

### 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  
Studio 3 Ltd  
Email: [pm@studio-3.co.uk](mailto:pm@studio-3.co.uk)

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.

DRY

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Pages</u>
<b><u>Foreword</u></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><u>Quick Wins</u></b>	<b>5</b>
<b><u>2. Town Management</u></b>	<b>5 - 7</b>
2.1 Town Centre Leadership	
2.2 Town(s) Centre Manager	
2.3 Establishment of a Town Team	
2.4 Attracting New Businesses and Brands	
<b><u>3. Town Offer</u></b>	<b>7 - 14</b>
3.1 The Broadway	
3.2 Retail	
3.3 Epping Forest Retail Park	
3.4 The Broadway Market	
3.5 Signage	
3.6 Tourism/Visitors	
3.7 Broadway Community Hub	
3.8 Library	
3.9 Public Facilities	
3.10 Wi-fi/Digital Presence	
3.11 New City College	
3.12 Epping Forest District Council	
3.13 Pedestrianisation	
<b><u>4. Appearance</u></b>	<b>14 - 16</b>
4.1 General Maintenance and Refurbishment	
4.2 Shop Fronts	
4.3 A-Board and Retail Paraphernalia	
4.4 Trees and Planters	
<b><u>5. Access</u></b>	<b>16 - 18</b>
5.1 Cycling	
5.2 Buses	
5.3 Parking	
5.4 General Traffic	
<b><u>6. Consultation</u></b>	<b>18</b>
6.1 Market Research	
<b><u>8. Sources of Additional Support</u></b>	<b>18</b>
<b><u>9. Action List</u></b>	<b>19</b>

## **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](http://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](http://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)) – supporting communities and local government to transform their high streets.

*Maybe* ([www.maybetech.com](http://www.maybetech.com)) – A smarter approach to social media

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