



NEWSLETTER

LOCAL PLANS – AN UPDATE

Many members and local residents are understandably confused and concerned about local planning issues. In the following pages we try to explain the nature of the different proposals and the status and progress they have made. We apologise for any errors we may have made which would be due to the frequent difficulty in getting up-to-date information. See our reports on:

- ✚ Epping Forest District Council Local Plan
- ✚ Epping Town Council Neighbourhood Plan
- ✚ St Johns Road site

OUR CAMPAIGNS



Ground conditions this winter prevented full enjoyment of the Forest especially by the disabled and those not so confident about crossing deep mud. They are prevented from accessing the Forest in these conditions.

Hemnall Street is a primary access point onto Bell Common and the alternative at Bell Motel traffic lights is hazardous because there is no pavement in Theydon Road.

The Epping Society has encouraged the Forest Conservators to install a bridge at waterlogged places, as at left.

We want everyone to enjoy the Forest and a bridge would prevent further damage by heavy pedestrian traffic and bikes in wet weather. So far we have encountered resistance from the authorities but we have not abandoned the campaign.

We do not support formal footpaths in the Forest whose natural wildness we enjoy but the effect on the forest tracks in wet weather through increased use by bikers and the able bodied can inadvertently prevent others from also benefitting from this important part of our Green Belt.

We hope you have enjoyed how well the forest looked this spring, and the Green belt generally – enjoy it while you can!

REVIEW OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Since the beginning of 2017 we have reviewed 490 planning applications for the Epping, Thornwood and surrounding area. We objected to 64 of which 19 were rejected and 15 are pending. We have noticed a growing problem of the scale of alterations and extensions which often become unneighbourly as a result. We also regret that permitted development rights allow owners to change their properties so they are out of keeping with the rest of their road.

We have brought the green wall at M&S to management's attention and we are pleased to report that rectification works have been ordered.

EFDC LOCAL PLAN

Epping Forest District Council is the Local Planning Authority ("LPA") for this area. That means it is responsible for the Local Plan and for planning permissions. Unfortunately, like so much of public policy debate, planning policy is full of abbreviations and jargon.

In December last year the introduction to the Local Plan began with the words "We are now well on the way to production of a new Local Plan that will help shape our District for the coming years until 2033" which is required in order to determine where development can take place and where it should not. The document also says "This Plan is necessarily a balance between the requirement from Government to deliver the identified and evidenced need for economic and housing growth, and the need to protect the greenness of our District." The **Local Plan** is the one that matters – it is the one which is taking our Green Belt.

The Local Plan has been approved by Councillors to be submitted to the government's Planning Inspectorate for approval. As such it is referred to as the Local Plan Submission Version (or "LPSV"). It proposes 13,500 additional homes in the District and 1,300 in Epping with the bulk of these on a site between Ivy Chimneys and Brook Road and the M25 motorway and referred to as Epping South.

Submission of the Epping Forest LPSV has been delayed following a Planning Court ruling on 20 March 2018. The Complainant says it has been prejudiced because details of Site Selection were not available (Arup December 2017) during the Regulation 19 publication period (that was the public consultation period). Epping Society complained about the lack of key documents at each stage of the LP process. We await the Court's decision.

If the Court rules against EFDC then a new consultation may have to be run following renewed adoption of the LPSV by the Council and that would further delay the process. EFDC are among the last 10 per cent of LPAs to submit their LPSV.



Epping Society hope to be represented at the public hearings, whenever they are held, but this uncertainty is playing havoc with Committee members annual holiday arrangements! Our representations will be based on our response to the Consultations and can be seen [http://planpub.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/nIM.websearch/\(S\(osq3dyrzfpi1nj55p0o5tdzb\)\)/Results.aspx](http://planpub.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/nIM.websearch/(S(osq3dyrzfpi1nj55p0o5tdzb))/Results.aspx).

The consequences of a viable challenge to the LPSV methodology or decisions can be seen from the Court case mentioned above. In addition, Quinn Estates have submitted a planning application (EPF/1494/18) for 555 dwellings plus 70-bed retirement accommodation and 70-bed extra care/nursing care accommodation, community buildings and offices etc on Green Belt land not included in the EFDC LPSV. The site is north of North Weald adjacent to the A414 (a golf club). In their proposed alternative Green Belt assessment, the applicants challenge the site boundaries used in the EFDC Green Belt assessments, as Epping Society did as well in our representations.

Of course, this is not a game – the damage which might be done by inappropriate development would be permanent; there are no second chances - once Green Belt is lost it is gone forever. We continue to be unimpressed by the argument used by Councillors, namely "we will all be dead" by the time the countryside is despoiled. The Epping Society continues to campaign for the future, which is what conservation is all about.

Because of the legal challenge, supplementary representations were permitted after the closing date and Epping Society was able to draw attention to a lack of preparation of the public for substantial near-term works at Wake Arms and the junction near the Bell Motel, each of which would require the use of Epping Forest land and the removal of Forest trees. It is clear from the late published Highways Assessment that further vandalism of the Forest may also be required for the junction at the north of the town (where the road to the hospital and North Weald separates from the Harlow Road).

[http://planpub.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/nIM.websearch/\(S\(esd2kijxvz1ehr4522s4I03g\)\)/Results.aspx](http://planpub.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/nIM.websearch/(S(esd2kijxvz1ehr4522s4I03g))/Results.aspx)

The scale of additional housing in Epping and the damage to the Green Belt call into question our status as a market town. Other changes suggest we are to be a mere commuter housing centre. Such a change has not been supported by local residents in any consultation.

The loss of public facilities is also very damaging to the coherence of the town: magistrate's court (gone), police station (gone), library (probably to be down graded and re-located), sports centre (very uncertain), schools all relegated to the edges, post office just a counter in a newsagents and so on.

STOP PRESS

As we go to print the Government announced that our District had a higher proportion of houses built anywhere else in the country. Forty three per cent of new homes last year were on the Green Belt. This will continue under the new LPSV with huge estates at Epping South and in the north, near Harlow and the sites which might be given the go-ahead (see Quinn above). If you are not happy with this, tell your C



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Communities have the right to set out planning policies for the neighbourhood area which should be used to decide whether to approve planning applications. They should be written by the local community rather than the Local Planning Authority (which is EFDC). It can be a powerful tool to ensure the community gets the right types of development, in the right place. It must support the strategic decisions taken by EFDC. The Epping NP was sponsored by Epping Town Council (ETC)

A plan for Epping which can be seen at: http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1fe86d_21604fa628db410db578a3aa7c0a256d.pdf



Certain members of our committee were invited by ETC to participate in discussions about what the NP should contain. A number of them were concerned that the procedures reduced the community led quality which is the whole point of a NP. The proposals for Epping South, which originated at the ETC NP meetings, and its manner of promotion, were especially unfortunate, in their view.

ETC has distributed a questionnaire to all households in the parish to invite answers to eleven questions about the NP (also online here <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6HFCEB98>). Epping Society has asked to be allowed to respond but we have not yet completed our study of the 58 page document, which we will share with you. **WE URGE ALL READERS TO RESPOND TO THE SURVEY.** It is available here <http://www.eppingtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>

No Masterplan for Epping South has yet been produced.

The Epping Society intends to make representations in response to the consultation and we congratulate ETC for allowing more time that was allowed by EFDC for the LPSV. While recognizing the limited power of an NP over planning matters we believe the next few years could lead to significant changes in the character of the town and as a Statutory Consultee, ETC can have some influence for the good.

Our interest is not just the number of new housing units or the loss of Green Belt. We are also very interested in better design in order to reinforce the market town image of Epping and to enhance peoples' lives. Too often we see poor or boring repetitive design and too little attention to the public realm: pavements, trees, roads and the general layout and appearance of new developments.

In order to improve these softer development issues we recommended a number of development control policies to EFDC for the LPSV which were not adopted; these included a design panel for large and sensitive developments. Having failed with EFDC we will try again with ETC so their views can reflect such values in the future.

ST JOHNS ROAD

For some months we have been told that progress would be made on this site "in a few days". Rumours suggest the original developer has withdrawn, but we have only rumours to guide us.

We note the last community consultation on this site was as long ago as 2012 since when the circumstances have changed considerably due to intense development in the town and the proposed additional 1,300 new homes. We feel the proposed number of homes on this site falls well short of the potential for such a large area and more intense development would protect some of the precious Green Belt.

The NP sets out proposals which it says will enhance the town centre and to include a "major quality food store, a cinema, restaurants, hotel, 35 residential units and 200 car parking spaces. We recall that the public rejected any additional supermarket when they were asked.

During the last few years, while negotiations have gone on between Councils and with a developer, the site has been wasted and the condition of valuable buildings has deteriorated. Centre Point has small shrubs growing out of the roof and windows have been boarded up – not a good image in our town, we think readers may agree.

In the earlier consultation the library and land nearby was considered as a part of this redevelopment but current proposals (so far as we can deduce what they are), suggest a piecemeal approach, which we deprecate. Local residents have put up with uncertainty for too long and the cost to Council Tax payers has been too high. We call for more vigour in resolving whatever obstacles may exist.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS - £5 pa

Unpaid annual membership subscriptions are now over due. We accept cheques or cash but we prefer Standing Orders for which forms can be downloaded from our website.

Life members are invited to make additional annual donations as the life subscription amounts paid have long since been accounted for. We encourage all members and donors to complete Gift Aid forms which are also available from our website or from any Committee member so we can recover tax.

COMMUNICATION

All members are asked to keep us informed of their postal address and provide an email address for future communications. Please look at our Facebook site for the latest information in confidence that we do not seek to harvest or use your personal data other than as you may direct and to inform you about local issues. We never hand personal data of members or supporters to any other organisations.

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

Adam Long became Chairman at the AGM and Andrew Smith was elected Vice Chairman. Susan Smith continues to manage the roles of Treasurer and membership officer while Judith Lunn became Secretary. We have received additional support for our local plan sub-committee and we are grateful to the volunteers.

We need members to come forward to assist with the current high work load. We need additional people, especially with any skill or interest in website maintenance and Facebook; research into larger development proposals; newsletter production and membership communications

TREES



Trees may be protected by a "TPO" and there is one in Half Moon Lane, opposite the Duke of Wellington pub.

Epping Society repeatedly drew to the attention of the planning department the lack of protection for the tree during excavation and construction work on the large block of flats which replaced the Half Moon pub and we were pleased the tree was not damaged.

After completion of the flats we were surprised there was no natural drainage anywhere on the site and no bare soil around the protected tree to allow its roots to thrive. Residents were driving over the bare roots to get to parking places, which was clearly not sustainable for the tree!

We were pleased the Council officers dealt with these matters but we remain disappointed that the developer was allowed to ignore the rules which require all householders to use water permeable materials when installing drives on their property.