



PO BOX 271, EPPING 1710

2020 Annual Report

It would be an understatement to say that 2020 was a year unlike any other. As all our lives were turned upside down, so it was with developments in Epping and the work of the Trust. There was noticeably less building in the town centre (with the exception of the huge Langston project) as developers didn't progress projects and unit sales fell. Council continued to work on some important planning reviews, forward planning and community infrastructure but the pace slowed. The Trust had to pause face-to-face General Meetings, but launched virtual quarterly meetings over Zoom.

Key issues during the year that the Trust addressed were:

Development Applications: The Trust made submissions on a wide range of applications, or responded to existing applications as they passed through the various stages of approval. We spoke at Planning Panel meetings (virtually, which was not a good way to conduct public review). Preparing responses to DAs takes time as attention to detail is required. We continue to need assistance in this area (both expertise but also for proof reading etc).

The pace of dual occupancy developments on the western side of the railway line continued, and is distressing for many residents as it usually involves wholesale removal of mature trees. Council has recognised that this is having an adverse impact on the character of the suburb and contributing to increased traffic on suburban roads. Planning changes are underway to address this.

The most disappointing sight this year was the demolition of the historic cottage on Oxford Street. This was a deliberate action by the developer who has shown no sign of proceeding with a new building on the site, but wanted to make sure it was clear of all obstacles. It is a poor part of the planning system that this is allowed.

Council Liaison: The Trust thanks all our local councillors for their work – we appreciate their ongoing support of the Trust, and their availability to talk through numerous issues. They are strong advocates for delivering the important community infrastructure Epping needs, and it was unfortunate that Covid slowed down some projects. Council elections were postponed until September 2021.

Infrastructure: 2020 was a frustrating year for two pieces of community infrastructure. Firstly, the new Epping Community Centre (in the old Boronia Grove centre that council purchased over 2 years ago) failed to open. Council did complete some essential updating work to bring the building up to code, but the failure to then open it for public use is unfathomable. At the time of writing, there is still no sign of it opening!

The new aquatic centre at Dence Park took an important step forward with the confirmation of the initial budget (over \$23 million) by council, and the public exhibition of new design options. It is frustrating that council spent 18 months and over \$500,000 on a master plan that is now largely redundant as further investigations have led to major design changes. But now the battle is to ensure that further funds are found to finish the new children's water play/wading pool area. To think of spending so much, and doing a huge rebuild, without this key element is ridiculous. Let's hope one of the State Government funds can be tapped to meet the difference.

However, challenges remain. Council staff continue to push for a library on the west side which would include selling off part of the council owned car park (why should public facilities be traded for commercial interests?), and the old Bowling Club site's future as public recreation space still hangs in the balance. The developer which owns this, together with the neighbouring site facing Epping Road, had their DA rejected in November with a large range of issues highlighted by council. But we are sure that more will follow, so watch this space.

Trust governance and membership: Covid definitely impacted the Trust's membership. It is understandable that during this time residents have had a lot of financial challenges, as well as other concerns but it was disappointing to see nearly 50 households not renew. This was the first drop in numbers in recent years, and the Trust is reaching out to them to rejoin in 2021. Membership funds (renewals and donations) were however sufficient to meet outgoings. Please see the Treasurer's Report for more information.

The Trust has 3 sub committees to look after topics in more detail. West Epping looks after the suburban areas west of the town centre and is chaired by committee member Steve Chaney. The Trees committee, chaired by Margaret McCartney, lobby on a large range of issues and were very active – see the newsletter for more information. Unfortunately, the North Epping sub-committee doesn't have a current chair and is looking for a local resident to help it. This committee is important as it should liaise with Hornsby Council. Whilst our General Meetings were held virtually, we still had a range of speakers and topics. November's meeting included a Special General Meeting to review and update several clauses in the Constitution.

Committee Farewells: Two long standing committee members – Ron Dunstan and Graeme Wyber - stood down during the year and the Trust thanks them for their service.

Thank You: To all members who have made submissions, attended meetings, got involved in the sub committees, letterboxed flyers, and voiced support on Facebook – thank you.

To those on the committee – Vice President, Mike Moffatt, Treasurer, Leo Hart, Newsletter editor Judith Dawes, Committee members: Margaret McCartney, Inaara Jindari, Ruth Evans, Steve Chaney and Carol Field – my appreciation and thanks. In addition, many thanks to Jane Buchan who designs our newsletter each quarter pro bono, and Ian Scott who keeps an eye on our website.

Janet McGarry
President