



Stronger Place Select Committee

Town Centre Regeneration – An Update.

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Agenda

- Our changing High Streets
- Epping Forest
- The benefits of a buoyant Town Centre
- The Covid effect
- EFDC Town Centre Action Plan
- The future
- Conclusion
- We need you!
- Questions

Our changing High Streets

- Generally in decline
- Increased competition from supermarkets & online retailers
- Mass exodus of brands/national chains
- Banks and Post Offices closing
- Continued attractiveness of retail parks and some shopping centres
- Reduced footfall – for various reasons
- High rent, rates and overheads
- Loss of planning regulation on High Streets
- National (High Street) vacancy rates – 14.5%

Epping Forest

- High streets appear to be fairly resilient
- Vacancy rates less than 9% (Nationally 14.5%)
- Mainly independent retailers
- Not many national chains/brands
- Work from home - helping to keep people local
- Buoyant and fairly loyal communities
- Each town is different / has different USP

The benefits of a buoyant Town Centre

- Increases social value of a town
- Provides benefits to economic and environmental wellbeing
- Increase social wellbeing and community value
- Can give people pride in their place – which can help reduce crime and vandalism
- Supports local businesses
- Encourages new businesses and nurtures retail innovation
- Brings people together

The Covid effect

- Devastating
- Massive loss of footfall and trade
- Mental stress
- Spiralling debt & financial pressure
- Uneven playing field - supermarkets able to sell “non-essential” goods

- More people working from home and using local shops
- Great community spirit and support

EFDC Town Centre Action Plan

- Commissioned independent Town Centre reports on Waltham Abbey, Ongar, The Broadway Loughton, High Road Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Epping
- Analysis of each town centre and of its strengths and weaknesses
- Provided a range of short term “quick wins” and indication of longer term plan
- Community centre was seen as important
- Consideration of development of areas into 15 minute neighbourhoods
- Importance of all stakeholders working together

EFDC Town Centre Action Plan

- Appointment of:
 - Town Centre Project Manager (12 month contract)
 - Deputy Town Centre Project Manager (6 month contract)
- Supported by the Councils Economic Development Department and with assistance of all relevant Council departments

Completed Works

- Works carried out by Highway Rangers to Waltham Abbey, Ongar, Debden and Buckhurst Hill – refurbishment/repainting of lamp posts, bollards, benches and bins. Levelling of uneven paving, replacement of trees and general beautification of areas to improve the public realm for residents and visitors alike.
- Improved pedestrian areas within Epping to provide for a Covid safe environment and generally improved public realm.

Initiatives underway

Christmas Radio Campaign to promote local high streets

Footfall data capture toolkit

Click It Local- E-commerce solution to support local independent traders.

Loyal Free- Free app for businesses to promote loyalty offers and local events.

Ongar Christmas Lights support

North Weald Christmas Light support

Stanford Rivers Parish Council Christmas Light support

Chigwell Christmas Light Support

Invest Epping Forest Website

Hanging Banner Project

22 temporary planters to be distributed across district.

Federation of Small Business (FSB) - Subsidised membership subscription.

Best Growth Hub Business Support

Parklet Programme for Waltham Abbey

Shopper/Residents Survey

Business Survey

Town Centre Entertainment

Business Breakfast/NCC

Extension of High Street Ambassadors Project

Other works and initiatives

- Significant capital investment by Qualis in the Town Centres
- Consultation underway for a new Epping Forest District Market Policy
- Consider new permitted development rights on High Streets and consideration of Article 4 Direction for pre-determined areas and/or sections of our high street to help protect their fabric.
- Continuous work to build relationships with Town/Parish Councils and Town Partnerships with a view to pulling together town teams to plan and execute a future for each of our high streets and town centres.

The Future

- Currently in a Covid “fog” and have been for 2 years – which is distorting planned town centre regeneration
- Current initiatives are short term funded by short term Covid support from central government.
- Plan for the medium to longer term
- Longer term initiatives determining and/or developing each towns USP
- Continued work with Town/Parish Councils, Town Partnerships and other key stakeholders to regenerate and re-invigorate our town centres with the drivers of Localism, Leadership and Sustainability for the benefit of future generations.
- Your attention is drawn to the Grimsey Review Research Paper, Against All Odds (available at: <http://www.vanishinghighstreet.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/AgainstAllOdds-REVIEW-16th-July-optimised.pdf>)

Conclusion

- A good start
- Still a massive amount to do
- Need an effective digital element – Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ)
- Make towns destinations in their own right
- Provide services and facilities you can't get online
- Bring people and communities together
- Long term District Council, Town/Parish Council, business & community commitment, support and budget



- To provide clear, stable, and well communicated leadership
- To value the independent retail and service sector
- To accept responsibility for your town centre and high street
- To provide a clear visionary plan (built with stakeholders) for your town centre
- To ensure a true corporate approach is taken throughout the whole local authority toward delivery of the plan
- To structure Council delivery to best support the needs of the town centre, (it is not uncommon for up to five or six different departments to be involved in operating its town centre functions each with separate budgets, responsibilities, etc.)
- To accept that the cost of maintaining and sustaining a vibrant, clean, safe, and environmentally friendly town centre are core functions not underpinned by a commercial model driven by charges and fees
- To provide safe, affordable incubation and start up space with appropriate help and support.
- To support and actively pursue local social value.
- To ensure effective partnerships with police and partners for town centres to be safe
- To value and support the arts and culture contribution to town centres and community
- To ensure the Councils own services and facilities are in and around its town centres (leisure, sport, health etc.)

Any questions?