

DEPOT ROAD/UPPER HIGH STREET:  
Without Prejudice Notes at meeting

**HELICAL BAR SITE**  
09:15 Monday 16 October 2006

Jack Pitman  
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King Sturge

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- Since the refusal of planning permission for the c8,000sqm retail (plus parking) scheme last May, the Council wished to see appraisals of the sites broadly bounded by Upper High Street & Church Street; & to see the public involved in the evolution of the project work from the beginning, ie not just on commenting on actual proposals;
- These site appraisals are not “planning briefs” and would not form part of the LDF, although they could contribute to the preparation of a town centre action plan.
- They would be a vehicle for developing the Council’s priorities and aspirations regarding the development of its own land holdings, and for possible negotiation with owners of the refused supermarket site and potential developers of adjacent sites, the wider business community, and other local interest groups.
- Basic steps in the study would be (a) site information and constraints, (b) obtaining views & contributions, & (c) preparing the appraisals & options for the individual sites.
- The aim was to complete this work by March 2007.
- The appraisals would give an opportunity for consensus to grow regarding the future use of this land, but would not have any statutory basis.
- The Council is shortly to commission a retail study that would give the context for assessing retail provision in the Town Centre; the Community Strategy (4:03) had as one of its proposals the encouragement of a new food supermarket (size and detailed location not identified), but was this still the aim? The (CACI) retail study should clarify this, and be completed by the end of 2006.
- The aim is to use the more informal appraisal approach to try to find a consensus.

Since the refusal, the applicants had been looking at various options, before (as now seems likely) appealing the decision, & were finding that;

- Despite trying for five months, they had still been unable to secure any viable interest in a store that was significantly smaller than the c8,000sqm;
- Smaller retail in the form of unit shops or restaurants/bars would not create an “anchor” that would draw people to the site;
- Using the site solely for non-retail use (eg residential/hotel/other) would remove the only remaining opportunity to attract a supermarket back into Epsom town centre;
- The key issue for consideration is whether there is still considered to be a strategic need for a large convenience store in Epsom TC; and if so, whether this was the most appropriate site in terms of the sequential approach?

Were a new scheme to go forward, (given the many alternatives already studied) the Council questioned whether the following might be worth further study? A slightly smaller store? “Facing” the street frontage with say housing for more interest? Facing the “rear” elevation (beside existing housing) with say housing, to face onto what could potentially be a good space? Trying to get the rather pedestrian-unfriendly service access away from the important UHS footpath route to the site from the Quadrant? Improving the “heavy” highway arrangements, buses, access generally? Note pedestrian improvements in the Quadrant intersection. Footpath/cycle shortcut link into Depot Road? Lessen impact on UHS houses in the conservation area? Copy of site map provided. Local concerns re security and graffiti issues impressed on Helical Bar. Agreed to meet for further discussions after consideration.

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