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 Meeting 7 February 2007

Steve Wightway Chairman
 & c 20 Partnership Members

Anthony Evans
 Tony Michael

E+E planning
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- Purpose of meeting was to get the views and ideas of the Partnership Members on how the development of the Study Area should proceed, views which need to be taken into account in the planning appraisal study by the planning office;
 - Public input was needed now, at the start of the project, which is to end in 3/07;
 - Notes of the meetings are being made public, public workshops had been held;
 - Site maps showing the various sites in the study area that could be developed, and the position of underground services, conservation areas, trees etc were displayed;
 - Looking at the wider picture for the Town Centre: Sutton & Kingston are losing their character, becoming “clone towns”, and are not the way to go; the main aim for Epsom would be to compete on character and quality, a social offer as well as commercial, & it will then get more people into the town; mixed uses are needed, with space for a wide range of businesses, from small start-ups and incubator units upwards; offices & businesses as well as shops; new residential generates more customers for business; child care facilities would allow longer stays; we should be thinking ahead, looking at the wider opportunities for adaptation and site development, rather than following the short term development of individual sites (eg the Rainbow was modernised, but then quickly redeveloped); both the western and the UHS ends were low key and needed more activity/interest; keeping the local Epsom character was highly important; the current public car parking level of c2000 cars serving the Town Centre was vital, and any reductions (400 spaces now in the Depot Road and UHS car parks), would cause concern; the cost of parking was an issue, although this provided income for the Council; Should a by-pass be reconsidered? Should there be another Mall at the eastern end, in UHS, to complement the Ashley Centre mall, to act as a magnet to hold people there, not just walk up one side and down the other, ie a destination?
 - There needs to be more emphasis on a “greener Epsom”, with buses, and not so much on the car; and something that “other towns do not have”; also, more office jobs;
 - A major new department store could be needed to match the D+J store in the Ashley Centre; should this go into the eastern end of the Town, to act as an alternative draw?
 - The Ashley Centre was considering expansion plans, and footfall over Christmas 2006 was up 3 times the national average; the new Boots is to have 1600sqm, and their move from their present shops in the High Street would leave space for others to move into;
 - New facilities were needed if we were not to lose out to the competition; eg young clothes, Primark, Carluccios, men’s wear, shoes, childrens toys/clothes (Gap Kids had left) and white goods;
 - A cafe culture was needed and should be encouraged, perhaps in UHS; some restrained evening economy also? Cinema is already a draw & catalyst in UHS, so build on this;
 - As the town has a Charter Market (not tied to a specific site) it needed to be promoted; should this be moved to UHS?
 - A big new retail supermarket on the UHS site was not seen as the answer; it was seen as an anachronism, appearing as a big “lump” with a facade, but nothing else;
 - Local views were clearly against having anything over-large on the UHS site, but wanted something more geared to providing for locals; traffic is a problem from big developments; should UHS be pedestrianised, or at least be more pedestrian friendly? There were some vacant shop units in UHS, including recent losses, yet there were some welcome specialist units, that balance the “clone town” criticisms; Could UHS be more like Merton Abbey Mills, a mini mall, a family orientated place to visit and stay longer?

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