

Evidence Base Documents

A number of evidence base documents, which comprise a variety of studies on different topics, have informed the development of the Plan E Issues & Options Paper. A brief summary of each of these documents and their main findings is set out below, drawing out the relevant issues to Plan E.

These include:

- Epsom Town Centre Retail Study and Health Check (2009)
- Epsom Town Centre Comparison Retail Study (2007)
- Employment Land Review (2006)
- Audit of open space, sport and recreation facilities and assessment of local needs (2006)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008)
- Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (2008)
- East Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008)
- Community Workshop Report, Upper High Street & Depot Road Car Park Sites (2007)

In addition two other documents have also informed the development of Plan E:

- Epsom town centre Urban Design Review (2001)
- Epsom town centre Urban Design Proposals (2004)

GVA Epsom Town Centre Retail Study and Health check (2009)

Background:

GVA Grimley consultants were instructed in October 2008 to undertake a retail study and health check of Epsom town centre. The purpose of the study was to provide an up-to-date picture of current and future retail capacity in the town centre up to 2026 and a health check. The study was to fulfil the requirements of PPS6 and compliment the earlier Retail Study carried out by CACI.

Main findings / suggestions:

Sub-regional positioning

- Epsom is encouraged to maintain its role in the strategic town centre network (second tier shopping centre), and no major step change is envisaged.
- Higher order shopping centres; Kingston, Croydon, Guildford and Sutton with their superior retail offer have a continued influence on shopping patterns in Epsom's catchment area
- Epsom must consolidate and improve its town centre function and retail offer in order to maintain its position
- Epsom needs to strike a balance over the forthcoming LDF period to enhance the retail and leisure offer and wider mix of uses whilst protecting the character of the built environment and enhancing its physical environment and general visitor attraction.
- Epsom has only a limited market share in its core catchment, with virtually none of this being in the northern part of the catchment.

Current performance

- Epsom appears to be a generally healthy town centre performing adequately in a number of key areas, although there are clear signs pointing to areas for improvement and consolidation over the LDF period to prevent the centre from slipping into a lower order 'clone town'.
- Currently, Epsom has a good representation of multiple comparison goods retailers and leisure and service businesses. It has improved its position in the national retailer demand rankings.
- Epsom has fallen in the 'Javelin Rankings', reflecting the failure to improve the range and mix of higher order retailing compared to other centres of similar scale in the UK. Representation from higher quality multiples and niche / specialist and independent retailers is weak and does not seem to be improving.
- Epsom's social grade mix demonstrates a wealthy catchment area with a high disposable income. GVA's assessment demonstrates that Epsom is not utilising the opportunities that the catchment presents to it.
- The greatest threat to Epsom isn't only the larger centres which will continue to trade at a higher level and improve their retail offer, but also the decline of its own retail offer and the consequent influx of fast food take-aways and charity shops, for example
- Long term solutions to the quality of the physical and pedestrian environment will be crucial to attract the higher order retailers and service businesses, and incremental development should take place within a wider comprehensive strategy for the town centre

Attracting Retailers / Consolidation

- Planning policy can't commit retailers to a town centre, but can develop and facilitate the creation of an environment with which to enhance the demand for representation. Epsom is in a good location to enhance the mix of retailing, benefiting from a catchment area with a higher than average disposable income and excellent accessibility links via a choice mode of transport
- Aside from controlling uses within the primary shopping area and designated frontages, the LDF and future strategy for Epsom should also enhance the environment, tackle negative perceptions of car parking and congestion and facilitate pedestrian movement around the centre.
- Car parking continues to receive negative perceptions and GVA strongly recommend a Parking Strategy is developed
- It is recommended the Council review its published 'Shopfronts: Design Guidance', throughout the LDF period to enhance and maintain a high quality appearance. Inconsistent fascia redevelopment could have significant detrimental impacts on the appearance of the town centre in the future.
- The AAP should focus on an implementation strategy to enhance the environment through a comprehensive and consistent policy. Specifically the AAP should set out a strategy to improve the public realm and pedestrian circulation.
- Measures, such as those implemented in Kensington High Street, should be considered. In Epsom a number of barriers to pedestrian movement and circulation have been identified, including the lengthy central reservation barrier on High Street.
- Epsom faces the challenge of pedestrian and traffic conflict and the future strategy will need to remove the perception of barriers to encourage pedestrian circulation and the attraction of the centre for retailers

- Assessment has also highlighted the extreme negative perceptions in respect of parking and traffic congestion

Eating / Drinking / Entertainment

- Assessment has demonstrated that the proportion of leisure uses in Epsom town centre is above the national average, and South Street and the piazza outside the Ebbisham Centre are the current focus for such activity
- The local catchment largely choose Epsom town centre over other destinations. Epsom is competing reasonably well with Kingston and Sutton as the two preferred choices. Epsom is clearly performing well as a restaurant destination at the current time. The Odeon cinema is a popular destination and bar usage compares favourably with Kingston, London and Sutton.
- Evening entertainment can bring with it anti-social behaviour and the Council should incorporate policy to manage this
- Recommend that A5 uses be prevented within the primary shopping frontage and on South Street and Upper High Street
- On South Street, Upper High Street and on the piazza between the Ebbisham Centre and High Street eastern end, 'restaurants and cafes' (A3) and 'drinking establishments' (A4) should be allowed to ensure the continued vibrancy of this activity. The Council could control the proportion / number of A4 (drinking establishment) uses which in turn would control any growth in anti-social behaviour and promote the quality of the restaurant offer.
- Restaurants and cafes (A3 uses) should be allowed within the primary shopping frontage, although the proportion / number should be controlled. The overriding objective is to retain the A1 retail function of the primary shopping frontages

Town Centre Management

- The findings identify the need to consolidate Epsom's position and retail / leisure offer rather than promoting major expansion. The key focus is the encouragement of new, higher quality operators, the enhancement of the environment and connectivity, and quality in-fill development. This can be partly achieved through policy, but would benefit significantly from focussed management to facilitate business partnership working between key stakeholders, commercial contacts with key operators (both existing and potential), the monitoring of key performance indicators, and the promotion of marketing and publicity campaigns.
- Based on the issues identified in Epsom town centre within the study, GVA recommend the establishment of a Town Centre Manager role to facilitate it's future direction, growth and enhanced vitality and improved perceptions.

The study also made suggestions for the designation of a primary shopping area, and primary and secondary retail frontages. These are being consulted upon as part of the Issues and Options Paper.

Summary

- Assessment has highlighted the importance of Epsom carving out a niche / complementary role enhancing the shopper and visitor attraction
- In this context, there is no requirement for major expansion of the primary shopping area, and identified development opportunities are small in scale forming infill redevelopment opportunities. The overall objective should be the enhancement of the existing building stock and adjoining public realm /

environment, which in itself should facilitate the attraction of new retailers and has the potential to consolidate and enhance market share.

- The control of frontages appears to be crucial to Epsom town centre over the forthcoming LDF period, as there has recently been a loss of a number of key retail attractors which underpin footfall and which have not been replaced by comparable retailers. Policy should protect against the loss of A1 retailers in the primary shopping frontages and control the infiltration of A5 and to some extent A3 and A4 uses.
- The lever to attract the retailers is not therefore a major new shopping centre development, but a design and environment led approach driven by quality. The focus should be on enhancing the existing building stock via a comprehensive and consistent strategy. The socio-economic catchment is strong with a high proportion of higher income groups, and the strategy should encourage pedestrian circulation, remove barriers to movement and tackle negative perceptions of congestion and parking

Considerations for Plan E

The findings of the Retail Study have been carefully considered and have informed the identification of issues, development of options and visions and the suggested options and actions.

CACI Epsom Town Centre Comparison Retail Study (2007)

Background:

CACI consultants were instructed in late 2006 undertake a retail comparison study of Epsom town centre. The brief was:

- Understand Epsom town centre's position in the hierarchy and in relation to other neighbouring centres and in relation to the national retail market.
- Assess the centre's key strengths and weaknesses and identify potential opportunities and threats
- Test the impacts of a set of different development and town centre management scenarios to identify a retail strategy for Epsom town centre

CACI conducted a marketing overview of retail performance for Epsom town centre, making use of their national comparison goods retail model, Retail Footprint and their resident consumer lifestyle segmentation tool, ACORN. The emphasis has been to help understand how Epsom town centre is viewed by the retail industry. This has compared Epsom's economic performance with both neighbouring centres and also placed it in national context.

Main findings / suggestions:

Marketing overview of Epsom

- Epsom has a current Comparison Goods Market Potential (base year 2006) of £269 million per annum. This places it 141st in the UK Rankings (based upon market potential) positioning close to St Albans and Bury in market size.
- Epsom has a very affluent consumer base and CACI's lifestyle analysis of these consumers has identified their preference for mid and upper-mid market classic fashion, boutique shopping and good quality catering facilities such as coffee shops and restaurants.

- The consumer base has a strong family bias. A strong presence of families is a great asset to a town – dwell times are long and spend is high in a wide range of categories. Families need safe and clean environments that are easy to access. They are also attracted by the offer of a full day out, meaning that family orientated leisure activities are important to support the retail economy of the town.

Epsom's position in relation to its competition

- Of Epsom's Core Market (defined by where 75% of its shoppers come from) it takes just 15.3% market share due to the high level of competition from larger centres.
- By comparing Epsom's market size and demographic profile of its shoppers with other UK centres, CACI have benchmarked Epsom against up-market towns such as St Albans, Windsor, Winchester and Altrincham. For this reason CACI believe that a greater emphasis on a premium retail offer is essential for Epsom to remain competitive.

Historic and future trends for Epsom

- Over the past 6 years (2000 to 2006) Epsom has been experiencing welcome growth, however, this growth is beginning to slow and over the following 5 years (from 2006) CACI forecast a potential decline due to increased competition for retailers and customers alike through expansion of nearby centres (e.g. Croydon).
- CACI's conclusion is that Epsom is under threat in the future of falling from its quality status. Not only will major developments in other centres impact on shoppers' choice over Epsom – but the town's current retail mix is not configured correctly to maximise sales from its affluent shopping population.
- Without effective Town Centre Management (TCM), CACI predict that Epsom could experience a decline – resulting in up to 25% loss in market potential. This could send Epsom down the national rankings some 60 places from 141st to outside the top 200.
- With good TCM, CACI believe that Epsom can manage a slight decline, which would almost inevitably happen as a result of surrounding major town centre developments, minimising the impact and safeguarding Epsom's Quality status and its appeal to its affluent consumer base.
- Epsom TCM should cover the following key areas and should help:
 - Define and preserve core retail pitch
 - Develop and maintain core retail pitch
 - Improve the way the town presents itself as a retail destination
 - Effectively market the retail offer of Epsom against major competitors
 - Improve the accessibility of the town centre to its core shopping groups and increase the town's relevance to these consumers
 - Proactively promote opportunities to a target list of new retailers
- CACI would recommend that TCM encourages the refurbishment and promotion of existing retail space on the high street to premium clothing retailers – who do not require such large footplates to operate.
- In CACI's experience this would also necessitate reducing the dominance of traffic and increasing space and priority allocated to the pedestrian movement across the high street. The current condition of the public realm in Epsom is not sufficient to attract premium retailers to take up retail pitch. The current

conditions for pedestrians are hazardous and in particular, make shopping particularly difficult for families and people with mobility issues.

Impact test of new retail development in Epsom

- Tests of introducing 40,000 to 80,000 sq ft of new comparison retail space to the town centre of Epsom reveal potential problems with the sustainability of these proposals. The success of these schemes for the town will be heavily dependent upon both the market positioning and the location of the scheme within the town centre. In particular, CACI do not believe that the forecasted increase in market potential would be sufficient to support new floorspace that was not directly connected to the existing primary shopping area.
- Therefore, CACI would recommend a strategy whereby more incremental, development opportunities closer to the primary shopping area are supported within the Local Development Framework.
- The study has highlighted potential threats to Epsom in relation to the quality of its retail offer. The concern relates to the impact this can have on retailer demand for Epsom, and the following consequences on consumer choice. CACI's main concern is about maintaining, and if possible growing a healthy cluster of premium retailers in the town. To do so, retailers need to be re-assured that the town is positioned for them and has the right environment for successful operation.
- Whilst the increased presence of mass value retailers may not necessarily have the direct effect of turning affluent customers away from the town, it may be in the long run sufficient for a premium retailer to vacate the town to a new location where they can co-exist with a more appropriate cluster of premium retailers. This is how CACI view a possible spiral of decline for Epsom town centre.
- However, the virtuous circle of success can be generated by targeting key new retailers to space in the retail centre that will help strengthen the premium market positioning of the centre, which will in turn generate greater interest from other premium retailers.

Considerations for Plan E

The GVA study complemented the CACI study and drew many similar conclusions and suggestions. The information from CACI has been carefully considered, throughout the development of Plan E, in particular the need for Town Centre Management and the need to improve the retail mix.

Employment Land Review (2006)

Background:

An Employment Land Review was carried out by the Council in 2006. The aims of the study were:

- Identify current and future employment needs in the Borough
- Provide policy context
- Appraise the current employment portfolio and establish various future policy options in light of social, economic and environmental trends

Main findings / suggestions:

Number of Businesses and Employees

- 85% of people of working age in the Borough are economically active. This is higher than the UK average (78.2%) (Nomis Labour Market Profiles 2003 to 2004)
- 3.2% of the economically active residents in the Borough are unemployed, slightly higher than the Surrey average (3%) (Nomis Labour Market Profiles 2003 to 2004)
- Surrey is a highly qualified County compared with England as a whole. The Borough of Epsom & Ewell has a similar profile to Surrey
- A large number of employees in the Borough are managers / senior officials or have professional occupations
- The greatest number of businesses in the Borough are to be found in banking, finance and insurance sectors.
- The job density is 0.89 (Nomis 2002), which implies there is slightly less than one job per resident
- Almost half the Borough's jobs are provided by the 34 biggest employees (100+), employing a total of 11,700 people. Hospitals and schools employ about 3,800, whilst the 5 largest retailers in the Borough (that tend to have more flexible, part time staff) employ about 1,200. the largest supplier of office based professional employment is Atkins, with their headquarters in Epsom town centre providing about 1,800 jobs (ABI 2003)
- 61% of the Borough's employed residents commute to work outside the Borough, whilst 53% of the Borough's jobs are filled by people commuting into the Borough (Census 2001)

Level of Employment Floorspace

- The Borough has a total of 216,000m² of B1, B2 and B8 employment floorspace (113,000m² offices, 48,000m² general industrial and 55,000m² warehousing) (ODPM 2004)
- The buildings in the Borough are relatively old with over 50% of offices being built prior to 1970. Few are post 1991 (ODPM 2004)
- Take up of employment space has slowed in the last 2 years, both in terms of freehold and leasehold interest, reflecting the wider economy.
- With the odd exception, offices are located in the two main centres; Epsom town centre and Ewell Village centre. B2 and B8 uses are predominantly found on Nonsuch and Longmead business parks

Future Forecasts

- The future forecast demand for employment floorspace can be calculated through two methods. These provide the basis of a range of possible future employment requirements, they are;
 - Employment Demand:* Using forecasts to predict the likely changes in the demand for employees from business sectors. Experian have conducted such forecasts and predict the increase in employment numbers for the Borough could be as many as 5,700 from 2006 to 2016 (i.e. the top end of the range)
 - Labour Supply:* Forecasting the size of the future workforce who will seek employment in Epsom and Ewell. Surrey County Council population projections are predicting an increase of 385 workers between 2006 to 2016 (i.e. the bottom end of the range)
- Approximately half these workers from both methods will be likely to be employed in premises that fall under the 'B' use classes (Business Strategies LTD Experian 2003)

- Average worker floorspace statistics for Surrey were found to be 22.2 m² per worker. [New Businesses in Surrey July 2001 – Surrey County Council Report]
- Taking other factors into account such as homeworking and vacant employment floorspace, it is calculated that the floorspace requirements in 2016 in relation to today's supply for the two methods were:

Employment Demand: Deficit of 48,044 m²

Labour Supply: Oversupply of 5,933 m²

Summary of Conclusions

- The Borough has a limited supply of employment space with relatively little scope for large scale additional land supply.
- To ensure an adequate supply for future generations, a cautious approach towards losses of employment land would be justified.
- Following an appraisal of the Borough's existing employment land, the following approach is recommended:
- The amount of employment land the study has shown to be the *minimum* required by the economy (the current supply minus 5,580 m² oversupply as identified by the labour supply method) should be protected. Ideally the protected employment land should be in sustainable locations.
- The redevelopment of employment floorspace in unsustainable locations to suitable alternative uses could be supported and therefore a reasonably flexible approach adopted in policy
- Redevelopment of older commercial sites should be encouraged, but retaining employment use wherever possible – at least to provide the same number of jobs as before
- The development of some additional employment floorspace, particularly to provide for B1 / B8 use would be desirable
- Careful monitoring is essential to ensure the needs of the economy are continuing to be met
- Encouragement should be given to developments that do not necessarily rely on imported labour or more land eg homeworking and new technologies.

Considerations for Plan E

It is apparent that a considerable proportion of the Borough's B1 floorspace is located within Epsom town centre. The recommendations of the ELR are taken forward in Core strategy policy CS11, which resists losses of employment floorspace in sustainable locations such as Epsom town centre. The level of employment floorspace within the town centre therefore needs to be protected and where possible improved or added to.

Audit of open space, sport and recreation facilities and assessment of local needs (2006)

Background

PMP consultants were appointed to undertake an audit of open space, sport and recreational facilities and assessment of local needs across the Borough. The study was undertaken to fulfil the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17

(Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002). It provides an evaluation and summary of the local needs assessment, presents a set of quantity, quality and accessibility standards for each type of open space and conducts an analysis of existing provision.

Main Findings/ suggestions:

Parks and Gardens

- A recommended standard of 0.35ha per 1000 population is set for parks and gardens in Epsom and Ewell. This is in line with existing provision, and there is no deficiency in the quantity.
- Mounthill gardens was rated the lowest quality and least accessible of the parks and gardens in the Borough. This should be a priority for improvements (together with Bourne Hall).
- There is a small area within the town centre at East Street and northwards that is bounded on two of three sides by the railway track. This physical barrier means that it is difficult to improve the provision in this area. An area of amenity green space, Stone Road Pond (Site ID 51) is located within this area and should be improved and intensified as appropriate to provide residents with access to a park and garden. In terms of priorities, it should however be noted that there are only limited number of residents in this area.
- Rosebery Park has an average quality rating, a good/very good accessibility rating and a high usage rating. As such, the quality of Rosebery Park should be the priority, particularly the cleanliness and maintenance and vegetation.

Natural and semi natural open space

- A recommended standard of 11ha per 1000 population is set for natural and semi natural open space in Epsom and Ewell. This is in line with existing provision, and there is no deficiency in the quantity.
- There are no areas in the Borough that do not have access to natural and semi-natural open space.

Amenity Green Space

- A recommended standard of 2ha per 1000 population is set for amenity green space in Epsom and Ewell. This is in line with existing provision, and there is no deficiency in the quantity.
- Stones road Pond (adjacent to the Lintons Centre) is considered to be a low quality site.
- An area deficient in amenity green space falls within the town centre at the southern end of East Street and Hook Road/ Adelphi Road. Court Recreation Ground is the only site which could help to serve this area of deficiency.
- Some improvements have been suggested at Dulshott Green

Provision for Children and Young People

- There are 23 play areas across Epsom and Ewell, equating to 0.34 play areas per 1000 population. The standard required is 0.35 play areas per 1000 population.
- The southern area of East Street, Adelphi Road and southern end of Hook road are within a small area of deficiency that is bounded on two of its three sides by the railway track. As a barrier to access, this means that it is difficult to improve the provision in this area. Stone Road Pond (Site ID 51), an area of amenity green space, is located just outside this area and could provide a play area. In terms of priorities, it should be noted that there are only limited number of residents within this area.

Outdoor Sports facilities

- A recommended standard of 3ha per 1000 population is set for outdoor sports facilities in Epsom and Ewell. This is in line with existing provision, and there is no deficiency in the quantity.
- There is a good distribution of outdoor sports facilities across Epsom and Ewell Borough, with all residents having access to some form of outdoor sports facility when applying the recommended accessibility standard (15-19 minute drivetime/8km).

Indoor sports facilities

- There are recommendation for an increased provision of indoor bowls within the Borough, and an increased provision of indoor tennis facilities.
- The Council is recommended to increase the provision of outdoor sports pitches through more grass pitches or development of synthetic turf pitches.

Allotments and Community Gardens

- Epsom and Ewell currently has 0.22ha of allotments and community gardens per 1000 population. The recommended local standard from the study is 0.16 ha per 1000 population, implying that there is an overprovision of allotments in some areas. The application of the accessibility standards also demonstrates that there are no areas within the Borough that cannot access an allotment site based on the accessibility standard.

Green corridors

- Future developments need to encompass linkage provision between large areas of open space, and create opportunities to develop the green corridor network for walking routes and cycleways.
- No Green Corridors are identified in the Audit within the town centre.
- There are no local standards set.

Other points

- All new housing developments should contribute towards open space provision.

Considerations for Plan E

There are areas within the town centre which are considered deficient in certain typologies of open space. For example the southern end of East Street and Hook Road/ Adelphi Road is deficient in amenity green space. This needs to be taken into account when considering the town centre opportunity sites.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009)

Background

Local Authorities are required by Government to produce a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), as set out in Planning Policy Statement 3. This was conducted by Council officers in accordance with Government guidance. The purpose of the SHLAA is to review the potential housing land supply in the Borough over the period 2006 to 2026 in relation to the Borough's housing allocation of 3980 new dwellings (199 per annum). The SHLAA identifies potential opportunities for meeting this need, but does not allocate sites. The whole of the Borough is

considered and the SHLAA suggests that there are sufficient potential sources of identifiable housing land supply available to meet the Borough's housing targets.

Main findings

- The SHLAA split the Borough up by wards and surveyed over fifty sites with housing potential within the Town Ward Boundary (wider than the town centre). This is a high number which is indicative of the sustainable location of a town centre with a wide variety in types of potential sites, its high levels of accessibility, and the higher density of existing uses already present.
- Housing has always formed a vital component within the town centre; historically with provision provided on the upper floors of individual shop units. This tradition of housing has fluctuated over time, in part being dependent upon the historic retail/ commercial requirements. For example as some stores have increased in size their on-site storage requirements have also increased (into the upper floors); centralised distribution and just-in-time resupply have witnessed the reversal of this trend with upper floors becoming surplus to storage requirements. This has resulted in new sources of housing land supply coming forward in the form of vacant upper floors on the High Street. There are a number of recent examples of this type of housing land supply source, including the permission for the re-use of the Post Office's upper floors (Ref 324). Notably, the recent closure of Woolworths (Ref 330) provides a potential example of future supply.
- The contraction of the town centre's retail core has also yielded sources of housing land supply. These sources have come from derelict or surplus sites, which have tended to be located upon the retail centre's periphery. Recent examples of supply include Capital Square and Hudson House, both of which have retained or re-instated a retail element within the development. The SHLAA has identified a wide variety of peripheral sites, some of which are vacant or derelict (the former Iceland site Ref 256), others that are currently occupied but who have users that are seeking to relocate (the Fire Station Ref 255), and some where the landowners are actively seeking intensification through mixed use development schemes (the Baptist Church Ref 20 and the United Reform Church Ref 148). The SHLAA identifies other examples. However, given the unpredictable nature of landowner/ user aspirations/ objectives other currently unidentified sites of this type could come forward during the SHLAA period. Consequently, the SHLAA identifies this type of town centre periphery intensification as a distinct form of future windfall supply within the Borough.
- One constraint to further intensification within the Town Centre is the current restrictive building height policy, which limits new buildings to four storeys (within the retail shopping area).
- The SHLAA takes a cautious approach to the housing potential from existing office buildings such as Global House and Shaftesbury House.

Considerations for Plan E

Plan E has considered opportunity sites that have been identified through the SHLAA process and considered residential as an important land use for the town centre. The town centre opportunity sites must be considered against the need to meet the Borough's housing targets.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008)

Background:

The Borough's Strategic Flood Risk assessment (SFRA), prepared by Jacobs Consultants (in collaboration with the Environment Agency) was published in May 2008. The main purpose of the SFRA is to determine the flood risk throughout the Borough. Robust information on flood risk is important to inform and support the Council's emerging policies in the development management DPD, and in the allocation of land for future development. It also assists the development control process by providing a more informed response to development proposals affected by flooding. The SFRA also helps to identify and implement strategic solutions to flood risk and supports and informs the Council's emergency planning. The SFRA addresses the requirements of PPS25: Development and Flood Risk.

Main Outcomes for the town centre:

The Borough has been delineated into zones of low, medium and high probability of fluvial flooding. A relatively small proportion of the Borough is susceptible to river flooding.

There are no watercourses within Epsom Town Centre. However, a significant surface water flow path draining from the North Downs flows south- north through the town centre. The SFRA identifies that there is potential for pluvial flooding, groundwater flooding emerging from the chalk downs to the south and sewerage surcharge to follow this flow path and cause flooding and disruption within Epsom Town Centre. Indeed, flooding on this flow path has been reported in 2000 and 2007. There are other flowpaths into the south-east sector of the town from Epsom Downs.

The JFLOW modelling (multi-scale two-dimensional dynamic flood model) has followed this overland flow path and it has been delineated as a Critical Drainage Area. Therefore, this area may be susceptible to overland flow, surcharging sewers/drains in a heavy rainfall event, or emerging groundwater flooding following the overland flow paths (and, therefore, contributing to surface water and drainage issues), but are not directly connected to watercourses.

The SFRA points out 5 recorded incidences of groundwater flooding in Epsom Town Centre, 2 reported foul water flooding incidences and 1 flooded property.

The SFRA will need to be considered in development briefs for all sites in the town centre. A site specific Flood Risk Assessment is required for all sites within Flood zones 2 and 3 and sites over 1 hectare in flood zone 1. The sequential approach is required for any site within the Critical Drainage Area.

The SFRA is a living document. It is important to be aware of any policy or guidance published after the SFRA, in particular by the Environment Agency.

Considerations for Plan E

Plan E needs to consider the risk of flooding in the town centre, taking the above information into account.

Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (2008)

Background:

The Borough Council has been set targets by the Government (PPG15) to carry out Appraisals of all its Conservation Areas over the next few years and produce Management Plans for them. These Plans are intended to help guide future planning policies for the area and identify any improvements that may be desirable. The Conservation Studio have been instructed to carry out these appraisals and the Epsom Town Centre appraisal was completed in August 2008.

The document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of Epsom town centre conservation area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It provides guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement in the form of management proposals.

Main findings/ suggestions:

Summary of issues

- While shoppers in Ashley Mall are well protected from the impact of traffic, the High Street suffers from traffic noise and pollution, and from intrusive street signage, traffic lights and metal barriers; this means that, despite the investment in pedestrian areas, the High Street is not an especially attractive or relaxing place to spend time.
- Illegal parking inhibits pedestrians and bus flows around the eastern end of the High Street, where drivers leave their cars in order to use nearby cash machines;
- The junction between the two halves of the High Street and Ashley Avenue suffers especially from traffic noise and pollution.
- The focus of shopping interest in Epsom lies in the covered malls, and this means the High Street often lacks life, especially when the weather is wet or dull. The market helps to draw people into the town centre, but only takes place two days a week. The metal stands for the market stalls are, however, left on the pavement permanently and are an eyesore and a potential hazard.
- The prohibition on smoking in the covered shopping malls leads to people smoking in doorways and around the entrances to shops on the southern side of the market place, and on benches in the pedestrian area; the smoke and smell are a hazard and a nuisance and interfere with other people's enjoyment of the conservation area.
- The public realm in Epsom is uninspiring; the raised flower beds have no plants, there are few trees, few benches and little that would invite parents and children or office and shop workers to seek the High Street out as a place for eating lunchtime sandwiches or socialising.
- West Street suffers from the use of pavements, front gardens and all available areas of free space for car parking. Litter is also a problem here, and the metal fencing that separates the street from the railway line is ugly and intimidating.
- The merits of the listed British Legion Club in West Street are disguised by the rendered exterior and the neglect of its immediate surroundings.
- Cars passing through the town heading west use Ashley Avenue and South Street as a race track, frequently breaking the speed limit in order to beat the pedestrian crossing lights at various points. South Street especially suffers from traffic noise and pollution.

- A number of buildings marked on the appraisal map are judged to have a neutral or negative impact on the conservation area and to detract from its character and appearance. Although only 15 per cent of the Conservation Area's buildings are post-war, some of them are very bulky and have a larger visual impact as a result: this is especially true of Nos 102 to 120 High Street (T K Max and Carpet Right).
- Epsom has a number of alleys and vehicle entrances connected with older property boundaries and coaching inns. Too often what is glimpsed through these openings is the featureless monolithic wall of a large modern building or an untidy mess of waste skips. This is especially true of the area around the northern end of Ashley Avenue, though here too are some good examples of how to vary modern walling by the use of blank arcading and bricks laid in contrasting patterns and colours.
- Some trees have had their roots covered by tarmac or concrete and are showing clear signs of drought and stress as a result.
- A comprehensive assessment of the existing boundary was carried out as part of the survey work for this Character Appraisal and major alterations are proposed in the Management Proposals.

Key negatives of the town Centre Conservation Area

High Street

- Busy roads; illegal parking within the pedestrian zone;
- Intrusive signage, bollards, metal barriers and highways paraphernalia;
- Empty buildings including the large unnumbered building next to Ashley House, the key corner building at No. 66 High Street and the No. 143 High Street;
- Insensitive design, leading to views of the massive monolithic walls of the Ashley shopping centre;
- Messy alleys and yards containing overflowing skips and rubbish containers;
- Gardens, where they exist, used as car parks (eg Ashley House);
- Trees with roots covered in tarmac suffering from drought;
- Poorly maintained and poorly extended buildings, including the locally listed Nos 93 to 95 High Street;
- Over-scaled and insensitive development (notably Nos 102 to 122 High Street, which dominates the northern side of the High Street, but including recent developments, such as the Argos store on the corner of Ashley Road and the Parade, Nos. 76 to 80 High Street (Wilkinsons), No. 115 High Street (NatWest bank) and the entrance to Ashley Court with its witch's hat roof;
- Listed buildings with uPVC windows (eg No. 92) or sash windows without glazing bars (Nos. 124 and 126 High Street);
- Poor quality shop fronts and signage that detract from the character of listed or positive buildings (for example, Epsom Grill, No. 1 Waterloo Road, Vodafone, No. 68 High Street);
- Occasionally bleak and empty High Street, with neglected flower beds and disassembled frames for the market stalls left permanently on the pavement;
- The Albion pub is at risk because of leaking drainpipes (damp patches and plant growth on the side elevations) and damage to the lead covering to roof of the projecting timber bay window.

West Street

- Large town houses have lost their gardens to car parking (including the listed buildings at Nos. 17 and 19 West Street);

- Even so, there is not enough parking space for those based at the offices, and every piece of vacant ground on the western edge of the conservation area is used as informal car parking, with much consequent clutter;
- This area also suffers from much litter and from the intimidating character of the spiked metal fence separating the road from the railway;
- The listed British Legion Club has been rendered and painted white to the detriment of its architectural details, and the surrounding car park is a bleak wasteland of litter, skips and concrete or breeze-block boundary walls;
- The messy front garden to the Marquis of Granby pub does not do justice to the considerable character of this listed building;
- There is much intrusive signage along the southern side of West Street, including advertising boards for local businesses as well as highways signage;
- Some listed buildings (e.g. Nos. 1, 5 and 7 West Street) have poor quality shopfronts and signage;
- The listed wall at the rear of the garage car park serving No.15 West Street (GP Motor Repairs) is in poor condition and is at risk from ivy growth; it is not clear who is responsible for the wall's maintenance.

South Street

- Heavy traffic;
- Poor quality shopfronts and signage (e.g. Nos. 20, 22 and 24 South Street);
- Bent and unattractive concrete and metal tube barrier on the raised pavement in front of No. 34 South Street;
- Waste skips on pavements outside restaurants (e.g. to the rear of the Playhouse and alongside the Symonds Well pub (No. 30 South Street)).

Conservation Area Management Proposals

The document provides a series of recommendations for improvement and change, summarised below:

Measures to enhance the town centre

- Consider a wider programme of outdoor events to bring the High Street to life and attract interest, including markets, musical performances and a range of seasonal events. Such a programme would be assisted by the (re)appointment of a Town Centre Manager. The existing monthly Farmers' Market, held on a Sunday, could become a more regular event.
- Consider incentives to attract small businesses to the High Street, selling more unusual products, as a way of bringing colour and interest to shops that are currently empty or dominated by estate agents and national retail chains. Pavement cafes and outdoor eating should be encouraged to create a continental piazza atmosphere.
- The market stall infrastructure and metal frames, currently stored on the pavement edge, should be removed altogether
- Consider more creative landscaping of the High Street's pedestrian areas, with new beds and more seating; enhance this wide area with a child friendly sculpture associated with the town's past.
- There is currently little in the town centre to remind visitors of Epsom's history as a spa or its worldwide fame as the source of Epsom Salts. A fountain or water-driven mobile could be commissioned as an appropriate form of commemoration.

Control of new development

- In future, in order that the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area is protected, the Borough Council will need to be especially vigilant when considering applications for new development.
- Consider replacing those buildings deemed to have a neutral or negative impact with new buildings whose design reflects the history and identity of Epsom;
- Consider a design code for shop fronts and fascias to ensure higher quality design that enhances the town centres historic buildings.
- Continue the policy of using high-quality traditional materials for the maintenance or refurbishment of buildings in the conservation area, and encourage building owners to replace modern materials with more traditional forms.

Trees

- It was noted that some of the trees in the conservation area are in poor condition, and appear neglected. It is recommended that the Borough Council monitor the condition of the mature trees of the conservation area and ensure that their roots have adequate access to water.

Buildings at Risk

- Several buildings at risk were identified within the conservation area whose management and maintenance gives cause for concern. It is recommended that the Borough Council monitor the condition of these buildings and work with the owners to put repairs and improvements in hand to prevent further deterioration, especially to the Albion pub, the listed wall and to the environment around the British Legion Club.

Traffic management and signage

- Consider measures to calm traffic in Ashley Avenue and South Street.
- Consider a comprehensive audit of signage in the town with the aim of reducing the amount of signage and its prominence.

Considerations for plan E

The CAAMP has considerably informed the visions for the parts of the town centre within the Conservation area. The spatial analysis, character areas and management recommendations have been carefully considered throughout the development of Plan E, particularly in areas concerned with the town's historic character.

East Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2008) and Update (2009)

Background

DCA were commissioned to carry out the East Surrey SHMA by the 5 East Surrey authorities in April 2007. The SHMA aims to help the East Surrey authorities

understand the nature and level of housing demand and need in their Borough's. It seeks to identify the drivers of a housing market and how these impact on housing demand and need.

2009 update:

DCA carried out an update of the SHMA in 2009. This states that the financial crisis in the mortgage markets has created a major fall in the availability of mortgages and has caused the fastest fall in house sales and new development for over 60 years. There will be significant issues to face in terms of delivery in both market and affordable housing in the short term and potentially medium term period. It is impossible to calculate the impact of the decline which forecasters are suggesting will last at least until 2010.

Main findings/ suggestions

There are excessive levels of housing demand and need within East Surrey. The level of both demand and need far exceeds what could be supplied in the study area from the proposed minimum level of total new housing provision to 2026.

To assist developers in relation to a property mix which would best meet the needs of current and future households in Epsom and Ewell, it would be logical to round the shortfall levels to 10% (1 and 4+ bedroom units), 35% (2 bedroom units) and 55% (3 bedroom units).

Student housing

In University towns, the student population mainly live in the private rented sector, in purpose built student accommodation or in rooms in a shared house provided by the private sector. Halls of residence provided by a university are normally available to first year students only.

Although students require lower cost accommodation they do not represent households eligible under planning definition for 'Affordable Housing'. They are not included in the Guidance Needs Assessment Model.

The majority of student accommodation is met in the market sector as rental income streams create viable developments able to access private sector borrowing.

The scale of students who require accommodation in East Surrey is very low because the nature of the further education courses provided are such that students are local and travel daily and therefore reduce the potential impact on the private rented sector.

The Higher Education sector is however an important element of local economies and the need for student halls of residence should be considered as part of the wider planning strategies in Districts where this requirement could apply.

Creating mixed and balanced communities

It is important to recognise that neighbourhoods have different characteristics and that this is important to providing a variety of choice in the housing market. The development of flats in urban and town centre locations will appeal particularly to young single people and couples. Suburban locations are favoured by families who

place a higher priority on access to good schools and houses with gardens. Such variety should be valued as part of creating diverse and liveable towns.

PPS3 requires that authorities should be aware of the 'overall balance of different household types to be provided for across the plan area, to ensure housing provision is made for example for family, single person, and multi-person households. In planning at site level, it is important that a broad mix of housing suitable for different household types is provided on larger sites. The mix of housing on smaller sites should contribute to the creation of mixed communities'.

The current economy

Logically a market correction on the scale currently being experienced should make a positive contribution to affordability but the lack of lending, other than at 60% of value, is making it almost impossible for first-time buyers to benefit from reducing prices and interest rates.

However it is extremely difficult to forecast when the housing finance sector will begin to operate effectively, and when it does so, on the level of lending to be provided to first-time buyers. New loans to first-time buyers are likely to be more cautious in the long term and may return to industry norms of 3 times income at 90% lending, even lower than the SHMA Guidance 2007 levels of 3.5 times income at 95%.

Ultimately the level of unemployment will determine how far house prices will fall as a further increase of a million people will cause increases in re-possession and continuing householders concern regarding unemployment, will have a negative influence on market confidence.

Key housing and income statistics for Epsom and Ewell

Land Registry data shows a 13.1% annual decline in house prices from Q1 in 2008 to Q1 in 2009.

90.1% of Epsom and Ewell's Household tenure are private, 9.1% are RSL and 0.8% are other public sector. This is nearly 5% more private tenure than the South east figure.

Epsom and Ewell average House Prices:

Area	Year	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Flat/maisonette	All types	Change Q2 2007- Q1 2009 %
Epsom and Ewell	2007	520,083	346,104	296,608	221,421	336,024	-18.1
	2009	483,758	292,035	203,850	183,755	284,420	
		-7.5%	-18.5%	-45.5%	-20.5%		

Gross Annual Pay 2008

Local Authority	Average Earnings 2008 (£)	% change 2006-2008	Low Income Households (£)	% change 2006-2008
Epsom & Ewell	41,075	+19.7	25,017	+30.1

Considerations for Plan E

The Town Centre is a highly sustainable location for residential development and it is recognised that higher densities are more appropriate in accessible locations such as the town centre. Provision needs to be made in the town centre for additional housing, especially in light of the Borough's limited housing land. The Issues & Options Paper puts forward options for the opportunity sites which include housing. On the other opportunity sites housing is suggested as an appropriate use, often as part of a mixed use scheme.

Dialogue Community Workshop Report, Upper High Street and Depot Road Car Park Sites (2007)

Background

In 2006 Dialogue was commissioned by the Council to independently facilitate a series of community workshops to discuss the future of the Upper High Street / Depot Road Car park site in the Town Centre, following a refused Helical bar application on the site that was opposed by considerable numbers of local residents and interest groups. The report highlights the responses of the local people attending the two workshops held on 19 January 2007. There were 150 participants in total.

Main findings/ suggestions for Upper High Street site

- 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- A mixture of tenures.
- That Epsom did not have a wide selection of comparison goods and leisure activities (especially for young people) which could be delivered in some way by the sites.
- Mixed views on the need for parking provision at the Upper High Street car park.
- Threat of large retailers on local businesses
- Keeping the development in character with the surrounding area
- Constraints on the site:
 - Proximity of the Pikes Hill Conservation area
 - Legal requirements for access to the site
 - Maintenance of existing underground services on site
 - Considerations for retaining existing car parking
 - Protection of local trees
 - Council policy restricting building height
 - Respect for the privacy of tenants on the sites and nearby
 - Traffic generation by any development
 - Capacity of local services to cope with new residents (health, education etc)
 - Land level height differences across the sites
 - Potential commercial impact of retail development on local traders

Findings/ suggestions for Epsom Town Centre in general

Positives

Market town
Ashley Centre and Library (public services)
Older buildings
'Village' feel
Very functional
Variety of shops
Has preserved some character/ history/ architectural
The Market
Compact and easy to get around

Negatives

Traffic congestion
Unbalanced central commercial area
Too many chain stores
Lack of parking
No 'character' in the town- compromised by new development
Lack of seating
Lack of affordable housing
Need small independent shops
Lack of shopping options

Site Opportunities

Balance the town centre by making High Street more attractive
Wider variety of shops and businesses
More public open space
More parking to relieve problems
Family housing
Energy efficient/ sustainable development
Community services
Attract shoppers to Upper High Street
Young people's leisure activities

Options put forward in the Committee Report:

Option	Small retail (etc) units sqm	Larger retail sqm	Total retail (etc) sqm	Private car parking HB*	Public car parking	Total car parking	Private housing flats	Social housing flats	Total housing flats	Medical Centre
Existing situation	nil	nil	nil	10	400	410	nil	nil	nil	Nil
Options with retail mainly on the ground floor; 4,200 sqm = 45,210 sqft)										
A1	2,400	1,800	4,200	95	310	405	24	43	67	Nil
A2	2,400	1,800	4,200	95	270	365	24	43	67	Yes
B1	1,800	2,400	4,200	95	310	405	24	43	67	Nil
B2	1,800	2,400	4,200	95	270	365	24	43	67	Yes
Options with retail mainly on two floors; 7,500sqm = 80,730 sqft)										
C1	2,400	5,100	7,500	95	310	405	15	37	52	Nil

C2	2,400	5,100	7,500	95	270	365	15	37	52	Yes
D1	1,800	5,700	7,500	95	310	405	15	37	52	Nil
D2	1,800	5,700	7,500	95	270	365	15	37	52	Yes
<i>*assuming that Helical Bar site has a single basement for car parking: an additional basement floor would double the figure to 190 spaces.</i>										

Considerations for Plan E

The findings of the workshops have been considered when developing options for the opportunity site of Upper High Street/ Depot Road.