



THE EPPING SOCIETY - NEWSLETTER

AGM DATE CHANGE – NOW MONDAY 11TH MARCH – EPPING HALL

February 2013

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

What with the St John's site consultation, the Local Plan consultation, our 40th anniversary and the National Planning Policy framework, 2012 was a challenging year for the Epping Society and it looks as though this year will be too.

We will be seeing a stepping down from the Committee of several members (some who have served for almost 20 years). I too will be standing down but will put myself up for election on the committee, as will others, in a different role. Having been elected as Chairman three years ago 'by default' as those of you who attended the AGM in 2010 will remember, I feel I have helped the Epping Society to evolve and it is now time for some new blood.

There will be vacancies for the following roles namely Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer, Website and PR, Planning, Events, Newsletter and Membership Secretary. We have had some volunteers for the vacant roles from new and old members of the committee, but that does not preclude any of our members putting their names forward, either before or at the AGM, when the new incumbents will be elected.

All societies and groups seem to be suffering from similar difficulties in finding volunteers, but we do believe the Epping Society still has a very important role to play in preserving and improving all that is good about Epping. It would be a very sad loss if we were not able to continue due to lack of volunteers.

Our membership, at present, stands at 745. It has to be believed that somewhere amongst all those members, are people who have the determination to do their utmost to protect Epping. This could be from unwarranted encroachment and building on Green Belt to unsightly and inappropriate developments. We need people with an interest in the character and history of Epping but with an open mind and forward looking attitude to new development.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Please note new venues for meetings:-

Epping Hall, Epping Town Council Offices – downstairs (lift available), St John's Road, Epping and St John the Baptist Church, St John's Rd., Epping.

AGM: Members only able to vote

Date:- Monday March 11th 2013

Time:- 7.30 for 8pm

Venue:- Epping Hall

Wine and Cheese will be served

AGM Business & Speaker: Judy Adams, Chairman of Friends of Epping Forest (see back page for more detail)

Open Meeting:- non members welcome

Date: Wednesday 17th April 2013

Time: 7.30pm for 8pm

Venue: St John the Baptist Church

Speaker: Ben Cowell & Rev Connor

Ben Cowell will be speaking on The National Trust & its role in the new planning policy. He will also talk about the trust's plans to celebrate the centenary of one of its founders Sir Robert Hunter.

Rev. Geoffrey Connor will talk about the proposed new building at St John the Baptist Church.

Epping Town Centre Festival

29th June – 7th July 2013

As part of the Festival the Epping Society plan to lead guided walks through Epping pointing out buildings of historical interest and entertaining fun facts for all. We will also have a stall at the Epping Town Show on Sunday 7th July.

Open Meeting:- non members welcome

Date:- Wednesday 18th September 2013

Time:- 7.30pm for 8pm

Venue:- St John the Baptist Church

Speaker:-Richard Morris - Verderer, Epping Forest & author. Richard will be speaking on the role verderers play in todays running of the forest and on his latest book 'Forest for the People' and the part George Burney (1818-1885) played in the saving of Epping Forest "for the people."

We don't win every battle by any means but if we don't try, who will? It seems we all lead busy lives and not everyone has time to review planning applications and object when necessary to preserve and enhance our town.

In moving with the times we are making some amendments to our **membership subscriptions** for this year and the way they are collected. The annual subscription will be increasing to £5 per household and we are asking for payment to be made by standing order or cheque. We are enclosing a form for this in the newsletter. Our "posties" will still be delivering this newsletter by hand this time but we are hoping that many of our members will be supportive of receiving future newsletters by providing email addresses as this will be the preferred option. In exceptional cases, being aware of our ageing membership, we will continue to send a hard copy by post. As you can imagine with postage costs ever increasing, the less postage we incur, the better. With email, we can bring you updates and news more regularly.

We, along with other organisations, can no longer offer life membership although those who have in the past taken out life memberships will be honoured.

The decision to make these changes has not been made lightly and many other similar societies were reviewed to ascertain the level of membership fees. We are fully aware that as planning departments become more pressed, with ever increasing financial constraints and legislative policy, we may have to resort to legal recourse to fight our battles as simple letters of objection may just not be enough to secure the integrity of Epping and its green belt surrounds. To consider this action, we need to know we have the financial backing.

I am grateful to our committee and "posties" for their contribution; we could not have survived without them all. I look forward to the Epping Society evolving further under new direction. I have no doubt our members will "step up to the plate" and volunteers will come forward to enable this to happen.

Sue Allison - Chairman

Committee Updates

LATEST NEWS ON ST JOHNS SITE AND LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

Meeting with Tony Church EFDC Councillor and Town Councillor 7th February, 2013

Adam Long, Steven Harding and Charlie Geddes attended the councillors surgery at Epping Hall.

St Johns Road development

- There was no update on the development, the three bodies involved are working independently on various actions and awaiting reports and studies regarding the feasibility of proposed uses.
- Epping Town Council were still awaiting the results of the feasibility study into leisure usage for the current Epping Hall. The review had been completed but the results were not yet published.
- In addition Epping Town Council would not make any decision about their stance on Epping Hall until all reports had been received. These reports included the leisure feasibility study and also reports from Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council.

Local Plan

- Councillors were currently attending sessions regarding the results of the consultation and once these had been completed the plan would be progressed to the next step.
- We asked what the council was doing to speed up the plan since the national planning policy framework stipulates that authorities that do not have an up-to-date plan by 1st April, 2013 will be subject to a "presumption in favour of sustainable development", which means the default answer to development is "yes", unless the local plan specifically protects the site in question. This would mean that Epping will have significantly less protection for unwanted development post 1st April, 2013. The published timetable for the EFDC Local Plan following the Community Choices consultation last year (30 July to 15 October 2012) is as follows: **Draft Local Plan May 2013, Submission Local Plan Autumn 2013, Examination in Public Winter 2013/14, Local Plan Adopted Spring 2014.** There appears to be no change to this scheduled timetable.

State of the High Road

- Given the current state of the High Road with many empty shops, others on the brink of closing and no apparent plan for mixed usage we asked who was co-ordinating plans for the High Road. Tony was not aware of an individual responsible for such co-ordination but would look into this and revert.
- Tony advised that part of the problem was that a number of different bodies seemed to be trying to work on behalf of the retailers such as the chamber of commerce and the town centre partnership and this hampered communication. He stated that there were moves to merge all these bodies into one to have a cohesive approach.
- We asked what steps were being taken to try and bring tourists into Epping to take advantage of the world renowned forest surrounding the town, not just as part of annual festivals but week in week out. Tony advised that he was not aware of anyone working on this but would look into this and revert.
- We discussed what incentives Epping Forest District Council could offer to try and bring new retailers into Epping, particularly independent, non chain retailers. Tony again was not aware of any incentives being offered and could not think of what could be offered by the council. We asked about business rates and Tony advised that reduction in business rates was beyond the control of Epping Forest District Council apart from Charities and certain non-profit making bodies.

General

We talked about the lack of target dates for any of the reviews, consultations, plans etc. and how disappointed we were that these had not been set when the various actions were created. We felt that it certainly would have added to the time taken for completion of the tasks and asked Tony if he could particularly ask whether any timetables had been set for the local plan and feasibility study into leisure usage at Epping Hall. We also said that any studies in future should always have dates as part of the process. Tony advised he would look into any target dates for all the outstanding matters and would revert. We stated that if there were no dates set to find out who had the power to set dates so we could contact them.

Planning Appraisals

During the last 12 months the main concern of the Society on the planning front has been the **EFDC Local Plan Consultation** and the future of the **St Johns Road** site. Both these issues would appear to be partially unresolved and we continue to monitor the situations.

However we still continue our routine task of monitoring all the EFDC Planning applications, checking the plans of those we consider controversial and registering an objection where we consider them to be in contravention of planning guidelines and not to be in the best interests of our Town. As in recent years there have not been too many of these but we have objected to two applications to turn existing retail premises into restaurants as we consider that although the High Street has a number of empty shops, the loss of these in favour of yet further eating establishments, of which we have many, is undesirable. We have also objected to three applications for internally illuminated shop fascia signs which are not allowed by the Local Authority, an application to turn an existing office premises into residential units for a variety of reasons, the building of a bungalow on a former lock up garage site which had no road frontage other than the drive-in, had very little amenity space, overlooked all its neighbours and exacerbated the local parking problems and also one or two domestic extensions where we considered they were either too large or overlooked or obstructed their neighbours.

This task has been made easier in recent times by the new Planning Department web site where one can look through all weekly planning lists and pull up the plans of those one wishes to view, rather than having to visit the Council offices and wade through piles of intricately folded plans. However, I have enjoyed doing the job but having done it for several years now I feel it is time to let a younger member take over, who is more conversant with modern technology! So we shall be looking for a suitable candidate at the coming AGM.

Iain Wallace - Planning

Publicity and Website

The Epping Society website is now over two years old. To attract and inform the younger members of the community, we will be entering the social media environment of the World Wide Web over the next few months. Our video of the 40th Anniversary can be seen on YouTube by typing "YouTube epping society" into a Google search. The Society already has 33 followers on twitter. Facebook will also have a presence from the Society over the next few months. Any suggestions for content on these sites would be appreciated.

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

Treasurer's Corner

It gives me pleasure to say that the accounts have been audited and will be presented at the AGM. Once again our expenditure has exceeded our income. This is due to our having incurred additional costs in 2012 in celebrating our 40th anniversary, but we cannot keep dipping into our decreasing reserves and so we find ourselves having to raise the subscription rates. We hope you will want to continue to being members and that you feel the work the Society does, on what we hope is your behalf continues to be considered "good value for money".

Like others you will be reading of in this newsletter, I too will be retiring from my committee duties. I have enjoyed the time I have served as a Treasurer and seeing the work of the Society. I wish my successor well and will of course be happy to help in any way I can to ensure a smooth takeover.

John Hill - Treasurer

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

Since the last newsletter, at national level, Sir Andrew Motion has been appointed as the new CPRE President following the retirement of the popular Bill Bryson. A former poet laureate, Sir Andrew is a "local" man from Stisted in the North Essex countryside and his aim is to protect the rural environment in general, to encourage the largest number of people from the widest possible range of backgrounds to enjoy it and to also share the responsibility for looking after it. He is

especially keen to see an increase in the younger membership of CPRE and their greater involvement with the organization.

CPRE Emergency Action

The Epping Society has been informed by Laura Jansen of the CPRE Campaign team; about CPRE's concern regarding the latest statement by the Prime Minister that he wants to increase England's built up area by one third. CPRE agrees that more houses are needed, but there are already enough previously developed sites for 1.5 million new homes. The Growth and Infrastructure Bill being debated in Parliament will take planning powers away from councils if they do not make (planning) decisions fast enough; this would make it easier for developers to build on green field sites. Furthermore the Bill could allow England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the National Parks, to be damaged by intrusive communication paraphernalia as well as preventing local communities from protecting their village greens from development. Laura summarised by pointing out that the Bill will damage the countryside and erodes local democracy unless we ask MPs to improve it (the Bill).

CPREssex

Following the death of the popular CPREssex Chairman Tom Holme as mentioned in the last newsletter, the CPREssex Chairmanship is being shared, currently, between Richard Beauchamp and Tricia Moxey.

CPREssex is keeping a watchful eye on proposed major traffic schemes in Essex which is under considerable threat from such schemes, and the resulting increase in traffic flows. CPREssex advocates that the reduction in such flows is the long term answer (to traffic congestion) rather than the building of bigger and better roads. CPREssex is also concerned about the increase in fly tipping on agricultural land (and elsewhere). It conducted a survey of this problem and, in conjunction with three MPs, is pressing for a change in legislation to place the burden of "cleaning up" on local councils rather than landowners.

Trevor Roberts, CPREssex Representative,

London Green Belt Council

Epping Society is a member of the London Green Belt Council which is a grouping of about 100 amenity organisations and Parish Councils (not individuals) with a concern for the Green Belt around London. LGBC was formed in 1955 and meets 3 or 4 times year in Westminster. Its main activities are to comment on draft Regional Plans and Local Development Frameworks and to make representation on planning applications and appeals.

Epping Society greatly values the work of the LGBC and welcomes the recent decision of Theydon Bois Action Group to join. It can sometimes seem lonely trying to resist planning applications which are often promoted by well financed businesses and seemingly given an easy ride by local planning authorities. Having LGBC is invaluable as an ally and source of technical advice.

As a result of conflicting pronouncements by the Government during August and September last year, for example, the Chairman sought clarification from Mr. Eric Pickles (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government). LGBC was particularly concerned about apparently conflicting statements by Mr. Pickles (on 6 September) and Mr. Grant Shapps MP on 24 August. It felt that assurances about government commitment to the Green Belt was put into doubt by its encouragement of planning authorities to remove Green Belt boundaries in the way of growth. LGBC reminded the government that:

"The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence."

"Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances."

The National Planning Policy Framework certainly does not give councils the flexibility to alter Green Belt boundaries just because they think it will help growth.

There was added concern at apparent confusion: - government had wrongly stated that quarries in the Green Belt would be considered as previously developed land. That was quite wrong.

A belief that the aesthetic quality of Green Belt was in some way relevant to its status as protected open land. It has long been a principle that the quality of the landscape is not relevant to the inclusion of land within a Green Belt or to its continued protection.

A recent planning application in Theydon Bois is an example of irrelevant issues being argued by an applicant seeking otherwise impermissible development in the Green Belt. Whatever the merits of a building, there is nothing in para 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework to suggest that Green Belt policies should not apply to high quality and innovative buildings.

However cleverly a house may be designed, it would still reduce the openness of the Green Belt. Technical ingenuity does not constitute an exceptional purpose for which the Green Belt should be developed.

Andrew Smith - LGC representative

Social Events

After some 19 years on the committee I have decided it's time to pass on my tasks to others - I have enjoyed my time on the committee and have met many interesting people and made friends and I know I will miss the committee meetings and the organising of events, but feel it's time to pass the baton on. I will of course help in any way I can, to aid my successor. Thank you all for your support in the past, best wishes to you all.

Christmas lunch - 2012 - 64 people sat down to a full Christmas lunch, with turkey and trimmings galore, the "sweets" proved to be a big hit too. Norman Lansdowne Davis and his "resident choir" provided the entertainment and I am sure I am right in thinking that the diners went home with a smile on their faces, having spent an afternoon in good company, with good food and a few laughs along the way too.

Christmas Tree Festival - 2012 - Once again the Christmas trees in St John's Church were a wonderful sight. The Society again decorated a tree, taking the theme the "Green Belt". If you were unable to visit in 2012, do try to make the time this year.

Doreen Tarling

Open Meeting – 17th April 2013

The next open meeting of the Epping Society will be on Wednesday 17 April at 7.30pm at St John's Church, Epping. Our speaker will be Ben Cowell, the new Regional Director for the East of England at the National Trust and author of *The Heritage Obsession - The Battle for England's Past*. Ben is also a Trustee of The Heritage Alliance and Our Democratic Heritage.

Before taking up his current role, Ben Cowell was one of the public faces of the National Trust as it lobbied Government on the new National Planning Policy Framework. Thanks to the efforts of Ben and his colleagues, the new planning policy framework strikes a better balance between development and protection of heritage and the environment than the Government's original proposals. The document now forms the basis of all central and local government policy - and is being used by Epping Forest District Council to inform the new Local Plan for the district. Ben will talk to the Epping Society about the National Trust's take on new planning policy, and how the Trust is working to protect its historic properties, the Green Belt and market towns like Epping from inappropriate development. 2013 also marks the centenary of the death of Sir Robert Hunter, one of the founders of National Trust and a key figure in the battle to save Epping Forest. Ben has written a biography of Hunter, and will talk about the National Trust's plans to mark his centenary.

As the Open Meeting is being held in St Johns Church, we will also have a presentation by the Reverend Geoffrey Connor, Rector of St John the Baptist Church, Epping, about the church's proposals for a new building next to the church that will provide new facilities for St John's and a new community space for Epping. We will have an opportunity to learn more about the plans, see a model of the proposed new building, and ask any questions that we may have.

Everyone is welcome to attend this open meeting - not just members of the Epping Society. Please invite anyone you know to come along for what will be a very interesting and informative event. Refreshments will be provided.

Steven Harding

Membership News

2012 was a good year for membership recruitment, our members now number 745. We on the committee hope that both new and old will want to continue supporting the Society in its endeavours. The amendments being made in the collection of the subscriptions to standing orders or by cheque will be a big change. Our Postmen/ladies have given of their time and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for making my job as membership secretary easier. I know we all dread the newsletter drop where we collect the subscriptions, but I for one will miss the opportunity of meeting the members, and the contact with our "posties". We hope you all feel the increase in subscriptions offers good value, and that you will want to continue supporting the Society and the Committee.

Do please persuade neighbours and friends in Epping to consider membership in order to strengthen our collective voice, help fulfil our aims and join us in protecting our Town.

This is to be my swansong of a newsletter, as I too am resigning from the committee due to changes in circumstances. I have enjoyed my time as membership secretary with the addition of editing the newsletter. I have enjoyed being able to take part in debates at the Committee Meetings and feel sure they will be of shorter length now that I won't be "putting my oar in". I can also say that I have done things I would never have thought myself capable of and so have gained in confidence. I can only add that if you think you might be interested in joining the Committee give it a try, you never know you too might enjoy it and the feeling that you are making a contribution to the Society and the town. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to play a part.

De Spence – Membership Secretary & Editor

Epping Society

I moved to Epping 15 years ago to take advantage of its unique position as a pretty market town surrounded by forest but also on the central line allowing me easy access to the city of London. Having grown up in Ilford I have fond memories of trips to Epping as a child with its high street full of different and interesting shops and playing in the forest.

For quite a while I had become concerned about the changes to Epping in both the state of shops in the high street and the general lack of forward planning to make both the town and high street a thriving and vibrant place to be.

I have seen what poor town planning, lack of vision and mismanagement can do to a town with vacant shops, declining services and disenfranchised youth and want to do all I can to return Epping to a place which services the needs of its residents and also provides entertainment to all ages.

I had heard of the Epping society and the tremendous work it did in preventing the M25 from ruining the town in the early 1980's but knew little of its work in modern times and was pleased to meet members at the town show in 2012. They explained to me of their continuing work as guardians of what they feel is right for Epping and its residents and I joined the society immediately.

In 2012 the St Johns Road development was also taking centre stage and I, along with other concerned Epping residents saw the consultation, as originally planned, as being inadequate for such an important, once in a generational change to Epping and lobbied the district council hard to change the format of the consultation arranging public meetings with town councillors and doing all we could to make Epping residents aware of what was planned.

After the consultation had finished the results were published and I was extremely disappointed by how the results were interpreted and the planning brief produced which, in my view, gave little or no protection to Epping from unsympathetic development of large multi-purpose retail outlets or residential development on a large scale which would add little to the town and would put unneeded pressure on the struggling high road and public services.

The Epping society arranged a meeting with District councillors to ask questions about the consultation and subsequent planning brief and I duly attended to ask my questions. I was very pleased to see the number of people present and the way that we were allowed to directly question the councillors and make our feelings known but I was concerned to see the age range of the Epping Society members was only really represented by the older generation. At that meeting I was asked if I would like to attend the next

committee meeting of the society to see how they worked which I agreed to do.

I was delighted to see that there was a group of people who felt as strongly about the town as I did and have attended every meeting since the first to add what I can to the work of the society.

However that is not to say that the society is perfect in every way, the members are beginning to age and are struggling to entice younger members to join the society and in order to truly represent Epping and to continue to thrive into the 21st Century we must change this. The society needs to embrace the benefits of the internet and social media, such as Facebook, whilst not disenfranchising the existing members with their wealth of experience, knowledge and love of Epping.

We must however find a way of handing the baton to the next generation to continue the ongoing work of protecting the town, while sharing with them their vast store of knowledge to equip new committee members with the necessary skills to do so.

The next few years are pivotal for Epping and its future prosperity with pressure on the green belt, unequal competition on the small shops from large retail chains and supermarkets and requests from the government to build ever increasing numbers of homes with seemingly no thought of the infrastructure of roads and services needed to support this.

I am pleased to work with the society in doing my bit to preserve Epping whilst being mindful that the town also needs to change in order to survive. Monetary needs alone must not be allowed to rule over what is best for the community even in these times of financial hardship for both the country and individuals.

I found an article from the property section of the Evening Standard published in April 2011 which states:

"...There is something magical about getting on the Tube in central London and getting off in a small country town about 45 minutes later. This is the delight of Epping, a small Essex market town surrounded by forest and open farmland..."

I would want people to be able to write this still in 20 years' time but if those who make the decisions are left unwatched and reminded that we put them where they are now, I am concerned that this will not be the

case and I look to the society to continue to remain the conscience of the town.

Adam Long – Committee Member

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 routes are all circular and vary from month to month. The finishing time back in Epping is usually around 2pm. An average distance is 10 miles, covered at a brisk pace. There is also a stop for drinks only at a public house. Boots or strong shoes are recommended. The leaders are volunteers with experience of rambling. The walks planned for the coming months are as follows:-

24th February Theydon Bois 9 miles leader Ray

31st March Toot Hill 9.5 miles leader Mara

For further details:

www.westessexramblers.org.uk

Copped Hall – Guided tours Dates:

Sunday 17th February 2013

Sunday 17th March 2013

Sunday 21st April 2013

Sunday 19th May 2013

Sunday 16th June 2013

Sunday 21st July 2013

Sunday 18th August 2013

Sunday 15th September 2013

Sunday 20th October 2013

Sunday 17th November

Gates open from 10am (last entry 11). Tours start at 10.15am and cover the whole of the gardens, a large part of the mansion, the cellars and stables. Tea, coffee and homemade cakes available; shop open; fruit and vegetables for sale in season.

Cost: - £7 per person

www.coppedhalltrust.org.uk

Tel 01992571657

Copped Hall, Upshire Road, Epping, CM16 5HS

AGM – MONDAY 11TH MARCH 2013
Epping Town Council Office's
(Epping Hall) - 7.30 for 8pm
Please don't forget – YOUR TOWN
NEEDS YOU!

We are hoping that you our members will turn out in force. There is to be a good supply of Wine, cheese and nibbles to entice you out of your cosy homes on an early Spring (?) evening. Whilst there is some "business" to be dealt with, it should be an entertaining evening. We have a speaker Judy Adams, Chairman of The Friends of Epping Forest.

An organisation similar to ours – except that their remit is to safeguard the Forest we live so close to. Just as we do, they review the planning applications and raise objections as the committee sees fit to any planning applications that may infringe on the Forest and its users, as well as many other tasks. It should prove to be an interesting talk as many of the aims and objects of the Friends coincide with ours.

Judy's talk will be before the AGM business, which all being well, should be over quickly, especially if we have some new members come forward to assist the committee and fill the vacant positions. We do have a few laughs on the committee, it is not all serious banter, and you will be made welcome. It is of course an opportunity to feel a part of the wider community and to hear others views on our town and put forward your own. We hope that you won't feel the wine and eats is a bribe to entice you to come! It will be an opportunity to say goodbye and thanks to those committee members who are leaving and, of course, a chance to greet all those new committee members who are going to come forward on the night. Should you feel you might like to join and would first like to know more about what this would entail, please contact Sue Allison, Chairman.

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