become a restaurant! We already have at least 10 restaurants (not including take-aways and coffee shops).

And yet an application to turn the Forest Gate pub's dilapidated outbuildings into a restaurant has been recommended for refusal? The continued existence of this favoured 'watering hole' could be in jeopardy and whilst it is in the conservation area I am sure the planners could work with the applicant towards an acceptable design. We feel we should give our support to this application.

Apart from the Council's 'appetite' for more restaurants in the High Street, we are also being 'bulldozed into believing there is a need for another supermarket' on the St Johns Road Site! (more in committee updates).

So just when we are reeling from all this interest in food courtesy of the EFDC, whether we want it or not, we are now being consulted on acceptance of housing on our Green Belt as per the proposed new **Local Plan Issues and Options!** (Read more in our committee updates).

This is a 'Call to Arms', Members of the Epping Society! Our membership represents nearly 7% of the Epping population. It is imperative that we get out there and make our views known. There are two public drop-in sessions for the Local Plan consultation:

'LOCAL PLAN' PUBLIC DROP-IN CONSULTATIONS IN EPPING

**Jack Siley Pavilion: Wednesday 5 September
5pm - 9pm**

**Epping Hall: Monday 17 September
5pm - 9pm**

*An unmanned exhibition is also being displayed in the reception area of the EFDC where you can see a hard copy of the Issues and Options Local Plan Consultation document (questionnaire inside). Also available to read at Epping library or download/read it from the Council's website www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ (and then click on LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION). Do go along and voice your concerns or register to respond on-line.

**DEADLINE for your response to EFDC is
15TH October 2012**

On a happier note despite the rain we celebrated our 40th Anniversary celebration in July in fine style with free cake and drinks and Morris dancers, alongside the many excellent events organised by the Epping Town Centre Partnership (and everyone hopes they will hold a repeat next year!) We also displayed the winners and highly commended paintings from the local schools as part of our art competition. The Epping Town Council mayor Jon Whitehouse presented the winners with a £5 silver Jubilee coin as well as an Epping Society 2013 Calendar with photos of the winning paintings. If anyone else would like a copy of the calendar, the cost is £5.99 and can be ordered by contacting us by phone or email below. (To view the calendar have a look on our website www.eppingsociety.org.uk under '40th Anniversary tab' or come along to one of our Open Meetings where a sample copy will be available to view. (The childrens' paintings and drawings are superb and we would like to thank the schools for their support.)

Sue Allison - Chairman

Contact Details:-Chairman: Sue Allison 01992 561961
Email: info@eppingsociety.org.uk
Editor & Membership: De. Spence 01992 577191 Email: eppsocmembership@live.com.

Committee Updates

THE EFDC LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - 2012-2033

Over 2000 new dwellings could be built on the identified GREEN BELT sites surrounding EPPING, as illustrated in the EFDC document. Most of the land in question has been put forward by farmers and land owners, following the Council's "Call for Sites". Every building developer must now be 'placing his bets' for the biggest potential pay-out bonanza in history!

The EFDC planning office recently confirmed to the press that a notification leaflet of the Consultation will be posted to every home and business in the district. Please contact EFDC if you have not received your copy.

The Coalition Government in their revised Town Planning document known as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires every Local Authority to plan for, and I quote "objectively assess development needs with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless specific policies indicate that developments should be restricted". Your Epping Society committee consider the Town's ring of GREEN BELT qualify as a 'specific' policy to restrict development!

From earlier press releases and from the bias of the consultation document, it is very clear that this Council intends to develop estates on the town's ring of GREEN BELT. Our GREEN BELT has protected Epping Town from urban sprawl since the 1930's and to counter this potential loss of heritage, the Epping Society's committee would have all its members join the appeal to keep the GREEN BELT sacrosanct for future generations.

REMEMBER: DEADLINE FOR responses to the LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION to the EFDC before the 15th October 2012.

Ken Miller - Vice Chairman

Publicity and Website

Please view our web site at www.eppingsociety.org.uk; it is regularly updated with local news and has a section with photos of the 'Epping - My View' Art competition and the 40th Anniversary celebrations on the 14th July (and also available to view our 2013 CALENDAR.) The website now has a downloadable form for prospective new members to fill in. This can be returned, for the attention of our membership secretary, to the Town Council at Epping Hall. We have had over 1000 visits since our last newsletter- of this 77% were new visitors.

We have been asked if any Society members have photographs of a house named Homestead, that was pulled down to build a dairy in the High Street. This is now the council depot adjacent to the Epping Orthodontic Practice. Please send any information or comments to me.

Charlie Geddes - 01992 573706
webmaster@eppingsociety.org.uk

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

Tom Holme, who died at the end of July, had been Chairman of CPREssex for nearly 3 years. During this time he achieved his ambitious plan of raising its profile within Essex as he made contacts with local MPs and planning officers to discuss the many issues surrounding potential threats to the countryside including the onward march of pylons. Another important concern for him was the impact of fly tipping and a well-received report on this was prepared earlier in the year. He was instrumental in helping to raise funds for CPREssex and as a result its finances are on a much firmer footing. Devoted to the countryside, Tom brought his gentle humour and understanding to his role and his passing leaves a gap not only within his family and the

local community but within CPREssex too. The Chairmanship of the Branch is temporarily, in the hands of Vice Chairman Tricia Moxey, and Trustee Richard Beauchamp.

LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION 30 July – 15 October.

Issues and Options – Planning for the future of the Epping Forest District

"A prosperous District with jobs and homes for local people. A place where our children can raise their own families and the Green Belt is protected." These are the stated aims of the Epping Forest District Council as it goes out to consultation on the next phase of its preparation for the new Local Plan.

This Local Plan will provide a key framework for development, conservation and investment within the District by all of us as individuals, businesses and utilities. The new Plan comes into force in 2014 and will shape the character and development of the District for the next 20 years. It will set out the policies by which Epping Forest District Council will decide future planning applications.

There has already been input into this Plan from residents and it is backed up with data gathered through research and consultation. To move the Plan forward, the Council has to ask such fundamental questions such as:

- What level of population growth and housing should the District plan for?
- How should we decide where it should go?
- What are our employment needs and aspirations?
- Where should industrial development happen?
- How do we protect the Green Belt and still provide homes for our children ten or 20 years from now?

The Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan, 'Community Choices' is a detailed document and over the past few weeks has become something of a hot topic, being fiercely debated by those who care about the future of the District.

Naturally we are all concerned about the potential increase in housing needs within the District. The local infrastructure is fully stretched at the current levels and there are very few options for further built development without incursions into the Green Belt.

Many of us are deeply worried about our own local patch and it is right to carefully consider the implications of more development within your own immediate community, but please take time to consider the wider implications across the District. There is insufficient water to meet any increased demand, the sewage treatment systems are overloaded, there is an increased risk of flash flooding with further built development and the local schools, medical practices, hospitals and other support systems including London Transport are struggling to cope with the current demands placed upon them. (Contribution courtesy of Tricia Moxey).

NB: The Planning Our Future Consultation document can be downloaded from our website or viewed at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/

Trevor Roberts – CPRE Representative

London Green Belt Council Green Belt under attack

There are 14 green belts in England, which "ring" urban areas and provide space for agriculture, forestry and leisure. However the primary purpose of them is to avoid

urban sprawl and their essential feature is that they are open.

The quality of the land is not important although very often, as in Epping Forest, it is an essential aspect of the character of the district.

It has recently been suggested that government should change the rules to make it easier for hundreds of thousands of new homes to be built, as well as new retail developments. This could include building on green belt land – something which was specifically ruled out in the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March when planners were specifically ordered to protect green belt land.

Some of the reasons why developers manage to pervert the rules include:

- Councils are keen to avoid the cost of maintaining land but instead want the cash from its sale
- Applicants spend a huge amount on publicity, hospitality etc.
- Local opposition is overcome by uninformed and unaffected interest groups from all over the country.
- Councillors refuse to speak out because (they say) Council rules stop them doing so
- The new buzz word “localism” only works to increase development not to limit it.
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For information about NPPF go to www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/download/2176

Andrew Smith - Epping Society Representative for the London Green Belt Council

St Johns Road Site

Design brief to be revealed

Residents and businesses in Epping will soon find out the likely future of their high street in September when Epping Forest District Council publishes a design and development brief for the St John’s Road site in the centre of the town. Despite overwhelming public opposition to large-scale retail on the site and support for improved sport, leisure and community facilities in the town, the signs so far are that EFDC and Essex County Council (the main landowners on the site) still consider a large-scale retail-led development to be the most viable use for the site.

The design and development brief – expected to be presented to the EFDC Cabinet meeting on Monday 10 September – follows a public consultation exercise conducted by EFDC earlier this year. That consultation presented four development scenarios: retail-led, leisure-led, a hybrid of retail and leisure, and a residential-led option. A summary of the consultation responses was published in June.

Over 800 people took part in the consultation exercise. That healthy response rate would certainly have not been anywhere near as high were it not for the efforts of the Epping Society and local campaigners to highlight the consultation exercise and encourage people to participate in the consultation, and to put pressure on EFDC to extend the consultation period.

In response to the question asking people to identify issues they felt should be addressed through the redevelopment of the St John’ Road site, the consultation showed:

- 535 would like to see improved sport and leisure facilities
- 401 want historic buildings to be protected and 382 want Epping’s historic scale to be respected
- 315 would like to see space for adult education
- 256 want historic trees to be protected
- 225 would like to see new high quality public space
- 203 would like to see space for smaller shops and boutiques

Only 95 people – barely one in ten – supported a new town centre supermarket while only 140 supported new affordable homes.

Since then there have been a couple of opportunities to gauge the thinking of EFDC and Essex County Council about their intentions for the site. At a briefing for local groups and elected representatives in the town on 16 July (to which the Epping Society was invited) it was very clear that EFDC’s consultants, Allies and Morrison, remained unswayed by the public consultation and remained firmly in favour of a large-scale retail-led development.

At the EFDC Cabinet meeting on 23 July, messages were more mixed. The new leader of the Council and local ward councillor Chris Whitbread made a personal statement setting out his own opposition to a supermarket on the site but emphasising that the decision was a collective one to be made by EFDC as a whole. Through a series of public questions put to the economic development portfolio holder Cllr Anne Grigg (who is leading on the preparation of the design and development brief), residents’ concerns and suggestions were brushed aside and it became increasingly clear that thinking remains biased towards large-scale retail.

It is extraordinarily frustrating that, at this late stage, that EFDC does not appear to have fully considered all possible land uses for the site. Large parts of the consultation – in particular the section where respondents were invited to make their own comments about the scheme – have not been published by EFDC. Officers have even sought to discredit their own studies – in particular the traffic survey which demonstrated that a new supermarket would bring no new trade to the town but would bring additional congestion to the high street. Officials, consultants and portfolio holders persist in justifying large-scale retail development on the site by reference to the 2008 town centres study by Roger Tym & Partners: a study conducted using a very small sample (100 people) at a time when Epping high street and the wider economy were in a very different place. This report produced no evidence of need or demand for further supermarket provision in the town. Furthermore this study was clearly biased towards retail considerations and failed to properly consider other land uses for the town such as leisure and recreation and community use. It may be that large-scale retail is the most viable option: yet it is difficult to understand why EFDC and its development partners persist with that option in the face of huge public opposition and widespread concern among retailers on our fragile high street about the impact upon their businesses. Epping will have to wait until 10 September when EFDC will finally show its hand, before finding out whether the council has any intention at all of listening to the will of local people.

Steven Harding

On one positive note there will be a:

SPECIAL Open Meeting **Thursday 4th October 2012**

Open to non-members

Venue: Epping Town Council Bldgs,
St Johns Road, Epping

Time : 6.30 for 7pm

Speakers: Cllr Chris Whitbread, Cllr Anne Grigg

**Subject: THE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF
OF THE ST JOHNS ROAD SITE FOLLOWED BY A
Question and Answer SESSION.**

**THIS WILL BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR
MEMBERS AND NON MEMBERS TO HEAR MORE
ABOUT THE PROPOSALS AND TO ASK QUESTIONS.**

Social Events

Christmas lunch

Here we are again – another year has passed and we are inviting you to join us at Pelly Court, Hemnal Street, Epping on Sunday 2nd December 2012 at 12.30 for our usual Christmas Lunch. I am sorry to say that this year we have to increase the price to £19.50 but as usual this will include a welcome drink. Please phone Doreen Tarling on 01992 574754 or post your cheque made out to the Epping Society with a self addressed stamped envelope so that I can send your tickets to you. My address is 8 Lynceley Grange, Epping, CM16 6RA.

Gibberd Garden

Last year we arranged a visit to see the snowdrops at this garden but at the last minute it had to be cancelled through inclement weather and burst pipes. We have tried to organise a visit for next February (2013), but unfortunately they can no longer provide meals as the insurance premiums have become excessive. The Gibberd Garden organiser now thinks its best for individuals to make their own arrangements rather than groups to visit the Gardens. However, we are still trying to arrange an outing locally (with hopefully better weather) so watch this space in your next newsletter.

Doreen Tarling

Membership News

Despite the rain throughout the day at the Epping Festival in July, in celebrating our 40th anniversary we were able to increase our membership by 34. Imagine the response we might have received had we had sun shine! So, if you are one of the those 34 new members we welcome you and hope that you will find this newsletter of interest, and that we will get to meet you at one of our meetings soon.

De Spence

Vacancies – Join our Committee - the Society needs you! We need volunteers to join our Committee. We would particularly welcome someone to deal with correspondence but all volunteers are welcome. Please contact us if you are able to help.

Walks

On the last Sunday of each month the Society shares a walk with The West Essex Ramblers. The walk starts from Epping Station at 10.00am. The walks planned for the coming months are as follows:-

- 30th September Gernon Bushes”, Coopersale – 10 miles – Mara Blumsom.
- 28th October “Travellers Friend”, Epping Green – 9.5 miles – Ray & Jan Latham.
- 25th November “Foresters Arms”, Loughton – 10 miles – Bola Baruwa.

For further details: www.westessexramblers.org.uk

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

EFDC Cabinet meeting

Monday 10th September 2012 (report on St Johns Design and Development Brief – public can attend)

Venue: EFDC Council offices

Time: 7pm

Open Meeting

Wednesday 19th September 2012

Open to non-members

Venue: Pelly Court, Hemnal Street, Epping

Time : 7.30 for 8pm

Speaker: Silvia Rice on “The Vancouver Ship Disaster”

Admission: free, donation requested only for refreshments.

Our speaker tells her story of an eventful holiday trip to Canada that culminated in her being on board the “MV Queen of the North” a car ferry, on the night of March 22nd, 2006. A ship sailing along the “inside passage of Canada” which sank tragically on that night in icy waters.

Open Meeting

Thursday 4th October 2012

Open to non-members

Venue: Epping Town Hall, St Johns Rd, Epping

Time : 6.30 for 7pm

Speakers: Cllr C Whitbread, Cllr A Grigg

Subject: St Johns Road Site Design and Development Brief followed by Q and A session

Admission: free

This is a significant potential development site in a town the size of Epping and this plan will impact hugely on the residents of Epping now and for years to come. Make sure it's the right choice for us! All residents who are interested in their town should attend.

Members Christmas Lunch **Sunday 2nd December 2012**

Venue: Pelly Court, Hemnal St., Epping

Time: 12.30 for 1pm lunch

Cost: £19.50

Contact: Doreen Tarling, 8 Lynceley Grange, Epping CM16 6RA Tel: 01992 574754