

## **East Grinstead - a plan.**

*This "plan" has been prepared by the CEO of the East Grinstead Business Association (EGBA) from comments suggestions and ideas, gathered over recent months. It is backed by members of the association's committee and officers (see last page for points of disagreement) but does not necessarily represent the views of the association's membership.*

### **Introduction.**

Over the last fifteen years or so East Grinstead (EG) as a centre for retail has declined in line with similar sized towns to the point where it cannot be classified as a "major attraction". Too many shops are empty, many are charity outlets and others are banks, estate agents or phone companies. The only thriving sector seems to be coffee shops and economy eating establishments. The privately owned/run retailer sector is fast disappearing and those remaining are getting very worried.

### **What are the causes?**

The growth of supermarkets and out of town mall retailing.

London Road is just like many other drab, uninspiring main street across the country.

Excessive rents and/or rates?

Lack of redevelopment:-

- Caffyns site.
- Queens Walk
- Railway Approach
- The station

Overall; insufficient "footfall".

### **What can be done in the short term?**

- Take a look at streets in similar towns in Europe. Send somebody to look at towns in say southern Germany or Austria – or get one of their experts to cast an eye over EG – we have a lot to learn about maximising our advantages.
- Add umbrellas outside Casablanca to bring a more "continental air".
- Replace the station – a fifty year old temporary prefab!
- Put up a prominent statue to Archibald McIndoe – EG's world famous "adopted son".
- Memorial sign outside Whitehall to the victims of the bomb.
- Improve convenience parking.
- Introduce a one way system.
- Build a quality promotional town web site – and keep it up to date.
- Heritage/attractions and car park signs.

### **What should be done in the longer term?**

- Revamp Railway Approach – it's the gateway to EG.
- Revamp London Road and all its shop fronts so that they reflect the architecture of the original – if you look up you can see that many of the buildings have architectural merit. Currently it is a mess and uninviting.
- Have the old post office building at the traffic lights (recently Grade 2 listed) renovated/converted (eg into a boutique hotel).
- Get back more of the business rate from central government and spend it locally.

### **Parking.**

This is a very raw issue both to retailers and shoppers in EG and needs addressing. Some arrangement needs to be made to provide easy, quick, free short term parking (60 mins). This could easily be addressed with the appropriate ticket machines. Streets currently restricted to permit parking (eg Fairfield Road) need to be made available under the terms now applied to Garland Road.

To maximise usage of the long term parking now provided some adjustment may be needed to the tariffs – parking fees are not very elastic!

Policing of free short term parking may be a problem as a constant roving enforcement presence would be necessary. This could possibly be achieved by forming Britain's first "Volunteer Traffic Warden Scheme" – similar to local "Speed watch". VTW's could also "police" yellow line parkers etc.

### **Traffic flow.**

The pedestrianisation of the High Street would greatly enhance EG however it would not be popular with effected retailers and many residents. A new one way system in both the High Street and London Road (as experienced during recent gas works and before that pavement improvement) would change the town and create a friendlier pedestrian/shopper environment. See sketch on last page.

### **Heritage signs.**

WE NEED TO SHOUT ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE.

Motorists heading north and south along the A22 pass along Beeching Way without a thought of visiting EG – why should they?

Should we start talking about *Grintstead* in the historical context?.

We need large well thought through, unusual "Heritage Signs" at the northern and southern ends of EG.

We need similarly positioned signs directing to parking.

The Sackville/Beeching Way roundabout could be "themed" showing what by-passers are missing. For example, have a timber framed mock medieval/Tudor building on it.

We need prominent maps in car parks indicating attractions, walks etc.

### **Web site.**

EG needs its own web site, "visiteastgrinstead.com", detailing:

- Attractions
- Access.
- Parking.
- Retailers
- History
- Walks
- Etc....

### **A centre for International companies.**

We are fortunate to have a number of large national and international companies based in greater East Grinstead – but we could have many more. What is holding such development back? Is it.....

- Lack of adequate modern office accommodation/
- Poor road infrastructure?
- Planning hurdles?

- Excessively high rents?
- Poor promotion of the benefits of locating here?

**Increase promotion of attractions/what EG offers.**

- Meridian line/rock
- Bluebell railway
- Medieval high street
- Medieval smuggling centre.
- Dorset Arms (Ghost/hanging judge).
- Chequer Mead Arts Centre.
- Home of Plastic Surgery (?)
- Blond McIndoe Research (statue?), Guinea pigs, "the Town that didn't stare".
- Town museum.
- Centre of the Iron Industry.
- Anybody for coffee.
- Sackville College (Good King Wenceslas)
- Martyrs site (Bar Cuba)
- St Swithans (Martyrs memorial)
- Standen House and Gardens.
- Wakehust Place.
- Lingfield Park horse racing.
- Blackland Farm – Girl Guide Association.
- Lama Park.
- Religious/sect centre
- Events
- Recreational cycling centre based on the Worth Way.
- Sports facilities. – 6 (?) golf courses within twenty minutes.
- Walking centre - Ashdown Forest.
- 15 minutes from Gatwick Airport, 50 minutes from London, 80 minutes from Dover, 40 minutes from the South Coast/Brighton, 30 minutes from the South Downs National Park.

## **WE NEED TO SHOUT ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE!**

**Points of disagreement raised by committee members or association officers.**

- Roger Martell does not believe that free parking will bring more business to the town, will only reduce council revenue and is consequently against it.
- Both Richard Blackburn and Carol Everest are against the introduction of a one way traffic system.
- Charmaine Hallmark and Matt Cole have not, as yet, responded.

SWPS  
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