

SUBGROUPS QUALITATIVE RESPONSES FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

EPHING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON Town centre, tourism and employment

Consultation Statement **Annex J**

Advisory Committee Sub-Groups formed to consider the public's responses and produced reports under the main plan topics. Each report shows the topics, the issues raised, the volume for each, with a short summary and it identifies the main themes impacting changes to the draft Plan.

The questionnaire outlined proposals to protect the main shopping area, with new shops and facilities at St John's, a new multistorey car park at Cottis Lane, the possibility of a hotel. With the regular market and other events are these measures enough to maintain the attractiveness of the town centre to shoppers and visitors?

On tourism – the Plan was to increase tourism citing the location, attractions and accessibility – asking whether this was supported?

Employment – the layout of the town limits opportunities for new employment, restricted to the existing offices, hospitality and retail in the town centre, asking if people agree with this approach?

Summary The responses receiving most comments were

- Concern over loss of Epping's character/heritage, and the Market Town 'feel' would become more urban
- too many restaurants, coffee shops, takeaways, fast food and charity shops, the need for greater retail variety and maintaining / improving the market
- Concerns over current levels of congestion and that further development would add to the problems
- NO to Tourism, NO to Hotel, NO to Multi-storey car park
- The St. Johns development should focus on facilities not more shops
- Concerns over car parking and that further development would add to the problems
- Similar concerns over levels of 'through' traffic in the town which will increase with housing developments in Epping and neighbouring villages and settlements,

The influx of several thousands of people and the fear that the town and its infrastructure will not be able to cope were a strong concern – turning it from a pleasant semi-rural place to live into a semi-urban unpleasant place to live.

Epping is not seen as a tourist destination, having no points of interest and an indifferent shopping offering. The Forest, as a tourist destination, is not seen as part of Epping town but rather as a beautiful piece of countryside buffering Epping from Loughton and Harlow, contributing to the semi-rural 'feel' of Epping town. There is a fear that if promotion of the Forest as a tourist destination were to be successful, the Forest would be damaged and eroded, with peace and tranquillity destroyed and the possibility of additional traffic. Tourism, if promoted successfully, would bring yet more traffic and congestion into the town.

Epping is largely seen as a commuter town and focus on providing employment is deemed unnecessary.

How responses influenced draft policies

- Policies and proposals which support the town's character/heritage, and the High Street as the main area for shops and services
- Seek means other than new road building / widening to reduce congestion and through-traffic
- Reduce elements in the plan around tourism and a new hotel,
- Review proposals for the St. Johns development
- Review the operation of existing car parks,
- To seek transport infrastructure improvements ahead of development

TOPIC	ANSWERS	YES – AGREE PLAN	NO – DISAGREE WITH PLAN / CONCERNS	ISSUE
Town Centre				
Heritage/Loss of Character	73	0	73	Market town charm and character will be lost.
Traffic congestion	74	0	74	Time wasted. (2)Pollution/Noise/Emergency services delayed. Bypass needed (3) Park & Ride Needed
Lack of Diversity in High Street	25	0	25	Too many coffee shops, restaurants, charity shops and fast food – not many retailers.
Market	30	0	30	Needs upgrade – old fashioned, cheap poor quality goods. Need Farmers Markets, Antiques etc., and at weekends. Attention should be paid to disabled.
Transport	28	5 positive about proposed cycle paths	19	Need transport to access underground and St. Margaret's Hospital. Underground at capacity. No cycle paths wanted. Epping is a dormitory town – need commuter parking
St. John's Development	16	0	16	Don't need more shops, too many empty already Sports centre should be relocated there.
Supermarket at St. John's Development	7	7	0	Need another supermarket to cope with new residents.
Hotel	50	5	45	NO to hotel

				YES only if it's good quality, not a chain and has leisure facilities
Parking	41	0	41	Not enough parking. Only 2 car parks shown on map. Not near enough to High Street. Need commuter parking.
Multi-storey car park	57	1	56	Out of keeping with character of town. Criminality. Litter anti-social behaviour. Should be at station not town centre.
More Facilities	12	0	12	Park. Family friendly open spaces, swimming pool, sports centre. Need police station.
Infrastructure	11	0	11	Infrastructure before development. Need police station and medical services
Pavements, Roads & Footpaths 6 0 6	6	0	6	Pavements, roads and footpaths are not being maintained to a good standard. Dangerous.
Tourism				
Promote Tourism? 39 2 34				No Attractions (10) More traffic & congestion (23) Disruptions to residents (3) Only with Tourism Centre (1) Make more of The Essex Way (1) Agree only if we have police.
Epping Forest	8	0	8	Forest is not in Epping and is not ours to promote (4) Ban cyclists from Forest (4)
Green Belt & Wildlife	3	3	0	Do MORE to protect it
Employment				
	11	9	5	No loss of Green Belt to do it.(4) Relax Planning on change of use.(1) DON'T change employment places to houses(1). Epping is a Commuter Town – don't focus on employment (4) Need small businesses otherwise people will HAVE TO commute.(1)

TOWN CENTRE:

Concerns: impact of high Business Rates, shops closing and a smaller market, too many charity shops, coffee shops, restaurants and hairdressers, no need for more shops, too many vacant already, too much development will ruin the town and reduce its attractiveness, clutter and rubbish,

Fears that proposals will make Epping more like other areas – Basildon, Harlow, Loughton, losing its character and identity, creating a commuter / dormitory town will lose the benefits of Epping as a charming market town

Suggestions: need a second big supermarket which provides competition, an Art Gallery, Exhibition Space or Museum , more independent retailers and small 'normal shops', support for traders, improve shop-fronts, family friendly facilities like recreation areas, police station, post office, Sports Centre. Regarding development at St Johns, less emphasis on new shops, should have facilities for teenagers, sports centre or a swimming pool.

MARKET:

Concerns: The market has deteriorated year on year,

Suggestions: the Market needs vast improvement, different timings, more food stalls, a monthly Farmers Market, antiques, crafts etc.,

PARKING:

Concerns: A Multi storey car park will ruin the town, will bring more litter, congestion and crime , not in keeping with the character of the town, proposed parking areas are nowhere near the Town Centre, new residents will require thousands of parking spaces,

Suggestions: Parking should be free or at least low cost at weekends and Bank Holidays, easier parking with fewer restrictions, commuter parking, a Park & Ride on the outskirts of the town, a multi=storey should be no higher than two storeys,

HOTEL

Concerns: no need for another hotel, location?,

Suggestions: If a hotel is built it should be of a high standard and quality with a spa, The Bell Hotel should be upgraded, should have a swimming pool rather than a hotel

PAVEMENTS & FOOTPATHS

Concerns: Pavements are a disgrace, footpaths ae not being maintained, footpaths are not adequate

Suggestions: none

CONGESTION:

Concerns: Development will bring more cars, more congestion, noise and pollution, extension of the Central Line will mean more congestion in the town, the roads, station and underground are already at capacity, Epping cannot cope with more traffic, the roads cannot be widened (Forest land),

Suggestions: need a By-pass to relieve the congestion, there should be a pedestrian crossing at the station, build a road UNDER the High Street, leaving the High Street for pedestrians,

TOURISM

Concerns: Plan should be first for residents' needs – not tourism, who will want to come to see a lot of houses and car parks? tourism will add more congestion and car fumes which is a danger to local people, Epping is already too cluttered with cars and the town is not a tourist destination, the Forest is not in Epping is not our concern, we don't own it and is not ours to promote, the forest is not near the town, so cars needed to access and there is no parking when you get there, cyclists are ruining the forest and should be banned,

Suggestions: need more events and publicity, issues getting to the forest from station, a visitor centre would help although the visitors centre in Epping Forest already caters for walkers and cyclists, there should be cycle paths, people come here for natural beauty and not shops and car parks,

EMPLOYMENT:

Concerns: Epping is a dormitory town we don't need employment, what is the point of building houses on the green-belt when there is no employment for them? no loss of green belt to do it,

Suggestions: Flexible planning on change of use and brownfield sites, no transfer of shops, offices to housing, Plans should help create new jobs, need more employment, it keeps shops, hotels etc. alive, no industry here

TRANSPORT

Concerns: Don't extend the Central Line, Central Line is at capacity now, roads are not wide enough for cycle paths.

Suggestions: Extend the Central Line, must ensure easy access to the Underground, need transport to St. Margarets Hospital

GENERAL

Concerns: Pie in the sky – you're dreaming, why is there no information about St. Johns Road development, these question have not been made for true and authentic consultation, infrastructure before building

Suggestions: none

