

# On Her Majesty's Service

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WALTHAM ABBEY

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# PERME — IDEAL FOR COUNCIL HQ

WALTHAM ABBEY'S massive PERME site would make an ideal base for Epping Forest Council's centralisation of offices, according to one district councillor.

Rumours about the future of the site and its buildings have been rife for several months. But now Waltham Abbey councillor Cyril Hewins has spoken out in favour of purchasing the former gunpowder factory, if and when it comes on the market.

But Mr Hewins' scheme will almost certainly be in conflict with the views of many council members. Last week the recreation and amenities committee urged "strong support" be given to development of the site for recreation.

Mr Hewins told the Gazette this week that his plan would make a much better use of the site.

## — says Councillor

The present buildings already have excellent facilities such as a lecture theatre and cinema, he said, and could be hired out for conferences as well as being used for council business.

There would be ample parking space on site and no traffic problems as there is an existing access route at the Highbridge Street /Abbey View roundabout.

The PERME site is a far better proposition than trying to fit centralised offices into crowded Loughton or Epping, concludes Mr Hewins.

He also feels centralised offices would be very good for Waltham Abbey and bring more people in to the town.

"I have always considered Waltham Abbey the most important area of Epping Forest, really, because the biggest

part of the history of the district centres round Waltham Abbey," said Mr Hewins.

"Public transport to the area would need to be improved, but the whole transport system for Waltham Abbey is badly in need of a complete review."

A district council spokesman said that, at present, the Ministry of Defence still owns the site and it was up to them if any of the land would be released.

There was no commitment by the district council to purchase the site, said the spokesman.

But the council has earmarked it as a major leisure and heritage feature in district plans, the development committee was told last Wednesday.

The development and recreation committees also noted suggestions by the Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation that links in local waterways should be built to give motor cruiser access to Waltham Abbey as a tourist centre and to give cruiser access to the gunpowder factory.