



Community Workshop Report

Upper High Street and
Depot Road Car Park Sites
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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Introduction

Dialogue was commissioned by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to independently facilitate a series of community workshops discussing the future of an important town centre location, taking in the Upper High Street site, adjacent Depot Road car park and adjoining sites such as the Rosebery Housing Association properties and fire station in Epsom. This report highlights the response of the local people attending the two workshops on Friday 19th January 2007.

Summary of Feedback

The main points raised by participants at the workshops were:

- Concern over the amount of traffic generated by retail developments on either site
- A perception that the town centre did not need another large food store
- That a smaller 'basket store' retail development could 'anchor' the Upper High Street but have a reduced impact on traffic
- Support for a wider selection of non-food goods in the town centre and developments that would allow local specialist retailers to thrive
- Acceptance that Epsom was not large enough to support or attract certain types of retailers and it was not feasible to expect them to invest in the site
- Support for housing development on the sites
- That Epsom did not have a wide selection of comparison (higher priced non-food) goods and leisure activities (especially for younger people) which could be delivered in some way by the site/s
- Mixed views on the need for parking provision at the Upper High Street car park

Site History and Appraisals Process

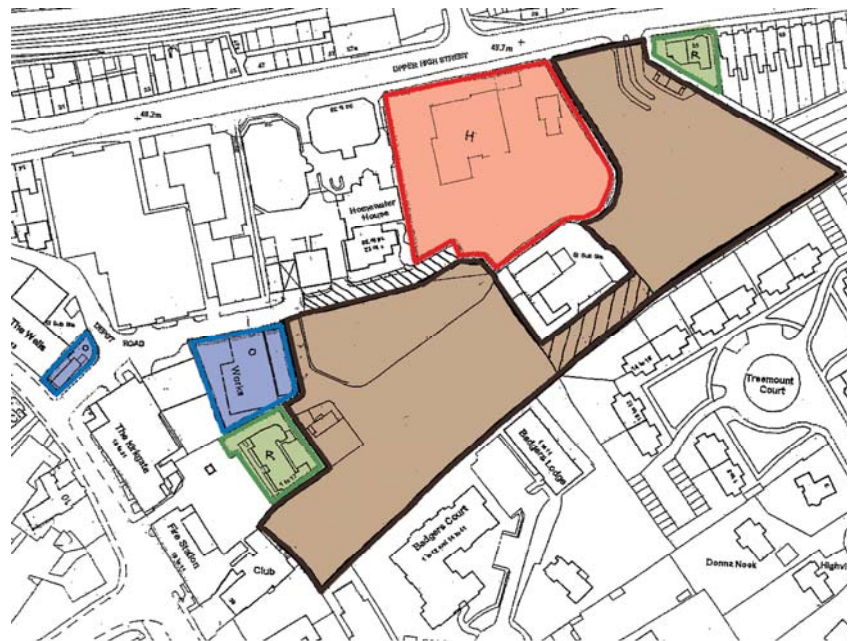
Helical Bar, owners of the Upper High Street site recently submitted a planning application for a food store development including part of the Council-owned car park. This application was turned down by councillors on the Planning Committee and was opposed by considerable numbers of residents and local interest groups. The decision is currently being appealed by Helical Bar and is likely to be considered later in Spring 2007.

Recognising the level of public interest and responses to the recent Upper High Street planning application, the Council has begun a site appraisals process. This seeks to consider the possible options for development of the sites, which together are a key strategic location in the town centre and will play an important role in shaping Epsom's future.

The Council's site appraisals process is considering future uses for the sites. Consulting local groups and individual members of the public is the first point in this process before looking into technical issues and site designs. Dialogue's independent facilitation of the workshops provided an opportunity for individual members of the community to have their views considered as part of the process, alongside local groups consulted on the proposals.

Site Map

The map below shows the sites under discussion:



principal sites + ownerships
11.07

	Council
	Helical Bar
	Rosebery
	Other

DEPOT ROAD + UPPER HIGH STREET

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Workshop Aims and Approach to Consultation

In preparing for the workshops and to deliver them in the most effective manner, Dialogue sought to:

- Provide a forum for local residents to air their views on future uses for the sites
- Explain the issues and constraints that shape and restrict the possible options for future development on both sites, allowing participants to make informed decisions on their vision for the future development of the area
- To encourage discussion and consideration of all viewpoints
- To accurately record and analyse the response of workshop participants

The workshop discussed the options for future development rather than the merits of the Helical Bar proposals. However, the issues raised by the local community when responding to the previous planning application were recognised as both valid and important considerations in the discussions.

Statistical Analysis and Results

The workshops provide a strong indication of public opinion on the future of the town centre sites, though the results presented are not suitable for rigorous statistical analysis.

To accommodate the diverse and flexible nature of consultation and the detailed discussions planned for the workshops, we quantified some of results and feedback, and combined this with qualitative analysis of key themes that emerged. This allows us to infer certain trends in public opinion on the issues tackled, which can in part inform the site appraisals process.

Methodology and Overview

Venue and Attendance

Two workshops were held on Friday 19th January 2007 at the Epsom United Reformed Church Unity Hall, at the south end of the Depot Road Car Park. The sessions were held for two hours each from 3pm and 7pm respectively to accommodate local residents with free time during the day, and those returning from work and commitments outside of Epsom during the evening.

Both sessions were very well attended, reflecting local interest in the Upper High Street site planning application and success of the promotional programme:

Session 1 (3-5pm)	95 participants
Session 2 (7-9pm)	55 participants

The first session proved so popular that the venue ran out of chairs.

Staffing

Councillor Mike Richardson, Chair of the Environment Committee was present to introduce both sessions and Head of Planning Mark Berry also spoke to explain the Council's site appraisals process and consultation. Planning Officers Anthony Evans and Tony Michael were also available to answer questions.

Five Dialogue representatives facilitated the event:

- Charles Anglin
- Francis Mallinson
- Laura Passam
- Munish Chopra
- Andrew MacLachlan

Promotion and Publicity

The workshops were promoted using several tools. This activity informed individuals that had commented on the Upper High Street site planning application and encouraged as many people as possible to attend:

- Letters to all individuals that objected to the previous planning application
- Letters to local community groups and specific stakeholders that Council officers had consulted in the site appraisals process
- Advertisement placed in the Epsom Guardian on 11th January
- Press release gaining coverage in the Epsom Guardian on 18th January
- Leaflet drop in the local area surrounding the two sites
- Discussion with Surrey County Council Youth Forum

Copies of all materials are available in the appendices.

Agenda and Workshop Programme

Effective consultation should recognise that individuals will have different interests and concerns which they will want to explore; everyone should have the opportunity to express their views and have these recorded.

This open approach to consultation was reflected in a flexible workshop agenda, where elements could be extended, re-arranged or curtailed to suit the needs of participants. The agenda was set out as follows:

Introduction

- Overview of the workshop
- Council consultation
- The workshop team

Icebreaker

- Putting Epsom on the Map

The Upper High Street and Depot Road Sites

- Introduction to the site(s)
- Previous planning application for the site
- Opportunities and issues to consider
- Group session introduction

Refreshments and Questions

Group Workshop Session

- Epsom town centre – your views on future development
- Options for the Upper High Street and Depot Road sites
- Group discussion and feedback

Close

The Group Workshop was scheduled to last one hour. In the evening workshop, the 'Your Views on Development' task was extended with a feedback session, reporting each table's views back to the whole workshop.

Workshop Activities

The workshop was designed to provide an introduction to the sites and their importance in the town centre, encouraging participants to discuss possible options for the future of the sites whilst considering the issues that would have to be accounted for when bringing forward a development.

Beginning with a simple icebreaker, the workshop was designed to gradually introduce more detailed discussion points and information, culminating in a group discussion of the specific options available on the site and what the local community would like to see.

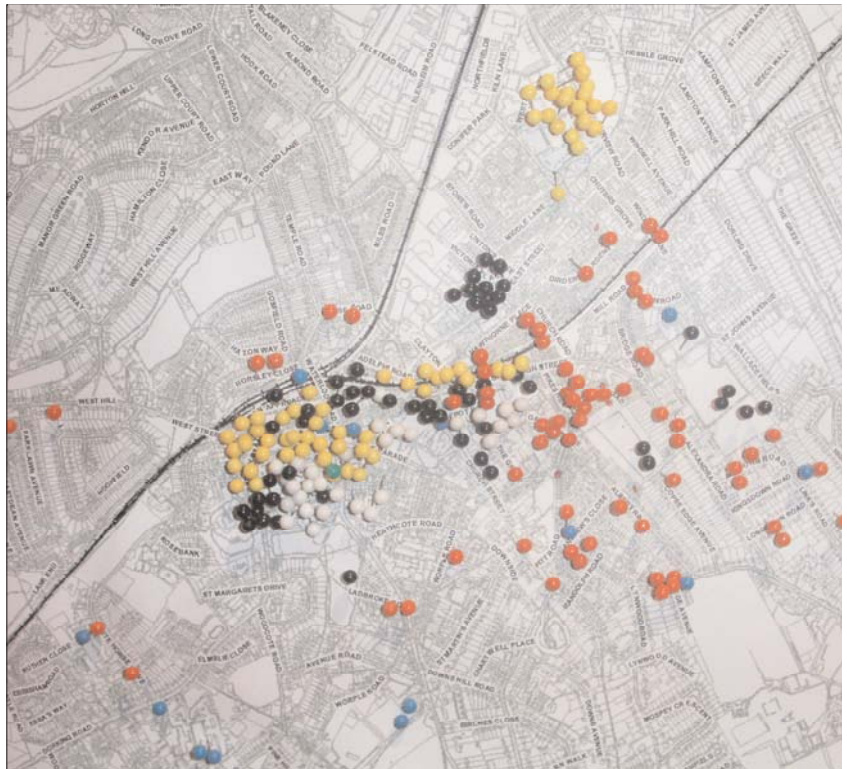
Throughout the workshops, participants' comments were noted; these contributed towards the wider conclusions drawn out in this report.

The activities were:

Putting Epsom on the Map

This was an icebreaker activity and no specific quantitative results were recorded. Participants were asked to place coloured pins on a map of the Borough to represent where they live, work, shop, park and use leisure facilities in the town centre (or elsewhere).

This encouraged participants to consider how they live in the town, what spaces they use and naturally, how this could be improved or altered by future developments.



The Upper High Street and Depot Road Sites

Charles Anglin, who led the workshop, discussed the sites and their importance to the town centre's future development. This session gently introduced the issues and constraints on developing the sites, and offered an opportunity to ask questions about the consultation, Helical Bar planning appeal, council policy and specific details of the two sites.

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The following constraints/considerations about development on the sites included:

1. Proximity of the Pikes Hill Conservation Area
2. Legal requirements for access to the site
3. Maintenance of existing underground services (gas, electricity etc.) on site
4. Considerations for retaining existing car parking
5. Protection of local trees
6. Council policy restricting building heights
7. Respect for the privacy of tenants on the sites and nearby
8. Traffic generation by any development
9. Capacity of local services to cope with new residents (health, education etc.)
10. Land level height differences across the sites
11. Potential commercial impact of retail development on local traders

Group Workshop Session

Views on Future Development of Epsom Town Centre

This exercise asked participants to consider and record:

- a positive aspect of the town centre
- a negative aspect of the town centre, or something that could be improved
- a positive opportunity for Epsom that could be offered by the sites
- an issue or consideration when considering development on either site

This exercise produced recordable results and helped participants to consider the constraints on delivering a development before discussing what they would like to see come forward in the future.

Options for the Upper High Street and Depot Road sites

This exercise took up the large part of the group workshop and sought to explore participants' views on the development of the sites in detail, drawing out both their preferences for new proposals and issues they wished to be considered.

The discussion was facilitated with one member of the team referring to a 'decision tree' diagram that posed questions about different options for development on the sites. Each facilitator sought to provoke discussion across a number of issues, and asked workshop groups to consider a number of different options for the development, rather than sticking to one issue or personal preference.

The decision tree asked participants to consider three very broad options for development on the Upper High Street and Depot Road sites:

1. Retail-led development
2. Mixed-use development (combining more than one 'use', such as housing, retail and leisure activities)
3. Housing led development.

Each option presented different questions shaping the final format of any given development, which led to final 'outcomes'. The options presented were not intended to be a 'definitive' answer for participants, nor a representation of Council policy, however, they did help discussion on a number of issues.

Local People's Views - Feedback and Analysis

This section of the report records the results of each exercise, on a 'table by table' basis. These results are analysed and conclusions drawn at the end.

Workshop Groups

There were 6 workshop groups in the afternoon (3pm) session and a further four in the evening (7pm) event. A group of representatives from the Epsom Youth Forum joined the afternoon event half way through and also contributed their views, which are recorded separately.

Views on future development of Epsom town centre

The key comments noted by each of the 10 tables over the two workshops were:

Table 1:

Town Centre Positives:

- 'Market town' feel, with a small town centre that can be accessed by foot
- Ashley Centre and library with its public square
- Eastern half of the town centre could be potentially redeveloped

Town centre negatives:

- Traffic congestion/one way system
- Central commercial area is 'unbalanced' and the Upper High Street needs to be developed
- Undesirable infill developments with 'anonymous' flats and town houses

Site Opportunities:

- Could balance town centre development by making the Upper High Street more attractive
- Residential development/affordable housing for younger housebuyers
- Supermarket - but not bigger than Epsom's Waitrose store
- Wider variety of shops and business to attract shoppers
- Public open space
- Small shops/mixed use development
- More parking to relieve problems

Site Considerations:

- Commercial need to make profit
- Increased traffic/deliveries to large stores
- Threat of large retailers on local businesses

Table 2:Town Centre Positives:

- Older buildings still remain in town
- Good indoor shopping
- Market/pedestrianised area
- 'Village' feel/homes and shops close together

Town Centre Negatives:

- Traffic congestion
- Too many chain stores/lack of variety
- Lack of parking
- New buildings/'urbanisation' of town through development

Site Opportunities:

- Mixture of housing and parking
- Range of shops/large but not 'massive' supermarket or food store
- Family housing, not just flats to keep domestic scale of the town

Site Considerations:

- Electrical sub station in car park
- Proximity to residential areas
- Traffic and access issues/impact on conservation area
- Development requires improvements to junction between Upper High Street and Church Road

Table 3:Town Centre Positives:

- 'Very functional' - serves basic requirements
- Retains 'small town' and 'homely' feel/selection of small shops

Town Centre Negatives:

- Traffic congestion
- 'No character' in town

Site Opportunities:

- 'Big opportunity' to provide for all shopping needs
- More shopping choice
- Decent department store
- Smaller shops and housing mixture
- Small supermarket

Site Considerations:

- Concern about impact of increased traffic flows
- Proximity to conservation area and residential homes/potential to 'dwarf' them

Table 4:Town Centre Positives:

- Market town feel to shops/easy to get around
- Variety of shops/mixture of business and buildings
- Ashley Centre

Town Centre Negatives:

- Traffic congestion
- Lack of on street parking
- Lack of seating

Site Opportunities:

- Improving an eyesore
- Energy efficient/sustainable development
- Community services and public space
- Mixture of buildings and stores/uses
- Expand Co-Op to 'medium' size
- Support Epsom's commercial vitality/draw shoppers to town

Site Considerations:

- Displacement of vehicles by building on Council car park
- Concern that development will attract more traffic into the town
- Lack of frontage (for retail development in the Depot Road car park)
- Disturbance of nearby commercial areas
- No supermarket needed/no dense housing development

Table 5:Town Centre Positives:

- Has preserved some 'character'
- Adequate shopping facilities
- Compact/easy to get around
- History and architectural merit

Town Centre Negatives:

- Traffic congestion
- Not enough good food retailers/specialist shops
- Lack of first time buyer housing

Site Opportunities:

- Additional housing/affordable first time buyer homes
- Small supermarket
- Comprehensive development = better use of town centre land
- Attract shoppers to the Upper High Street

Site Considerations:

- Traffic and access road system
- Noise/disruption of extended commercial area near residential homes
- Large retailer will 'destroy' the town
- Proximity to residential homes and integration with existing onsite buildings

Table 6:Town Centre Positives:

- Still has some independent shops
- Market
- Proximity of amenities and services

Town Centre Negatives:

- Traffic and congestion
- Distance between Upper High Street and Waitrose/polarised town centre

Site Opportunities:

- Mixed-use development
- Smaller shops/restaurants
- Population expansion in Epsom requires development, large supermarket
- Affordable housing

Site Considerations:

- Parking spaces taken up by new developments/residents
- Road capacity/traffic congestion/servicing requirements

Table 7:Town Centre Positives:

- Markets, country town atmosphere
- Compact and easy to travel around by foot
- Public services such as library

Town Centre Negatives:

- Traffic congestion
- Modern developments not in keeping with existing buildings
- Lack of small food shops/'household' stores
- 'Boring', lack of life in town centre
- No department store

Site Opportunities:

- Maintain car park
- Smaller supermarket
- Smaller individual shops (not just coffee stores!)
- Underdeveloped site(s) - chance for contribution in keeping with town centre
- Smaller retail complex
- Sustainable/environmentally friendly development
- Revive dying area

Site Considerations:

- Supermarket/'mall', threat to small businesses
- Traffic congestion
- Near conservation area

Table 8:Town Centre Positives:

- Easily accessible, pedestrianised shopping
- Attractive central market area
- Small town character

Town Centre Negatives:

- Traffic congestion
- Unsightly developments detracting from image of area
- Lack of shopping options

Site Opportunities:

- Mixed development/smaller shops and offices
- Affordable housing/town houses
- Small supermarket
- Young people's leisure activities
- Maintain car parking/sense of space on sites

Site Considerations:

- Traffic flow increases
- No 'big' supermarkets

Table 9:Town Centre Positives:

- Atmosphere/market town
- Characterful architecture/history

Town Centre Negatives:

- Skewed to the west, 'slowly dying'
- Ashley Centre development has drained Upper High Street and the eastern part of the High Street
- Lack of car parking
- Small individual shops needed
- Poor variety of small shops

Site Opportunities:

- Contribution to housing
- Rejuvenation of east of town centre
- Mixed use with housing
- Small food shop
- Retain car parking

Site Considerations:

- Traffic and noise/disruption to conservation area/residents
- Relationship to surrounding buildings and residential homes

Table 10:Town Centre Positives:

- Variety of small shops/good quality
- Clean town centre

Town Centre Negatives:

- Congestion
- Danger of too many large shops
- Too many flats/modern developments

Site Opportunities:

- Regeneration benefits/bring new business to Epsom
- Mixed use development
- Small supermarket

Site Considerations:

- Funding for development
- Respect for local conservation area
- No large/supermarket development
- Need to retain existing car parking

Options for the Upper High Street and Depot Road sites

The key comments noted by each table were as follows:

Table 1:

- Traffic generation by any development on either site would be a major consideration
- Mixed use development favoured, offices and smaller shops as a priority
- Reductions to parking by developing on the car park were not supported, though using its space for development was. Solutions such as extra decking in appropriate locations would be supported
- Public open space was a popular option in any development
- Affordable housing provision in any development
- A supermarket or large retail development would have to provide its own parking
- The Upper High Street was seen to be in decline and in need of an appropriate development to draw shoppers into the area
- A smaller 'basket' sized supermarket was seen as acceptable
- Sheltered/assisted housing for disabled people and activities for younger people (commercial leisure provision such as bowling) was mentioned
- Any development should support increased sense of community, requiring a mix of residential development and shops

Table 2:

- Affordable housing was a major need in the town centre which could be delivered by developing the sites, though some felt the Upper High Street was already too developed
- There was some consensus on a 'Waitrose sized' (small/medium) supermarket in keeping with the town's character which would anchor the high street and draw shoppers in by foot
- Some participants disagreed and said a larger store was needed to draw in any shoppers
- Maintaining the existing car parking provision was important to participants, though multi storey development was suggested as a means of facilitating further development
- Again, leisure facilities for younger people, particularly through commercial provision (bowling etc.) were mentioned

Table 3:

- Participants felt that car parking provision should be protected and that there was too much building going on
- Opinions varied: some supported residential-led development, some mentioned a small supermarket. A larger food store was not popular
- Affordable housing in the town centre was a concern and any residential element of a mixed use scheme was seen as very important
- ‘Café style’ development, with restaurants and concession stores spilling onto the pavement and public space around smaller (possibly independent) food stores
- A particular sore point was the lack of car servicing centres in Epsom
- Smaller stores providing niche market products and services were popular, perhaps in the form of an indoor market, with the critical mass of development attracting shoppers
- Also mentioned were: the possibility of a hotel and the need for a vocational training business college/institution

Table 4:

- A key concern was the cost of rents in the local area, which was seen as a major reason for the decline of the Upper High Street and failure of smaller retailers
- Affordable housing in the town centre was raised and the possibility of creating an ‘Upper High Street Village’ with opportunities for first time buyers to get on the housing ladder
- Access to any development and traffic generation was a major concern and would have to be carefully managed, with appropriate car parking provision important
- Two or three storeys was considered the highest development acceptable
- Quality of architecture to complement the town and its existing character was important to participants, with some consideration given to the market life character of Epsom
- New pubs and drinking establishments were not welcome
- Small independent/individual shops were favoured in any retail development
- Flats and higher density housing to provide first time homes were supported by some group members
- Car parking for any development could be accommodated underground (though this would have to take account of any electrical lines from the sub station)
- A sustainable approach to housing with car pools etc. was mentioned, and participants did not want ‘gated communities’
- Overall view: a mixed use development with affordable housing and some commercial space including smaller independent retailers and possible green space acting as a focal point. Car parking needs to be retained. Theme of an ‘Upper High Street Village’.

Table 6:

- The group identified a lack of good quality comparison goods in the town (non-food items at higher prices) though it recognised Epsom was possibly too small to attract a white-goods (electrical, fridges etc.) store
- Despite this, a good quality smaller department store was a priority for group members
- Some participants agreed that a smaller basket size food store would be acceptable and pointed to M&S Simply Food or smaller Waitrose supermarkets as examples that would encourage shoppers to walk up the Upper High Street and visit other shops
- Smaller specialist shops were lacking in the town centre and their provision would support its growth and long term commercial viability
- Some residential development (flats) would help finance the project and public space improvements to make the area pleasant, reflecting the character of Epsom High Street
- A large supermarket development out of town near the old hospital sites was suggested to relieve traffic congestion and free up options for the Upper High Street
- Smaller development kept strictly to the Upper High Street frontage was favoured by one participant
- There was also considerable support for a small scale mixed use development combining different retailers, with several participants suggesting a covered shopping mall

Table 5:

- Residential development was preferred to a supermarket, though it was recognised that this would require more parking provision and any development would lead to an increase in traffic along the Upper High Street and within the town centre generally
- It was felt that further shopping development was not useful as local people shopped online and elsewhere for their goods
- Maximum retail development size of 2,000 square metres plus smaller shops, however another food basket store was not needed – the existing Co-Op was enough
- Again, the 'Village' theme of development was suggested, local housing was too expensive for families and they should be catered for with town houses in a residential development that was designed to be architecturally complementary to the town
- Two or three storeys was considered the highest development acceptable
- Office space and workshops were also mentioned
- Possibility of using decking/multi storey car parking to extend provision in certain areas of the car park

Table 7:

- Many participants were against a large scale supermarket on the site, saying that this would generate too much traffic and there was already adequate provision for food shopping
- A number of participants agreed that supermarket chains would not want to buy into any site in Epsom unless it presented an opportunity to develop a large store, the market would not support a smaller store even if local people would shop in it
- It was generally agreed that any store would have to 'anchor' the Upper High Street in order to support the long term viability of smaller shops in the area
- A number of participants suggested that, because of a property developer's need to make a profit on the site, the only feasible developments were large housing or retailing
- The group broadly agreed that a housing led development would be the only way to secure the Upper High Street, with a mixture of tenures (flats through to town houses) though retailers could be included
- Separately, the group also agreed on a number of constraints to development:
 - That buildings would have to be sensitive to their surroundings, allowing more dense development near the Upper High Street and lower building heights close to homes
 - Landscaped public space in the proposals encouraging movement of pedestrians was welcomed
 - Though public services and leisure facilities were popular, there was an understanding that these would have to be funded by private development or 'Section 106' monies
 - Several participants wanted to see sustainable development designs

Table 8:

- This group favoured a mixture of housing and retail in the development
- Epsom & Ewell considered to be densely populated and did not need large amounts of new development
- The sites were considered part of the town centre, not just a local site
- Identified need for public services onsite – e.g. toilets and GP surgery
- Car parking should be preserved or replaced in a new development
- Energy efficient/sustainable housing development was important
- Family housing
- Medium or small sized store as anchor
- Smaller 'interesting' shops desired but it was recognised that smaller businesses are not able to afford current commercial rates

Table 9:

- The group broadly agreed on a mixed-use development led by a small anchor store with high quality goods and a restaurant, possibly an M&S Simply Food store
- Did not want any reduction in car parking provision and did not want to see any extension of the existing car park through decking etc.
- Considered including some office space and a small number of housing units in the development
- Were supportive of public open space but wanted this to remain on the Helical Bar (Upper High Street site) alone
- Supported affordable housing in the development, prioritising shared ownership starter homes
- Landscaping treatment to improve the visual amenity of the car park
- Possible inclusion of child care facilities

Table 10:

- Housing led regeneration of the sites
- Willing to consider low level multi storey car parking to boost town centre capacities
- Keen to see a smaller 'basket store' development but any development should remain predominantly residential and retain existing car parking provision
- Wished to ensure the development did not extend the town centre retail area closer to existing residential homes, hence housing led approach.

Youth Forum

The Youth Forum members made the following points:

- They felt there was not enough to do in Epsom, they wanted more 'unorganised' commercial leisure activities where they were welcome within the adult sphere without being singled out as young people – this could be games areas or competitively priced cafés/restaurants
- The Odeon cinema was popular and other commercial ventures such as bowling were mentioned as possibilities
- The car park itself or open space within a development could house activities such as bowling, an area to meet friends such as a skate park was popular – not everyone actually skated but did want somewhere to meet friends
- There was a distinction between Youth Service provision and private leisure provision, and the Forum representatives did suggest that there could be more official activities provided, but with less formal organisation or supervision
- The representatives also felt public space or green space would be welcome in any development, to make the town more attractive, but did recognise this would come at a cost.

Conclusions and Analysis

As noted in our introduction, there was a good deal of discussion at both workshops and it was very encouraging to see so many points of view aired, reflecting different opinions of the local community.

It was certainly not the case that a single group or opinion held sway over the workshops. Though there were a number of local residents that objected to the supermarket planning application for the Helical Bar/Upper High Street site, there was a considerable group of workshop participants that said a food store was an appropriate and possible option for development in the future, and some felt a larger retailer would also be a welcome 'anchor' to the Upper High Street.

We have set out below some statistical information based on the responses to the first exercise '**Views on Future Development of Epsom Town Centre**'. Participants were able to highlight the issues they considered positive and negative about the town in general, and the sites in particular, on post-it notes. The charts below indicate the number of times specific issues were raised on the post it notes, and give a good indication of the spread of concern over individual points.

Town Centre Positives

Market town 'feel'	26
Compact size	23
Good range of stores	23
Clock Tower & market	15
Ashley Centre/Library	12
Historic aspects	9
Parking	3
Clean	2
Pedestrianisation	2
Assembly	2
Leisure facilities	1
Good schools	1
Toilets	1
Cinema	1
Station	1
Public transport	1
Pikes Hill	
'village atmosphere'	1
Derby Square	1

Town Centre Negatives

Traffic	58
Lack of parking	12
Lack of retail variety	10
Design & scale of new developments	8
A24	8
Traffic lights	5
1 way system	3
On street commuter parking	2
Town centre development skewed to west	2
Lack of supermarket choice	2
No department store	2
Too spread out/long high street	2
Poor pedestrianisation	1
Too many people	1

Site Opportunities

Residential	39
Parking	33
Small local shops	30
Small supermarket/ basket store	25
Affordable housing	15
Workshops/offices	8
Youth facilities	5
Park/community area/ public square	5
Supermarket	5
Leisure	4
Energy advice centre	2
Department store	1
Casino	1
Technology park	1
Hotel	1

Site Considerations

Traffic	57
Loss of parking	18
Access	10
Conservation Area	8
Environmental	5
Building height & scale	4
Sub-station	4
Noise	4
Deliveries	3
Out of town centre site	3
Residents' privacy	3
Right of way	2
Housing density	2
Impact of trade	1
Lack of frontage	1
Funding	1

The second workshop exercise **‘Options for the Upper High Street and Depot Road sites’** led to more qualitative results. Two key issues were repeatedly raised throughout the sessions:

- Concerns that developments (particularly retail and food stores) would generate extra volumes of traffic that local roads were incapable of accommodating
- General opposition to a large food store due to traffic generation issues and perceived lack of need for further provision in Epsom

However, a number of other issues were raised by some participants, which outlined contrasting opinions within the local community. These also identified that some respondents were happy to see retail development on a smaller scale, whether this was a food retailer or not:

- Need for a retail development to ‘anchor’ the Upper High Street and support smaller shops by encouraging shoppers to visit the area
- Support for a smaller ‘basket store’ supermarket or other retailer which would generate shopping trips by foot and less car journeys
- Support for a mixed-use development, combining a number of different options for town centre activities, particularly some housing and groups of smaller shops in a ‘mall’ or ‘market’ development
- Strong support (from all the evening workshop groups) for housing led development, mixed with other elements

In summary, there are a number of areas that we have identified for consideration in the site appraisals process:

Preferences for Site Activities and Uses

- Retail-led development through a smaller/medium sized store or mixture of smaller stores
- Housing-led development
- Parking provision to continue/be improved (if capacity requires)

Popular Preferences and Issues Raised

- Traffic generation was the major concern when considering development
- Affordable housing provision was mentioned on a number of occasions
- A mixture of tenures (flats, town houses, family homes) to be provided
- Height and density of the development was a consideration for many participants, to protect character of the town
- Parking requirements of any development to be satisfied/accommodated by its designs
- Threat of large retailers on local businesses a concern/requires complementary development to support area
- Keeping development in character with surrounding area/building heights and densities
- Opportunity to provide further 'comparison goods' shopping choice
- Sustainable/environmentally friendly development was popular
- Lack of smaller retailers in the town centre an issue
- Public open space/landscaping to complement architecture

An Agreed Way Forward

Whilst not every workshop participant was able to agree on a final preferred option for development across the sites, there was some constructive discussion and a willingness from many participants to listen to the views of others.

From the information recorded, our analysis suggests that there was a general consensus about the way forward for the town centre sites in question, especially the Upper High Street and Depot Road Car Park. The most prevalent view was that the Upper High Street should be developed to make the most of the opportunity it presents, and that this should be as a 'mixed-use' proposal, combining retailing and housing development. Most respondents also felt that this development should not lead to a large reduction in existing car parking spaces on the Depot Road site.

The exact type of retailing was a moot point, though, as noted before, it was certainly not the case that a food store was ruled out by all. There was general agreement that a 'basket store' or medium-sized shop would be acceptable. Some individuals suggested that a number of smaller shops in a 'mall' type development could work, however there was an understanding that this might not have the same regenerating 'pull' to the Upper High Street as a single 'anchor store' development.

Appendices

Appendix I – Promotional Materials

Press Release

Date of Issue: 10th January 2007

Residents views invited on Upper High Street

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is calling all residents and local organisations who are interested in the future of Epsom's Upper High Street to attend a workshop on Friday January 19th and to give their views on the area's development.

The Council has written to all organisations, businesses and residents who had contacted them regarding the development of the area - that includes the adjacent Depot Road Car Park - and invited them to attend one of two free workshops. These will be from 3:00pm – 5:00pm and 7:00pm – 9:00pm at the United Reformed Church's Unity Hall, off Depot Road Car Park, Church Street, Epsom.

Following the Council's rejection of a planning application from Helical Bar to develop the Upper High Street last summer, it undertook to consult as wide an audience as possible with regarding future development.

Councillor Mike Richardson, Chairman of the Environment committee said, "I stand by what I said at that time; that this exercise gives us a valuable opportunity to listen to the views of local residents, the business community and local organisations. The results of the appraisal will provide useful information for the preparation of future development proposals that will consider the area as a whole; is publicly acceptable and contains the right mix of uses to enhance this part of the town centre. "I am keen that as many people as possible attend one of our workshops, to have their say on this important issue," added Councillor Richardson.

The workshops have been widely publicised and options for the future of this area will be compiled. Planning Officers have already been in discussion with a number of people regarding their views on this subject, and a record of these meetings is available on the Council's web site <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Planning/> Click on 'Upper High Street Consultation'.

The workshops will be run on behalf of the Council by an independent company which specialises in consulting local communities. The workshops are free of charge and refreshments will be available.

Letter from Council to Helical Bar Planning Application Consultees

Dear Resident,

A VISION FOR UPPER HIGH STREET & DEPOT ROAD, EPSOM

I am writing to you because you expressed views on the planning application for a new Supermarket in Upper High Street, Epsom. Although the Council refused that application, it is keen to engage local residents, businesses and any other interested parties regarding the future of this important site and the adjacent Depot Road car park.

I would like to invite you to attend a workshop where options for the future of this area are to be discussed. I enclose a leaflet explaining the details. We have planned two alternative sessions, one in the afternoon and another in the evening. I hope that one of these will be convenient to you and that you will be able to attend and contribute. The workshops will be run, on behalf of the Council, by an independent company which specialises in consulting local communities.

You may be interested to know that Planning Officers have already been in discussion with a number of people regarding their views on this subject, and a record of these meetings is available on the Council's website <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Planning/> Please click on "Upper High Street Consultation".

The full results of the consultation, including the workshop, will be reported to the Council's Environment Committee on March 28th 2007.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Berry
Head of Planning

Letter from Council to Community Groups and Stakeholders

Dear Resident,

A VISION FOR UPPER HIGH STREET, Friday 19th January

I am writing to invite you to a community workshop on the future of an important part of Epsom town centre, and hope that members/representatives of XXX will be able to attend to find out more.

Many local people expressed views on the recent planning application for a new supermarket on the Upper High Street in Epsom. Although the Council refused that application, it is now keen to discuss the options for the future of this site and the Depot Road car park that will have an important role to play in shaping your town centre.

The town centre is important to everyone in the community and we would like to hear from as many people as possible as we produce a report on options for development of the two sites. This will be presented to the Council's Environment Committee on March 28th.

Two identical workshops are planned for Friday 19th January at the Epsom United Reformed Church Unity Hall, taking place from 3-5pm and 7-9pm, entrance is free and refreshments will be provided. The workshops will be run by an independent company specialising in consulting local communities.

You may be interested to know that Council Officers have already been in discussions with a number of people and a record of these meetings is available on the Council's website <http://www.epsomewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Planning/> Please click on "Upper High Street Consultation".

If you have any further questions, please contact my colleague Francis Mallinson on 0207 357 6606 or email francis.mallinson@localdialogue.com

Yours sincerely,

Mark Berry BA(Hons) MRTPI DMS
Head of Planning

Epsom Guardian Advertisement



**A Vision for
Upper High Street**

Epsom and Ewell Council is holding two community workshops on the future of the Upper High Street and Depot Road area. The Council is looking at the possible options for these important sites and we want to hear your views.

Refreshments will be available.

19th January
3-5pm and 7-9pm

Epsom United Reformed Church
Unity Hall
(Entrance from Depot Road Car Park)

Further information:
Contact Frances Malinson on 0207 357 8804

Event Flyer



A Vision for Upper High Street Community Workshop

Come along to Epsom and Ewell Council's community workshops on the future of the Upper High Street and Depot Road area. The Council is looking at the possible options for the future of these important sites and we want to hear your views.

Join a free workshop on Friday 19th January to learn more about the town centre and have your views taken on board as the Council produces a report on the sites. Refreshments will be available at both sessions.

19th January

3-5pm and 7-9pm



Epsom United Reformed Church
Unity Hall
(Entrance from Depot Road Car Park)

Further information:

Contact Francis Mallinson on 0207 357 6606
or email francis.mallinson@localdialogue.com



Appendix 2 - Putting Epsom on the Map – Instructions Putting Epsom on the Map

Welcome to the Epsom town centre community workshop, 'A vision for Upper Street'. This is your opportunity to contribute to the discussion about the future of Epsom and an important town centre site that could shape the way our town develops.

How is the town centre shaped?

Please take a look at the Borough and town centre maps that are placed in the room. By placing pins on the map, we'd like you to tell us where you live, spend your time and what services you use in Epsom. Everyone should collect a set of pins (of different colours).

We would like you to place the different coloured pins in the map to indicate where you:

- Live (red)
- Work (blue)
- Shop (yellow)
- Park in the town centre (white)
- Use leisure facilities (black)

If you do any of these activities outside the Borough, please place the pin at the side of the map closest to where you live.

The future and the Upper High Street site

This is an opportunity to start thinking about the future of Epsom town centre and what challenges it faces. You may already have some suggestions on what should happen to the Upper High Street and Depot Road car park sites or how the town could change to meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

There will be plenty of time to discuss all of your ideas during the group activities and question session later in the workshop!

Appendix 3 – Decision Tree

