

Len Goss      The Best of Epsom

Anthony Evans    E+E planning  
Nigel Eveleigh  
Tony Michael

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- Purpose of the meeting was to record some business-orientated views, concerning the future of the study area in general, which need to be taken into account in the production of the Depot Road and Upper High Street (DR/UHS) site appraisal study by the planning office;
- Public input was needed now at the start of the site appraisal project, which is to end in 3/07;
- Notes of the meetings would be made public, & there were to be public Workshops on 19<sup>th</sup> January;
- A site map showing the principal ownerships was noted; there were significant underground services and legal constraints across the area;
- LG mentioned that he was the current Chairman of the Epsom & Ewell Business Partnership Board, Chairman of the Epsom Retail Group and Vice President of the Surrey Chambers of Commerce who currently have the contract with E&E Council to manage the Epsom & Ewell Business Partnership and the Epsom Town Market;
- Basic views were that Epsom was somewhat out on a limb; losing ground to Sutton and Kingston; area was basically affluent, and “quality” was needed, so no need to crudely compete with the other centres; there were some retailing problems; loss of local offices may become a larger issue, as local providers need local workspace;
- A special character or “brand” was needed, better safety (not currently good enough after 6pm), attractiveness for all the family and for children;
- People are looking out for not just a shop and a meal but an overall experience; the Town Centre needs to have enough for a whole day out; it needs to be wider in scope, with working and study, a thriving environment, people living in the centre, outdoor culture in the evening; a range of interests, better environmental quality;
- Town centre now is looking tired, not able to compare with (say) any similar French town with its flowers, cleanliness, public domain character, good paving and imaginative lighting, friendliness to pedestrians, artworks, buildings design; market had potential but needed more imagination;
- Town Centre needs investment; is not yet properly marketed, is uncoordinated, lacking a clear vision; the entrance to the Town from the Station created a poor image;
- A Town Centre Manager would be one possibility to drive things forward, (perhaps with Ewell and Stoneleigh also) but is dependent on Council and business joint funding; even Haslemere has a TCM; a new retailing group was being set up locally;
- A new Town Centre action plan is needed, produced jointly by Business, Council, and local interest groups;
- NE noted that a CICI retail study was being commissioned, & its contents would be shared, as would other information on the operation of the Town Centre.

**What could the DR/UHS area do for the Town Centre?**

- There was not yet a clear business line on what the site should contain, but there was a need for a **character space**, not just a “development”, but an asset that was part of the Town Centre character; it should **not be just residential**; should it have a **square?**
- General business view of the large supermarket proposal had been in favour, but there were significant local “tactical” issues; did it have enough of a memorable “**wow factor**” character (as eg Bourne Hall, the Ashley Mall or the Ebbisham Centre had) for its place in the Town?
- Ideas included: **local offices** & wireless Hubs, a **leisure use** to complement the Cinema, a **draw**, a **place**, a **mix of uses** as part of the Town Centre character; **social housing**, **pedestrian facilities**, flowers and pleasant **sitting out**; **child play park** to help families;
- The space is of significant size and presents a wonderful and very rare opportunity to do something memorable – we must not waste it;
- Epsom is a Charter Market Town and currently the market is located in the High Street and often attracts criticism. The land it is on is also owned by Surrey County Council Highways and its future is uncertain. The Upper High street site may also therefore be a great location for a well designed **market of character**, and if it could be integrated with some of the other ideas above, may enable us to have a unique and significant attraction for Epsom.