

**Walthamstow Town Centre
Public Meeting
21 May 2007**

- Meeting opened by Councillor Clive Loakes, Leader of the Council.
- Presentation of results of public consultation period by Mrs Sam Neal, London Borough of Waltham Forest and Mrs Sian Penner, Renaisi. (Consultation process and results summary available at: <http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/consultation-report-final.pdf>)
- Presentation on The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, 'Enquiry by Design' and the Walthamstow Town Centre project by Mr Jason Syers, The Prince's Foundation.
- Audience discussion facilitated by Councillor Loakes.

Notes from Discussion:

Street Market

- Toilets requested and cleanliness maintained.
- Current practice of lorry/team of people putting up and taking down all street market stalls – unsustainable? Waste of energy and time etc?
- Maintenance of the market: when decision made to close market on Monday's, insurance of 'deep cleaning' of the street was made. However, concerns this has not eventuated.
- The market is a significant draw of people to Walthamstow Town Centre. Any changes to the market, including the days of the week, affect customers.
- Does having to pack up/down the market each day create an incentive to limit the days?
- Question the need to shorten the market – some comment that market is too crowded, therefore opportunity to spread it out. Advantages in being long (increased walking).
- The Market competes with supermarkets and out of town centres, so it needs to compete back: needs to be clean, litter free, easy to walk through.
- 'If it aint broke, don't fix it'
- Previous advice suggested the market would be better when smaller and closed on Monday. But has suffered in St James end since the time of that decision.
- Confusion to shoppers re. closed days, which can lead to reduced trade.
- Market is lovely.
- How can the street market be saved? It has been experiencing an accelerating rate of shrinkage in last 50 years. Concern that this will continue. Market is noisy, smelly, unruly, creates litter – but is one of the best elements of Walthamstow. Take market away, let it die and Walthamstow will be like many other anonymous, Edwardian, dormant Borough.
- The Market is the best thing about Walthamstow. It is the economic pulse of the Borough.
- Concern that the three options produced did not illustrate a strong commitment to the future of the market and its central role in Walthamstow and its development.

- Bottom half of the market has been dying because of increase in traffic on Willow Rd. Idea of creating an underpass.
- Consider how you could cover some or all of the market, so that it could operate in mixed weather.
- Competing with Bluewater, Mall shopping in Stratford, Wood Green etc – need to try to revive market so it can compete with such developments.
- When traders had to put up and pack down their own stalls, it was very noisy.
- The site where stalls used to be stored is a mess.
- State of the surfaces along the High Street look shabby and dirty. They are not being cleaned properly, resulting in them looking unattractive and risk of leading to falls, due to slippery surface.
- Support for current policy of not having market on Monday – gives opportunity to maintain street and properties. As long as well publicised.
- Wonderful asset and people come from long distances to visit/utilise the Market.

Evening Economy:

- Greater police presence requested, in order to be / feel safer in the Town Centre at night.
- Restaurants desired
- Culture and the arts a major contributor to reviving an area.
- Concern that EbD has made no plans for a theatre, public art, arts centre.
- High St restaurants use needs to be linked to a cultural activity.
- Encourage re-establishing a cinema into the EMD Cinema building, to be used as a cinema plus other daytime activities.
- Evening economy could extend from the EMD Cinema site to the Town Square.
- Issue of the blank wall of BhS and the limited activity of the bank – both impacting on the vitality of the Town Square.
- Lots of residents using Islington, West End etc for a night time economy. If had cinema, art, pub, theatre people would stay here. Have the artists, need the spaces. If things on offer, people will use area and stay and spend money here.
- Concerns regarding security of tube station, and accessibility – when so many people use it.
- Concern regarding stair access to tube station – need to improve this access.
- Need to encourage young people to stay in Town Centre for social activities, as this will boost the economy.
- Build on strengths: EMD cinema, other beautiful buildings.
- Need to combine activities, to enable a night time economy. Otherwise people will continue to go elsewhere for recreation.
- Dog Track, Market, EMD Cinema – elements that define Walthamstow but are all under consideration at present.
- Can't have an evening economy by decree. Evening economy not separable from a day time and other economy. Need a strong day time economy that will spill over into the evening.
- Introduction of employment will have a greater impact on the evening economy than new housing will. Don't separate issue of evening economy with general economy.

Town Square

- Need to bring activity from High Street across Town Square, so when people come out of the station people can see it and are drawn into the Town Centre.
- If things (bus station, market) are well maintained, people will be encouraged to use them more. Plants in the town square. Replacing of the paving stones after works.
- Support for market to come onto town square. But fruit and vegetable stalls make a mess – still want these stalls but they need to be maintained/cleaned.
- No toilet facilities open before 9am – when market traders on site from 4am. Consider opening toilets earlier.
- Town Square needs to be well maintained.
- Appreciate the entertainment/activity brought onto the town square e.g. French Markets.
- Suggestion for Town Square to accommodate different type of markets on different days of the week e.g. antique market, craft market, French market.
- Support the retention of the playground
- Proposal for a skate park, small portable outdoor eating tables, outdoor dining.

South Grove

- Support for a supermarket activity to be added to South Grove.
- Opposed to supermarket on South Grove.
- Need to do something to it.
- Could have spill over benefits to Mission Grove
- Workspace/Alpha Business interested in putting more work space on car park.
- Concerned that plans to increase activity/uses on South Grove would be at the detriment of the lower part of the Street Market.
- When identifying potential for key retailers to be located on South Grove, consider past experience of such retailers in the Town Centre.
- Need space for youth activities – Mission Grove car park used for basketball.
- Could something be done specifically for youth on this site?
- Suggestion of putting a mix of houses and car parks around St James St.

Length of High Street

- Like length in totality.
- Desire for the quality of the High Street to be managed along full length of the street.
- Love interaction of people on High Street, in the market. Appreciate the variety of offer. Like social interaction it enables. Love spontaneous nature. Multi culture experience.
- Question the need to have cars on High St in evening – dangerous for pedestrians on High Street. Good being pedestrianised during day.
- Comment that High Street is a pedestrian zone at all times – but this is not policed.
- Issue of during loading time, vehicles can park on pavement at any location – dangerous for pedestrians.
- Recent paving scheme took off edge of pavement, now dangerous for pedestrians. Needs to be replaced/addressed.
- Bit at top of High Street, opposite Church Hill, where market was clipped back – now two way traffic. Lots of traffic and difficult for pedestrians to use. Should be

put back to how it was, this would also provide an opportunity to integrate the street market into Hoe Street.

- Suggestion that bikes be permitted to go down the High Street during the evening.

Bus Station

- Safety has been improved greatly to date.
- Concerned with area at top of station, which links to High Street – dark, lack of lighting, needs to be more approachable.
- Bus station wont be big enough to meet needs of buses in 20 years time etc.
- Slow for buses to come off Hoe Street and turn onto Selborne Rd.
- In 15-20 years time an interchange could be built on top of railway. Need to consider the long term future for the interchange.
- Current bus station meets current needs. But need to safeguard space around the station, so bigger change could be built in future. Would be a mistake to use station car park for small amount of housing etc, when future interchange could grow there.
- Support design of bus station. But a lot of unused space on the inside, with limited space in the pedestrian spaces on the outside. Some areas are too narrow and risk pushing pedestrians into path of buses.
- Concern EU money has run out to complete underpass. Is this correct? Underpass due to be completed in this summer – this is designed to alleviate pedestrian congestion along outside of station.
- For late night users of the bus station, a police presence is necessary. Especially within underpass.
- Is it possible to signpost along the High Street the existence of the toilets in the bus station?

Queens Road Station

- What is the current usage of the Queens Road station, as a percentage of Walthamstow Central? This would determine the relevance of working on it.
- Queens Road station provides a good link to Hampstead. But need more trains on this line.
- Walkway between Queens Road and High St needed as is difficult to do so at present.
- Station is really unsafe.
- No ticket machines.
- Provides a great link between North and East London – but needs to be promoted more.
- Corner of Storey Road and High Street used to be a station. Consider extending right to here, and reopen.
- Support any proposal to improve access to Queens Road station from High St.
- Cost implication if tunnelling through etc – but something definitely needs to be done, even just extending to Selborne Rd and combining with good signage.
- Usage would increase if better interchange.

Height

- Against the 18 stories proposed on one of the options.
- Concern over parking issues created by increased heights.

- Walthamstow would need to have social amenities to support increase heights.
- Query regarding the status of agreements made in the past about limiting heights on the Arcade Site to seven stories.
- Council has refused many previous applications on height and shading – need assurance that Council will adhere to planning application precedent.
- Request for an Environmental Impact Assessment for Arcade scheme.
- Existing two story buildings in Town Square provide community aesthetics. A large range of housing/building styles and types leads to confused visual impact.
- If have higher heights, need public spaces/parks for residents to enjoy.
- Concern over apartment building opposite Walthamstow Central.
- Opposed to height.
- Look at how Arcade Site was original built, then incorporate an additional floor, to return to original style of development.
- Like the open skies of Waltham Forest.
- Sympathetic architecture. Need to ensure Town Centre/ High St and arcade development compliment each other.
- Reference to Paris neighbourhoods – 4-5 stories, retail on bottom, high densities.
- Keep Edwardian heights.
- Potential to utilise unused space above High Street shops.
- Recognise existing strengths of Walthamstow – this implies a low rise Borough (being different from Kensington, Westminster etc).
- Questioned why all three options included high rise.
- Query regarding previous agreements between the Council and the Cleveland Road Residents Association.
- Strong environmental impact advantage of having high rise in town centre, if office accommodation – due to empty trains coming in/out with existing commuter traffic. If height not having detrimental impacts on people's quality of life, then economic benefits will enhance all.

Other Comments

- Pleased pride in heritage illustrated in consultation results.
- Concern regarding past actions leading to activities and key buildings being closed down and money spent on things not needed.
- Request for actions to fix/enhance Walthamstow.
- How radical can the rebuilding be – knock down Selborne Walk, move the bank etc. Can you link through to South Grove, so no longer just a narrow High Street. Bring train station into town centre. Would help with congestion on Selborne Road. Have you got the remit? - if other councils/LA's can, so can LBWF. Tough decisions to be made, funding is difficult, private sector partners, central govt involvement.
- Questioned authenticity of consultation methods.