



NEWSLETTER

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - Monday 13 March 2017 Epping Hall

7:30pm Members meeting

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chairman's introduction 2. Apologies for absence 3. Minutes of AGM held on 14 March 2016 4. Chairman's Report 5. Annual Accounts 6. Election of Officers:
Vice President
Chairman
Vice Chairman | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Election of Officers (continued):
Honorary Secretary
Honorary Treasurer
Membership Secretary 7. Election of Committee Members 8. Constitution change – see page four 9. Any other business 10. Close of the Annual General Meeting |
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8:00pm Refreshments and an opportunity to talk to the new Committee

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS - £5 pa

All annual membership subscriptions are now due and we can accept cheques or cash at the AGM. We will also have available Standing Order forms to make it easier for each future year's subscriptions.

Life members are invited to make additional annual donations as the life subscription amounts paid have long since been accounted for

COMMUNICATION

All members are asked to confirm their postal address and provide an email address for future communications. The cost in money and manpower of distributing paper notices and the speed of emails for urgent business have led us to make the proposals for a constitutional changes as shown overleaf.

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

This year the Chairman will step down but offer himself for election to the Committee. The Treasurer has been covering for the role of Secretary as well as looking after finances and membership and can no longer cope with all those roles.

As a result **we need members to come forward** to fill two officer roles as soon as possible. The Secretary role could be split between minute secretary and other, more general work if it helped bring forward a volunteer.

Committee members are all seeking re-election but additional people, especially with different skills and interests, would help us to handle the numerous planning issues we expect in the coming year. The roles need not be individually arduous but when too few are handling too much (and running businesses as well) it can become difficult to cover all we would like. Examples of useful skills and interests include:

- Digital communications – website maintenance and Facebook
- Research into larger development proposals
- Newsletter production and membership communications
- And the two officer roles

Open Meeting 14 November

For the second time in 2016 we held a packed open meeting at Epping Hall. We apologise to those members and the public who were unable to join the audience at this over subscribed meeting to discuss the draft local plan for Epping Forest district.



The importance of issues arising out of the draft proposals can hardly be overstated. The prospect of 11,400 additional homes in the district (with 1,633 in Epping plus 60 in Coopersale and 130 in Thornwood) raised considerable agitation among the audience.

These additional new homes were proposed to be built largely on Green Belt which surrounds each of the communities in our district.

Officers of the Society presented a summary of the draft plan together with suggestions for issues which then public might wish to consider in their responses to the District Council.



On 13 January our Vice Chairman, Adam Long, together with Barbara Scruton (Committee) and Ian Wilcox met with Eleanor Laing MP to express our concerns about the draft local plan and to seek her support for particular aspects.

St Johns Road site

Your Society continues to monitor this matter.

We are relieved that, after such a long delay, the sale of the County Council's interest to the EFDC has been accomplished. We understand that negotiations are under way between EFDC and the Epping Town Council (ETC) who own Epping Hall for it to be transferred in exchange for an interest in Centre Point.

We strongly encourage ETC to secure a freehold or near-freehold interest in whatever property they decide to occupy so their independence and longevity can be assured. We look forward to seeing what public meeting rooms will be available after this change has taken place.

We are in touch with the proposed developers who have indicated a willingness to meet us and, possibly, present their ideas at a future meeting of the Society.

The Telegraph

The Daily Telegraph published our letter on 4th January in response to their report of Government plans for a new town or garden village near Harlow. The plans were announced without consultation and appeared to be final.

Dear Sir

Local Planning Authorities have spent years and millions of pounds to write draft local plans which have just been consulted upon. The Epping Society was critical of the plan put forward in our district but no plan has been offered for comment by the government in respect of Harlow and Gilston on which they seem determined (DT today).

There is no significant local support for developing the Green Belt but we do not oppose fully serviced new villages.

Our Society does not oppose all development. We proposed higher density as a means of providing more homes while also replacing low specification properties, especially from the 1960s and 1970s. Harlow itself and some parts of Epping Forest district, which is adjacent to it, appear to offer immense opportunities this way without destroying the Green Belt.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Smith
Chairman
The Epping Society

Epping Forest local plan

We understand the EFDC Cabinet will consider responses to the draft local plan on Thursday 9 March. We present below an abbreviated extract from our 31 page response below, on matters other than development site selection.

- **Development management policies** are of considerable importance. If EFDC is to get its way and increase the size of the communities in the district by adding large blocks of new homes over a 17 year period there is a vital need for policies which can assist in providing a liveable environment.
- **In conservation areas and town centres** (especially primary retail areas) it is essential to adopt specific policies to encourage and protect a market town character in order to enhance its attractiveness to visitors, shoppers and residents.
- **DM 4** "Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space and Corridors" should not be considered a reasonable or adequate substitute for protecting the Green Belt.
- **DM 5** "Green Infrastructure: Design of Development" refers to provision of new (or, presumably, replacement) trees and habitat. The wording could be strengthened to ensure traditional species are used and that their survival to maturity is assured.
- **DM 7** "Heritage Assets" have not been well served in Epping in recent years with the loss of the Half Moon pub and the Pearce's Bakery sites to new development. Accordingly The Epping Society proposes that an urgent review should be undertaken to increase the local listings which should specifically be identified in this policy as "Heritage Assets".
- We welcomed a policy to reinforce the ability to resist inappropriate and garish shop fronts **Conservation Areas**
- **A lack of facilities.** Findings by a team of design and transport engineers at Leeds University two years ago warned that town centres are becoming virtual elderly-free zones as an unintended consequence of changes such as closing public lavatories and stripping out benches. We note with approval the efforts of Epping Town Council to maintain decent public toilets.
- **H 2 Affordable Housing** We challenged the ratio of affordable housing. Affordable housing mandated in the district should be reserved for local people in the first instance and only released if declined by them and by local housing associations.
- **E 4 The Visitor Economy** In order to make the district more accessible to visitors and enhance the market town appearance of those towns, we propose that finger posts should be installed.
- **DM 9 High quality design** The Epping Society proposes that the public generally should be able to give their views on Masterplans. We propose that an advisory design panel should be established which would comment when it thought fit on any planning matter and the planning committees and the Council would undertake to give consideration to their views.
- **DM 9 policy E** – We need to know more details of the Design Review Panel as we do not want yet another consulting firm.
- **SME builders:** a HOUSE OF LORDS Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment called for help for SME builders which we believe could increase innovation and add to variety while stimulating local businesses.
- **DM 10 Housing Design and Quality** The Epping Society welcomes the commitment to amenity space for family homes but we feel some provision should also be made for all homes of say two or more bedrooms.
- **DM 11 Waste recycling facilities on new development**
- Wheelie bins are an eyesore. Fly tipping is an environmental and health risk and would be reduced if ECC disposal sites were open every day.
- **DM 13 Advertisements** While advertisements for individual local events should be tolerated, persistent and long term "temporary" signs are a blot on the environment and those responsible ought to be more vigorously dealt with, as should those who simply ignore the rules. Certain blocks of flats in the town seem to have perpetual signs "For Sale" or "To Let" and this ought to be restricted.
- **Policy D3 – Utilities** The list of required facilities does not include fast broadband which we consider to be essential to enable home working and small business development.

And lastly, we were dismayed by remarks by several Councillors that older people need not be concerned about the draft local plan because they will no longer be here when the damage is done. Such a remarks were disrespectful and implied a wholly selfish attitude to the consultation in which the future condition of our district was of interest only for our own benefit.

CONSTITUTION CHANGES

6. MEETINGS

add "Subject at all times to the requirements of the Charities Commission, the Executive Committee may resolve to dispense with an audit of the accounts."

The Committee monitors the financial affairs which are not complex and it considers that an audit is not necessary.

15. NOTICES

delete "Membership Secretary" and add "Society but the Executive Committee may decide not to give notice to any member where it appears the member no longer resides at the address and no subsequent or forwarding address has been provided.

The Executive Committee may require members to confirm their postal addresses annually or to provide email addresses and thereafter notice shall have been duly given if left or sent as aforesaid or sent by email to the last notified address.

The Executive Committee shall use reasonable endeavours to display a copy of any such notice within the town of Epping."

We have not had a Membership Secretary for some years so notifications should not be made to a specific officer. The Committee considers that communication with members and the wider public is essential to the success of the Society. However, hand delivery and post paid communications are no longer practical. Accordingly we have focused on digital communications (Email, website and Facebook) and as a result, over the past two years, we have had greater interaction with members and the public. The Committee will continue to use reasonable endeavours to advertise meetings.

The Committee recommends these constitution changes to the meeting.

Review of planning applications

In the year 4 January 2016 to 2 January 2017 the Society Committee reviewed 308 planning applications for the Epping, Thornwood and surrounding area. There are, on average, 6 applications per week but there can be as many as 14. We commented on 48 – that is 15% of the total. Of these applications, 52% were either refused or withdrawn by the applicant.

Every week the Committee is circulated with a prepared report from the published documents available on the Epping Forest District Planning website. This highlights the impact of the proposed development and, where possible, it shows the existing street scene from published sources or a recent photograph. There is a recommendation to comment or not. The ensuing discussions form the committee view on each application which are sometimes lively and always well considered.

The example below shows examples of application outlined in red. The Committee has many years of local knowledge which helps them bring individual insight into the discussion. We also benefit from a professional architect's views.

The Committee recognizes the advantages of the Permitted Development arrangements (whereby certain limited works can be carried out without planning permission) but we regret that it is operating in such a way as to "uglify" many parts of our town and other towns and villages up and down the country.

We feel that too many homeowners do not think enough about the design and appearance of their homes following changes such as loft extensions, porches and other unsympathetic works.

Of course, not all such works damage a property or an area but too many seem to do so. We are especially concerned about ad hoc and unsympathetic materials and design in highly coherent streets and areas, such as The Orchards, Buckingham Road and (prospectively)

Theydon Grove. In our response to the draft local plan we have recommended that protection ought to be given, especially for highly "designed" areas.

While permitted development of offices into homes might seem a convenient solution to central government, its effect could be to empty our town of business activity. If it drives up rents for remaining office premises and reduces available stock, new business will be forced to move away and the town will lose both its character and its prosperity.

