

Supplementary Committee Agenda



Overview & Scrutiny Committee Tuesday, 8th June, 2021

Place: Conference Suite - Civic Offices

Time: 7.00 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Vivienne Messenger Tel: (01992) 564243
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9.a Any Other Business - Economic Development: Town Centre Regeneration - Loughton Broadway, Loughton High Road, Buckhurst Hill and Epping town centres (Pages 3 - 92)

To consider the attached reports.

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SCRUTINY



Epping Forest District Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 8 June 2021

**Portfolio: Finance, Quality Client and Economic Development
(Councillor J Philip)**

**Subject: Economic Development: Town Centre Regeneration – Loughton Broadway,
Loughton High Road, Buckhurst Hill and Epping town centres**

**Officer contact for further information: Senior Leadership Team: Nick Dawe
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Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- 1. For the Committee to read the reports and express opinions around the immediate actions identified prior to consideration by Cabinet.**

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To note: Loughton Broadway

The attached report has been commissioned by EFDC Officer from a specialist external consultant.

Work on this report was carried out between December 2020 and April 2021 so some of the observations may refer to issues and conditions that existed at that time and may have been subsequently addressed.

The report is often linked with development proposals focused on the immediate actions required to improve the town centres. Further reports will be brought forward, often associated with more significant investment and development to cover the medium and long-term improvement of the town centres.

The immediate resources required to address priority town centre issues were identified in the EFDC 2021/22 Budget or will be supported by specific Covid 19 recovery grants made available by the Government.

It is intended as with the Waltham Abbey and Ongar town centre reports, that all approved recommendations will be project managed in detail, assigned to managers, given timelines, supported by identified resources and their delivery and impact monitored.

The reports have been produced after extensive consultation. This consultation with local members and other key partners will continue.

Although not specifically mentioned in this report, work on the ground will be linked with other initiatives such as sustainable transport with sub projects of demand responsive transport, cycling routes, electric car charging points and various greening and tree planting initiatives being taken forward as per our Green Infra-structure Policy and climate change action plan.

Comments only for Cabinet: Loughton Broadway

The report is generally positive and has only been edited with regard to minor language changes.

The report mentions the Retail Park and EFDC as a significant landowner and infers both positive leverage and impacts on the Broadway.

The only other issue of note is how active the District wishes to be about frontage, preserving retail space at the core of the town and other associated actions. At one level there is an option of a "Schedule D" protection of the town centre, through an updated y Planning re frontages, signs, colour palette etc, through to informal guidance and encouragement. It should be noted that Government has become more permissive recently regarding change of use and similar but a balance between a market driven adaptive look and feel to the place, versus a Planning determined look, needs to be considered. There is also been some (opposition) noise around creating a formal conservation area and whilst this may be protective of what is there now, it could severely limit the ability of the area to develop and thrive for the future.

The Broadway, Loughton Regeneration Study and Proposals

“The most successful high streets and town centres will need to change to reflect the communities they serve by transforming themselves into community hubs, playing to their strengths of offering human interaction and a unique sense of place and community”

HM Government response to an enquiry into High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 (presented to Parliament in 2019)



Prepared by: Paul Messenger
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Date: 5 February 2021



AUTHORS NOTE:

The contents of this report and the recommendations made are based on Studio 3 Ltd's view of the town centre as a whole and the actions which should be taken to regenerate the towns and increase their general attractiveness to residents, visitors and businesses. Absolutely no consideration has been given as to whether the suggested actions and/or any related costs are the responsibility of the County, District, Town/Parish Councils or any other body.

What is crucial is that the different Councils, Town Partnerships, businesses and residents come together to agree priorities and for each organisation to put in place the necessary actions within their remit/responsibility to make the required improvements.

The regeneration of our town centres is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Key to these changes are the businesses, residents and Town/Parish Councils themselves. They are closest to the town and really know and understand the town and the needs and requirements of the local community. Their counsel and guidance should both therefore be provided and encouraged at all times.

The reinvention of our town centres will only be achieved by a joint and collaborative approach utilising the knowledge, expertise and skills of a range of people, bodies and organisations. No single person or organisation can achieve this on their own and everyone has their own specific part to play. It is essential that any plans have the buy in of all connected persons and that all parties support each other through the process.

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Foreword

Epping Forest District Council is reviewing a number of its town centres with the objective of regenerating them and making them a better and more attractive place to live, work, visit and play. There have been numerous projects over the years to generally improve the amenities, however the UK as a whole is now in the midst of a new era which will undoubtedly change high streets up and down the country. Covid 19 has unexpectedly changed the way we live and also as a result, our relationship with our local high street and/or town centre. More people are now shopping locally, and more people are working from home, which in turn is encouraging them to use their local amenities on a more regular basis. The Grimsey Review advises that high streets need to be re-invented as unique community hubs, designed around health, education, culture, housing, leisure and arts and crafts, along with retail shops. If towns can get it right, consumers should emerge from the pandemic with a stronger sense of community and a desire to support their local town centre. Strong high streets can build communities, keep crime at bay and foster civic pride and togetherness.

A YouGov poll revealed that only 9% of Britons want life to return to “normal” after the coronavirus outbreak is over. The positive from the above is that this is a great time to engage with our local communities and reinvent our town centres while the focus is on them and before things automatically revert to the “old” normal.

The Grimsey Review goes on to advise that for town centres and high streets to thrive and rediscover their community purpose we need to see:

Localism - A massive shift in power to local communities and a renewed focus on localism. Local people must be empowered to redesign their own high streets and have a say on the businesses, services and amenities that occupy it.

Leadership - Local leaders should be valued and recognised. Candidates for leadership roles should be selected for having a broad range of dynamic and collaborative skills in order to get the best out of communities. Local leaders who embrace change and are brave enough to imagine a new world have a better chance of succeeding.

Fewer cars, more green spaces - fewer streets and a huge expansion of green space, parks and town squares. Our towns must no longer be designed around the car as people learn to appreciate the benefit of open spaces.

Other important takeaways from the Grimsey Review that should be considered is the fact that there is a growing view among young adults that businesses need to be accountable to more than their bottom line and for the wellbeing of people and communities. It goes on to confirm that 72% of millennials (aged 24 to 38) would rather spend their money on an experience or an event than buying things and that this is reflected in the shift towards leisure, arts, culture and dining on the high streets. Deloitte’s 2019 Millennial Survey showed that millennials will patronise and support companies that align with their values and make a positive impact on society. Generation Zs (aged 5 to 23) are also socially focussed with their opinions on companies formed by their ethics, practices and social impact.

The Grimsey Review confirms that town and high street plans should put sustainability and the environment at the heart of everything; should base their development on quality of life and experiences and not blind mass consumerism; should recognise and reward great local leadership; and allow local communities to develop their places to compete for people to live, work, visit and play.

Introduction

Loughton is the largest town within Epping Forest District Council's area with an estimated population of circa 33,000 people (Source: UK Office for National Statistics) and an average house price of £606,898 (Source: Zoopla). Loughton is a lovely town set on the east side of Epping Forest. It provides a wide range of residential property across various neighbourhoods, is home to two main shopping areas, a retail park and an industrial estate. The town has a real community feel to it with a wide range of clubs, associations and community centre-based activity and in current Covid times is attractive as a town as it is pretty self-sufficient.

Although one town, Loughton is split into 2 main shopping areas – The Broadway (known locally as Debden Broadway) and the High Road. Each of these have their own range of characteristics, anomalies and requirements. As a result, I have chosen to split the study into two and report on each separately. This report concentrates on The Broadway.

The Broadway is a striking 1950s shopping parade with flats above laid out as a sweeping but gentle crescent with wide pavements and a generous central reservation. It sits within its own residential catchment area, is close to the London Underground station of Debden and also junction 5 of the M11. In addition, it is also home to 2 industrial areas and the Epping Forest Retail Park. Within easy access of The Broadway are numerous schools, New City College and E15 Acting School, part of Essex University.

The Epping Forest Retail Park has undoubtedly had an impact on trade on The Broadway and although it was originally meant to be fashion-led has become very much mixed use, with only 3 of the 12 outlets being fashion based and the remainder including a supermarket, greeting cards shop, pet shop, interiors shop, coffee shop and bakers.

Having said that, The Broadway is fairly well tenanted with only 4% of the shops being physically empty – well under half of the national average. Speaking to the landlord it would appear that the empty shops are actually under offer and/or awaiting fit out – which would mean that, remarkably in the current climate and in comparison to high streets up and down the country, The Broadway is 100% tenanted. We now therefore, need to establish that The Broadway is meeting the needs and requirements of its customer base and take steps to increase the footfall.

It is felt that The Broadway has a great deal of potential to be made a much more attractive space and appeal to a wider and increasingly larger percentage of both visitors and residents.

1 Quick Wins

There are a number of matters which could be addressed quickly and cheaply and could make considerable improvements to The Broadway:

- ***Sweep/clean The Broadway on an ongoing basis and ensure that litter bins are emptied and litter is cleared from the street/pavement.***
- ***Arrange for the regular clearance of all accumulated rubbish around the bin areas to the rear of the shops.***
- ***Arrange for the cleaning/redecoration/repair of all street furniture – lamp posts, bollards, railings, planters, litter bins, benches etc.***
- ***Replace broken/previously removed bollards.***
- ***Replace/re-lay broken and uneven paving.***
- ***A reconsideration of future parking charges to encourage short stay shopping should be considered, noting that during Covid 19 a 20p parking scheme was in orce.***
- ***Tidy green spaces and planters and weed kill as necessary.***
- ***Arrange for regular parking enforcement to combat overstays, double parking, parking on the pavement etc.***
- ***Arrange for resurfacing of central reservation – it is suggested that this be filled in to make it into a hardstanding (similar to the central area) and that substantial planters, in size and strength, are positioned at regular intervals along The Broadway. These will deter vehicles from mounting the central reservation, whilst at the same time adding greenery and colour to enhance the streetscape. It will also allow for a central reservation with protection for pedestrians to easily cross the road.***

2 Town Management

2.1 Town Centre Leadership

Town centre regeneration is about localism and local leadership and the way to make this work is to provide local leadership with its finger on the pulse and with a connection to the local community. Therefore, and accepting that this project is being driven by Epping Forest District Council, it is suggested that buy in, action and leadership should be provided by Loughton Town Council with the support of a Town(s) Centre Manager appointed by the District Council.

All Town Councillors are local and as a result should be able to bring the local community and businesses together and develop a strong visionary plan to reinforce the distinctive heritage of the town, assist in making the town centre a real community hub and making Loughton a far more attractive town for locals and visitors alike. The role of an independent Town Centre Manager will be critical to provide professional expertise and an unbiased view on what is needed locally.

The great thing about Loughton is that it already has great community spirit and an extremely active residents' association. I am certain that all of these working together with the Town and District Councils will produce excellent results.

Recommendations:

- 1) Engage with Loughton Town Council (LTC) and the town centre partnership.**
- 2) Obtain LTC commitment to the scheme and to providing leadership and support.**
- 3) Work with LTC and Loughton Residents' Association to establish and action a realistic plan.**

2.2 Town(s) Centre Manager

It is suggested that the Council commits to the appointment of a Town Centre Manager initially on a two-year fixed term basis. The manager would act as a single point of contact to receive ideas, thoughts and views from local stakeholders and as such, would be known and trusted by businesses, retailers and residents alike. They would work with the Town Council to ensure that standards are adhered to and that the town is as vibrant and attractive to local people and visitors as possible. A review of the post would be undertaken after 12 months to assess progress against the Town Centre action plan and the success of interventions and extended if necessary.

NB. As a part of its regeneration, Stockton-on-Tees Council pulled together a multi-disciplinary team of market management, street licensing, civil enforcement and business support to manage their town centre. Stockton is a much larger town than Loughton, however the principles of hands on organisation and management are much the same.

Recommendations:

- 4) Write job profile and agree responsibilities for shared Town Centre Manager post.**
- 5) Post to be part of EFDC's Economic Development team within Strategic Planning Directorate.**
- 6) Town Team establishment to be priority.**

2.3 Establishment of a Town Team

To achieve the required changes, considerable two-way dialogue needs to be sought from the town's residents and businesses. Buy-in from the community is important to ensure that there is a need or requirement for any proposed changes and that as a result these are carried out with the support of the town. Loughton already has an active residents' association and two Town Forums – one for The Broadway and one for the High Road and it is thought that these could be used as a catalyst for pulling together a formal Town Team. The Broadway also has the Debden Traders Association representing the interests of the retailers.

It is important that the Town Team is made up of a cross section of the community including residents, businesses and retailers. A fair representation of age, sex and race should be included, and input should be encouraged from organisations such as educational establishments, religious groups, social groups (e.g. Scouts etc) together with members of the town council and tourism and visitor groups.

Within Loughton, it is suggested that 2 Community Hubs are established – one centrally perhaps in the High Road or failing that, in the library and another on The Broadway. These could be used to create a place where public opinions could be shared and discussed and provide a centre of community well-being for the area. This idea may link with other potential changes and developments in the Broadway.

Recommendations:

- 7) Decide with LTC the make-up of a Town Team and what it will be called.**
- 8) If utilising current Town Forums, engage with and obtain commitment and support from Chairmen and Town Forums as a whole.**
- 9) Arrange initial meeting to establish parameters and put in place a plan for town team development and action.**

2.4 Attracting New Businesses and Brands

In conjunction with the Town Team, work could be done to identify key brands, businesses and/or other organisations to attract to The Broadway and then steps taken to secure them. With the landlord on The Broadway being Epping Forest District Council, there is a great opportunity for the Council to encourage a good mix of retailers ensuring that the needs and requirement of the community are met. In addition, thought could also be given to holding an empty unit for short term rental for pop-up shops, start-up ventures, new/irregular non-high street retailers to test the water for their market and for more experiential and art based activities including exhibitions, shows, demonstrations etc.

Recommendations:

- 10) Put in place a programme to encourage new businesses.**
- 11) Target prospective businesses.**
- 12) Communicate requirements to commercial agents.**
- 13) Consider use of an empty unit for non-conventional retailing i.e. pop-ups, start-ups, experiential etc.**

3 Town Offer

3.1 The Broadway

The Debden area of Loughton and The Broadway could prove to be a perfect example of the “20 minute neighbourhood”. There is everything at hand within a 20 minute public-transport trip, bike ride or walk from home – work, shopping, education, healthcare, community facilities, recreation and sport. There is also a fantastic community spirit particularly encouraged by longstanding shopkeepers providing old fashioned service and support on The Broadway, at the centre of the area.

Unusually, The Broadway is home to a bank and also has a new post office on its way. It has wide, attractive boulevard pavements which could lend themselves nicely to a café culture, street trading and markets. If done properly The Broadway could become a real destination for locals and visitors alike.

The Broadway is a striking development and an example of 1950s architecture at its best and something that should be cherished and maintained. A local elected member suggested it be made a conservation area which I would whole heartedly support. This would provide a framework for the area’s conservation and also ensure that it is maintained and that any works carried out were done in the best interests of the area and the development.

Having spoken to various people about The Broadway, please find below a selection of the comments:

- The Broadway is unique – not like a High Road - has own demographic.
- The Broadway needs more shops appealing to younger people.
- The Broadway is a nice place.
- It has a good community vibe.
- A big social place with lots of local people.
- Street needs more colour – planters and flower beds.
- Needs to be brighter, more colourful/interesting.
- Shops need to be more inviting.
- Some shops are nice and done up well.
- Mainly independent shops.
- The Broadway needs – a wet fish shop, children’s clothes, fashion, shoes, sportswear. These could be in a market.
- Longer trading hours required.
- Lots of greasy spoons, takeaways etc.
- Shops need to tidy up their frontages – pull out canopies, promote street trading, more finger on the pulse retailing.
- There are lots of hardware shops.

Recommendations:

14) Consider updating planning and other guidance to preserve and build-on the uniqueness of the Broadway area.

15) Consider reinstating the 4 flag poles to the flats above Brickclamps Path together with any other original details

3.2 Retail

The retail offer on The Broadway consists of 63 shops spread across a sweeping crescent. It has a variety of shops and includes a number of cafes, restaurants and take-away outlets. Unusually, The Broadway is home to a bank, is about to get a new Post Office, and there is also a Sainsbury’s supermarket just off The Broadway. The current vacancy rate is well below the national average and in fact having spoken to the Landlord, EFDC, the 4 empty units are under offer.

The Epping Forest Retail park is nearby, which although initially proposed as a fashion-led retail park has now morphed into a mixed use retail park including a supermarket. This is undoubtedly having some impact on the footfall at The Broadway, although I suspect it is also drawing a large percentage of its footfall from outside of the immediate area. The good news is that all of the customers on the retail park are also potentially customers for The Broadway. We just need to work out what would entice them to The Broadway, what types of shops would complement and/or compete with the retail park and/or what sort of environment would provide an additional draw for retail park customers.

Work should be done with retailers, perhaps through the Debden Traders’ Association, to consider these matters and alter/improve the retail offer accordingly.

Another varying element of high streets is the progression of the weekend and evening economies. We now live in a seven day a week world with extended working hours. Businesses need to adjust to the needs and requirements of their customers, and this may now include opening longer/different hours, opening on Sundays etc. The town centre manager could discuss these matters with retailers and see if there is any scope for taking these considerations further with a view to increasing footfall and also, subsequently, trade.

With EFDC being the landlord for The Broadway, there is an ability to shape and control the types of tenants and retail offers. In partnership with the existing traders The Broadway could be developed to offer an innovative and distinctive mixed-use together with a range of food and experiential and community-based services.

At the current time, people are tending to shop nearer to home using their local town centres as opposed to going to the larger out-of-town shopping centres. Retailers should take advantage of this and go that extra mile to ensure a clean, safe and welcoming environment offering a comprehensive range of products and services. If customers can see the benefit of shopping locally, and enjoy it, they are less likely to change their habits when the pandemic is brought under control.

Some businesses in The Broadway have undoubtedly changed their business model to meet their customer's needs as a result of the pandemic. There are also excellent examples of good old-fashioned retailing, excellent customer service and community togetherness. These tend to result in regular and loyal customers who keep coming back and spread the word to their friends – a great way of building business.

Recommendations:

- 16) Town Centre Manager to work with Debden Traders' Association and EFDC to increase the attractiveness and draw of shops with a view to increasing the viability of The Broadway.***
- 17) LTC and EFDC to ensure a clean, safe and welcoming environment.***

3.3 Epping Forest Retail Park

It should be accepted that the Epping Forest Retail Park is a reality and consideration should be given to the benefits the retail park can bring to The Broadway, and what can be done to make the most of them. The biggest benefit has to be the increased footfall brought into the area and consideration should be given to encouraging some of this footfall to The Broadway.

It is understood that in normal, non-Covid times, congestion on the retail park is significant and that it can take a considerable amount of time to enter the retail park and park and then to exit the retail park at the end of a visit. My suggestion therefore would be to utilise The Broadway parking and put on a complimentary park and ride service from the centre of The Broadway to the retail park and back. In addition to relieving the stress of parking on the retail park, it would also encourage customers to frequent the shops, restaurants and services provided by The Broadway. The shuttle bus providing this service could be funded/part funded by the retail park. In addition to park-and-ride services for the retail park, the shuttle bus would also provide a complimentary travel service for employees from the industrial estate to travel to and from The Broadway and also for pedestrians looking to access the retail park from The Broadway. As I understand it, there is one bus which goes from The Broadway to the retail park, but to return you have to get the same bus route which does a journey around Loughton before returning to The Broadway. This shuttle bus would solve this problem.

Recommendations:

- 18) Consider a shuttle bus/park and ride service between The Broadway and Epping Forest Retail Park potentially linked with the demand responsive transport work currently being undertaken across the District.***

3.4 The Broadway Market

The Grimsey Review highlighted the importance of markets and their positive effect on residents. In a report by the Institute of Place Management (2015) it explained why markets are economically, socially and politically critical for town centres. The report also confirmed that markets can generate footfall increases of circa 25% and have been shown to increase retail sales with market visitors spending money in other shops. The report goes on to explain that markets provide low barriers to entry and as result can encourage new businesses and nurture retail innovation.

The situation in respect of market and street trading is confused and unclear on The Broadway . As it stands a Market Licence is held by Debden Traders' Association (DTA) for Saturdays and Sundays between certain hours. The idea of the licence being held by DTA is that they can control market traders and the types of stalls, to ensure that they don't compete with the retailers. From what I understand the market used to run on certain days of the week and that in actual fact there were a minimum and decreasing number of stall holders. The other issue I don't fully understand is that the licence doesn't allow DTA to sub-let the space, so I don't fully understand how the space can be let to stall holders. This same licence is also used to allow retailers to "street trade" outside their shops.

My view is that these licences need to be sorted out and split into 2 clear categories. One would be a street trading licence for the retailers – allowing them to retail directly outside their shops for seven day per week and setting out clear parameters as to the conditions making this allowable. The second would be a market licence on set day(s) to enable any remaining trading space not used by retailers to be utilised by stall holders as a market. This licence could be managed by DTA but would require an ability for the space to be sub-let.

It would be logical for the market to be held at weekends. It would also be good to split speciality markets (such as farmers' markets) with Loughton High Road, to ensure that there is no competition and to spread trade around the town.

A busy and successful market will serve as an additional draw to The Broadway and make it more of a destination, whilst at the same time providing additional footfall for The Broadway retailers.

Recommendations:

- 19) DTA in conjunction with the Town Manager to consider its needs and requirements in respect of licensing.**
- 20) DTA to decide on suitable market day(s).**
- 21) EFDC to discuss with DTA and put in place suitable licences/solutions to meet requirements.**
- 22) Review market layout and pitches utilising the space on The Broadway and ensuring adequate parking arrangements for traders.**
- 23) Put in place a calendar of feature markets i.e. Farmers, Antiques, French, Italian etc.**

3.5 Signage

A common comment was that there was insufficient signage to the Broadway. Having looked around, I tend to agree.

Recommendations:

- 24) Review signage to The Broadway and implement new signage as required.**
- 25) Repair/clean up any existing signage.**
- 26) Increase signage from retail park to The Broadway.**
- 27) Increase signage from station to The Broadway – particularly footpath signage.**
- 28) Put in place signage at the Chigwell Road end of The Broadway, perhaps incorporating an over street arch with wording along the lines of “Welcome to The Broadway” to make The Broadway more of a feature and destination.**

3.6 Tourism/Visitors

I am not sure that The Broadway can be classed as a tourist or visitor attraction, however I feel that it can become an extremely important element of the Epping Forest Retail Park and provide an additional and attractive shopping area for visitors to the retail park by providing a wider range of retail offerings and village type feel with vibrant café culture and experiential market, exhibitions and attractions. The Broadway can become a part of the Epping Forest Retail Park as a destination and benefit from it accordingly.

If we can encourage people to dwell in The Broadway as a part of their trip to the retail park they can add real value to a local economy in terms of spending on food and drinks and also other retail.

Clearly people need to know about The Broadway, so clear signage from the retail park is essential, together with signage promoting the previously proposed park-and-ride service and also general marketing and advertising of The Broadway and its range of services.

If holding any events on The Broadway, it would be good to include the retail park and also Crate Loughton – a creative hub at Oakwood Hill - so all areas of the community can share their customers and benefit accordingly.

Recommendations:

- 29) The Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership to reach out to Epping Forest Retail Park and Crate Loughton to build a relationship with other local retailers.**
- 30) Town Centre Manager to encourage the DTA, Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership, Epping Forest Retail Park and Crate Loughton to work together for their mutual benefits.**
- 31) Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership to work with DTA to put on key events and liaise with the retail park and Crate Loughton where appropriate.**
- 32) Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership to encourage support and participation from local retailers and businesses for any Broadway events.**

3.7 The Broadway Community Hub

The key to a community hub, much the same as in the “20-minute neighbourhood” is to have a full range of services and facilities within easy reach of each other. This comprises homes, shops, businesses, green

spaces, schools, medical centres, play areas etc together with function space within which community events can take place.

Although I understand that Loughton is one town, it is very much split into two, between the High Road and The Broadway - The Broadway very much having its own residential catchment area. As a result, I feel that an active community hub in or around The Broadway is essential. This was available in The Broadway until a few years ago, when it eventually ran out of funding.

It is appreciated that there is a great community spirit around The Broadway and also that community facilities are already provided by the Oakwood Hill Community Centre. To this end perhaps some form of link could be established between the services offered by the Oakwood Hill Community Centre and a further hub formed on The Broadway. This hub could form a part of a Broadway Library and would also be used to coordinate events and activities within the town centre and be a resource for services including perhaps a Police help desk, a mini job centre and a place for locals to impart their thoughts, observations and complaints. Provision of these increased services will encourage more people into the town centre and will lead to them using other elements of the town centre at the same time. St Johns Church has a shop/community base on The Broadway. It would also be worth considering the service offered by this to ensure that it does not compete with our own hub.

It is noted from my various conversations that outside of the specific clubs and associations based in Loughton, there is a lack of facilities for the youth. This is something that could also be considered by the community hub and community centre.

Recommendations:

- 33) Set up community hub base within The Broadway to a similar model to those being developed at Waltham Abbey and Epping.**
- 34) Publicise community hub.**
- 35) Pull together program of events and activities for the year.**
- 36) Liaise with Oakwood Hill Community Centre and St Johns shop and jointly promote community events, activities and services**

3.8 Library

The library for The Broadway and Deben had now been established in New City College with the College set to take over its running. It would appear that this is causing considerable anxiety to local and older residents who at one time would have used a library but now choose not to. The issues are partly to do with having to cross the main road - Chigwell Lane - to get to it, but more importantly due to the feeling of intimidation for older people having to use a library in a college.

Libraries are of great importance to all elements of the community and for many areas form the base for a community hub. For older users, libraries are of particular importance as they have a role in supporting older people to live independently and remain actively engaged in the world of learning and the wider community. They are an important source of access to computers and digital literacy training helping seniors to connect with family, friends, health information and government services. Libraries should also provide a safe, comfortable and inviting setting at which older members of the community are treated with courtesy and respect and can socialise with like-minded people.

In short, and particularly as there are so many older residents around The Broadway and its immediate area, I feel that a library should be brought to The Broadway. It can be a part of a community hub and again will assist in enticing more people onto The Broadway for other purposes.

Recommendation:

- 37) Research appetite for a library service on The Broadway and action accordingly.**

3.9 Public Facilities

If the Broadway is going to meet people's needs, it should be reviewed to ensure that there are the required public facilities. These include adequate seating for all sections of the community in all areas, open, clean and functional public toilets, adequate lighting at all times across all areas of the town centre, bike racks/hoops in easily accessible places and strategically placed dog poo bins.

Recommendations:

- 38) Review benches and seating on The Broadway and ensure it is adequate for the needs of the town.**
- 39) Review bike racks/hoops within The Broadway and at other destinations and ensure they are adequate for the needs of the town.**
- 40) Review dog poo bins in The Broadway and other areas as appropriate and ensure they are adequate to the needs of the town.**
- 41) Ensure that all areas of The Broadway, including car parks to the rear of the shops and footpath to the station are adequately lit.**

3.10 Wi-fi and Digital Presence

The digital age and the need for connectivity is increasingly important for numerous sections of the community and as a result I would suggest free wi-fi availability within The Broadway.

It should be acknowledged that people are now shopping differently and that circa 30% of retail sales are being done online (Office of National Statistics, Aug 2020). This figure is up from 21.9% at the beginning of March 2020 and the beginning of the Covid 19 lock down. Regardless of the pandemic, online sales will continue to grow, and retail experts KPMG predict the figure rising to 50% by 2025. As a result, retail businesses need to adjust their business models accordingly and develop their offer for both markets.

As a part of adding a wi-fi option to the town centre a social media presence should be developed enabling online and offline businesses. Mobile technologies and virtual shopping should be used to enhance the consumer town centre experience and in turn increase footfall.

Consideration should be given to bringing in a third-party contractor such as Maybe (www.maybetech.com) to develop social media/town centre/retailer collaboration.

Recommendations:

- 42) Put in place free WI-FI within The Broadway and publicise.**
- 43) Agree way forward in respect of Social Media strategy/presence and execute accordingly.**
- 44) Arrange for assistance and support for retailers in establishing an online presence.**

3.11 New City College

New City College is a welcome addition to the area and generally increases the mix of people around the town centre. The large numbers of students coming into the area can, on occasions, cause friction on The Broadway. They can also cause some apprehension for the more elderly residents.

The College have been receptive to representations made to them and now have security officer patrols on The Broadway to monitor student behaviour. The College have agreed to join the Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership and are keen to work to become reintegrated within the local community.

Recommendations:

45) EFDC/LTC to work with Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership to include New City College in their initiatives and activities and encourage their participation and inclusion.

3.12 Epping Forest District Council

Unusually, EFDC, as well as being the District Council is also the landlord for The Broadway. As you would expect, there have been a large number of comments in respect of rents, rates, service charges, upkeep of common areas, control of shop uses etc. It was also suggested that communications from EFDC are poor. Having said this, the Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership have confirmed that they have good relations with EFDC and find it helpful, when required.

It's not in my remit to comment on some of the matters raised concerning EFDC, but I would hope that the appointment of a Town Centre Manager would build and maintain relationships with The Broadway and its tenants.

Recommendations:

46) EFDC Town Centre Manager to be actively involved and build/maintain relationships with The Broadway and its tenants.

3.13 Pedestrianisation

I know that thought had been given to pedestrianising The Broadway at weekends and that the idea has been set aside due to a lack of funds. My thought on this is that it would be a lot of effort for little gain and that overall it may lead to a reduction in footfall. The Broadway has plenty of space. It has wide pavements, a wide covered area in the centre and a generous central reservation. Currently, people like to drive, stop outside the shops, get what they want and go – they don't want to park and then have to walk, especially when they expect their actual time shopping to take minutes.

If The Broadway can become a busy hub and destination, and shopping habits change, then the idea of pedestrianisation may become viable. For the time being however it is something I would discount.

4 Appearance

Although a striking and attractive 1950s development, The Broadway could benefit from further work and improvement. The "Quick Wins" listed above go some way to achieving this, however there are a number of other issues requiring attention to restore this attractive parade and make it a place that people want to go to, want to be seen in and are proud to be a part of.

Unfairly, The Broadway has a reputation as the poor relation to the High Road and unfortunately appears to have been treated accordingly. Now, with more people working from home and more people spending money locally and rediscovering their local high streets and independent stores, the Broadway should come into its own and every effort should be made to make it as attractive and viable as possible.

4.1 General Maintenance and refurbishment

In addition to the Quick Wins listed above, consideration needs to be given to a number of general maintenance issues which would have a major impact on the appearance of The Broadway:

Recommendations:

- 47) Refurbishment/redecoration of the areas directly above and between the shop fronts.***
- 48) Refurbishment/redecoration of the doorways and doors to the flats on The Broadway.***
- 49) Repair and redecoration to the trunking carrying wiring, just above door height, to the flats on both sides of The Broadway and running the full length.***
- 50) Refurbishment/redecoration of Brickclamps Path – particularly the walk through under the flats. It is noted that there is a memorial situated here following the death of a local student – my feeling is that this should be sympathetically reviewed.***
- 51) The flats on the north side of The Broadway have a varying selection of fencing and other materials attached to the railings above the shops, presumably to give the flats individual and private outside space. There is also a “Jesus is Lord” sign, numerous satellite dishes, a trampoline, a gazebo, sheds, garden umbrellas etc. These make The Broadway look extremely untidy and tatty. Consideration should be given to what is acceptable and steps taken to put guidelines in place.***

4.2 Shop Fronts

The shop fronts along The Broadway are, on the whole, attractive and neat with only a few exceptions. As Epping Forest District Council is the landlord on The Broadway, some control could be brought in through leases and tenancy agreements to ensure that shop fronts are maintained and appropriate to the development. The making of The Broadway into a conservation area would also assist in this, ensuring that it remains as attractive as possible.

Recommendations:

- 52) Consult with retailers and consider options in respect of shop fronts and making/keeping them attractive and in the overall style of The Broadway.***

4.3 A-Boards and other retail paraphernalia

A number of retailers have A-boards and other retail paraphernalia, external trading/retail displays on the pavement outside their shops. Although I understand the need for this, if not carefully managed these can block access and generally make the place look untidy. The market licence/street trading licence should lay out conditions and spaces for use – the Council should monitor this and ensure that all conditions are being complied with, particularly to ensure that The Broadway remains as attractive and as accessible as possible.

Considerations should be given to some form of demarcation outside each store over which seating, A-boards and other retail paraphernalia, if allowed.

Recommendations:

- 53) Review town centre policy and regulations for trading from the front of premises, retail displays and A-boards on the pavement and enforce accordingly.***

4.4 Trees and Planters

Tree lined pedestrian routes and landscaped areas all contribute to civic pride and generally make a town more attractive. I understand that throughout the summer months there are hanging baskets along The Broadway planted with flowers, which I am sure contribute greatly to the streetscape. Having said this, I am concerned that overall, the area looks fairly bleak and quite hard. There are a number of trees planted along The Broadway, however I think that the planting could be greatly improved with the addition of more trees and a number of planters, together with the redevelopment and planting of the central reservation.

Recommendations:

54) Review current "green" townscape and work to develop and improve.

5 Access

Town centres need to recognise that Co2 emissions have to be reduced and as a result there is much more emphasis on ensuring a reduced reliance on cars. To this end, town centres need to ensure their accessibility via other methods of transport and provide for these methods accordingly. In addition to reducing carbon emissions this will also encourage the use of the town centre by a wider range of the community via numerous methods of transport.

Simply stopping car access and reducing or taking away parking spaces, doesn't resolve this problem. Undoubtedly people will still want to access the Broadway by car. However there is a balance to be had between encouraging pedestrian, cycling and public transport access to The Broadway and then gradually reducing provision for motor vehicles as other methods of travel develop and gain traction.

For generations urban areas have been designed exclusively around the car. This now has to change and town centres developed to provide attractive, walkable and cyclable physical space.

5.1 Cycling

In a town the size of Loughton, all residents should be able to access the town centre, the retail park, the town's various green and public spaces, leisure centre and attractions via a network of secure, safe and clearly marked cycle paths and routes.

In addition, the town should also provide for cycle racks/hoops at the various destinations to enable bikes to be safely secured.

Recommendations:

55) Review cycling accessibility in Loughton particularly around main roads, shopping hubs, attractions and green spaces and make arrangements to provide a network of secure, safe and clearly marked cycle paths and routes.

5.2 Trains

Debden underground station, provides regular commuter and other services in and out of London and assists in making the Debden area of Loughton a popular commuter town.

5.3 Buses

The Broadway provides for a busy bus hub with numerous routes arriving and departing from the end of The Broadway. My only observation here is that the bus that goes to the Epping Forest Retail Park doesn't come directly back and that to return you have to take the same bus on an elongated trip around Loughton.

As suggested elsewhere in this report consideration should be given to a direct park-and-ride/shuttle bus service from The Broadway to the retail park and back. This would provide easy access to the retail park and may also encourage employees at the businesses on the industrial estate to come onto The Broadway to shop and for lunch/breaks etc.

5.4 Car Parks and Parking

Although use of other methods of transport into the town centre is important, it is inevitable that a section of the community will continue to use a car for a variety of reasons. As a result, parking is a bone of contention with many, and varying views are held by different sections of the community.

A number of people have highlighted the loss of a number of parking spaces in The Broadway and would generally recommend their reinstatement – this however I feel is not necessary, particularly as there is adequate longer-term parking at the rear of the shops. It was also suggested that the parking on The Broadway should be made parallel parking – this idea I have again discounted as it would undoubtedly mean the loss of further parking spaces.

In and around The Broadway, my feelings are as follows:

Firstly, it is generally felt that the 1-hour free parking on The Broadway itself is about right. I would however reduce this to 30 minutes and make the parking pay and display/pay by phone and perhaps increase the overall parking time to 2 hours maximum – with no return within 3 hours. I would also increase parking enforcement with a view to discouraging double parking, parking on the pavement, parking in disabled bays, parking on double yellow lines and parking of overly large vehicles which may block the road.

In respect of the parking to the rear of The Broadway, I would make this first 30 minutes free and then normal rates thereafter.

I have been advised that all-day parking behind The Broadway is cheaper than all day parking in the station car park. This I would seek to rectify by either increasing the all-day parking charge or removing the ability to park all day. I feel that all-day parking by station users would have a minimal impact on footfall on The Broadway and reduces the amount of available spaces for shoppers.

In addition, there would appear to be an issue with access to the car park behind the shops on the southern side of The Broadway. The walkway from The Broadway, through to the car park appears to be controlled by Jimmy's Barbers next to it. Currently the barbers shutter when closed also closes off access to the walkway to the car park. While this may be acceptable in normal trading conditions during lockdown no access whatsoever was available.

It has also been suggested that the lighting to the rear car parks needs to be reviewed. These are fairly dark areas and as a result provide a hang out/loitering space and make it uncomfortable to access the car parks in the evenings.

Although parking arrangements outside The Broadway are beyond my remit, I acknowledge the comment raised that resident permit holder parking needs to also be considered in the immediate residential area.

Recommendations:

- 56) Make parking on The Broadway pay and display.**
- 57) Reduce free parking on The Broadway to 30 minutes and make maximum stay 2 hours, not to return within 3 hours.**
- 58) Make parking to the rear of The Broadway 30 minutes free with normal parking charges applying thereafter.**
- 59) Increase cost of all-day parking behind The Broadway to exceed cost of station parking.**
- 60) Increase parking enforcement.**
- 61) Review car park access arrangements by Jimmy's Barbers and take steps to rectify.**
- 62) Review lighting to car park areas and ensure adequately lit and secure spaces.**

6 Consultation

6.1 Market Research

In addition to thoughts and expertise of the author, consultation for this report has been obtained from the following:

Epping Forest District Council
Loughton Town Council
Loughton Residents' Association
Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership
Debden Traders' Association
Loughton High Road Town Centre Partnership
Various councillors and other prominent/influential Loughton (Debden) residents
Various Broadway and High Road Retailers
Independent landlords
Various Loughton residents

It is accepted that additional research will be required from residents, retailers and businesses to move the ideas in this report forward. It is felt however that if the initiative is going to be Community/Town Council driven then the research should be carried out more locally.

7. Sources of Additional Support

High Streets Task Force (www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk) – supporting communities and local government to transform their high streets.

Maybe (www.maybetech.com) – A smarter approach to social media

Action List	Priority
<i>EFDC/Highway Rangers to complete “quick wins”</i>	1
<i>Consider making The Broadway a Conservation Area and take steps to put in place</i>	2
<i>Discuss with and establish Town Leadership Team</i>	1
<i>Form Town Team/refocus Town Centre Partnerships</i>	1
<i>Appoint Town Centre Manager</i>	1
<i>Establish Community Hub</i>	2
<i>Provide for additional seating, bike racks/hoops, dog poo bins as appropriate</i>	2
<i>Talk to retailers re shop fronts, A- boards, pavement trading etc</i>	1
<i>Review Street Trading/Market licenses for The Broadway and action</i>	1
<i>Review Broadway Market and put in place plans to re-establish and grow it</i>	2
<i>Research appetite for Broadway Library (perhaps as part of Community Hub) and action accordingly</i>	2
<i>Put in place plans to review town cycle paths and implement findings</i>	2
<i>Consider introduction of park and ride/shuttle bus service to retail park from The Broadway</i>	1
<i>Review parking charges per report and implement findings</i>	1
<i>Review town WI-FI proposal and put in place findings</i>	2
<i>Develop town centre social media presence</i>	2
<i>Complete research on thoughts and considerations of residents and businesses – incorporate and implement where appropriate</i>	1
<i>Review new businesses required on The Broadway and take steps to attract</i>	3
<i>Review the “green” street scene on The Broadway, consider the addition of planters etc and action accordingly</i>	1
<i>Carry out all general maintenance/refurbishment recommendations</i>	2
<i>Increase parking enforcement</i>	2

To note: Loughton High Road

The attached report has been commissioned by EFDC Officer from a specialist external consultant.

Work on this report was carried out between December 2020 and April 2021 so some of the observations may refer to issues and conditions that existed at that time and may have been subsequently addressed.

The report is often linked with development proposals focused on the immediate actions required to improve the town centres. Further reports will be brought forward, often associated with more significant investment and development to cover the medium and long-term improvement of the town centres.

The immediate resources required to address priority town centre issues were identified in the EFDC 2021/22 Budget or will be supported by specific Covid 19 recovery grants made available by the Government.

It is intended as with the Waltham Abbey and Ongar town centre reports, that all approved recommendations will be project managed in detail, assigned to managers, given timelines, supported by identified resources and their delivery and impact monitored.

The reports have been produced after extensive consultation. This consultation with local members and other key partners will continue.

Although not specifically mentioned in this report, work on the ground will be linked with other initiatives such as sustainable transport with sub projects of demand responsive transport, cycling routes, electric car charging points and various greening and tree planting initiatives being taken forward as per our Green Infra-structure Policy and climate change action plan.

Comments only for Cabinet: Loughton High Road

The report is generally positive and has only been edited with regard to minor language changes.

The report mentions the Retail Park and EFDC as a significant landowner and infers both positive leverage and impacts on the Broadway.

The only other issue of note is how active the District wishes to be about frontage, preserving retail space at the core of the town and other associated actions. At one level there is an option of a "Schedule D" protection of the town centre, through an updated Planning Regulations, frontages, signs, colour palette etc, through to informal guidance and encouragement. It should be noted that Government has become more permissive recently regarding change of use and similar but a balance between a market driven adaptive look and feel to the place, versus a Planning determined look, needs to be considered. There is also been some (opposition) noise around creating a formal conservation area and whilst this may be protective of what is there now, it could severely limit the ability of the area to develop and thrive for the future.

High Road, Loughton Regeneration Study and Proposals

“The most successful high streets and town centres will need to change to reflect the communities they serve by transforming themselves into community hub, playing to their strengths of offering human interaction and a unique sense of place and community”

HM Government response to an enquiry into High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 (presented to Parliament in 2019)



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Date: 16 February 2021



AUTHORS NOTE:

The contents of this report and the recommendations made are based on Studio 3 Ltd's view of the town centre as a whole and the actions which should be taken to regenerate the towns and increase their general attractiveness to residents, visitors and businesses. Absolutely no consideration has been given as to whether the suggested actions and/or any related costs are the responsibility of the County, District, Town/Parish Councils or any other body.

What is crucial is that the different Councils, Town Partnerships, businesses and residents come together to agree priorities and for each organisation to put in place the necessary actions within their remit/responsibility to make the required improvements.

The regeneration of our town centres is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Key to these changes are the businesses, residents and Town/Parish Councils themselves. They are closest to the town and really know and understand the town and the needs and requirements of the local community. Their counsel and guidance should both therefore be provided and encouraged at all times.

The reinvention of our town centres will only be achieved by a joint and collaborative approach utilising the knowledge, expertise and skills of a range of people, bodies and organisations. No single person or organisation can achieve this on their own and everyone has their own specific part to play. It is essential that any plans have the buy in of all connected persons and that all parties support each other through the process.

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Foreword

Epping Forest District Council is reviewing a number of its town centres with the objective of regenerating them and making them a better and more attractive place to live, work, visit and play. There have been numerous projects over the years to generally improve the amenities, however the UK as a whole is now in the midst of a new era which will undoubtedly change high streets up and down the country. Covid 19 has unexpectedly changed the way we live and also as a result, our relationship with our local high street and/or town centre. More people are now shopping locally, and more people are working from home, which in turn is encouraging them to use their local amenities on a more regular basis. The Grimsey Review advises that high streets need to be re-invented as unique community hubs, designed around health, education, culture, housing, leisure and arts and crafts, along with retail shops. If towns can get it right, consumers should emerge from the pandemic with a stronger sense of community and a desire to support their local town centre. Strong high streets can build communities, keep crime at bay and foster civic pride and togetherness.

A YouGov poll revealed that only 9% of Britons want life to return to “normal” after the coronavirus outbreak is over. The positive from the above is that this is a great time to engage with our local communities and reinvent our town centres while the focus is on them and before things automatically revert to the “old” normal.

The Grimsey Review goes on to advise that for town centres and high streets to thrive and rediscover their community purpose we need to see:

Localism - A massive shift in power to local communities and a renewed focus on localism. Local people must be empowered to redesign their own high streets and have a say on the businesses, services and amenities that occupy it.

Leadership - Local leaders should be valued and recognised. Candidates for leadership roles should be selected for having a broad range of dynamic and collaborative skills in order to get the best out of communities. Local leaders who embrace change and are brave enough to imagine a new world have a better chance of succeeding.

Fewer cars, more green spaces - fewer streets and a huge expansion of green space, parks and town squares. Our towns must no longer be designed around the car as people learn to appreciate the benefit of open spaces.

Other important takeaways from the Grimsey Review that should be considered is the fact that there is a growing view among young adults that businesses need to be accountable to more than their bottom line and for the wellbeing of people and communities. It goes on to confirm that 72% of millennials (aged 24 to 38) would rather spend their money on an experience or an event than buying things and that this is reflected in the shift towards leisure, arts, culture and dining on the high streets. Deloitte’s 2019 Millennial Survey showed that millennials will patronise and support companies that align with their values and make a positive impact on society. Generation Z’s (aged 5 to 23) are also socially focussed with their opinions on companies formed by their ethics, practices and social impact.

The Grimsey Review confirms that town and high street plans should put sustainability and the environment at the heart of everything; should base their development on quality of life and experiences and not blind mass consumerism; should recognise and reward great local leadership; and allow local communities to develop their places to compete for people to live, work, visit and play.

Introduction

Loughton is the largest town within Epping Forest District Council's area with an estimated population of circa 33,000 people (Source: UK Office for National Statistics) and an average house price of £606,898 (Source: Zoopla). It is a lovely town set on the east side of Epping Forest. It provides a wide range of residential property across various neighbourhoods, is home to two main shopping areas, a retail park and an industrial estate. Loughton is close to the M11 with easy access to central London and has London Underground available from Debden and Loughton stations with access to Liverpool Street in 30 minutes. Although one town, Loughton is split into 2 main shopping areas – The Broadway (known locally as Debden Broadway) and the High Road. Each of these have their own characteristics, anomalies and requirements. As a result, I have chosen to split the study into two and report on each separately. This report concentrates on the High Road.

On the whole, Loughton is an affluent area, has a unique character and is a popular and vibrant place to live. It has a real community feel to it with a wide range of clubs, associations and community-based activity. In current Covid times Loughton is attractive as a town as it is pretty self-sufficient.

I am concerned that the current scale and mix of retail may be difficult to sustain in the longer term. The northern end of the High Road is home to over 160 mixed use shops. Although there is currently a vacancy rate of slightly lower than the national average, it can be seen that some of the national chains/brands have already withdrawn and I am concerned that this may be the beginning of a downward spiral. Unusually, the High Road has 6 banks. These I think will gradually close as, with the growth in digital banking, branch networks are no longer required. In addition to empty units, this will undoubtedly lead to a reduction in footfall. I do not see this town as a destination other than for locals yet the High Road houses 23 restaurants. I cannot see that these can all be viable. This will no doubt lead to further closures and more empty shops. Finally, I am aware that the quality of retailers now opening on the High Road does not meet the requirements of the area's more affluent consumers and that they will therefore shop elsewhere. I really think that the District and Town Councils, together with other local stakeholders and the Loughton High Road Town Centre Partnership, need to get together urgently to discuss this and put together a long-term plan for the town's future development and success.

Loughton is a great town to develop and adapt to the changing needs mentioned above. It already has a superb town centre, community space and activities and an abundance of green spaces. The town needs to ensure that it is modelled around the community, to make a more vibrant and relative space, and its residents and businesses encouraged and empowered to make the transformation into a town they can continue to be proud of. Success is about breathing life back into the High Road and The Broadway, about giving residents and visitors reasons to visit the town centre other than just the shops and making the experience enriching and the town centre a place to be seen in.

It is felt that the emphasis should be very much on developing a town, in the first instance, for residents and businesses. This regeneration and renewed enthusiasm in the town will result in a town centre that local people can be proud of with a brighter more buoyant market, new shops and a range of interesting activities and events. This in turn will provide for a more interesting place for visitors and make it somewhere they will be happy to dwell and as a result frequent more of the town's shops, businesses and attractions.

1 Quick Wins

There are a number of matters which could be addressed quickly and cheaply and could make considerable improvements to the High Road:

- ***Sweep/clean the High Road on an ongoing basis and ensure that litter bins are emptied and litter is cleared from the street/pavement.***
- ***Arrange for the cleaning/redecoration/repair of all street furniture – lamp posts, bollards, railings, planters, litter bins, benches etc.***
- ***Replace/re-lay broken and uneven pavement – particularly to the northern end of the High Road.***
- ***Tidy green spaces/ tree surrounds etc and weed kill as necessary.***
- ***Consideration should be given to the addition of further cycle racks/hoops.***
- ***Consideration should be given to the provision of further planters to soften/add character to the central retail section of the High Road.***

2 Town Management

2.1 Town Centre Leadership

Town centre regeneration is about localism and local leadership and the way to make this work is to provide local leadership with its finger on the pulse and with a connection to the local community. Therefore, and accepting that this project is being driven by Epping Forest District Council, it is suggested that buy in, action and leadership should be provided by Loughton Town Council with the support of a Town(s) Centre Manager appointed by the District Council.

All Town Councillors are local and as a result should be able to bring the local community and businesses together and develop a strong visionary plan to reinforce the distinctive heritage of the town, assist in making the town centre a real community hub and making Loughton a far more attractive town for locals and visitors alike. The role of an independent Town Centre Manager will be critical to providing professional expertise and an unbiased view on what is needed locally.

The great thing about Loughton is that it already has great community spirit and an extremely active residents' association. I am certain that all of these working together with the Town and District Councils will produce excellent results.

Recommendations:

- 1) Engage with Loughton Town Council (LTC).***
- 2) Obtain LTC commitment to the scheme and to providing leadership and support.***
- 3) Work with LTC and Loughton Residents' Association to establish and action a realistic plan.***

2.2 Town(s) Centre Manager

It is suggested that the Council commits to the appointment of a Town Centre Manager initially on a two-year fixed term basis. The manager would act as a single point of contact to receive ideas, thoughts and views from local stakeholders and as such, would be known and trusted by businesses, retailers and residents alike. They would work with the Town Council to ensure that standards are adhered to and that the town is as vibrant and attractive to local people and visitors as possible. A review of the post would be undertaken after 12 months to assess progress against the Town Centre action plan and the success of interventions and extended if necessary.

NB. As a part of its regeneration, Stockton-on-Tees council pulled together a multi-disciplinary team of market management, street licensing, civil enforcement and business support to manage the town centre. Stockton is a much larger town than Loughton, however the principles of hands-on organisation and management are much the same.

Recommendations:

- 4) Write Job profile and agree responsibilities for Town Centre Manager post.**
- 5) Post to be part of EFDC's Economic Development team within Strategic Planning Directorate.**
- 6) Town Team establishment to be priority.**

2.3 Establishment of a Town Team

To achieve the required changes, considerable two-way dialogue needs to be sought from the town's residents and businesses. Buy-in from the community is important to ensure there is a need or requirement for any proposed changes and that as a result these are carried out with the support of the town. Loughton already has an active residents' association and two Town Forums – one for The Broadway and one for the High Road and it is thought that these could be used as a catalyst for pulling together a formal Town Team.

It is important that the Town Team is made up of a cross section of the community including residents, businesses and retailers. A fair representation of age, sex and race should be included and input should be encouraged from organisations such as educational establishments, religious groups, social groups (e.g. Scouts etc) together with members of the town council and tourism and visitor groups.

Recommendations:

- 7) Decide with LTC the make-up of a Town Team and what it will be called.**
- 8) If utilising current Town Partnerships, engage with and obtain commitment and support from Chairmen and Town Forums as a whole.**
- 9) Arrange initial meeting to establish parameters and put in place a plan for town team development and action.**
- 10) EFDC to work with LTC and Loughton High Road Town Centre Partnership (LHRTCP) to establish vision and format for a new 21st century High Road.**

2.4 Attracting New Businesses and Brands

In conjunction with the Town Team, work could be done to identify key brands, businesses and/or other organisations to attract to the High Road and then steps taken to secure them. As the landlord for some sections of the High Road is Epping Forest District Council, there is a great opportunity for the Council to encourage a good mix of retailers ensuring that the needs and requirements of the community are met. In addition thought could also be given to holding an empty unit for short term rental for pop-up shops, start-up ventures, new/irregular non high street retailers to test the water for their market and for more experiential and art-based activities including exhibitions, shows, demonstrations etc.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, EFDC has a plan for one of the parades of shops in the High Road. Details of the proposed tenant(s) should be sought and consideration given to their suitability to the town. (Note- At the time of writing there were vacancies that have since been let as of June 2021)

Recommendations:

- 11) Put in place a programme to encourage new businesses.***
- 12) Target prospective businesses.***
- 13) Communicate requirements to commercial agents.***
- 14) Consider use of an empty unit for non-conventional retailing i.e. pop ups, start-ups, experiential etc.***
- 15) Seek confirmation of proposed use of EFDC's parade of shops.***

3 Town Offer

3.1 High Road, Loughton

Loughton and the High Road could prove to be a perfect example of the "20 minute neighbourhood". There is everything at hand within a 20-minute public-transport trip, bike ride or walk from home – work, shopping, education, healthcare, community facilities, recreation and sport. There is also a fantastic community spirit supported by numerous community groups, church groups, clubs and associations.

The High Road is a mixed-use road ranging from mixed retail to churches, to community organisations, to offices and also residential use. There is a mixture of property ranging from Lopping Hall dating back to 1884, to 1960s parades of shops, the more recent development of the M&S Food Store in the 2000s and various developments in between.

The northern, retail end, of the High Road is quite busy and dynamic and has a great atmosphere. I visited the High Road on a warm September lunchtime last year and experienced a Mediterranean type atmosphere with people sitting outside restaurants, bars and coffee shops, eating, drinking and socialising.

Having said this, I have concerns about the High Road and its future. I would suggest that it could be on the verge of falling into decline and that as a result its retail footprint could reduce significantly as will its footfall and therefore its viability as a town centre. My reasons for these thoughts are as follows:

- Some of the larger brand names and national chains have vacated fairly spacious premises and these at the time of writing now remain empty. These brands are generally anchor stores to High Streets and serve to draw in footfall which other retailers, coffee shops and restaurants benefit from. Once

one or two of these anchor stores go, it puts pressure on other brands who will tend to follow, which then puts pressure on the remaining high street.

- Extremely unusually for a town of the size of Loughton, the High Road is home to six banks. With increased digital banking and the reduced need for in-person banking and therefore a branch network, we are seeing banks withdraw from high streets. Again, banks bring footfall, so any loss of banks from the High Road would further impact its viability. I understand that HSBC has already advised of its withdrawal from Loughton in August 2021.
- Loughton has 23 restaurants in the High Road. As it isn't particularly a tourist/visitor destination and I don't believe that any of these restaurants would be classed as destination type restaurants, they need therefore to rely on Loughton's local population to keep them in business. Even without Covid, I would suspect that there are insufficient potential customers to keep all but the very best restaurants going, so would expect to see further empty retail outlets as a result.
- A large percentage of the population in and around Loughton are high net worth individuals with substantial spending power. The type of shops however that this community would frequent in Loughton are reducing and being replaced with less attractive alternatives.
- Westfield Stratford, with its attractive range of retail outlets, is only a 20-minute train journey from Loughton.

In short, my view is that Loughton High Road needs immediate and urgent attention to maintain it as a popular, busy and attractive town centre. EFDC as the District Council and also a landlord of a large section of the High Road is in prime position to lead this work and in conjunction with Loughton Town Council, the Loughton Residents' Association and the Loughton High Road Town Centre Partnership together with residents and businesses, turn the High Road into a busy, vibrant and dynamic town centre and destination for the 21 Century.

3.2 Retail

Loughton High Road's retail offer is large and consists of over 160 shops. Its current vacancy rate (February 2021) is circa 10% which is slightly lower than the national average however some of the vacant units are owned by EFDC and are being kept purposefully vacant with a plan which at the current time EFDC is unable to disclose due to commercial sensitivity.

The High Road is very much mixed use with a fantastic selection and variety of shops. As could be expected, the largest uses in the High Road are restaurants at 14% of units and Hair and Beauty at 13%. There are 2 supermarkets – Sainsbury's and Morrisons and an M&S Food Store. Other larger users are estate agents at 7%, takeaways at 6%, opticians at 4% and unusually high, banks at 4%.

With fairly wide pavements at various points along the High Road, there is good opportunity for street trading and outdoor cafes, restaurants etc.

As previously explained, I am concerned that it will be difficult to maintain the High Road in its current form and feel that careful consideration needs to be given to its make-up and role in modern society. There are one or two shops which I feel would be attractive to Loughton's more affluent residents. These would include Gail's Bakers and The Ginger Pig butchers, together with one or two restaurants. My view is that work needs to be done to attract more of the same. Although I understand that McDonalds has pulled out of its proposed development, I would suggest that this is the type of retailer the High Road doesn't want.

Another varying element of high streets is the progression of the weekend and evening economies. We now live in a seven day a week world with extended working hours. Businesses need to adjust to the needs and requirements of their customers, and this may now include opening longer/different hours, opening on Sundays etc. The town centre manager could discuss these matters with retailers and see if there is any scope for taking these considerations further with a view to increasing footfall and also, subsequently, trade.

With EFDC being the landlord for large sections of the High Road and also some of the larger units, there is a great opportunity to shape and control the types of tenants, shops and uses moving forward. In partnership with the existing traders the High Road could be developed to offer an innovative and distinctive mixed use together with a range of pop up and temporary shops and also various experiential and community-based services.

At the current time people are tending to shop nearer to home and using their local town centres as opposed to going to the larger out of town shopping centres. Retailers should take advantage of this and go that extra mile to ensure a clean, safe and welcoming environment offering a comprehensive range of products and services. If customers can see the benefit of shopping local and enjoy it, they are less likely to change their habits when the pandemic is brought under control.

Recommendations:

16) EFDC to confirm details of their plans for the High Road and incorporate this within proposals.

17) Town Centre Manager to work with LHRTCP and retailers to increase the attractiveness and draw of the retail centre with a view to increasing the viability of the High Road and work towards aforementioned vision and redesign.

3.3 Epping Forest Retail Park

The Epping Forest Retail park situated near Debden Station will undoubtedly have some impact on the High Road and its retailers, however I feel that overall this effect would be minimal. This is due mainly to the make up of the retail park and its range of tenants, which I don't think will particularly pull trade away from the High Road.

If the High Road can be redeveloped as a unique and experiential shopping destination, then the retail park will provide an additional attraction to the area with the more every day type retailers.

Recommendations:

18) High Road should consider developing a place and offer which is complimentary to the retail park with a view to adding a further dimension to Loughton .

3.4 High Road Market

The Grimsey Review highlighted the importance of markets and their positive effect on residents. In a report by the Institute of Place Management (2015) it explained why markets are economically, socially and politically critical for town centres. The report also confirmed that markets can generate footfall increases of circa 25% and have been shown to increase retail sales with market visitors spending money in other shops. The report then goes on to explain that markets provide low barriers to entry and as result can encourage new businesses and nurture retail innovation.

Loughton has been holding a farmers' market every second Sunday of the month since 2002. This market is extremely popular with local people. It has become a community event and has also been pulling in people from outside the immediate area. Although currently cancelled due to Covid, it is a welcome addition to the town and moving forward should be encouraged, supported and if possible extended.

A busy and successful market will serve as an additional draw to the High Road and make it more of a destination, whilst at the same time providing additional footfall for High Roads retailers.

Recommendations:

- 19) EFDC to work with LTC and LRA to support and drive the market.**
- 20) Consideration to be given to expanding the market and/or introducing other feature markets i.e. Antiques, French, Italian etc. and doing this in conjunction with The Broadway.**

3.5 Signage

The biggest issues in respect of signage are the lack of signs from the station to the town centre and also to Epping Forest, which must be one of the town's biggest attractions. There is also a lack of signage from the High Road to Loughton Broadway.

Recommendations:

- 21) Generally review town signage and implement new signage as required.**
- 22) Increase signage from the station to the High Road and Epping Forest.**
- 23) Increase signage from the High Road to The Broadway.**

3.6 Tourism/Visitors

Loughton isn't a great tourist/visitor destination, although it does have easy and close access to Epping Forest. The one thing that could be done to attract more visitors is to remodel the town and make it a busy and bustling High Road with lots of interesting and experiential shops and venues, together with trendy boutiques and niche outlets and also destination restaurants, bars and cafes and the Mediterranean café culture which goes with it.

Recommendations:

- 24) EFDC/LTC to work with Loughton High Road Town Centre Partnership to put on key events to increase visitor interest in the Town.**
- 25) Loughton High Road Town Centre Partnership to encourage support and participation from local retailers and businesses for any High Road events.**

3.7 Loughton High Road Community hub

Within Loughton, it is suggested that 2 community hubs are set up – one centrally in the High Road and another on The Broadway. These could be used to establish a place where public opinions could be shared and discussed and a centre of community well-being for the area with exhibition space and also perhaps space for workshops, demonstrations, pop up shops etc. This community hub could also provide functions such as a Police help desk, mini job centre and other community based initiatives. Provision of these increased services will encourage more people into the town centre and will lead to them using other elements of the town centre at the same time.

I would normally recommend that the community hub is set up in the Library. This may be a consideration for the High Road, although it is slightly “off pitch” in Traps Hill. Having said this, if the Library was to be used then work should be done to ensure that the High Road is advised of and able to participate in any events and activities.

It is noted from my various conversations that outside of the specific clubs and associations based in Loughton, there is a lack of facilities for young people. This is something that could also be considered by the community hub.

Recommendations:

- 26) Set up community hub in line with the model being proposed for Waltham Abbey and Epping.**
- 27) Publicise community hub.**
- 28) Pull together program of events and activities for the year.**

3.8 Public Facilities

If the High Road is going to meet people’s needs, it should be reviewed to ensure that there are the required public facilities. These facilities would include adequate seating for all sections of the community in all areas, open, clean and functional public toilets, adequate lighting at all times across all areas of the town centre, bike racks/hoops in easily accessible places and strategically placed dog poo bins.

Recommendations:

- 29) Review benches and seating on the High Road and ensure they are adequate for the needs of the town.**
- 30) Review bike racks/hoops within the town centre and at other destinations and ensure they are adequate for the needs of the town.**
- 31) Review dog poo bins in High Road and other areas as appropriate and ensure they are adequate to the needs of the town.**
- 32) Ensure that all areas are adequately lit in and around the High Road, including car parks to the rear of the shops and footpaths etc.**

3.9 Wi-fi and Digital Presence

The digital age and the need for connectivity is increasingly important for numerous sections of the community and as a result I would suggest free wi-fi availability within the High Road.

It should be acknowledged that people are now shopping differently and that circa 30% of retail sales are being done online (Office of National Statistics, Aug 2020). This figure is up from 21.9% at the beginning of March 2020 and the beginning of the Covid 19 lock down. Regardless of the pandemic, online sales will continue to grow, and retail expert KPMG predicts the figure rising to 50% by 2025. As a result, retail businesses need to adjust their business models accordingly and develop their offer for both markets.

As a part of adding a wi-fi option to the High Road a social media presence should be developed enabling online and offline businesses. Mobile technologies and virtual shopping should be used to enhance the consumer town centre experience and in turn increase footfall.

Consideration should be given to bringing in a third-party contractor such as Maybe (www.maybetech.com) to develop social media/town centre/retailer collaboration.

Recommendations:

- 33) Put in place free WI-FI along the northern, "town centre" end of the High Road and publicise.**
- 34) Agree way forward in respect of social media strategy/presence and execute accordingly.**
- 35) Arrange for assistance and support for retailers in establishing an online presence.**

3.10 Epping Forest District Council

It was suggested by various parties that neither EFDC nor LTC were particularly receptive to working with the town centres on various initiatives. Moving forward, it is important that all parties work together to make the town as viable as possible for residents, visitors and the businesses.

It's not in my remit to comment on specific matters raised concerning EFDC/LTC but would hope that the appointment of a Town Centre Manager would build and maintain relationships with both the High Road and The Broadway and the town's businesses.

Recommendations:

- 36) EFDC Town Centre Manager to be actively involved in building and maintaining relationships with the High Road and The Broadway and their tenants.**

3.11 Pedestrianisation

I know that thought had been given to pedestrianising large chunks of the High Road. My thought on this is that it would be a lot of effort for little gain and that overall it may lead to a reduction in footfall. The High Road has plenty of space with wide pavement areas, various greens and service roads to some parades of shops that can be used, subject to permissions, for town centre events, activities and initiatives.

If the town centre becomes a busy hub and destination and shopping habits change then the idea of pedestrianisation may become viable. For the time being however it is something I would discount completely.

4 Appearance

The High Road has a long retail centre at the northern end, made up of various developments built over a long period of time. This has resulted in a mixture of designs and architecture and a selection of varying shopfronts and shop front design. Although adding interest to the High Road, it can also make it look untidy and disjointed and highlight retailers who aren't doing so well or have no consideration for the look of their business as a part of the general street scene.

My view is that the Councils should work with landlords and retailers to generally improve the street side view of the High Road and its aesthetics. The licensing/planning teams could also play a more active role by ensuring that new and replacement shop fronts are fairly uniform and in keeping with the requirements and feel of the town and that applications for street trading licenses are granted confirming strict terms and conditions in respect of space allowable, trading times, collection of litter, A-boards etc. Considerations should be given to some form of demarcation outside each store over which seating, A-boards and other retail paraphernalia, is allowed.

Recommendation:

37) EFDC to work with landlords and retailers to improve the appearance of the High Road.

38) EFDC planning/licensing teams to consider appropriateness of new/replacement shops/shop fronts to town design and police street trading licenses.

4.1 Street Scene

Work has been done to develop the High Road roughly between M&S and The Drive. The High Road north of The Drive however is in desperate need of attention with uneven and broken pavements, road surfaces in disrepair and old-fashioned lamp posts, which I understand are unable to supply power for that end of the High Road's Christmas lights.

Recommendation:

39) Refurbish road and pavement surfaces at northern end of High Road and replace street lights with modern alternatives.

4.2 Trees and Planters

Tree lined pedestrian routes and landscaped areas all contribute to civic pride and generally make a town more attractive. Although there are a number of trees along the High Road and some planters suspended from lamp posts, I am concerned that overall the area looks fairly bleak and quite hard. The addition of further planters would be a great improvement. In addition, I understand that a number of trees have been removed in the past. Consideration should be given to replacing these and also potentially adding some more.

Recommendations:

40) Review current "green" townscape and work to develop and improve.

5 Access

Town centres need to recognise that Co2 emissions have to be reduced and as a result there is much more emphasis on ensuring a reduced reliance on cars. To this end, town centres need to ensure their accessibility via other methods of transport and provide for these methods accordingly. In addition to reducing carbon emissions this will also encourage the use of the town centre by a wider range of the community via various methods of transport.

Simply stopping car access and reducing or taking away parking spaces, doesn't resolve this problem. Undoubtedly people will still want to access the High Road by car however there is a balance to be had between encouraging pedestrian, cycling and public transport access and then gradually reducing provision for motor vehicles as other methods of travel develop and gain traction.

For generations urban areas have been designed exclusively around the car. This now has to change and town centres developed to provide attractive, walkable and cyclable physical space.

5.1 Cycling

In a town the size of Loughton, all residents should be able to access the town centres, the retail park, the towns various green and public spaces, leisure centre and attractions via a network of secure, safe and clearly marked cycle paths and routes.

In addition, the town should also provide for cycle racks/hoops at the various easily accessible destinations to enable the bikes to be safely secured.

Recommendations:

41) Review cycling accessibility in Loughton particularly around main roads, shopping hubs, attractions and green spaces and make arrangements to provide a network of secure, safe and clearly marked cycle paths and routes.

5.2 Car Parks and Parking

I have not come across a lot of comments or complaints about parking in the High Road. My only observation here is that perhaps the pay-and-display parking on the High Road could provide 30 minutes free.

It was pointed out that there was very little parking for shop staff – perhaps parking permits could be issued by the Council in certain parking areas.

Recommendations:

42) Make parking on the High Road 30 minutes free of charge.

43) Consider parking permits for retailers in certain parking areas.

6 Consultation

6.1 Market Research

In addition to thoughts and expertise of the author, consultation for this report has been obtained from the following:

Epping Forest District Council
Loughton Town Council
Loughton Residents' Association
Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership
Debden Traders' Association
Loughton High Road Town Centre Partnership
Various councillors and other prominent/influential Loughton (Debden) residents
Various Broadway and High Road Retailers
Independent Landlords
Various Loughton residents

It is accepted that additional research will be required from residents, retailers and businesses to move the ideas in this report forward. It is felt however that if the initiative is going to be Community/Town Council driven then the research should be carried out more locally.

7. Sources of Additional Support

High Streets Task Force (www.highstreettaskforce.org.uk) – supporting communities and local government to transform their high streets.

Maybe (www.maybetech.com) – A smarter approach to social media

Action List	Priority
<i>EFDC/Highway Rangers to complete “quick wins”</i>	1
<i>Discuss with and establish Town Leadership Team</i>	1
<i>Form Town Team/refocus Town Centre Partnerships</i>	1
<i>Appoint Town Centre Manager</i>	1
<i>EFDC, LTC, LRA and LHRTCP to discuss future of Loughton High Road and develop longer term plan</i>	1
<i>Establish community hub</i>	1
<i>Provide for additional seating, bike racks/hoops, dog poo bins as appropriate</i>	2
<i>Talk to retailers re shop fronts, A-boards, pavement trading etc</i>	1
<i>Review Street Trading/Market licenses for the High Road and action accordingly</i>	1
<i>Review High Road market and put in place plans to re-establish and grow it</i>	1
<i>Put in place plans to review town cycle paths and implement findings</i>	2
<i>Review parking charges as per report and implement recommendations</i>	1
<i>Review town WI-FI proposal and put in place findings</i>	2
<i>Develop town centre social media presence</i>	2
<i>Complete research on thoughts and considerations of residents and businesses – incorporate and implement where appropriate</i>	1
<i>Review new businesses required on the High Road and take steps to attract</i>	3
<i>Review the “green” street scene on the High Road, consider the addition of planters etc and action accordingly</i>	1
<i>Carry out all general maintenance/refurbishment recommendations</i>	2

To note: Buckhurst Hill

The attached report has been commissioned by EFDC Officer from a specialist external consultant.

Work on this report was carried out between December 2020 and April 2021 so some of the observations may refer to issues and conditions that existed at that time and may have been subsequently addressed.

The report is often linked with development proposals focused on the immediate actions required to improve the town centres. Further reports will be brought forward, often associated with more significant investment and development to cover the medium and long-term improvement of the town centres.

The immediate resources required to address priority town centre issues were identified in the EFDC 2021/22 Budget or will be supported by specific Covid 19 recovery grants made available by the Government.

It is intended as with the Waltham Abbey and Ongar town centre reports, that all approved recommendations will be project managed in detail, assigned to managers, given timelines, supported by identified resources and their delivery and impact monitored.

The reports have been produced after extensive consultation. This consultation with local members and other key partners will continue.

Although not specifically mentioned in this report, work on the ground will be linked with other initiatives such as sustainable transport with sub projects of demand responsive transport, cycling routes, electric car charging points and various greening and tree planting initiatives being taken forward as per our Green Infra-structure Policy and climate change action plan.

Comments only for Cabinet: Epping

The report is generally positive and has only been edited with regard to minor language changes.

The only other issue of note is how active the District wishes to be about frontage, preserving retail space at the core of the town and other associated actions. At one level there is an option of a "Schedule D" protection of the town centre, through an updated Planning re frontages, signs, colour palette etc, through to informal guidance and encouragement. It should be noted that Government has become more permissive recently regarding change of use and similar but a balance between a market driven adaptive look and feel to the place, versus a Planning determined look, needs to be considered.

Buckhurst Hill

Regeneration Study and Proposals

“The most successful high streets and town centres will need to change to reflect the communities they serve by transforming themselves into community hubs, playing to their strengths of offering human interaction and a unique sense of place and community”

HM Government response to an enquiry into High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 (presented to Parliament in 2019)



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AUTHORS NOTE:

The contents of this report and the recommendations made are based on Studio 3 Ltd's view of the town centre as a whole and the actions which should be taken to regenerate the towns and increase their general attractiveness to residents, visitors and businesses. Absolutely no consideration has been given as to whether the suggested actions and/or any related costs are the responsibility of the County, District, Town/Parish Councils or any other body.

What is crucial is that the different Councils, Town Partnerships, businesses and residents come together to agree priorities and for each organisation to put in place the necessary actions within their remit/responsibility to make the required improvements.

The regeneration of our town centres is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Key to these changes are the businesses, residents and Town/Parish Councils themselves. They are closest to the town and really know and understand the town and the needs and requirements of the local community. Their counsel and guidance should both therefore be provided and encouraged at all times.

The reinvention of our town centres will only be achieved by a joint and collaborative approach utilising the knowledge, expertise and skills of a range of people, bodies and organisations. No single person or organisation can achieve this on their own and everyone has their own specific part to play. It is essential that any plans have the buy in of all connected persons and that all parties support each other through the process.

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Foreword

Epping Forest District Council is reviewing a number of its town centres with the objective of regenerating them and making them a better and more attractive place to live, work, visit and play. There have been numerous projects over the years to generally improve the amenities, however the UK as a whole is now in the midst of a new era which will undoubtedly change high streets up and down the country. Covid 19 has unexpectedly changed the way we live and also as a result, our relationship with our local high street and/or town centre. More people are now shopping locally and more people are working from home, which in turn is encouraging them to use their local amenities on a more regular basis. The Grimsey Review advises that high streets need to be re-invented as unique community hubs, designed around health, education, culture, housing, leisure and arts and crafts, along with retail shops. If towns can get it right, consumers should emerge from the pandemic with a stronger sense of community and a desire to support their local town centre. Strong high streets can build communities, keep crime at bay and foster civic pride and togetherness.

A YouGov poll revealed that only 9% of Britons want life to return to “normal” after the coronavirus outbreak is over. The positive from the above is that this is a great time to engage with our local communities and reinvent our town centres while the focus is on them and before things automatically revert to the “old” normal.

The Grimsey Review goes on to advise that for town centres and high streets to thrive and rediscover their community purpose we need to see:

Localism - A massive shift in power to local communities and a renewed focus on localism. Local people must be empowered to redesign their own high streets and have a say on the businesses, services and amenities that occupy it.

Leadership - Local leaders should be valued and recognised. Candidates for leadership roles should be selected for having a broad range of dynamic and collaborative skills in order to get the best out of communities. Local leaders who embrace change and are brave enough to imagine a new world have a better chance of succeeding.

Fewer cars, more green spaces - fewer streets and a huge expansion of green space, parks and town squares. Our towns must no longer be designed around the car as people learn to appreciate the benefit of open spaces.

Other important takeaways from the Grimsey Review that should be considered is the fact that there is a growing view among young adults that businesses need to be accountable to more than their bottom line and for the wellbeing of people and communities. It goes on to confirm that 72% of millennials (aged 24 to 38) would rather spend their money on an experience or an event than buying things and that this is reflected in the shift towards leisure, arts, culture and dining on the high streets. Deloitte’s 2019 Millennial Survey showed that millennials will patronise and support companies that align with their values and make a positive impact on society. Generation Z’s (aged 5 to 23) are also socially focussed with their opinions on companies formed by their ethics, practices and social impact.

The Grimsey Review confirms that town and high street plans should put sustainability and the environment at the heart of everything; should base their development on quality of life and experiences and not blind mass consumerism; should recognise and reward great local leadership; and allow local communities to develop their places to compete for people to live, work, visit and play.

Introduction

Buckhurst Hill is a gorgeous town just south of Loughton. The main shopping centre in Queens Road is slightly off the beaten track and as such would only be visited if you had a specific reason to go there. The town has a great feel, good community spirit, a busy little shopping centre and benefits from 2 London Underground stations. It has 2 community halls, a great deal of outside leisure space and is also on the edge of Epping Forest. Buckhurst Hill has an estimated population of circa 11,380 people (2011) (Source: UK Office for National Statistics) and an average house price of £603,477 (Source: Zoopla).

Queens Road, the main shopping street, stretches for just over half a mile and along its length includes residential, retail, offices and some industrial/business units. The main section of the retail offer is at the bottom, easterly end, of Queens Road. Buckhurst Hill is a fairly affluent area which lends itself nicely to supporting the eclectic array of independent retailers and businesses.

Although the centre has a great deal going for it, it could also do with some love and attention to keep its unique personality, maintain and/or increase its Village like feel and keep itself fresh and relevant for locals and their everyday needs and requirements. In addition, it is felt that by developing its village vibe and encouraging an alfresco and continental feel the area could also become more of a destination which could increase its buzz and in turn provide additional footfall and ultimately trade for the numerous shops and businesses.

Literally just outside London, Buckhurst Hill is a gem and probably one of the best kept secrets within the Epping Forest district. Its support and development are crucial to its continued and future success. The area lends itself nicely to being developed as a proper 20-minute neighbourhood, along much the same lines as Walthamstow Village. It has everything a family needs within a short walk and priority can easily be given to pedestrians and cyclists, particularly at the eastern end of Queens Road.

Buckhurst Hill town centre is already a unique location and would benefit from regeneration with a minimal amount of time, effort and money. It has an active, interested and passionate Parish Council and Residents' Society and on the whole the people who live there love it and would undoubtedly support an improved town centre.

1 Quick Wins

There are a number of matters which could be addressed quickly and cheaply and could make considerable improvements to the centre of Buckhurst Hill:

- *Sweep/clean Queens Road on a regular basis and ensure that litter bins are emptied and litter is cleared from the street/pavement.*
- *Arrange for the clear marking of parking bays along Queens Road – particularly in areas where road improvements/alterations have been made requiring the removal of previous markings.*
- *Arrange for the cleaning/redecoration/repair of all street furniture – lamp posts, bollards, railings, planters, litter bins, benches etc.*
- *Repair/replace broken and/or bent signage.*
- *Replace broken/previously removed bollards.*
- *Replace/re-lay broken and uneven paving along the length of Queen Street, make good lifted areas around tree bases.*
- *Arrange for relaying of road surfaces/filling of potholes along Queen Street, as required.*
- *Re-lay/replace uneven cobbled areas at the bottom of Queen Street, particularly in the loading bay at the junction with Kings Avenue.*
- *Tidy and upkeep green spaces along Queens Road and weed kill as necessary – particularly at the western end of Queens Road and also at the entrance to Andrews Close.*
- *Arrange for regular parking enforcement to combat overstays, double parking, parking on the pavement etc. in Queens Road and also Station Way.*
- *Add dog poo bins at appropriate intervals and further bike hoops as required along length of Queens Road.*
- *Weed kill areas in Station Way, outside the parade of shops and around the station forecourt area.*
- *Make good all broken and uneven paving in front of the shops in Station Way.*
- *Refurbish/replace railings outside shops in Station Way.*
- *Landscape green spaces outside station in Station Way.*
- *Add benches, planters/baskets etc to parade of shops/station entrance in Station Way.*
- *Replace broken bollards and add further bollards as required to area around the station entrance road in Station Way.*

2 Town Management

2.1 Town Centre Leadership

Town centre regeneration is about localism and local leadership and the way to make this work is to provide local leadership with its finger on the pulse and with a connection to the local community. Therefore and accepting that this project is being driven by Epping Forest District Council, it is suggested that buy in, action and leadership should be provided by Buckhurst Hill Parish Council with the support of a Town(s) Centre Manager appointed by the District Council.

All Parish Councillors are local and as a result should be able to bring the local community and businesses together and develop a strong visionary plan to reinforce the distinctive heritage of the town, assist in making the town centre a real community hub and making Buckhurst Hill a far more attractive town for locals and visitors alike. The role of an independent Town Centre Manager will be critical to provide professional expertise and an unbiased view on what is needed locally.

The great thing about Buckhurst Hill is that it already has great community spirit and an extremely active Residents' Society. I am certain that all of these working together with the Parish and District Councils will produce excellent results.

Recommendations:

- 1) Engage with Buckhurst Hill Parish Council (BHPC).***
- 2) Obtain BHPC commitment to the scheme and to providing leadership and support.***
- 3) Work with BHPC and Buckhurst Hill Residents' Society to establish and action a realistic plan.***

2.2 Town(s) Centre Manager

It is suggested that the Council commits to the appointment of a shared Town Centre Manager initially on a two-year fixed term basis. The manager would act as a single point of contact to receive ideas, thoughts and views from local stakeholders and as such, would be known and trusted by businesses, retailers and residents alike. They would work with the Town Council to ensure that standards are adhered to and that the town is as vibrant and attractive to local people and visitors as possible. A review of the post would be undertaken after 12 months to assess progress against the Town Centre action plan and the success of interventions, and extended if necessary.

NB. As a part of their regeneration, Stockton-on-Tees council has pulled together a multi-disciplinary team of market management, street licensing, civil enforcement and business support to manage their town centre. Stockton is a much larger town than Buckhurst Hill, however the principles of hands-on organisation and management are much the same.

Recommendations:

- 4) Write Job profile and agree responsibilities for Town Centre Manager post.***
- 5) Post to be part of EFDC Economic team that reports direct to the Chief Operating Officer.***
- 6) Town Team establishment on a virtual basis, to be priority.***

2.3 Establishment of a Town Team

To achieve the required changes, considerable two-way dialogue needs to be sought from the town's residents and businesses. Buy-in from the community is important to ensure that there is a need or requirement for any proposed changes and that as a result these are carried out with the support of the town. Buckhurst Hill already has an active Residents' Society and there is also a Town Partnership representing the businesses in Queens Road. Although the Town Partnership is not currently very active, it could potentially be revitalised and brought back into life and could be developed to include the retailers in Station Way and Loughton Way. It is thought that these, in conjunction with the Parish Council, could be used as a catalyst for pulling together a formal Town Team.

It is important that the Town Team is made up of a cross section of the community including residents, businesses and retailers. A fair representation of age, sex and race should be included and input should be encouraged from organisations such as educational establishments, religious groups, social groups (e.g. Scouts etc) together with members of the Parish Council and any tourism and visitor groups.

Recommendations:

- 7) Decide with BHPC the make-up of a Town Team and what it will be called.***
- 8) If utilising current Town Forums and Residents' Society, engage with and obtain commitment and support from the Chairmen accordingly.***
- 9) Arrange initial meeting to establish parameters and put in place a plan for Town Team development and action.***

2.4 Attracting New Businesses and Brands

In conjunction with the Town Team, work could be done to identify key brands, businesses and/or other organisations to attract to Buckhurst Hill and then steps taken to secure them. Thought could also be given to approaching landlords of empty units and considering the viability of making them available for short term let - for perhaps pop-up shops, start-up ventures, new/irregular non-high street retailers to test the water for their market and for more experiential and art-based activities including exhibitions, shows, demonstrations etc.

Recommendations:

- 10) Put in place programme to encourage new businesses.***
- 11) Target prospective businesses.***
- 12) Communicate requirements to commercial agents.***
- 13) Consider use of empty units for non-conventional retailing i.e. pop ups, start-ups, experiential etc.***

3 Town Offer

3.1 Queens Road

Queens Road is very much the centre of Buckhurst Hill. It is a lovely road stretching for approximately half a mile and made up of a combination of retail/food and beverage, residential and offices/commercial premises. Although there are shops at various intervals along Queens Road, the main retail section is at the eastern end. Queens Road is the main shopping area in Buckhurst Hill and is also home to a Waitrose and within a short walk, Buckhurst Hill London Underground Station. There are small parades of retail in Station Way and Loughton way, however these are very much convenience type stores with, I would suggest, a very local appeal. The Lower Queens Road also has a very small parade of shops including an extremely popular bike shop.

Buckhurst Hill has a great Village feel to it and to my mind it is important that this village atmosphere is maintained and in fact should be capitalised on. What really makes this place is the combination of uses, its “local” feel and the wide range of retail choice and differentiation. As a fairly affluent area, it is well set to be able to support a range of more upmarket, niche and specialised offers – to some extent this is already demonstrated by the presence of a quality butcher, specialist wine shop, designer clothing retailers, specialist watch shop, speciality coffee shops and now at the western end of Queens Road, a new grocer and deli.

I have some concern that as time goes on some of the lovely period houses in Queens Road will be demolished and replaced with modern blocks of flats and also that retail units may be converted to residential use. This I would suggest should be carefully monitored with steps taken if necessary, to restrict the ability for this type of work to take place if required. Part of the success of Queens Road is its combination of uses. To flood it with increased residential housing and reduced retail will kill off the uniqueness and attractiveness of the shopping area and turn Buckhurst Hill into another bland outer London suburb with insufficient parking.

Like Walthamstow Village, Buckhurst Hill lends itself nicely to becoming a “20-minute neighbourhood” with a real community feel and buzzy and attractive high street. In Buckhurst Hill there are easily accessible facilities for all sections of the community - shopping, education, healthcare, community facilities, recreation and sport - all within a 20 minute journey, either on foot, by cycle or by public transport. The car could really become a second priority and as a result the sense of local community could grow as locals get to know each other and share the benefits of their local neighbourhood and shopping centre.

Recommendations:

- 14) Consideration should be given to how the new local plan can help to protect the makeup and appearance of Queens Road.***
- 15) Consider the restriction of further residential development in Queens Road and protect retail offer from conversion to residential use.***
- 16) Get buy-in from BHPC, Buckhurst Hill Residents’ Society, local residents and businesses to the benefit of formally converting to a “20-minute neighbourhood” and take appropriate action.***

3.2 Retail

The retail offer on Queens Road consists approximately 110 individual shops spread along its half mile length. With the exception of Waitrose, Costa (x2), Prezzo and Ladbrokes, all are independent and offer a varying range of products and services. Queens Road currently has a retail vacancy rate of 5% which is under half of the national average. Hair and beauty take up a massive 21% of the retail units and unusually in the current climate there are 8 independent fashion retailers (7% of the retail units). As would be expected there are no

banks in Buckhurst Hill, however there are 4 post offices – one at either end of Queens Road, one in Station Way by Roding Valley station and one in Loughton Way.

Queens Road has attracted a number of newer niche retailers. These include a nice butcher, a quality wine shop, a trendy florist, speciality watch shop and an upmarket men's fashion retailer to name but a few. These shops have stylish shopfronts, are nicely fitted out and add to Queens Road in terms of both appearance and the quality and speciality of their product and/or service. There is also an emerging coffee culture with a number of trendy coffee shops and cafes. To make more of Buckhurst Hill, add to its buzzy village feel and make it a destination, Queens Road needs to attract more of these types of businesses and the Council needs to support them by ensuring a bright, clean and attractive public realm. It has been suggested that the town is crying out for retailers such as a fishmonger, baker, gift shops, a shoe shop and a hardware store. It was also suggested that the town centre should be home to a plastic free refill shop and also a speciality whole food/organic shop.

I am concerned that with the majority of the retail offer at the eastern end of Queens Road this area receives the majority of the town centre focus. My feeling is that extra effort should be made to include all sections of Queens Road in any initiatives and also in the interests of a single town community that the retailers in Station Way and Loughton Way are also taken into consideration. This whole town approach would mean including all retailers in any Christmas lights and decoration initiatives and also inviting all retailers to be a part of any town centre activities, initiatives, markets etc.

A varying element of high streets is the progression of the weekend and evening economies. We now live in a seven day a week world with extended working hours. Businesses need to adjust to the needs and requirements of their customers and this may now include opening longer/different hours, opening on Sundays etc. The town centre manager could discuss these matters with retailers and see if there is any scope for taking these considerations further with a view to increasing footfall and also, subsequently, trade. At the current time people are tending to shop nearer to home and using their local town centres as opposed to going to the larger out of town shopping centres. With Waitrose as an anchor store, Buckhurst Hill lends itself nicely to this and it is important that retailers also take advantage of it and go that extra mile to ensure a clean, safe and welcoming environment and a comprehensive range of products and services. If customers can see the benefit of shopping locally and enjoy it, they are less likely to change their habits when the pandemic is brought under control.

Recommendations:

- 17) EFDC and BHPC to maintain and increase the attractiveness and draw of the Buckhurst Hill public realm.***
- 18) Town Centre Manager to work with retailers and encourage their attractiveness and viability.***
- 19) Seek the appetite and interest of Station Way and Loughton Way retailers in being included in any town centre initiatives.***

3.3 Pedestrianisation

In the interests of promoting the 20-minute neighbourhood and making Buckhurst Hill town centre a more attractive place to visit, shop and socialise, I would recommend making the eastern end of Queens Road from the junction at Kings Place/Kings Avenue to the junction at Princes Road/Victoria Road, available for pedestrian and cyclist access only between agreed hours – this could be between say 10:00am and 22:00pm, to enable access for deliveries etc. at other times.

The road layout should be redesigned, with parking spaces, kerbs etc. being removed and the area redesigned to provide for further planters, benches and bicycle hoops. A central, clear road way should be left for access purposes.

Recommendations:

20) Takes steps to redesign layout of eastern end of Queens Road and make available for pedestrian and cycle access only between agreed hours.

3.4 Speciality Market

The Grimsey Review highlighted the importance of markets and their positive effect on residents. In a report by the Institute of Place Management (2015) it explained why markets are economically, socially and politically critical for town centres. The report also confirmed that markets can generate footfall increases of circa 25% and have been shown to increase retail sales with market visitors spending money in other shops. The report then goes on to explain that markets provide low barriers to entry and as result can encourage new businesses and nurture retail innovation.

With a view to increasing the viability of Queens Road and again, adding to its village feel it is considered that it would be an ideal venue for a regular, weekend, flower/plant market (or other speciality market). This market could be laid out at the eastern, pedestrianised end of Queens Road and if done properly could become a real destination for locals and visitors alike – similar to the Columbia Road flower market.

Recommendations:

21) Take steps to put on a regular, weekend, flower/plant market and advertise accordingly.

3.5 Library

Buckhurst Hill library is a lovely building sitting in the middle of the shopping area at the western end of Queens Road. I understand that it has been threatened with closure and although currently under reprieve there are various discussions in connection with its possible relocation to another part of the town.

It is considered that in fact, the library should be left exactly where it is and developed to also make it into a Community hub for the town. Redeveloping the library and renovating it to make it fit for modern day should be a priority and consideration should be given to how its uses can be widened to provide a range of community-based uses and activities

Its location at the western end of Queens Road would assist in increasing footfall to that part of town which in turn would assist retailers and other businesses to flourish and also help pull both ends of Queens Road together as more of a cohesive shopping centre.

In addition to the benefits to the community in developing the library and a possible community centre, I am also concerned for the building's fate if it is let go. The site would undoubtedly be developed for residential use and potentially this beautiful, historic arts and crafts building could be lost which would have an immense effect on the characteristics of Buckhurst Hill town centre and Queens Road. For Buckhurst Hill and Queens Road to survive, it needs to maintain its unique and quirky character, its variety of buildings and its mixed-use including community, retail, business and residential uses. Without it, Buckhurst Hill will become just another faceless suburb.

Recommendations:

- 22) Consult with library owners/operators and obtain commitment/make arrangements for its continued use.**
- 23) Carry out required maintenance work and also modifications required to make the building safe and accessible for all users.**

3.6 Community hub

The idea of the “20-minute neighbourhood” is to have a full range of services and facilities within easy reach of each other. This comprises homes, shops, businesses, green spaces, schools, medical centres, play areas etc together with function space within which community events can take place. As discussed above, the library, I feel, would provide an ideal location for a community hub and a space for community events. Utilising the library would also ensure that this lovely building is maintained for the benefit of the community for many years to come.

The community hub could provide for local exhibitions, demonstrations, lectures and talks, social space for mums’ groups, youth activities, perhaps a Police drop in desk, a mini job centre for local employment and as a meeting space for community themed meetings, consultations and discussions. It would be a useful and safe space for older residents and generally aid a stronger sense of community and wellbeing.

The events run at this Community hub would also bring continued footfall to the western end of Queens Road which would in turn benefit retailers and businesses at that end of the road.

Recommendations:

- 24) Review benefits of Community hub and put together program of events.**
- 25) Publicise Community hub and program of events.**

3.7 Tourism/Visitors

Although Buckhurst Hill is not a particular tourist/visitor attraction, it is a lovely town with a real Village feel. If the town centre can be developed to include more niche, exclusive and experiential retailers and also become known for a fantastic flower (or other speciality) market I could see it becoming a destination for visitors, which would of course increase its attractiveness and viability. If the library could also be developed as a Community hub offering a variety of exhibitions, demonstrations and classes, this would add another dimension to the town centre and also encourage people to make more of the western end of Queens Road.

Recommendations:

- 26) Promote Buckhurst Hill as a destination.**
- 27) Develop town offer to make town centre more attractive to visitors**

3.8 Signage

The signage to Buckhurst Hill shops/Queens Road at the junction with High Road should be revised to make it larger and more prominent and also to ensure that it is both clearly legible and not lost in the undergrowth.

Likewise, larger and more prominent signage for Buckhurst Hill shops, parking and the station should also be placed at the junction of Palmerston Road and Victoria Road.

Lower Queens Road, just by the underpass from Queens Road has a small parade of shops, including a popular bike shop and launderette. It is felt that more could be made of these shops if they were clearly signposted from Queens Road – from Waitrose and/or the junction of Queens Road and Victoria Road and at the entrance of the underpass.

Recommendations:

- 28) Review signage to Buckhurst Hill shops/Queens Road from High Road and make more prominent.***
- 29) Review signage at Palmerston Road and make more prominent.***
- 30) Add signage to promote shopping parade on eastern side of the railway.***

3.9 Public Facilities

Buckhurst Hill should be reviewed to ensure that there are the required public facilities. These facilities would include adequate seating for all sections of the community in all areas, open, clean and functional public toilets, adequate lighting at all times across all areas of the town centre, bike racks/hoops in easily accessible places and strategically placed dog poo bins.

Recommendations:

- 31) Review benches and seating in Buckhurst Hill and ensure adequate for the needs of the town.***
- 32) Review bike racks/hoops within the town centre and at other destinations and ensure adequate for the needs of the town.***
- 33) Review dog poo bins in town centre and other areas as appropriate and ensure adequate to the needs of the town.***
- 34) Ensure that all areas of Buckhurst Hill, including car parks, alleyways, underpass etc are adequately lit.***
- 35) Review provision of public toilets and ensure they are adequate for the town.***

3.10 Kings Place Play Area

Kings Place Play Area is the nearest playground to the town centre. Although well positioned in a fairly central location it is restricted by the types of play equipment, to fairly young children. The issue with this is that the park doesn't therefore serve a useful purpose where parents have different age children or where children are slightly older. In the interests of a 20-minute neighbourhood and having all of the facilities required within close and easily accessible proximity, it would be good if the playground could be enlarged and provided with equipment aimed at older age groups.

Recommendations:

- 36) Review Kings Place Play Area, address any maintenance issues and consider increasing the size and equipment range to cover a wider range of age groups.***

3.11 Wi-fi and Digital Presence

The digital age and the need for connectivity is increasingly important for numerous sections of the community. As a result I would suggest free wi-fi availability on Queens Road.

It should be acknowledged that people are now shopping differently and that circa 30% of retail sales are being done online (Office of National Statistics, Aug 2020). This figure is up from 21.9% at the beginning of March 2020 and the beginning of the Covid 19 lock down. Regardless of the pandemic, online sales will continue to grow, and retail experts KPMG predicts the figure rising to 50% by 2025. As a result, retail businesses need to adjust their business models accordingly and develop their offer for both markets.

As a part of adding a wi-fi option to the town centre a social media presence should be developed enabling online and offline businesses. Mobile technologies and virtual shopping should be used to enhance the consumer town centre experience and in turn increase footfall.

Consideration should be given to bringing in a third-party contractor such as Click It Local or Maybe (www.maybetech.com) to develop online, social media/town centre/retailer collaboration.

I understand that there is a Buckhurst Hill website being developed – this would assist in the visibility of Buckhurst Hill and it is important that all retailers are represented.

Recommendations:

- 37) Put in place free WIFI within Queens Road and publicise.**
- 38) Consider benefits of Click It Local scheme. Secure and promote accordingly.**
- 39) Agree way forward in respect of Social Media strategy/presence and execute accordingly.**
- 40) Arrange for assistance and support for retailers in establishing an online presence.**

4 Appearance

As previously stated, Buckhurst Hill is a hidden gem. It has a lovely Village feel, a close local community and appears to have the genuine love of everyone who lives and works there. Queens Road is very attractive and has an unusual split of retail, residential and other business use. Having said this, it could do with some attention to maintain its attractiveness and also its continued appeal.

Maintaining and increasing the attractiveness of the public realm makes a massive difference to a town centre. It encourages people to visit and also increases their dwell time, which in turn benefits the local shops and businesses. Making a town into something that residents can be proud of and somewhere they are pleased to be seen increases their loyalty and encourages support and engagement.

4.1 General Maintenance and refurbishment

The majority of the general maintenance issues are covered in the Quick Wins earlier in this report.

Recommendations:

- 41) Review Quick Wins and arrange for work to be completed.**

4.2 Shop Fronts

The uniformity of shops fronts along a retail centre can markedly increase the attractiveness of the road and also increase the attractiveness and t draw to individual stores. Although some shops in Queens Road are attractive and in good repair, there are also a large number which require redecoration and/or complete refit. Although this type of work is generally the responsibility of the landlord and/or the leaseholder I feel that it would be a real benefit to Buckhurst Hill if shopfronts were standardised and in keeping with the general feel of the town. To do this would undoubtedly assist the retailers in attracting business, increase the attractiveness of the public realm and improve the town centre for everyone's benefit.

It would be good to agree a uniform approach to shop front and signage presentation along Queens Road and ensuring this is adhered to. Failing that, careful consideration should be given by the Council in allowing changes to shop fronts and/or shop signage and in ensuring that any proposals are in keeping with the area. Perhaps to promote this, consideration could be given to providing some form of incentive or match funding scheme to assist retailers in the cost of refitting their shop fronts.

Recommendations:

- 42) Consult with BHPC, Town Partnership and retailers to consider options in respect of shop fronts and making/keeping them attractive and in the overall style of Queens Road.***
- 43) Consider uniform scheme and approach to the design and style of town centre shop fronts and signage.***
- 44) Consider incentive/match funding scheme to encourage updating of existing shop fronts and signage.***

4.3 A-Boards and other retail paraphernalia

A number of retailers have A-boards and other retail paraphernalia, external trading/retail displays on the pavement outside their shops. Although I understand the need for this, if not carefully managed these can block access and generally make the place look untidy. Street trading licences should provide for these and lay out the conditions and spaces for use – the Council should monitor this and ensure that all conditions are being complied with, particularly to ensure that Queens Road remains as attractive and accessible as possible.

Considerations should be given to some form of demarcation outside each store over which seating, A-boards and other retail paraphernalia, if allowed, cannot overstep.

Recommendations:

- 45) Review town centre policy and regulations for trading from the front of premises, retail displays and A-boards on the pavement and enforce accordingly.***

4.4 Bin Collections

Council should ensure that all businesses have the required trade waste licences and that these bins are emptied as required. It is not acceptable for retail and commercial properties to leave their bins and accumulated rubbish on pavement areas between collections.

Recommendations:

46) Ensure businesses have the required trade waste agreements.

47) Ensure pavement areas are clear of accumulated rubbish and bins.

4.5 Station Way

Although the shops in Station Way are a small parade, they play an important role in the local community and also no doubt for commuters using the station. The public realm around the station and these shops does however feel a little run down and appears to be an unremembered and unimportant part of Buckhurst Hill, which is a shame. Although there are yellow lines and marked parking spaces, cars park everywhere here including on the pavement. This is reducing and impeding pedestrian access and also making the whole area look unattractive and more like a car park.

My view is that this part of Buckhurst Hill needs to be brought up to date and given a new lease of life. This would be of great benefit to both shopkeepers and local residents.

Most of my suggested works are listed in the Quick Wins section above, however I would recommend that the Town Team, when formed, consider the role of this part of the town and actions taken to enhance it.

Recommendations:

48) Review Station Way shopping parade and station entrance and put in place plans to enhance the area and increase its appearance and attraction.

4.6 Trees and Planters

Tree lined pedestrian routes and landscaped areas all contribute to civic pride and generally make a town more attractive. There are a number of trees and planters along the shopping sections of Queens Road, however I feel these should be reviewed and increased as required. Particular attention should be given to the very eastern end of Queens Road, running up to the railway which is particularly characterless and also various other parts of Queens Road running all the way to the top, perhaps in locations where the pavement widens and/or where further bollards may otherwise have been considered. The addition of a 20-minute neighbourhood style pedestrianised area at the eastern end of Queens Road (as mentioned above) would also have a requirement to increase the planting to make the area softer and more attractive.

I understand that there is currently an arrangement with retailers to water and generally look after planters outside their shops. If the provision of planters etc is going to be extended consideration should be given to whether this should continue and/or Council landscape teams should take this over.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the green space outside the entrance to the station in Station Way needs tidying up and could be made to look particularly attractive with some form of planting considered along the two parades of shops in Station Way.

Recommendations:

- 49) Review current “green” townscape and work to develop and improve.**
- 50) Increase numbers of planters/hanging baskets etc along Queens Road.**
- 51) Review current arrangements with retailers in respect of watering etc and see if and/or how this arrangement should be amended.**
- 52) Review green space outside station in Station Way and make plans to landscape and add planters/baskets etc along parade of shops in Station Way.**

5 Access

Town centres need to recognise that Co2 emissions have to be reduced and as a result there is much more emphasis on ensuring a reduced reliance on cars. To this end, town centres need to ensure their accessibility via other methods of transport and provide for these methods accordingly. In addition to reducing carbon emissions this will also encourage the use of the town centre by a wider range of the community via various methods of transport.

Simply stopping car access and reducing or taking away parking spaces, doesn't resolve this problem. Undoubtedly people will still want to access Buckhurst Hill town centre by car however there is a balance between encouraging pedestrian, cycling and public transport access and then gradually reducing provision for motor vehicles as other methods of travel develop and gain traction.

For generations urban areas have been designed exclusively around the car. This now has to change and town centres developed to provide attractive, walkable and cyclable physical space.

5.1 Junction of Queens Road and Princes Road (Western End)

Princes Road has been made one way and exits from a wide junction at the western end on to Queens Road. I have been advised that a large number of people ignore the one-way system and drive the wrong way down Princes Road to access properties at the western end and the various closes off of Princes Road – saving them the time of driving through and round the town centre. This clearly is dangerous for pedestrians and other road users who think it's a one-way street and are only expecting traffic coming from the eastern end.

Firstly, consideration should be given to the appropriateness of this road remaining one way. On the basis that the one-way system remains, I would recommend that the junction at the eastern end is reduced in size to one single lane and that the space taken is used to extend the pavement areas. This extended pedestrian area could be planted out, provide additional benches and also a street trading space for the restaurant and other retailers adjacent to it. This provision would make Princes Road very much one-way whilst also adding to the public realm and increasing the attractiveness of the eastern end of Queens Road.

Recommendations:

- 53) Review viability of one-way system in Princes Road.**
- 54) Consider extending the pavement at the junction of the western end of Princes Road and Queens Road, thus reducing the exit from Princes Road to a single one-way lane.**
- 55) Arrange for benches and planting to extended pavement space and allow street trading for adjoining restaurants and retailers.**

5.2 Speeding in Queens Road

It is understood that a number of cars travelling down Queens Road, do so at considerable speed. This clearly presents a safety issue for all other road users. I am not a great fan of speed humps/sleeping policeman due to the noise they cause, the damage they can cause to some vehicles and also as a result of their general need for upkeep. Queens Road at certain points is wide enough to accommodate chicanes to slow the traffic down. These chicanes could initially be put in on a temporary basis to test their effectiveness perhaps by using substantially sized planters.

Recommendations:

56) Consider using chicanes as an aid to slowing down the traffic in Queens Road. Temporary chicanes could be constructed using large planters and placed at appropriate intervals.

5.3 Cycling

Cycling is increasingly being promoted and encouraged and it is important that all residents of a town should be able to access the town centre, the town's various green and public spaces, leisure centre and attractions easily and safely by bike. In addition, the town should also provide for cycle racks/hoops at the various destinations to enable the bikes to be safely secured.

My feeling in Buckhurst Hill is that the majority of roads are fairly quiet and that as a result there is minimal need for dedicated cycling lanes. Having said this, a detailed review should be carried out to confirm the same and on roads or routes where traffic is busy and/or congested provision for safe and secure cycle lanes should be made.

Recommendations:

57) Review cycling accessibility in Buckhurst Hill particularly around main roads and make arrangements for the provision of safe, secure and clearly marked cycle paths and routes.

5.4 Buses

Buckhurst Hill has bus routes running along High Road, Palmerston Road and on the eastern side of the railway in Buckhurst Way/Albert Road/Loughton Way with all routes stopping at Buckhurst Hill Station. There aren't any buses that run through the town centre, although the walk from Buckhurst Hill station to Queens Road is less than 5 minutes. This lack of town centre transport could put some sections of the community off accessing Queens Road and its amenities. With this in mind, consideration should be given to either extending existing bus routes, perhaps to the Queens Road car park (lower) or alternatively providing some form of local round trip mini bus service covering the whole length of Queens Road.

Recommendations:

58) Consider public transport connection to Queens Road and weigh up local need for extending existing bus services or putting on an alternative option.

5.5 Trains

Buckhurst Hill and Roding Valley London Underground stations provide regular commuter and other services in and out of London and assist in making Buckhurst Hill a popular commuter town.

5.6 Car Parks and Parking

Parking is potentially an issue in Buckhurst Hill, particularly for residents. From what I understand more resident parking permits have been issued than there are resident parking spaces. I'm not sure what the answer is to this and how it could be addressed. I do know however that if more flats are built and houses are allowed to be extended and considerably increased in size then in the current climate the numbers of resident owned cars in Buckhurst Hill will continue to increase, as will the parking issue.

Consultation could be used to seek opinions of residents on remote parking. Consideration could then be given to providing residents' only spaces in the Queens Road south car park and, if necessary, extending the car park/making it a 2-storey car park.

Clearly if the town centre is going to become more of a destination an increased number of visitor spaces will also be required.

All new parking should include provision of electric charging points.

Recommendations:

- 59) Consult with BHPC, BHRS, residents and businesses on parking requirements and provision of remote resident parking.***
- 60) Review usage of Queens Road south car park and consider provision of a number of residents' only spaces.***
- 61) Consider the alteration of Queens Road south car park to make more spaces or make 2- storey, depending on previous considerations.***

6.1 Market Research

In addition to the thoughts and expertise of the author, consultation for this report has been obtained from the following:

Epping Forest District Council
Buckhurst Hill Parish Council
Buckhurst Hill Residents' Society
Buckhurst Hill Town Partnership
Various councillors and other prominent/influential Buckhurst Hill residents
Various Buckhurst Hill retailers
Various Buckhurst Hill residents

It is accepted that additional research will be required from residents, retailers and businesses to move the ideas in this report forward. It is felt however that if the initiative is going to be Community/Parish Council driven then the research should be carried out more locally.

7. Sources of Additional Support

High Streets Task Force (www.highstreettaskforce.org.uk) – supporting communities and local government to transform their high streets.

Click It Local (www.clickitlocal.co.uk) – online shopping/delivery service

Maybe (www.maybetech.com) – A smarter approach to social media

Action List

Priority

<i>EFDC/Highway Rangers to complete “quick wins”</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Appoint Town Centre Manager</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Discuss and establish Town Leadership Team - form Town Team and/or refocus Town Centre Partnership</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Complete research on thoughts and considerations of residents and businesses – incorporate and implement where appropriate</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Take steps to protect make up and appearance of Queens Road, particularly from residential development</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Discuss vision for Queens Road and target new and specific retailers and businesses</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Review the “green” street scene and public realm on Queens Road, consider the addition of planters etc and action accordingly</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Consider reducing western end of Princes Road to a single lane, extending the pavement areas and landscaping accordingly</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Carry out all general maintenance/refurbishment recommendations</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Consult on feasibility of keeping Queens Road Library, carrying out maintenance and renovation works and also turning it into a community hub</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Establish Community hub and put together a program of initiatives and events</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Take steps to form BH as a 20-minute neighbourhood and action accordingly</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Plan revised, pedestrian layout for Lower Queens Road</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Establish regular speciality flower market and publicise</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Consider use of planter chicanes in Queens Road to slow down the traffic</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Consider options in respect of the style and general appearance of shopfronts and consider schemes to encourage retailers/landlords to u date their shops</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Talk to retailers re shop fronts, A-boards, pavement trading etc</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Review signage to Buckhurst Hill shops from High Road and Palmerston Road</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Put in place signage from Queens Road to shops in Lower Queens Road</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Review provision of public facilities within town centre, including seating, bike racks/hoops, dog poo bins, toilets, lighting of public areas etc and act on findings</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Develop town offer to make BH more of a destination</i>	<i>3</i>

<i>Review trade waste licenses and ensure public areas are clear of accumulated rubbish</i>	2
<i>Review retailers in Station Way and Loughton Way and see how they can be included in town plan and town initiatives</i>	2
<i>Review town WIFI proposal and put in place accordingly</i>	2
<i>Develop town centre social media on line presence</i>	2
<i>Review parking arrangements and consider options for increasing resident parking</i>	3
<i>EFDC and BHPC to consider improvements to the public realm in Station Way shopping parade and put in place a suitable improvement plan.</i>	2
<i>Review Kings Place Play Area and consider plans to extend the size and increase the equipment for older age groups</i>	2
<i>Review cycling accessibility in BH and ensure suitable to the needs of the community</i>	2
<i>Review bus/public transport connection to Queens Road and ensure that it is adequate. Consider extending existing bus routes from BH Station or adding alternative town centre shuttle</i>	3

To note: Epping

The attached report has been commissioned by EFDC Officer from a specialist external consultant.

Work on this report was carried out between December 2020 and April 2021 so some of the observations may refer to issues and conditions that existed at that time and may have been subsequently addressed.

The report is often linked with development proposals focused on the immediate actions required to improve the town centres. Further reports will be brought forward, often associated with more significant investment and development to cover the medium and long-term improvement of the town centres.

The immediate resources required to address priority town centre issues were identified in the EFDC 2021/22 Budget or will be supported by specific Covid 19 recovery grants made available by the Government.

It is intended as with the Waltham Abbey and Ongar town centre reports, that all approved recommendations will be project managed in detail, assigned to managers, given timelines, supported by identified resources and their delivery and impact monitored.

The reports have been produced after extensive consultation. This consultation with local members and other key partners will continue.

Although not specifically mentioned in this report, work on the ground will be linked with other initiatives such as sustainable transport with sub projects of demand responsive transport, cycling routes, electric car charging points and various greening and tree planting initiatives being taken forward as per our Green Infra-structure Policy and climate change action plan.

Comments only for Cabinet: Epping

The report is generally positive and has only been edited with regard to the permanent pavement widening work and the community hub, (which has obviously stayed as an idea), but now infers that the location for this is the Civic Centre rather than the current Library.

The only other issue of note is how active the District wishes to be about frontage, preserving retail space at the core of the town and other associated actions. At one level there is an option of a "Schedule D" protection of the town centre, through an updated Planning re frontages, signs, colour palette etc, through to informal guidance and encouragement. It should be noted that Government has become more permissive recently regarding change of use and similar but a balance between a market driven adaptive look and feel to the place, versus a Planning determined look, needs to be considered.

Epping

Regeneration Study and Proposals

“The most successful high streets and town centres will need to change to reflect the communities they serve by transforming themselves into community hubs, playing to their strengths of offering human interaction and a unique sense of place and community”

HM Government response to an enquiry into High streets and Town centres in 2030 (presented to Parliament in 2019)



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Date: 31 March 2021



AUTHORS NOTE:

The contents of this report and the recommendations made are based on Studio 3 Ltd's view of the town centre as a whole and the actions which should be taken to regenerate the towns and increase their general attractiveness to residents, visitors and businesses. Absolutely no consideration has been given as to whether the suggested actions and/or any related costs are the responsibility of the County, District, Town/Parish Councils or any other body.

What is crucial is that the different Councils, Town Partnerships, businesses and residents come together to agree priorities and for each organisation to put in place the necessary actions within their remit/responsibility to make the required improvements.

The regeneration of our town centres is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Key to these changes are the businesses, residents and Town/Parish Councils themselves. They are closest to the town and really know and understand the town and the needs and requirements of the local community. Their counsel and guidance should both therefore be provided and encouraged at all times.

The reinvention of our town centres will only be achieved by a joint and collaborative approach utilising the knowledge, expertise and skills of a range of people, bodies and organisations. No single person or organisation can achieve this on their own and everyone has their own specific part to play. It is essential that any plans have the buy in of all connected persons and that all parties support each other through the process.

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Foreword

Epping Forest District Council is reviewing a number of its Town centres with the objective of regenerating them and making them a better and more attractive place to live, work, visit and play. There have been numerous projects over the years to generally improve the amenities, however the UK as a whole is now in the midst of a new era which will undoubtedly change high streets up and down the country. Covid 19 has unexpectedly changed the way we live and also as a result, our relationship with our local High street and/or Town centre. More people are now shopping locally and more people are working from home, which in turn is encouraging them to use their local amenities on a more regular basis. The Grimsey Review advises that High streets need to be re-invented as unique Community hubs, designed around health, education, culture, housing, leisure and arts and crafts, along with retail shops. If towns can get it right, consumers should emerge from the pandemic with a stronger sense of community and a desire to support their local Town centre. Strong High streets can build communities, keep crime at bay and foster civic pride and togetherness.

A YouGov poll revealed that only 9% of Britons want life to return to “normal” after the coronavirus outbreak is over. The positive from the above is that this is a great time to engage with our local communities and reinvent our Town centres while the focus is on them and before things automatically revert to the “old” normal.

The Grimsey Review goes on to advise that for Town centres and High streets to thrive and rediscover their community purpose we need to see:

Localism - A massive shift in power to local communities and a renewed focus on localism. Local people must be empowered to redesign their own High streets and have a say on the businesses, services and amenities that occupy it.

Leadership - Local leaders should be valued and recognised. Candidates for leadership roles should be selected for having a broad range of dynamic and collaborative skills in order to get the best out of communities. Local leaders who embrace change and are brave enough to imagine a new world have a better chance of succeeding.

Fewer cars, more green spaces - fewer streets and a huge expansion of green space, parks and town squares. Our towns must no longer be designed around the car as people learn to appreciate the benefit of open spaces.

Other important takeaways from the Grimsey Review that should be considered is the fact that there is a growing view among young adults that businesses need to be accountable to more than their bottom line and for the wellbeing of people and communities. It goes on to confirm that 72% of millennials (aged 24 to 38) would rather spend their money on an experience or an event than buying things and that this is reflected in the shift towards leisure, arts, culture and dining on the High streets. Deloitte’s 2019 Millennial Survey showed that millennials will patronise and support companies that align with their values and make a positive impact on society. Generation Z’s (aged 5 to 23) are also socially focussed with their opinions on companies formed by their ethics, practices and social impact.

The Grimsey Review confirms that town and High street plans should put sustainability and the environment at the heart of everything; should base their development on quality of life and experiences and not blind mass consumerism; should recognise and reward great local leadership; and allow local communities to develop their places to compete for people to live, work, visit and play.

Introduction

Epping is a busy, bustling, historic market town with a number of listed buildings, situated to the north of Epping Forest and completely surrounded by countryside. It is nestled just north of the M25, west of the M11 and a 40-minute London Underground Central line journey from London's Liverpool Street. Although a relatively small town with a population of 11,461 (Source Office of National Statistics 2016) it has a large central High street and in addition to serving the community of Epping is also a main shopping area and Town centre for a number of nearby villages. Epping is a fairly affluent area, it has an average property price of £622,458 (Source: Zoopla March 2021), but is also surrounded by a number of multi- million-pound properties. Although not the largest, Epping is an important town within the Epping Forest district. It has real character and historical interest and it is important that work is done to ensure the town maintains its position and attractiveness.

I am pleasantly surprised by Epping. It has a great feel to it, a real sense of community and a wide range of shops and businesses. As a result of Covid, more people have been working from home and I think this can be seen in Epping as even with Covid restrictions the High street is fairly busy. This is undoubtedly assisted by having a Tesco and Marks and Spencer Simply Food in the town centre, which encourages people to use other Town centre facilities at the same time. This I think reinforces the importance of anchor retailers in Town centres and highlights the disadvantages of allowing supermarkets to build in remote, out of Town centre locations.

There are a number of exciting developments proposed within the town centre which I feel will help to rejuvenate the town and keep it relevant and up to date. Having said this I am pleased to see that they have been planned in an area just off of the High street which will mean that they don't take away from the historic Town centre and as a result should maintain the town's character whilst adding new life and vibrancy.

Interestingly, Epping town centre has almost as many shops in it as Loughton High Road, yet with a population of about a third of Loughton. In the current climate, much the same as Loughton, this concerns me. Epping still has three banks and a number of branded retailers and restaurants. This I suspect could change in the near future as banks and brands withdraw from the smaller High streets and resulting in lesser attraction for consumers to the Town centre. This however will in some way be countered by the building of a new leisure centre and also a retail and cinema complex in the Town centre, which will hopefully maintain footfall.

I think the future for Epping is bright but the town shouldn't be complacent. The town centre needs to be worked on to ensure its continued vibrancy, life and attractiveness. It also needs to ensure its retail offer remains suitable to the wide needs of the community and also to the visitor economy. The town has residents which appreciate and love where they live, active town teams such as Epping in Bloom and a passionate and engaged Town Council – all of which want to improve the Town centre and make Epping a better place to live, work and play.

1 Quick Wins

There are a number of matters which could be addressed quickly and cheaply and could make considerable improvements to the centre of Epping:

- ***Sweep/clean the High street on a regular basis and ensure that litter bins are emptied and litter is cleared from the street/pavement.***
- ***Decide whether adjustments to the public realm as a result of Covid considerations should be made more permanent and action asap. This is now being actioned.***
- ***Plastic barriers, cones etc need to be removed to increase the attractiveness of the public realm this relates to both High street and the junction of High street and Station Road. This is now being actioned.***
- ***Remove all unnecessary temporary signage – which again makes the public realm look untidy.***
- ***Arrange for the cleaning/redecoration/repair/replacement of all street furniture – lamp posts, bollards, railings, planters, litter bins, benches etc.***
- ***Add further benches and bike hoops along High street to meet the needs of all sections of the community.***
- ***Add dog poo bins at suitable intervals.***
- ***Review planting in public realm and add planters/hanging baskets etc as appropriate along the length of the High street.***
- ***Consider additional heritage type signage from the station to Epping Forest, to the Town centre, to The Epping Way and also town entrance signs welcoming people to Epping.***

2 Town Management

2.1 Town centre Leadership

Town centre regeneration is about localism and local leadership and the way to make this work is to provide local leadership with its finger on the pulse and with a connection to the local community. Therefore and accepting that this project is being driven by Epping Forest District Council, it is suggested that buy-in, action and leadership should be provided by Epping Town Council with the support of a Town(s) Centre Manager appointed by the District Council.

All Town Councillors are local and as a result should be able to bring the local community and businesses together and develop a strong visionary plan to reinforce the distinctive heritage of the town, assist in making the Town centre a real community hub and making Epping a far more attractive town for locals and visitors alike. The role of an independent Town centre Manager will be critical to provide professional expertise and an unbiased view on what is needed locally.

Epping already has a strong local community, great community spirit and an active and motivated Town Council. I am certain that these working together with the District Council will produce excellent results.

Recommendations:

- 1) Engage with Epping Town Council (ETC) and the town centre partnership.***
- 2) Obtain ETC commitment to the scheme and to providing leadership and support.***
- 3) Work with ETC to establish and action a realistic plan.***

2.2 Town(s) Centre Manager

It is suggested that the Council commits to the appointment of a shared Town Centre Manager. The manager would act as a single point of contact to receive ideas, thoughts and views from local stakeholders and as such, would be known and trusted by businesses, retailers and residents alike. They would work with the Town Council to ensure that standards are adhered to and that the town is as vibrant and attractive to local people and visitors as possible. A review of the post would be undertaken after 12 months to assess progress against the Town centre action plan and the success of interventions and extended if necessary.

NB. As a part of its regeneration, Stockton-on-Tees council pulled together a multi-disciplinary team of market management, street licensing, civil enforcement and business support to manage their Town centre. Stockton is a much larger town than Epping, however the principles of hands on organisation and management are much the same.

Recommendations:

- 4) Write Job profile and agree responsibilities for Town centre Manager post.***
- 5) Post to be part of EFDC's Economic team within Strategic Planning Directorate.***
- 6) Town Team establishment to be priority.***

2.3 Establishment of a Town Team

To achieve the required changes, considerable two-way dialogue needs to be sought from the town's residents and businesses. Buy-in from the community is important to ensure that there is a need or requirement for any proposed changes and that as a result these are carried out with the support of the town. Epping has an active Town Council and also a Town Partnership representing the businesses in the town. It is thought that these, in conjunction with the District Council, could be used as a catalyst for pulling together a formal Town Team.

It is important that the Town Team is made up of a cross section of the community including residents, businesses and retailers. A fair representation of age, sex and race should be included and input should be encouraged from organisations such as educational establishments, religious groups, social groups (e.g. Scouts etc) together with members of the Town Council and any tourism and visitor groups.

Recommendations:

- 7) Decide with ETC the make up of a Town Team and what it will be called.***
- 8) If utilising current Town Partnership, engage with and obtain commitment and support from the Chairman accordingly.***
- 9) Arrange initial meeting to establish parameters and put in place a plan for Town Team development and action.***

2.4 Epping Town Partnership

Epping has a Town Partnership which has been established for a number of years. It has in the past run a number of successful Town centre events and was particularly active in Town centre initiatives and activities. In more recent times and also due to Covid, it's activity level has reduced.

Having spoken to the Chairman, she can clearly see the benefit to both the traders and the town of having a successful Town Partnership and would be happy with support from the Town and District Councils to reform and revitalise it.

Recommendations:

- 10) Town centre Manager to work with Town centre Partnership to reform and re-establish the organisation.***

2.5 Attracting New Businesses and Brands

In conjunction with the Town Team, work could be done to identify key brands, businesses and/or other organisations to attract to Epping and then steps taken to secure them. Thought could also be given to approaching landlords of empty units and considering the viability of making them available for short term let - for perhaps pop-up shops, start-up ventures, new/irregular non-High street retailers to test the water for their market and for more experiential and art-based activities including exhibitions, shows, demonstrations etc.

Recommendations:

- 11) Put in place programme to encourage new businesses.**
- 12) Target prospective businesses.**
- 13) Communicate requirements to commercial agents.**
- 14) Consider use of empty units for non-conventional retailing i.e. pop-ups, start-ups, experiential etc.**

3 Town Offer

3.1 High street

The high street in Epping is central to the town with the main high street and shopping area extending for approximately half a mile. Its central location makes it accessible for residents from the majority of the town and also potentially reduces and/or removes the need for residents to have to drive. The town is made up of a selection of buildings from various eras. Some are older historic and listed buildings whereas others are much more modern. They come together to form a somewhat disjointed yet somehow charming Town centre.

Epping High Street is a busy mixed-use centre with a variety of retailers, restaurants and cafes and numerous businesses above and behind the shops. The town benefits tremendously from supermarket anchors, Tesco and M&S Simply Food within the town centre. These will undoubtedly aid footfall to the remaining retailers as will the central position of offices and other businesses.

There is a great community feel to Epping and it seems everyone has a vested interest in maintaining its viability and ensuring its continued and future success. It's a nice town to live in and a town to be proud of. There will be changes as the town develops and the retail element will go through some transition as a result of changing shopping habits and consumer needs, however I am certain that with careful management Epping will thrive and maintain its position as an attractive and sought-after town.

3.2 Retail

The retail offer on Epping High street consists of approximately 160 individual shops spread along its half a mile length. In addition to the anchor supermarkets of Tesco and M&S Simply Food, there is a Next and a FatFace, three banks and a few branded restaurants amongst the 24 available (14%). As is normal in this day and age the other larger supplier on the High street is hair and beauty providers. These account for 19 units or 12% of the high street. Currently there are 16 empty units which equates to a 10% vacancy rate. This is slightly lower than the national average.

As stated elsewhere in this report, the viability of Epping Town centre is supported tremendously by the central location of Tesco and even better location wise, M&S Simply Food. For consumers using these retailers, it is very easy and convenient for them to avail themselves of the products and services of other retailers in the High street and/or to meet friends for a coffee/lunch etc at the same time.

Within the main body of the High street there is a good mix of retailers, however there is little which would differentiate Epping High street from other High streets and therefore make the town more of a destination. There are some more unusual upmarket retailers, such as Coles Fine Clothing for Men, Roy Cain Tailoring and Church's Butchers. These niche and quality retailers can really differentiate a High street and providing there is enough of them, can replace the need for branded/chain stores to attract footfall and keep the town busy. The same goes for restaurants and coffee shops.

There are some trendy and upmarket outlets, such as the Roza restaurant and Fred and Dougs coffee shop and popular niche restaurants such as Harry's Pie and Mash and although not currently in a permanent shop,

the Brick Lane Bagel Company. These are however few and far between. To keep the town viable and relevant it is important that the town does what it can to attract more of these types of brands and build a reputation for a wide selection of quality, independent and niche shops, bars, coffee shops and restaurants.

Undoubtedly as the digital age changes the way we shop and banks and branded chains are withdrawing from smaller high streets, it is important that the High street adjusts to meet the needs and requirements of its shoppers. High streets now need to be more experiential, more social and more of a community hub and in support, they need to have retailers offering unique products, services and possibly more important, experiences, together with a selection of hospitality options providing a range of relaxed and comfortable environments. Retailers may also have to review their operating times to suit their customers – this could mean evening and weekend opening and perhaps longer operating hours.

Epping High street will undoubtedly change and I suspect, lose a large amount of its shops. I think that it is important to recognise this and also to identify and protect the retail heart of the town – which in my mind runs from St Johns Church northwards towards the Council offices. If retail units become empty and are not let they can easily transfer to residential use. This can fragment a High street the size of Epping and I feel, unless the retail centre is protected, will take away from its unique character.

Recommendations:

- 15) Identify retail centre of the town and consider taking steps to protect from conversion to residential use.**
- 16) EFDC and ETC to maintain and increase attractiveness and draw of Epping Town centre public realm.**
- 17) Town centre Manager with support of Town centre Partnership to discuss needs of the town with retailers and seek views on needs and requirements to maintain retail viability.**
- 18) Build wish list of new Town centre retailers and pursue.**

3.3 New Developments

The proposed development of the Cottis Lane and Bakers Lane car parks is seen as being a real positive addition to the town. The biggest and most attractive element of these developments is the fact that they are situated right in the heart of the Town centre, providing easy access to the high street. This will encourage town centre usage and will benefit the retail centre and its shops, restaurants and bars as a whole.

The developments will also bring more visitors to the town to avail themselves of the new facilities. The big draws will be the new leisure centre and particularly the swimming pool in Bakers Lane and the addition of a cinema in the Cottis Lane development. It is worth highlighting that it has been suggested to me by various Epping residents that an “Everyman” type cinema and environment would attract a wider section of the community than a normal cinema. This I think I would agree with as it would make trips to the cinema more of an occasion and encourage shopping and other hospitality prior to and following the film. I am comforted that there aren’t too many additional retail outlets within the new development and that the High street will remain the substantial draw for the retail offer.

Once the developments are complete and particularly the Cottis Lane development it will be important that the standard of the public realm connecting with the development and running into the high street is brought up to the same standard. This will ensure connection and flow and tie the High street into the development making it feel like a single and continuous space.

I see that the proposed St John Road, Hemnall Street and Condor building residential developments are also a big positive for the town. They will bring new life to Epping, increase the mix of residents and will hopefully bring a new and perhaps younger dynamic, which again should encourage and drive retailers and assist greatly in the continued success of the town.

It has been suggested that there is no playground space in and around Epping Town Centre. This would be a great addition to the new development and provide an additional attraction for younger families to the high street. Additionally, I would recommend ensuring adequate bike parking facilities in the Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane developments, bike storage facilities in the residential developments and provision of dog poo bins across all areas.

Recommendations:

- 19) Review plans for the new Town centre developments and consider adding a children's play area.**
- 20) Ensure that plans are made to refurb the High street to the same standard as the new development, tying in the High street so it flows and feels like a single space.**
- 21) Ensure adequate bike parking/bike storage facilities across all developments**
- 22) Ensure addition of dog poo bins across all areas.**
- 23) If not done already considered make the cinema an "Everyman" type concept.**

3.4 Market

The Grimsey Review highlighted the importance of markets and their positive effect on residents. In a report by the Institute of Place Management (2015) it explained why markets are economically, socially and politically critical for Town centres. The report also confirmed that markets can generate footfall increases of circa 25% and have been shown to increase retail sales with market visitors spending money in other shops. The report then goes on to explain that markets provide low barriers to entry and as result can encourage new businesses and nurture retail innovation.

The Town Council has been working hard to maintain the Town's Charter market on Mondays. It is trying to keep the market more traditional with a wide range of stalls selling a selection of goods. It has also worked to change the style of the stalls, moving away from the old metal frames to more modern gazebo type stalls, making the market look more attractive and also taking less time to set up and break down. Although the market continues it is not the size, nor as vibrant as it has been in the past. This appears to be a common problem across the district and I feel needs further consideration and attention.

The addition of speciality markets on perhaps a monthly basis at weekends would add greatly to the towns ambience and increase the attractiveness of the town for both residents and visitors alike.

Recommendations:

- 24) Town centre Manager to work with ETC to review the current market and take steps to develop.**
- 25) Consider addition of weekend speciality markets and take steps to secure.**
- 26) Town centre Manager to review markets district-wide and look for a revised approach to their operation, also taking the specific opportunity offered by the regional market at North Weald Airfield.**

3.5 Library

The library continues to play an important part of local Town centres. Epping is no exception. As a part of the redevelopment plans, it is intended that the library be kept, but potentially relocated to an alternative location. The options are under consideration.

If it is intended to emphasise the community hub aspects and if relocation occurs, ensure it is located in building that provides space and support for a variety of community hub activities, such as those envisaged for the Waltham Abbey Community Hub development

Recommendations:

27) EFDC/ETC to consult on space requirements and needs of a new library and work to secure a suitable location.

28) Consideration should be given to establishing the library as a Community hub and provision made for this accordingly.

3.6 Community hub

A town centre community hub would provide a central location specifically designed to provide a range of services for residents and businesses. It could include such things as a mini job centre for local employment opportunities, a Police helpdesk, town centre information point and a place where locals could come to discuss and highlight issues, concerns or thoughts they may have. The community hub could provide space for local exhibitions, culture/arts, demonstrations, lectures and talks, social space for mums groups, youth activities and as a meeting space for community themed meetings, consultations and discussions. It would be a useful and safe space for older residents and generally aid a stronger sense of community and wellbeing.

A logical home for a community hub would be a colocation with library, voluntary and other public service bodies, e.g. The Civic Building. The events run at the community hub would bring continued footfall which, providing it was positioned in the town centre, would in turn benefit local retailers and businesses. It is noted that the Town Council operate a number of facilities for community use and due consideration should be given to the option of using these as well.

Recommendations:

29) Continue with the Community hub development of the Civic Centre.

30) Review benefits of Community hub and put together program of events.

31) Publicise community hub and program of events.

3.7 Playgrounds

There are a number of playgrounds around Epping, some of which are better than others. I am aware that an organisation called the Epping Playground Association has been formed and is actively funding for updated facilities at the Lower Swaines recreation ground playground. I feel that these play areas are an essential element of a town's make up and encourage community and social interaction. As a result, it is important that both the Town and District Councils are actively involved in their ongoing development and support.

Currently there are no play areas within Epping Town Centre. However, a play area is something which could be included within the new Town centre developments and I feel would be of great assistance in ensuring a Town centre offering something for families and for the community as a whole.

Recommendations:

32) Consider addition of a childrens' play area to the new Town centre developments.

3.8 Tourism/Visitors

Although Epping is a lovely town with a great deal of character, charm and historic interest, it is not particularly a tourist/visitor destination.

Clearly with the introduction of a new sports centre/swimming pool and a cinema this will change tremendously and also add some further footfall to the evening economy.

The Epping Ongar Railway is a major attraction to the area and in the year pre-Covid carried approximately 45,000 passengers. Although it is called the Epping Ongar Railway it doesn't currently link up with Epping and instead runs from North Weald to Ongar with a vintage bus service operating from Epping to North Weald. The railway track does run to Epping, however there are a number of engineering and other practical hurdles that need to be addressed to extend the service to Epping. If the heritage railway could run from Epping this would increase the attraction tremendously and could potentially double passenger numbers – which of course would also increase footfall to Epping Town centre and benefit the economy as a whole. With this in mind, I would recommend EFDC maintains relationships with the Epping Ongar Railway and supports them in extending their operating service.

Recommendations:

- 33) EFDC to support Epping Ongar Railway in its plans to increase the operating service.**
- 34) Develop town offer to make Town centre more attractive to visitors.**

3.9 Signage

Signage within Epping could be greatly improved and should be reviewed accordingly. Examples would be from the station to Epping Forest, from the station to the town centre and to the Epping Way to name but a few. Also signage welcoming people to Epping. All new signage should be of a heritage type and compatible with the historic character of the town.

Recommendations:

- 35) Review all signage in and around Epping and ensure it s suitable to the needs and requirements of the town.**
- 36) Ensure any new signage is in keeping with the character of the town.**

3.10 Public Facilities

Epping should be reviewed to ensure it offers the required public facilities. These include adequate seating for all sections of the community in all areas, open, clean and functional public toilets, adequate lighting at all times across all areas of the Town centre, bike racks/hoops in easily accessible places and strategically placed dog poo bins.

Recommendations:

- 37) Review benches and seating in Epping and ensure it is adequate for the needs of the town.**
- 38) Review bike racks/hoops within the town centre and at other destinations and ensure they are adequate for the needs of the town.**
- 39) Review dog poo bins in town centre and other areas as appropriate and ensure they are adequate to needs of the town.**
- 40) Ensure that all areas of Epping, including car parks, alleyways, etc are adequately lit.**
- 41) Review provision of public toilets and ensure they are adequate for the town.**

3.11 Wi-fi and Digital Presence

The digital age and the need for connectivity is increasingly important for numerous sections of the community. As a result I would suggest free wi-fi availability on Epping high street and across the new leisure and retail developments.

It should be acknowledged that people are now shopping differently and that circa 30% of retail sales are being done online (Office of National Statistics, Aug 2020). This figure is up from 21.9% at the beginning of March 2020 and the beginning of the Covid 19 lockdown. Regardless of the pandemic, online sales will continue to grow, and retail expert KPMG predicts the figure rising to 50% by 2025. As a result, retail businesses need to adjust their business models accordingly and develop their offer for both markets.

As a part of adding a wi-fi option to the town centre a social media presence should be developed enabling online and offline businesses. Mobile technologies and virtual shopping should be used to enhance the consumer Town centre experience and in turn increase footfall.

Consideration should be given to bringing in a third-party contractor such as Click It Local and Maybe (www.maybetech.com) to develop online, social media/Town centre/retailer collaboration.

Recommendations:

- 42) Put in place free WI-fi within the High street and new leisure and retail developments, and publicise.**
- 43) Consider benefits of Click It Local scheme. Secure and promote accordingly.**
- 44) Agree way forward in respect of social edia strategy/presence and execute accordingly.**
- 45) Arrange for assistance and support for retailers in establishing an online presence.**

4 Appearance

Epping is an extremely attractive town. It has a very definite town centre, a good community feel and from the people I have spoken to has the genuine affection of everyone who lives and works there. The main High street has a real mixture of properties. Although built across different eras, the Town centre comes together well and its mixture of property gives the feel of a town that has developed over time, is lived in and well used and appreciated. There is a nice green space half-way along the High street at the end of Station Road and at the northern end the High street tapers out onto another lovely green and war memorial. The new developments will add a further and more modern aspect to the Town centre, but if done sympathetically should generally increase the overall attractiveness of the town, whilst maintaining its character.

Maintaining and increasing the attractiveness of the public realm makes a massive difference to a Town centre. It encourages people to visit and also increases their dwell time, which in turn benefits the local shops and businesses. Making a town into something that residents can be proud of and somewhere they are pleased to be seen increases their loyalty, encourages their support and engagement and of course helps build a strong and cohesive community. It is important therefore that the public realm is continually reviewed, that maintenance issues are addressed and that the residents and businesses take a pride in its appearance.

4.1 General Maintenance and refurbishment

The majority of the general maintenance issues are covered in the Quick Wins earlier in this report.

Recommendations:

46) Review Quick Wins and arrange for work to be completed.

4.2 Widening of pavement area.

As a part of the Safer Spaces work by EFDC, a number of parking spaces have been removed to make a wider pavement space for Covid safe pedestrian separation. The areas are currently separated using plastic barriers which are both untidy and unsightly. Moving forward, it has been decided that a more permanent temporary pavement area be established and that it will remain there until a potential removal date of December 2021.

The loss of parking spaces doesn't appear to be making a particular difference to Town centre parking and only accounts for a small percentage of the overall parking spaces. As a result, I see this scheme, particularly in the main stretch of High street from St Johns Church to the Council offices, as an excellent way of testing the ground for a permanent extension of the pavement and also as a way of encouraging shops to extend their business to include both on-street trading and on-street hospitality. The widened area could also be used as a performance space for street musicians and buskers, adding to the overall atmosphere. This will all add to the attractiveness of the town centre, increase the feeling of community and make the town more of a destination to visitors.

Recommendations:

47) Encourage retailers to extend their business to include street trading.

48) Review benefit/appropriateness of extended pavement space and consider making permanent. This is now taking place.

49) Consider encouraging musicians and street performers into the high street

4.3 Shop Fronts

The uniformity of shops fronts along a retail centre can markedly increase the attractiveness of the road and also in doing so increase the attractiveness and therefore draw to individual stores. The majority of shops in the High street are attractive and in good repair, however there are some which require redecoration and/or complete refit. To do this would undoubtedly assist the retailers in attracting business, increase the attractiveness of the public realm and therefore improve the town centre for everyone's benefit.

It would be good to agree at Council level a uniform approach to shop front and signage presentation along the High street and to ensure that this is adhered to. Careful consideration should be given by the Council in allowing changes to shop fronts and/or shop signage and in ensuring that any proposals are in keeping with the area.

Recommendations:

50) Consult with ETC, ETCP and retailers to consider options in respect of shop fronts and making/keeping them attractive and in the overall style of the town.

51) EFDC to give careful consideration to design and style of Town centre shop fronts and signage.

4.4 A-Boards and other retail paraphernalia

A number of retailers have A-boards and other retail paraphernalia, external trading/retail displays on the pavement outside their shops. Although I understand the need for this, if not carefully managed these can block access and generally make the place look untidy. Street trading licences should provide for these and lay out the conditions and spaces for use – the Council should monitor this and ensure that all conditions are being complied with, particularly to ensure that the High street remains as attractive and as accessible as possible.

Considerations should be given to some form of demarcation outside each store over which seating, A-boards and other retail paraphernalia, if allowed, cannot overstep.

Recommendations:

52) Review Town centre policy and regulations for trading from the front of premises, retail displays and A-boards on the pavement and enforce accordingly.

4.5 Trees and Planters

Tree lined pedestrian routes and landscaped areas all contribute to civic pride and generally make a town more attractive. Epping already has an active Epping in Bloom scheme, with a team of local volunteers improving the appearance of the public realm and also adding the interest of a community garden in the Town centre. I feel though that this could be built on considerably and that perhaps the District and Town Councils could work with Epping in Bloom to extend the scheme further.

There are a number of trees along Epping high street and also from St Johns Church, running south, a large expanse of grass borders and verges. From St Johns Church running north however there is very little until you reach the planters at the very end of the shops, by the Council offices. My feeling is that the public realm along this stretch could be greatly improved with the addition of some planters, hanging baskets etc. This landscaping should also be followed along the same theme and design into the new developments.

Recommendations:

53) Review current “green” townscape and work with Epping in Bloom to develop and improve.

54) Add further planters/hanging baskets etc along the High street north of St Johns Church.

5 Access

Town centres need to recognise that Co2 emissions have to be reduced and as a result there is much more emphasis on ensuring a reduced reliance on cars. To this end, Town centres need to ensure their accessibility via other methods of transport and provide for these methods accordingly. In addition to reducing carbon emissions this will also encourage the use of the Town centre by the wider community via various methods of transport.

Simply stopping car access and reducing or taking away parking spaces, doesn't resolve this problem. Undoubtedly people will still want to access Epping town centre by car, however there is a balance to be had between encouraging pedestrian, cycling and public transport access and then gradually reducing provision for motor vehicles as other methods of travel develop and gain traction.

For generations urban areas have been designed exclusively around the car. This now has to change and Town centres developed to provide attractive, walkable and cyclable physical space.

5.1 Parking

Parking in Epping is undoubtedly a problem. There are insufficient parking spaces for the number of cars using the town and even through the pandemic, car parks and high street parking have been heavily used. With further residential development planned and additions of a new leisure centre and cinema/retail developments encouraging more people to use the town there will be an even greater need for parking. It is appreciated that we are trying to encourage a lesser reliance on cars, however with the introduction of cleaner electric cars, I think it will be some time before we see a reduction in car numbers and as a result Town centre parking will continue to be in demand.

Having discussed this matter with all the stakeholders, residents and businesses, there is no clear answer. I think that commuter parking should be discouraged other than in the station car park. I would suggest that commuters bring no benefit to the town and that a reduction in street parking for commuters would increase the street parking available for residents and short-term visitors. This could be enforced using parking restrictions such as permit holder parking and "permit holders only 1-2pm", zone parking, use of pay and display in a greater number of areas and increasing the cost of longer-term parking. Another option would be to consider making the Epping Station car park into a multilevel car park, thus doubling or more, the number of spaces.

The other option is to find alternative ways for residents to access the town centre – see below.

Recommendations:

- 55) Review parking provision in and around Epping and consider schemes to aid resident and business parking.***
- 56) Review parking arrangements to discourage commuter parking***
- 57) Consider option of making station parking multi level.***

5.2 Electric Scooter Scheme

Consideration should be given to implementing an electric scooter rental scheme to help support a 'green' alternative to local travel that is convenient, clean and affordable and helps to mitigate reduced public transport capacity and allow for social distancing as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. E-scooters can reduce reliance on car trips, reduce congestion and improve air quality.

The Department for Transport (DfT) expanded trials of rental e-scooters and legislation was introduced to allow e-scooters to use highways and cycle routes. Only e-scooters in an approved trial are legal. Privately owned scooters will still be illegal on public networks.

It may be worth consulting Buckinghamshire Council which introduced this service on a 12-month trial in Aylesbury and High Wycombe. The scheme is operated by Zipp Mobility. The scooters have defined parking areas and also a defined operating area, outside which they cease to run.

This would be a great scheme to assist in discouraging car usage in Epping. Scooters could be made available at the station and at various locations in and around the Town centre. If successful, consideration could be given to extending the scheme to other areas within the District.

Recommendations:

- 58) EFDC to consult with ETC on viability of introducing an E-Scooter scheme.**
- 59) EFDC to contact Buckinghamshire Council and discuss trial findings and benefits.**
- 60) Introduce scheme for Epping on a trial basis.**

5.3 Cycling

Cycling is increasingly being promoted and encouraged and it is important that all residents of a town should be able to access the town centre, the towns various green and public spaces, leisure centre and attractions easily and safely by bike. In addition, the town should also provide for cycle racks/hoops at various destinations to enable the bikes to be safely secured.

My feeling in Epping is that the majority of roads are fairly quiet and that as a result there is minimal need for dedicated cycling lanes. Having said this, High Road/High street (B1393) in and out of Epping is a busy route. Although some of the road has tracks running alongside it within the safety of the forest, some sections could do with the addition of a dedicated cycle lane.

Recommendations:

- 61) Review cycling accessibility in and around Epping - particularly around main roads and the B1393 and make arrangements for the provision of safe, secure and clearly marked cycle paths and routes where necessary.**

5.4 Buses

There are numerous bus services in and around Epping connecting the town with towns like Harlow, Loughton, Waltham Abbey and Ongar. From what I understand these aren't reliable or punctual services. At a time when we want to reduce car usage and encourage public and other forms of transport the benefit of a reliable bus service is important and key. As a result I would suggest that the bus routes and their timetables are reviewed to ensure they are meeting the needs of the community.

Recommendations:

- 62) Review bus routes and timetables to ensure they are meeting the needs of the community.**

5.5 Trains

Epping is the final stop on the London Underground Central Line and provides regular commuter and other services in and out of London with Liverpool Street 40 minutes away and Stratford 20 minutes away. The Central Line makes Epping a busy commuter town not only for residents, but also as it is at the end of the line, for a number of commuters who drive from neighbouring towns and villages to access it.

6 Consultation

6.1 Market Research

In addition to thoughts and expertise of the author, consultation for this report has been obtained from the following:

Epping Forest District Council
Epping Town Council
Epping Town Partnership
Qualis Group Ltd
Epping Ongar Railway
Various councillors and other prominent/influential Epping residents
Various Epping retailers
Various Epping residents

It is accepted that additional research will be required from residents, retailers and businesses to move the ideas in this report forward. It is felt however that if the initiative is going to be Community/Town Council driven research should be carried out more locally.

7. Sources of Additional Support

High streets Task Force (www.highstreettaskforce.org.uk) – supporting communities and local government to transform their High streets.

Click It Local (www.clickitlocal.co.uk) – online shopping/delivery service

Maybe (www.maybetech.com) – A smarter approach to social media

Action List	Priority
<i>EFDC/Highway Rangers to complete “quick wins”.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Appoint Town centre Manager.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Discuss and establish Town Leadership Team - form Town Team and/or refocus Town Centre Partnership.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Complete research on thoughts and considerations of residents and businesses – incorporate and implement where appropriate.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Identify the retail heart of Epping and take steps to protect it from residential development.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Discuss vision for the High street and target new and specific retailers and businesses.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Review the “green” street scene and public realm on the High street, consider the addition of planters etc and action accordingly.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>EFDC and ETC to work with Epping in Bloom to extend scheme.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Continually review town centre public realm, maintain and increase its attractiveness.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Review plans for town centre development and see if a children’s play area can be included.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Ensure that provision is made to develop the town centre in line with new developments - to make the space flow continually and tie the old and new together as one.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Carry out all general maintenance/refurbishment recommendations.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Ensure adequate public facilities throughout the town, including public toilets, benches, street furniture, bike parking, dog poo bins etc.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Review market provision with TC and assess what should be done to promote it.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Review future library provision, the space required and the range of services offered.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Review with ETC, the requirement for a community hub, consider its location and services provided.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Review attraction of Epping to visitors, together with the services offered by the Epping Ongar Railway and take action to increase visitor numbers.</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Put in place a free wi-fi service in the Town centre and increase the towns digital presence through the promotion of Click It Local, Maybe Tech etc.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Arrange for removal of unsightly temporary barriers, signage etc and complete more permanent temporary works.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Encourage safe street trading and hospitality.</i>	<i>1</i>

- Consider encouraging street musicians/performers into the Town centre.*** 2
- Review Town centre policy on A Boards and other pavement retail paraphernalia and ensure pavements are kept tidy and accessible to all.*** 2
- Review parking arrangements in Epping. Take steps to assist with parking for residents and businesses and to discourage commuter parking.*** 2
- Consider benefits of an E-Scooter scheme, review Bucks Council trial and if appropriate, roll out.*** 1
- Review cycling accessibility in Epping. Consider addition of cycle lanes on the B1393, ensure adequate cycle parking in and around Epping.*** 1
- Review bus routes and times to ensure they are meeting the needs of the community.*** 3

Draft

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