

DRAFT

**ST JOHN'S ROAD EPPING
DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF**

Consultation appendix

August 2012

**Allies and Morrison
Urban Practitioners**



INTRODUCTION

This appendix details the findings from public and stakeholder consultation undertaken as part of the St John's Road design and Development Brief, which has been prepared to guide the future shape of the St John's Road area in Epping.

The consultation was undertaken in two parts, in February 2009 a stakeholder consultation event was undertaken to determine the main issues and opportunities for the area. This was followed by a public exhibition in March and April 2012 which presented four masterplan options and was supported by a questionnaire. A youth workshop was also held at the Box on Epping High Street as part of the second stage of consultation.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

In February 2009 Urban Practitioners led a stakeholder workshop in Epping Hall in the form of a walking audit - a consultation technique that aims to stimulate and record the issues and dreams of those present for the area.

The walking audit started with a short presentation of Urban Practitioners understanding of the urban design issues relating to the site. This was followed by a 'virtual' walk around the site (this replaced an actual walk around the site which was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions), and a dreams workshop which used post-it notes to record participants issues and dreams while on the virtual walk. The final solutions workshop required participants to annotate a large plan of the area.

The findings from the walking audit informed the creation of the St John's Road Area Development and Design Brief and the main points are summarised below.



St John's Road Area Development and Design Brief

Walking Audit

2.00pm - 5.00pm, Friday 6 February 2009
Epping Hall, St John's Road,
Epping, CM16 5JU

PROGRAMME

2.00pm	Welcome and registration
2.10pm	Introduction and project briefing Steve Walker, Urban Practitioners
2.30pm	Walking audit
3.30pm	Refreshments
3.40pm	Dreams workshop
4.00pm	Solutions workshop
4.50pm	Feedback and next steps
5.00pm	Close

Walking audit agenda

Walking Audit Attendees

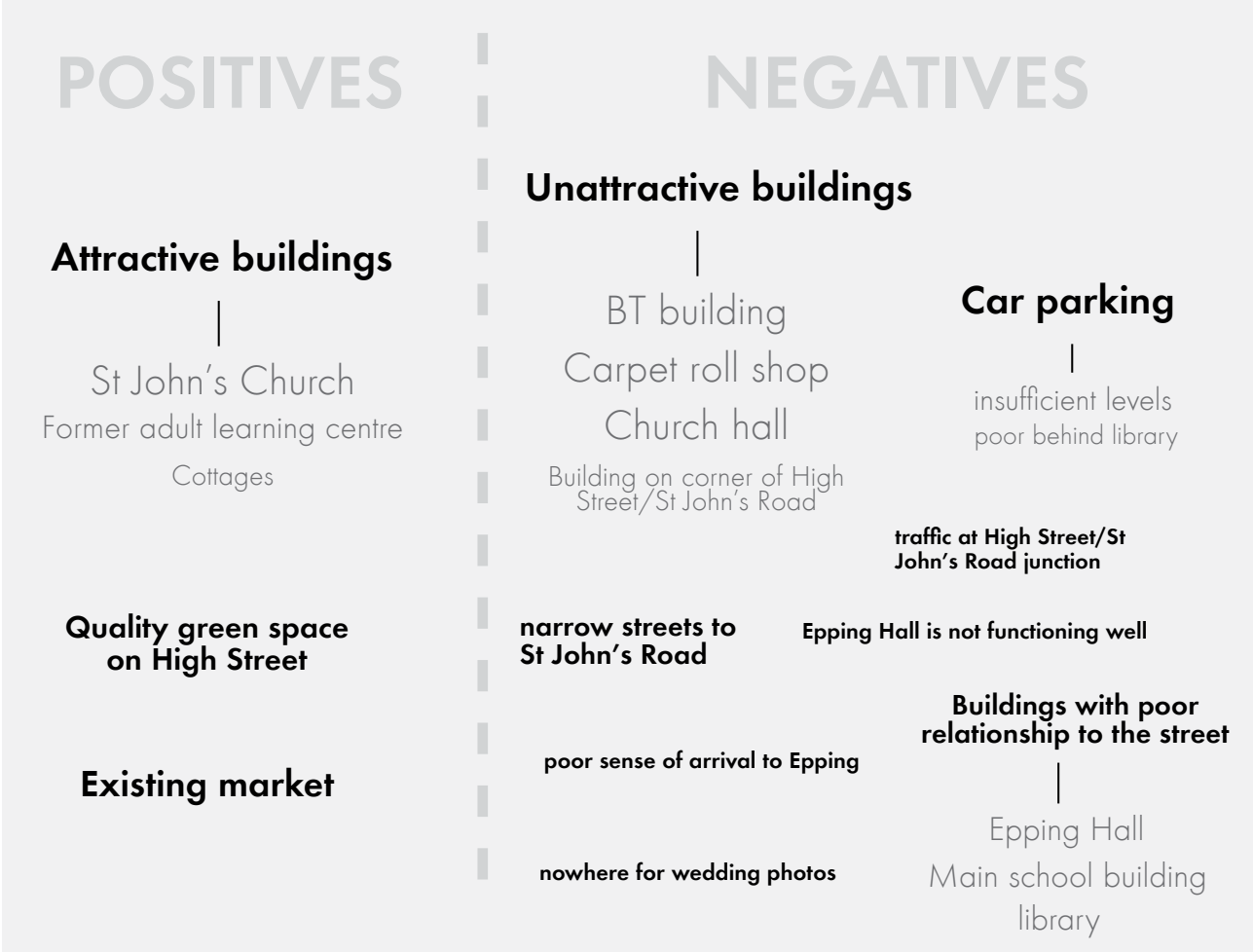
- Ken Avey - Epping Town Council
- Keith Binnie - Urban Practitioners
- Revd Geoffrey Connor - St John's Church
- Liz Crouch - Essex County Council
- Anna Dawson - Essex County Council
- Geoff Elgar - Essex County Council
- Anna Griffin - Urban Practitioners
- Cllr Anne Grigg - Epping Forest District Council
- Lizzy Haines - Epping Forest District Council
- Charles Harvey - Essex County Council Libraries
- Malcolm Hewines - CB Richard Ellis
- Grainne Nixon - Registration Service
- Ed Morgan - Lambert Smith Hampton
- Margaret Roberts - Registration Service
- David Sellings - Epping Forest District Council
- Cllr Alan Smith - Epping Town Council
- Peter Smith - Essex County Council
- Cllr John Spencer - Essex County Council
- Steve Walker - Urban Practitioners
- Ian Wallace - Epping Society
- Alan Warner - Epping Town Council
- Amanda Wintle - Epping Forest District Council
- Cllr Janet Whitehouse - Epping Forest District Council
- Cllr Jon Whitehouse - Epping Forest District Council
- Bob Whittone - Epping Town Council Clerk
- Vicki Willis - Epping Forest District Council



Dreams Workshop Section of Walking Audit

While on the virtual walk, and shortly after, participants recorded their perceived issues for the St John's Road area and their dreams for how it should be improved. The two following word-clouds summarise the responses.

Issues



Dreams

Retain historic sense of area

Street environment

better use green space
keep trees and plant more
enhance setting to St John's Church
pedestrianised areas
more walking opportunity

Make library visible from street

A two storey car park

Land use

community
sports centre
pavement cafés
retail
small business
affordable and private housing

A new town square

A public garden

Retain old cookery school building

Solutions Workshop Section of Walking Audit

The solutions workshop split attendees into three groups with each given a map on which to draw their own masterplan, the results of which are shown on the following pages.



St John's Road Area | Development and Design Brief

Priorities

- = RETAIN
- = TO GO

Community uses should be an important part of any new scheme. Could it be a sports centre? Community Hall space is needed.

An Epping Museum?

Arts & culture

Ancillary service/community space needed e.g. CAB

Enhancing retail if possible - needs to strengthen the High Street. Discount food?

Anchor building?

Residential - sheltered housing. Shortage of family housing. Some flats, perhaps above ground floor uses.

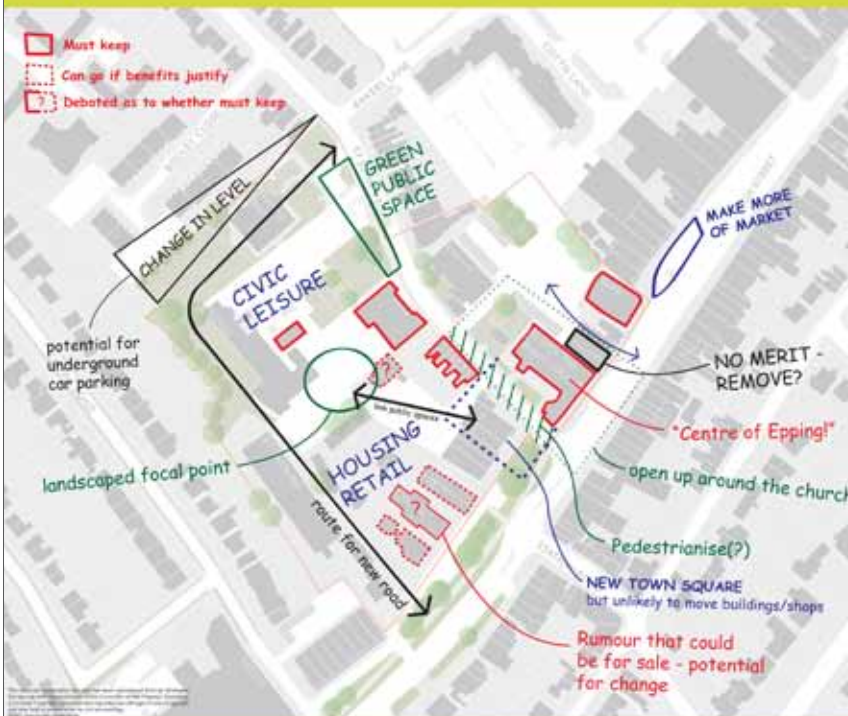
Offices - some inclusion. A hotel.

Open spaces. Mature trees / leafy Epping. Pockets of public spaces.

Car parking needs to be addressed,

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Priorities

- One large/group of civic/leisure building(s)
 - swimming pool / sports centre? / library / Epping Hall
- Integrate historic buildings
- Church setting
- Change in levels allow for underground parking
- A good mix of uses
- Housing/retail adds to vibrancy
- Avoid dead areas
- Registry office needs more attractive front for photos
- Re-use of historic buildings
- Maintain mature trees
- Plant more!
- Park & ride from edge of town



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Priorities

1. Community spaces - Uses - How they work together.
2. Library - remains in place - with improved access and frontage OR relocate as part of wider site strategy
3. Opening up access to site, consideration towards car parking
4. Underground car parking
5. Old Adult Centre - community hall / town hall building. Meeting rooms.
6. Pedestrianisation
7. Possible sports centre / leisure facility
8. Open space as focal point ♥
9. Residential & commercial? small scale?



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EXHIBITION

A public exhibition was held in March and April 2012. For the first month it was held in St John's Parish Church and for the second month it was held in Epping Library whilst a duplicate exhibition was displayed throughout the period in the Epping Forest District Council offices. The exhibition outlined the main issues facing the development brief area and included four options for how change could be realised. These options and the text from the exhibition are displayed on the facing page.

The exhibition was supported by a questionnaire. This was also available on-line with an electronic version of the exhibition available for download. A total of 826 responses were received, of which 462 were submitted as paper questionnaires or letters and 354 were submitted on-line through the council website.



Opening of the exhibition in St John the Baptist Church

1 // Retail-led option

A comprehensive approach to the site which could deliver significant new retail development including a food store. It also has the potential to integrate well with the High Street and to improve existing community facilities such as the library.



- New supermarket
- New shops
- New housing
- New telephone exchange
- New/retained community use
- New offices

Key features

1. Food store, with enclosed service yard to the north and decked parking at-grade with the store and below, taking advantage of the slope of the site
2. Retained former cookery school building providing opportunity for either commercial or community use, possibly as a new space for the Town Council
3. Centre Point building refurbished and opened up to create new arcade
4. Larger format retail with housing above
5. New high quality housing
6. Potential for future redevelopment of the telephone exchange site featuring new housing
7. New vehicle access from the High Street
8. New library building with commercial uses on the ground floor
9. Potential for future new office development
10. New link from the Baker's Lane car park, possibly including an element of parking
11. Potential for further new development, either commercial office space or residential
12. New commercial development suitable for cafes or boutique shopping and with residential development above fronting onto a new lane around the church
13. New church amenity building

Our evaluation of this option:

We think this is a really strong option which could enhance the town centre retail offer and could help to improve facilities such as the library. It would create a good mix of uses as well as attractive new routes and spaces which would improve the setting of the church. This option is financially viable.

2 // Leisure-led option

An option which would deliver new leisure facilities to replace those on Hemnall Street as well as delivering a substantial area of new housing and some improvements to the community facilities and pedestrian network.



- New leisure centre
- New shops
- New housing
- New telephone exchange
- New/retained community use
- New offices

Key features

1. New sports and leisure centre based around a refurbishment of the existing Epping Hall
2. Retained former cookery school building providing opportunity for either commercial or community use, possibly as a new space for the Town Council
3. Centre Point building refurbished and retained for community use
4. New high quality housing
5. Potential for future redevelopment of the telephone exchange site featuring new housing
6. New minor vehicle access from the High Street
7. Existing library building remodelled to create an entrance on the southeastern side where it can be visible from the High Street
8. New commercial development suitable for cafes or boutique shopping and with residential development above fronting onto a new lane around the church
9. New church amenity building

Our evaluation of this option:

This option would provide new leisure facilities and bring some improvements to other community facilities. However, it would not add significantly to retail capacity of the town centre and the leisure centre element of the project would require the District Council to contribute several million pounds to the project, making the option unviable.

3 // Retail & leisure option

A composite approach which includes the potential for a new food store but also includes a new leisure centre. It includes the same proposals to create new links and public space around the parish church and to improve the library as option 1.



- New supermarket
- New leisure centre
- New shops
- New housing
- New telephone exchange
- New/retained community use
- New offices

Key features

1. Food store, with enclosed service yard to the north and decked parking at-grade with the store and below, taking advantage of the slope of the site
2. Retained former cookery school building providing opportunity for either commercial or community use, possibly as a new space for the Town Council
3. Centre Point building refurbished and opened up to create new arcade
4. New sports and leisure building with frontage onto the new square
5. Potential for future redevelopment of the telephone exchange site featuring new housing
6. New building creating frontage onto the High Street
7. New vehicle access from the High Street
8. New library building with commercial uses on the ground floor
9. Potential for future new office development
10. New link from the Baker's Lane car park, possibly including an element of parking
11. Potential for further new development, either commercial office space or residential
12. New commercial development suitable for cafes or boutique shopping and with residential development above fronting onto a new lane around the church
13. New church amenity building

Our evaluation of this option:

Option three represents the most comprehensive package for the town centre in terms of activity and mix of use. However, the leisure centre element of the project would require the District Council to contribute several million pounds to the project, making this option unviable.

4 // Residential option

An approach which would be focused on delivering residential development with minimal retail/community facilities. This could be delivered as phases of development, allowing for the Epping Hall to remain in situ if desired.



- New housing
- New/retained community use
- New offices

Key features

1. New high quality housing
2. Potential for a central space
3. Retention of the Centre Point building for community use
4. Establishment of a new pedestrian link into the site as a continuation of the existing lane

Our evaluation of this option:

This option is financially viable. It is mainly high-quality new housing, and, although it is not expected to contribute significantly to the strength and vitality of the town centre, its impact on traffic is likely to be minimal. The site can be designed to respect the local historic character but it would not include the improvements around the Parish Church or the library. It would be expected to provide some limited community facilities.

Questionnaire responses

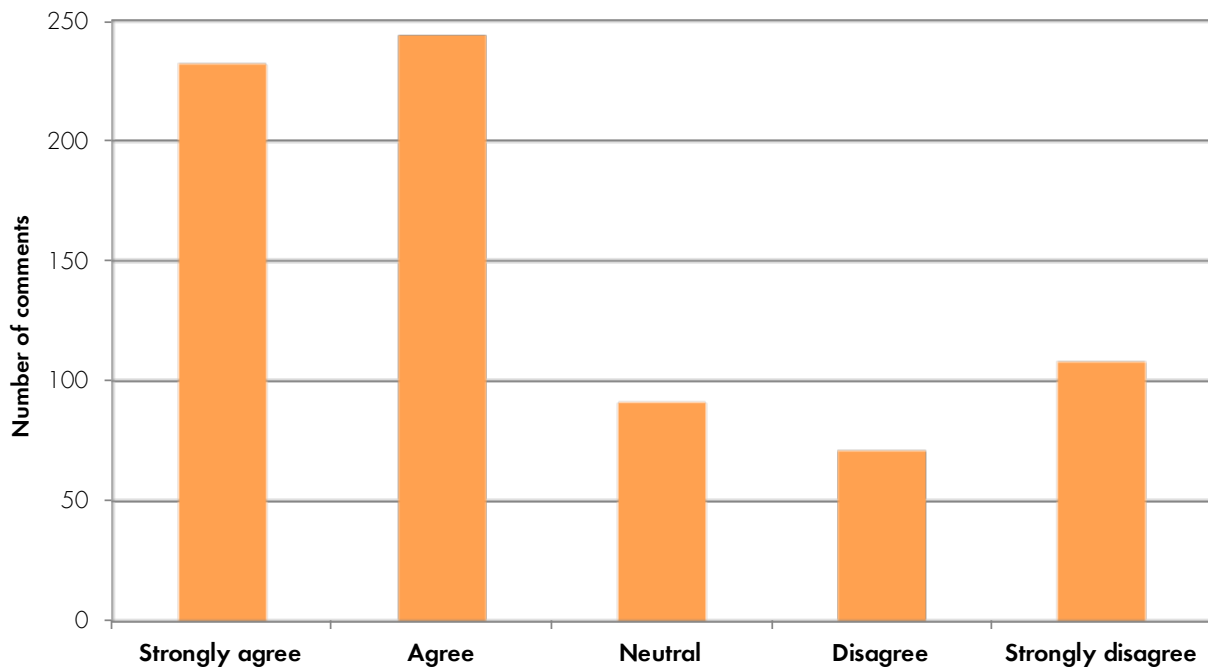
Question 1

The first question asked respondents whether they agreed with the core project principles which had been set out in the consultation material as follows:

- The development needs to be strongly integrated with the High Street and the rest of the town centre;
- The area should include a sustainable mix of uses and create high quality public streets and spaces;
- Any development should respect and complement the historic character and scale of the town centre with buildings of the highest quality; and
- The ideas for development should make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity for the town but should be practical, deliverable and affordable.

The responses provide a very strong positive feedback on this question, with 477 people either supporting or strongly supporting the principles whilst 178 people disagreed or strongly disagreed with the principles. 91 people indicated a neutral response and a further 80 people did not complete the question.

It is instructive to read the written comments which accompany the scores. These indicate that some people have rated the illustrative schemes in the exhibition rather than the core principles as the questionnaire asked. Many of the comments mention issues which do not relate to the principles given and so people may not have answered the question accurately.



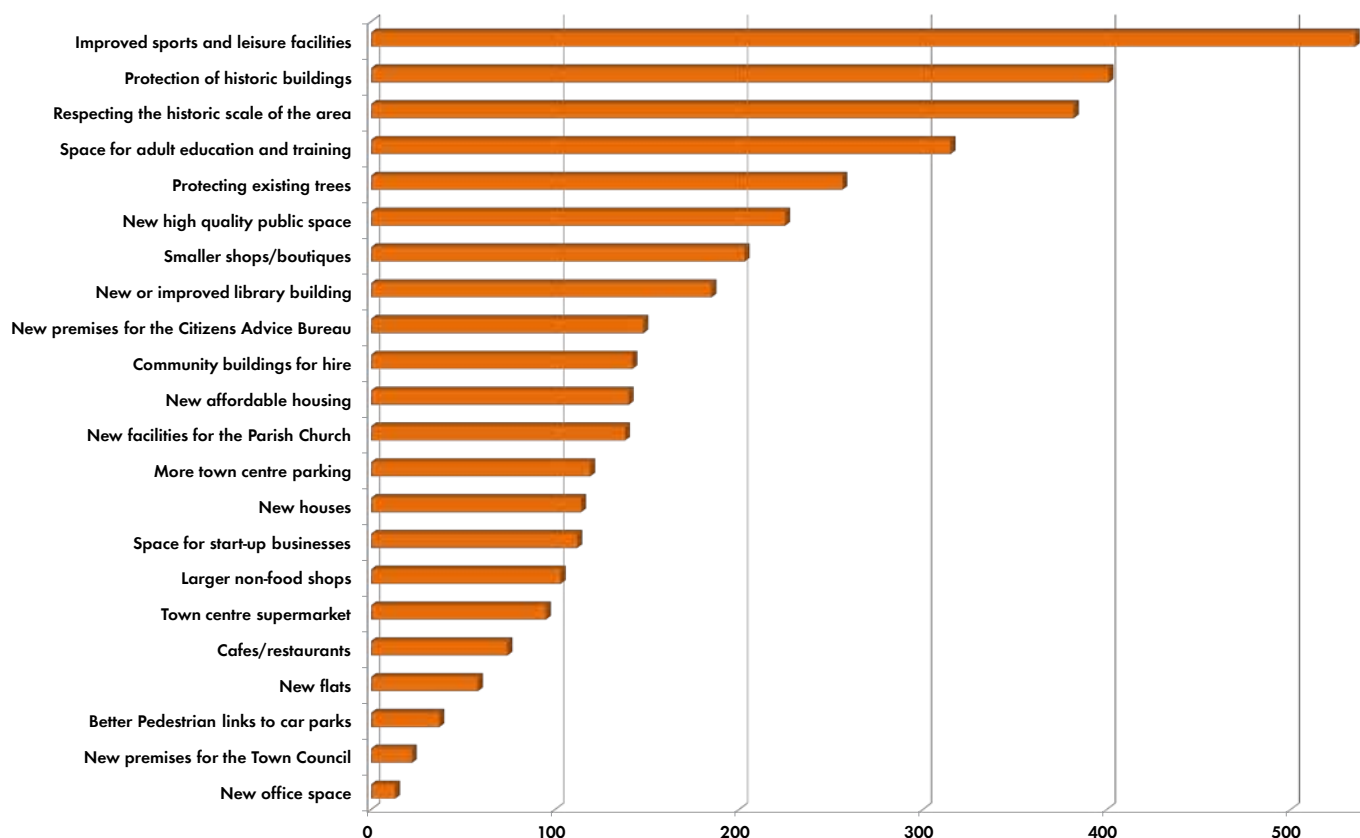
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Paper:	69	136	68	58	81
Electronic:	163	108	23	13	27
Total:	232	244	91	71	108

Question 2

Question two asked people to tick five things from a long list to identify what they would consider the best for Epping town centre. The graph on the facing page shows how people responded to the question. The most common responses were:

- Provision of improved sport and leisure facilities in the town centre was the stand-out issue with 535 of all respondents ticking this option;

- Protection of historic buildings and respect for historic scale were the next two most selected issues with 401 and 382 votes respectively;
- Provision of space for adult education received a high response of 315 votes;
- Protecting existing trees and new high quality public space were the next two most selected issues with 256 and 225 votes respectively;
- Smaller shops / boutiques received 203 votes; and
- New or improved library received 185 votes.



	New office space	New premises for the Town Council	Better Pedestrian links to car parks	New flats	Cafes/restaurants	Town centre supermarket	Larger non-food shops	Space for start-up businesses	New houses	More town centre parking	New facilities for the Parish Church	New affordable housing	Community buildings for hire	New premises for the Citizens Advice Bureau	New or improved library building	Smaller shops/boutiques	New high quality public space	Protecting existing trees	Space for adult education and training	Respecting the historic scale of the area	Protection of historic buildings	Improved sports and leisure facilities
Paper:	8	14	27	40	30	62	60	69	71	82	101	101	88	104	101	94	124	161	206	230	232	278
Electronic:	5	8	10	18	44	33	43	43	43	37	37	39	54	44	84	109	101	95	109	152	169	257
Total:	13	22	37	58	74	95	103	112	114	119	138	140	142	148	185	203	225	256	315	382	401	535

Question 3

Question three provided people with space to make their own comments on the plans. The responses have been analysed using a coding system to group similar comments together so that the key issues can be identified. The opposition to a new supermarket received by far the largest percentage of responses, as can be seen on the adjacent table and bar chart on the following page, which show the number of each coded response.

The other stand out responses were:

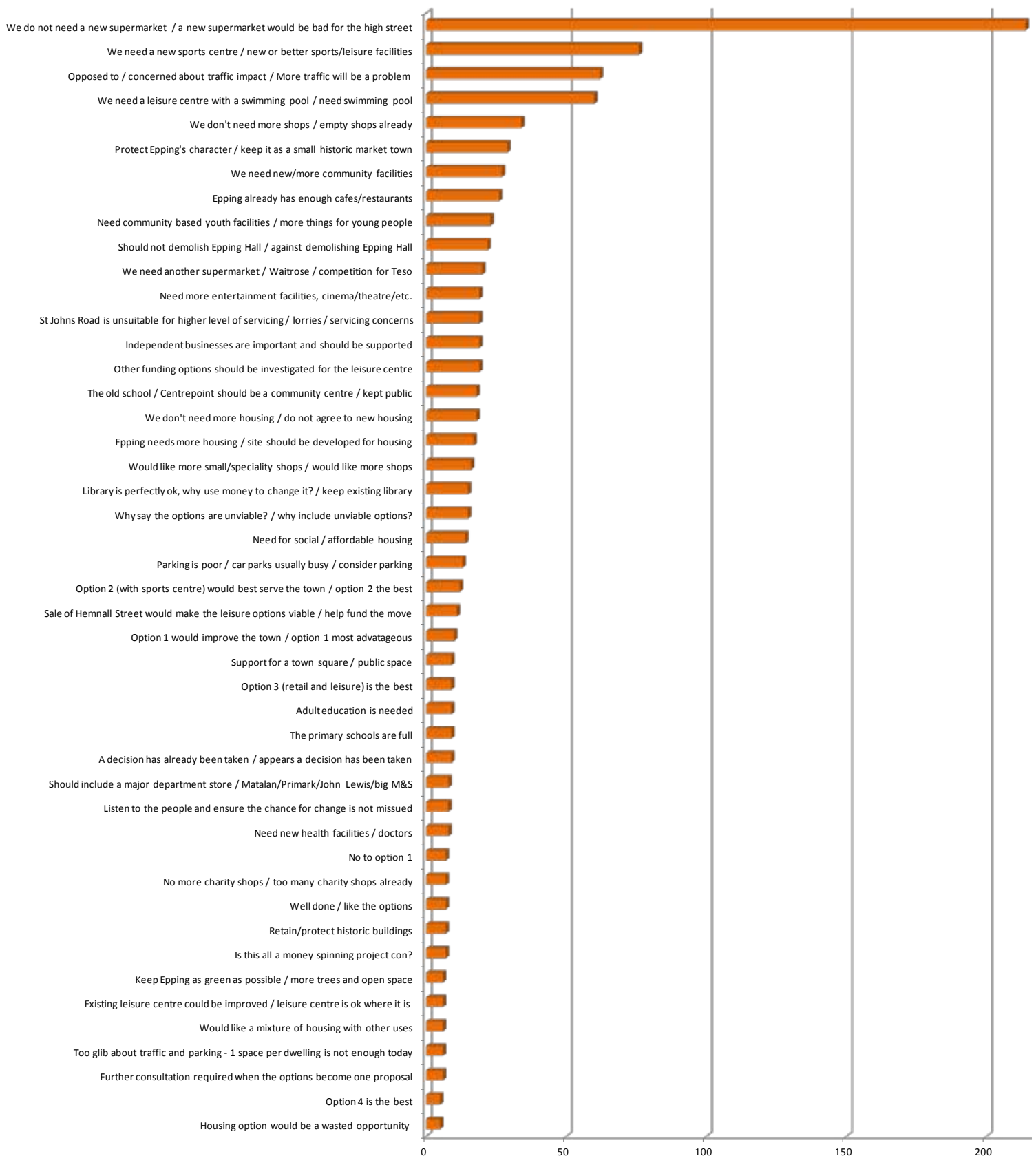
- The desire for a new sports centre and better sports/leisure facilities;
- Concern about traffic and the impact of new development; and
- The desire for a swimming pool.

Other responses which were received multiple times, but with less regularity than those above, include:

- That Epping has enough shops already and does not need more;
- That the character of Epping as a small historic market town should be protected;
- That more community based facilities are needed, particularly youth orientated ones;
- That Epping already has enough cafés and restaurants.
- That Epping Hall should not be demolished; and
- That a new supermarket is needed as competition to Tesco, with Waitrose referenced.

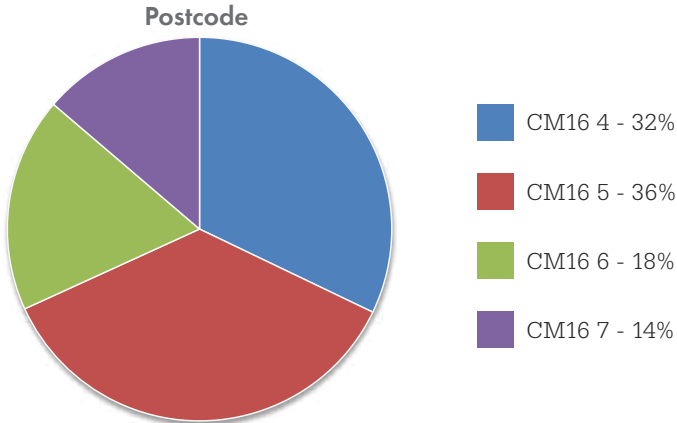
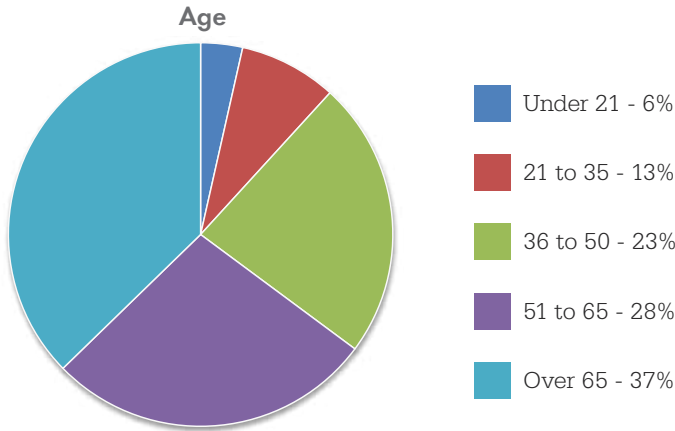
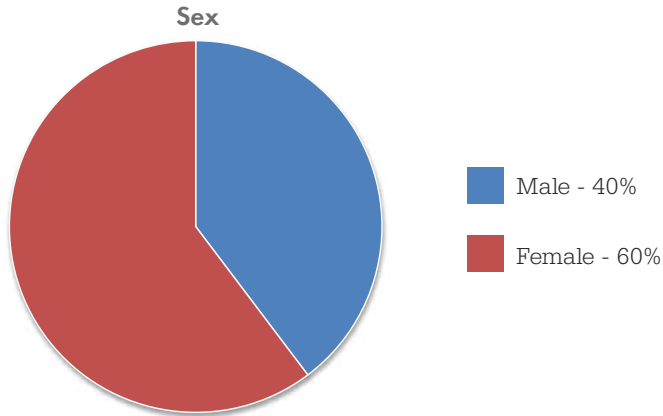
All responses received 5 times or more can be seen in the adjacent table.

RESPONSE	Number
We do not need a new supermarket / a new supermarket would be bad for the high street	214
We need a new sports centre / new or better sports/leisure facilities	76
Opposed to / concerned about traffic impact / More traffic will be a problem	62
We need a leisure centre with a swimming pool / need swimming pool	60
We don't need more shops / empty shops already	34
Protect Epping's character / keep it as a small historic market town	29
We need new/more community facilities	27
Epping already has enough cafes/restaurants	26
Need community based youth facilities / more things for young people	23
Should not demolish Epping Hall / against demolishing Epping Hall	22
We need another supermarket / Waitrose / competition for Tesco	20
Other funding options should be investigated for the leisure centre	19
Independent businesses are important and should be supported	19
St Johns Road is unsuitable for higher level of servicing / lorries / servicing concerns	19
Need more entertainment facilities, cinema/theatre/etc.	19
We don't need more housing / do not agree to new housing	18
The old school / Centrepoint should be a community centre / kept public	18
Epping needs more housing / site should be developed for housing	17
Would like more small/speciality shops / would like more shops	16
Why say the options are unviable? / why include unviable options?	15
Library is perfectly ok, why use money to change it? / keep existing library	15
Need for social / affordable housing	14
Parking is poor / car parks usually busy / consider parking	13
Option 2 (with sports centre) would best serve the town / option 2 the best	12
Sale of Hemnall Street would make the leisure options viable / help fund the move	11
Option 1 would improve the town / option 1 most advantageous	10
A decision has already been taken / appears a decision has been taken	9
The primary schools are full	9
Adult education is needed	9
Option 3 (retail and leisure) is the best	9
Support for a town square / public space	9
Need new health facilities / doctors	8
listen to the people and ensure the chance for change is not missed	8
Should include a major department store / Matalan/Primark/John Lewis/big M&S	8
Is this all a money spinning project con?	7
Retain/protect historic buildings	7
Well done / like the options	7
No more charity shops / too many charity shops already	7
No to option 1	7
Further consultation required when the options become one proposal	6
Too glib about traffic and parking - 1 space per dwelling is not enough today	6
Would like a mixture of housing with other uses	6
Existing leisure centre could be improved / leisure centre is ok where it is	6
Keep Epping as green as possible / more trees and open space	6
Housing option would be a wasted opportunity	5
Option 4 is the best	5



Question 4

Question 4 collected demographic data from the respondents. It was split by sex, age and postcode. The data is provided in the charts below.



Youth workshop

In addition to the exhibition a youth workshop was held in The Box on Epping High Street. This was held over two hours during the time that many young people use the facility after the school day.

Young people were asked what they would like to see on the Development Brief site. Responses include:

- A football pitch with astroturf and the facilities required for a football academy;
- A bigger and better skate park;
- National restaurant chains (McDonalds, Burger King and KFC);
- National high street retail outlets (JD Sports, HMV, Vans, Primark, etc.);
- A larger youth centre;
- A college;
- Housing;
- A swimming pool; and
- A bowling alley/cinema.

Conclusions

The public consultation identified a number of key themes:

- There are significant concerns about the provision of a new food store on the site, including concerns about scale and bulk, parking, traffic impact and impact on the High Street. Conversely, there would be a greater level of support for small shops or a department store.
- There is strong support for improved sport and leisure provision in the town centre, potentially as a replacement for the Hemnall Street leisure centre. Other leisure uses which have been suggested include a cinema.
- There is strong support for an approach which protects the historic character and scale of the area and which retains the green space and mature trees on the High Street.
- There is a desire expressed for improved community facilities in the town centre and particularly for the inclusion of facilities for adult education and an improved/redeveloped library.
- The proposals accommodate and facilitate the proposed developments being planned by the Parish Church;
- Clear guidance is given on the acceptable scale and massing of any new development, with particular reference to the historic character of the town centre; and
- The potential for housing development is noted, although it is clear that this should not be the predominant ground floor use on key frontages given the town centre location.

In response to this and the rest of the consultation responses the brief takes the following approach:

- There is provision for leisure uses to form a key part of any development proposals, both in terms of sports and leisure use and also in terms of commercial leisure such as a cinema;
- The policies note that retail uses could be included on the basis that they are well connected with the High Street and form a complementary rather than competing offer;
- The potential for community uses including adult education is noted, and potential options identified for the library building to either be redeveloped or remodelled to enhance links with the town centre;

