

news

hereford civic society

Early Summer 2011

www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk

Hereford Civic Society

c/o Packers House, West Street, Hereford HR4 0BX

In This Issue

Special Feature – Transporting Hereford to a low-carbon future through quality streets for all

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future events

***TWO CONTRASTING LECTURES, NOT TO BE MISSED,
THE OLD AND THE NEW***

HEREFORDSHIRE'S HISTORIC MILLS

Illustrated talk by

Alan Stoyel

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

**Wednesday 25th May 2011
7.30pm Shire Hall
St.Owens Street, Hereford**

THE SATURATION OF SUPERMARKETS

Presentation by

Peter Wynne-James

Managing Director MPC Associates

**Wednesday 22nd June 2011
7.30pm Kindle Centre
adjacent ASDA
Belmont Road, Hereford**

VISITORS WELCOME / FREE ENTRANCE

FREE

Preface.....

All the current talk seems to be about localism, new planning procedures, the big society and what we'll be left with after all the cuts; see Dr.D's Diagnosis on page 6. But this quarter we thought we should include some

analysis of the use of shared space. Mo Burns and Paige Mitchell, both lateral thinkers, have brought together ideas and examples of how we move around our towns and cities. Stimulating ideas that could be adopted by an enlightened council.

Letters, emails and phone calls all welcome, we strive to be an inclusive society, welcoming all views and, not least, visitors to our regular monthly lecture series. [Don't miss the two featured on the front page] JB

Guest Editorial : Mo Burns and Paige Mitchell

A freelance transport policy researcher who has lived in Hereford for over 20 years.

The Future Starts Here

For most of us, most of the time, **the public realm equals the street**. Most urban open space is the site of movement, meeting and display. There is a growing understanding that the success of a place - how it attracts desirable activity, whether economic or social - is underpinned by environmental quality. And there is increasing awareness that this in turn depends on the design and management of streets: **'streets which resolve competing demands and create places that people enjoy using can deliver in transport, economic and social terms.'** (*The Manual for Streets 2*)

There is a deep affinity between managing the public realm and encouraging walking and cycling. These require human energy and it is this that powers both the conviviality of the public realm and the most sustainable trips in town. Streets designed to serve as habitats and networks for pedestrians and cyclists are inclusive, accommodating and egalitarian – they have a human scale.

Our premise for guest editing this issue of the HCS NEWS is:-

1. *In the 2020s we believe Hereford should be a city where a significant proportion of its residents — everyone who **wishes** to — can get about comfortably and safely on foot and by bicycle.*
2. *This will only be achieved if we value our public realm and provide the good quality networks sustainable travellers need.*
3. *Investing in repairing our damaged public realm, **across the the city**, will bring higher returns and wider benefits than continuing to make the same old mistake; investing in expensive roads to carry more, and more, traffic or depending on shopping for regeneration.*

Our timeframe stretches from Hereford of today to 2026. This is the period over which our Local Development Framework should be preparing us for rapid

reductions in our carbon emissions, and buffering us against the impacts of spiraling energy prices, regardless of the size of the county's population.

If the majority of people in the Hereford of 2026 choose to walk and cycle they will be leading active lives, in a low-carbon economy, and contributing to the maintenance of a high quality urban environment. They will be living in a more equitable and inclusive society. And if they are, **everyone will benefit**.

In this edition of the news we introduce *The Manual for Streets* and use its main themes of Place and Movement. We explore how the potential of its principles could change the way this city works by featuring recent developments local, national and international such as the reworking of streets in Hereford, Ashford, Oxford and Aylesbury. We seek inspiration from Ben Hamilton-Baillie, who has brought his vision to Hereford. We argue that if you stop managing the road network almost exclusively for drivers, you will get something different benefitting, cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers, including drivers of buses. And we apologise for not discussing public transport.

Our quest is zero carbon travel and community investment in the public realm.

The deep unpopularity of the 'relief' road and growth agenda has, for now, stopped the LDF clock and there is an opportunity to take stock and - evidently - an urgent need for alternative visions. What we propose in this edition of the HCS NEWS is a change of tack, from road driven growth (or even a growth driven road) to public realm led regeneration, **an urban renaissance that starts in the street**.

www.qualitystreetsforhereford.wordpress.com
www.quality-streets.org.uk/

The Manual for Streets: How to move in the 21st century city

The Manual for Streets is two volumes of guidance for everyone involved in designing and managing streets. The first, published in 2007, concentrates on 'lightly trafficked' roads and was, in part, intended to reduce the dominance of, and dependence on, the motor car in new residential developments.

MfS1 put design for low traffic speeds and high quality environments up-front and made it respectable, after years of emerging practice in the separate areas of urban regeneration, casualty reduction and design for walking and cycling. It is now steering the accumulated and varying conventions of traffic calming toward civility. It conjured up inter-disciplinary working over the complex territory that is 'the street' by introducing the notion of 'place-making' into the problem-solving world of traffic management.

Imagine a graph. Along the horizontal axis is 'Place Status' and along the vertical axis is 'Movement Status'. Every effort to manage the public realm or traffic will occupy an area on that graph. On it you can locate the motorway, the high street and the residential terrace. But you can't convince a road safety engineer with an indicative graph. MfS1 is backed up with real world research; for example,

the relationship between forward vision and junction approach speeds. MfS1 also seeks to provide a path through the design process to ensure that the right people are involved at the right time.

MfS2 (2010) takes 'the wider application of the principles' into the tricky category of more heavily trafficked, 'mixed priority' routes. These are the roads most of us use to get around town and where road user conflicts are chronic. MfS2 research demonstrates that the principles are indeed robust.

So what are the principles? Here is a short summary: Equity and Inclusion — put the most vulnerable and the most sustainable road users first. Design for low speeds unless there are 'overriding reasons' not to. Do not lose sight of the community function of streets. Avoid the deleterious effects of severance. Respect the 'desire lines' of pedestrians and cyclists. Create networks of streets that provide 'permeability and connectivity' to main destinations and choice of routes. MfS defines a 'street' as 'a highway that has important public realm functions beyond the movement of traffic.'

Most highways in built-up areas can therefore be considered as streets.'

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets/

Ashford Ring Road

An award winning precedent for the Newmarket Street upgrade



Photo: Gronmij Architects

The brief was to convert a ring road into a series of quality streets, introducing the concept of integrated streets and shared surfaces, and unlocking the stranglehold of the ring road. The solution is a unique and distinctive public realm, pushing the boundaries of conventional highway design by integrating public art, sustainable urban drainage and a place making approach to road design. The work of Hans Monderman, the Dutch engineer, was explicitly acknowledged. The result is one of the first integrated pedestrian and vehicular routes in the UK costing £9m. including fees for nearly three quarters of a mile of quality streets.

continued on back page

The network effect: Cycling and the future of Hereford

Hereford's compactness and self-containment make walking and cycling real options for getting about. The city can be traversed on a bicycle in 20 minutes. 70% of residents travel less than 3 miles to work. 38% travel less than a mile and a half - see Herefordshire Council's Local Transport Plan 2. So a significant component of our transport problems begin and end in the city, and they are a burden that the citizens and employers of Hereford impose on each other.

The preliminary West Midlands DaSTS (Delivering a Sustainable Transport System) study, sponsored by the Dept. for Transport, looks at how a 'growth point' could also meet climate reduction targets. This tells us that today 15% of Hereford residents who have jobs walk to work and 8% cycle to work. This 'far exceeds both the regional and national averages' and walking and cycling are already both 'the most promising' and 'the most important sustainable modes of transport in Hereford'.

According to the study, the key challenges for Hereford are: *'to understand, protect and enhance those characteristics of place which make it easy and attractive for people to walk [and] 'to maintain and develop the cycling culture through a combination of hard and soft measures'*

We agree. The Hereford Preferred Option consultation document promises that cycling and walking will account for the majority of trips in 2026, which makes it appear that the Council has taken these challenges to heart. Unfortunately, the traffic modeling commissioned by the Council, as

evidence to support the 'relief' road on which its growth plan depends, demonstrates that car travel will still account for 56% of trips compared to a 2008 baseline of 67%. The modeling also shows that **'trips are shifting back to the car with the implementation of a relief road.'** And even worse: **their forecast is that in 2026 cycling will account for less than 5% of all trips on the road network in Hereford compared to 3% in 2008.**

The quantitative case for the relief road must therefore rely on levels of cycling in 2026 that would require a failure, not a flowering, of sustainable transport. But given a background of accelerating carbon reductions and expensive fuel, can it really be likely that by 2026 people will so shun the most energy efficient machine?

One has only to look to towns and cities in today's mainland Europe and Scandinavia where local governments have a commitment to cycling; Groningen, with a cycle share at 38%. Copenhagen 29%, Freiburg 22%.

Transport consultants MTRU in their, forthcoming, 'A New Sustainable Transport Option for Hereford' use the same data as the Council's 'sustainable option packages' report. They take out the relief road but leave in the projected housing growth. Then they assume levels of cycling at 20%. And show that in 2026 **the proportion of car trips on the network has fallen by 25%.**



The network effect: Cyclists on a major radial road out of Freiburg. Cyclists in Freiburg have a complete network with high quality lanes along heavily trafficked roads and complex junctions. Pictures: Paige Mitchell



The key challenges highlighted by the DaSTS study could be met by the enthusiastic adoption of the principles advocated in the Manual for Streets — above all by creating those networks of streets that are equitable and inclusive, designed for low speeds wherever it is possible, and offering generous space to both pedestrians and cyclists where it is not.

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport/3207.asp

The Hub in St James — a place in the making

Way back in 2003, armed with some Lottery funding, and working in partnership with Herefordshire Council, St James' residents and local school negotiated a series of schemes planned to improve road safety, while enhancing the distinctive qualities of their neighbourhood. Our Hereford community activists are no slouches. They are alert to innovation and keen to spread good practice. They got wind of the work of a man who was quite literally pushing the boundaries of design and tracked him down. Thus was Ben Hamilton-Baillie - see interview page 4 - introduced to Hereford.

His design for the junction of Nelson Street and Green St, 'The Hub', was to be the key feature of the area's nationally innovative Community Travel Plan. It was designed to calm traffic on this socially important intersection, to allow safer access to the many local destinations - the school, shop, pub, church, community centre, work places and, of course, homes - that surround the intersection.

The essence of the scheme was simple and elegant; realign kerbs, add street trees and introduce sympathetic paving materials. The intention, now mainstreamed by the Manual for Streets, was to engender that sense of place needed to balance the public realm against the movement of traffic. Staggered parking was intended to support the scheme by reducing approach speeds. Then, with a change of Transportation leadership in the Council in 2007, the Hub was shelved and community aspirations dashed. The other intention, was that the project would serve as a pilot to be adopted and adapted in neighbourhoods across the city, has been stymied, but, as they say, you can't kill the spirit.

Even without their refurbished 'place', the Community Travel Plan stalwarts have succeeded in securing some complementary measures - such as the staggered parking. An advisory 20 mph speed limit is being made enforceable. There is a continuing engagement to ensure that any road safety measures that are eventually introduced are effective, extensive and attractive. People want to feel both free and safe to go about their business in their community. Concerned residents of St James have diligently argued for the 'reclaiming' of their streets for over 10 years and continue to argue it still.

www.jaba.org.uk/

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RIBA Sustainability Award, Sustainable Architect of the Year, Hereford and Worcester Chamber of Commerce Green Business of the Year, Sustainable School of the Year, Civic Trust Award

Interview with Ben Hamilton-Baillie



Your guest editors went to Bristol to interview Ben Hamilton-Baillie, urban designer and a leading protagonist of 'shared space'. We caught up with some of his current projects and got him to muse on what's good and what's not. His mood was sanguine. Even though the UK has not caught up with the pace of innovation and the daring and imagination of the best European examples - he cited in particular the Aachen scheme visited by the ESG team and the dazzlingly amusing Stadt Lounge in St. Gallen, Switzerland, - there is a growing number of well-executed and successful urban design schemes. These are highlighted in CABA case studies and the Manual for Streets, and include the Ashford Ring Road makeover in Kent. Hamilton-Baillie Associates are very busy, with projects large and small all over the UK, including the scheme in Aylesbury, pictured here, where clean lines and trees are being used to make a busy roundabout, and a road, pedestrian-friendly.

Here is Ben's definition of 'shared space':

'Shared space describes streets and spaces where movement is determined by negotiations and social protocols rather than state regulation and control.'

It's not about the physical but the social. It's not measured by kerb heights or the absence of signs. 'At the heart of shared space is the concept of **integration**. This contrasts to the principle of **segregation**, the idea of separating different functions and different users within the urban landscape.' He contrasted settings where social protocols work effectively, such as campsites and car parks, with those where the state steps in, for example, at traffic signals.

He dislikes intensely the term 'naked streets', coined by the Daily Mail, and often used interchangeably

with 'shared space', because it suggests that all you have to do is 'take stuff away'. It ignores the importance of the public realm.

On our theme of the relationship between walking and cycling, and an attractive public realm, Ben commented that 'walking and cycling are benign by-products of designing for civility'. 'Streets are very complicated - you should never concentrate on just one road-user; if you do, you disadvantage the other road users...' He cited a plan for bus lanes in a Bristol Road that will introduce additional dangers for pedestrians and cyclists as well as degrading an historic streetscape.

Streets are also complicated because of the range of professions required to make informed design and management choices: engineering, road safety, traffic light management, urban design, services and utilities, archaeology, etc. When it comes to shared spaces, it is important to 'embed' artists in schemes from the very beginning. Professionals, said Ben, 'have to collaborate ... trust each other so people can be frank about their ideas and concerns.' While initially this can take time, mutual respect is essential to successful schemes.

Ben was complimentary about the teamwork in Hereford that produced the Widemarsh Street renovation scheme. He noted that it can also take time for people to get used to shared space schemes, and is confident that the problems with the Widemarsh scheme will fade with increasing familiarity.

We got into a debate over whether investing in the public realm is expensive but worth it, or cheap but even more worth it, especially when compared with other types of local authority highway expenditure. At £1.3m Widemarsh Street is a 'snip' for a scheme using such high quality materials. The community-led 'DIY Street' Beech Croft Road in Oxford cost £4,000 for some high spec. paint, bike racks, trees and a park bench. Meanwhile Portishead in Avon has put bags over 13 traffic signals at a complicated junction that cost nearly £800,000 not including



NEWMARKET ST images: Will the Newmarket Street upgrade and Widemarsh Gate set the tone for reworking Hereford's streets in the future?



ongoing maintenance costs. The Bristol bus lane was another example of a massive expenditure with damaging impacts.

To its credit, Herefordshire Council commissioned Ben to write a 'Streetscape Design Strategy for Hereford Town Centre' (apparently still only in draft form, but available on the HCS website, www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk/issues/streets). Its 'key principles' were applied in the Widemarsh Street renovation scheme. Ben would like to see it expanded on, especially with respect to materials. Stanhope's planning application for the Old Cattle Market site promises this for the Widemarsh/Newmarket/Blueschool Street junction.

Ben and we would like to see his ideas expanded on in other ways - why are 20mph design speeds desirable in Widemarsh Street, but not in St Owen Street? Why should the streetscape design strategy be restricted to the town centre? Why will the planned ESG link road replicate the bad design of the Inner Ring Road, hopefully to be remedied by the ESG development? Why not be bold and take on the ghastly Edgar Street Roundabout? Without doing this, won't the eagerly expected - and potentially game-changing - upgrading of Newmarket Street be another hash of the good and the dire, so typical of decision-making in Herefordshire?

The job of the visionary is to keep visions alive. By grasping the nettle of the Edgar Street Roundabout, if Stanhope, ESG and Herefordshire Council were so minded, Hereford could become a real precedent for solving these problems, which are common to hundreds of towns and cities.

www.hamilton-baillie.co.uk/



Taming a rough roundabout and crossing the road in Aylesbury. Current conditions and artist's impressions of the same sites after scheme completion. Photos: Hamilton-Baillie Associates.



OPINION

What a well developed set of articles describing the benefits of shared space. It's quite a step, though, for all road users to take; to respect a new way of relating to each other. And what a lot of effort is required to effect change. But this looks like the only way forward - let's embrace it.

JB

Planning Matters.....

Here we list recent planning applications and any action that our executive committee has taken. Our Society is concerned about the built environment and we peruse all new applications and assess against a schedule of criteria. When we feel applications justify a comment we submit a letter to the Planning Department. These letters are shown on our web site and are the opinions of the committee at the time of the letter.

To view plans on the web go to www.ukplanning.com

Click on 'select another council' (highlighted in blue)

Click on Herefordshire Council

Click on 'Search applications' (on the left hand side)

Scroll down to 'Application Number' and enter the relevant six figures

Criteria used when considering new planning applications

Architectural / design merit

Suitability of the scheme / design in relation to its context or surroundings

Layout of interior spaces and suitability of circulation routes

Design relating to use and functionality

How the character and structure of the scheme relate or convey its intended use

Sustainability credentials (materials sourcing, water use, energy consumption, waste minimisation)

Construction and detailing

Civic contribution – social, cultural, environmental or economic benefit to the local community

103007

4 South Bank Road. Alter former PCT centre to create 7 self contained residential units for independent living; 4 additional car parking spaces and staff sleeping facility.

103138

Old Market Inn. Partial demolition work and reinstatement of North elevation and window to East elevation.

103202

1 Broad Street, ex Burtons. Conversion of upper floors to 6 flats and the shop to become Phones 4 U.

103306

76-84 St Owen Street. 6 x 2 beds houses and 1 x 1bed house. This is the space previously occupied by the printers. HCS objected to this rather bleak development which consists of two blocks of terraced buildings enclosing a parking area; with no amenity areas or trees. This planning application was approved on the 14th February 2011

110027

48 Eign Gate advert for Coop Funeral Care, to replace wedding and parties frocks!

103350

Elm Hurst, Venns Lane. Listed building, conservation area. Refurbishment and extension of nursing home. 57 bed spaces. The listed building looks set to return to its original appearance.

110145 (O)

9 Friar Street. Demolish house, build 6 one bedroom flats. No parking spaces. Probably a good use of this plot.

DMCW/092858/F

July 2010 Sainsbury. Store extension and building of car deck (Refused)

DCCW/2329/A

6th Oct 2008 Site of Champion Restaurant, Greyfriars Avenue. 14 apartments, restaurant and public plaza approved. Work appears to have started.

102459

87 Whitecross Road. Redevelopment of Gas services and shop to 3 storey apartment block; 12 x 1 bedroom apartments and car park for 12 cars, but with no landscaping. HCS objects to the development as it is presented believing improvements can be made to the setting.

110158

21 Eign Gate. Change of use from shop(bakery) to restaurant. It is good to see Eign Gate recovering; but the Old Saddler shop remains boarded.

110211

12-13 Commercial Street; two shops being combined into one for Lakeland. Remove shop front of No12 and replace to match No 13. (No 13 is a listed shop front window).

110238

191 Aylestone Hill 3 detached houses with new highway access.

110344

99 Kings Acre Rd. New dwelling

110170(L)

Kings Acre Road . Some internal work and demolition of leanto.

110370

74 Breinton Road, house and parking. This has appeared before. It is a parking area at present. Building on this site means that the cars belonging to the occupiers of the house on the corner will now be parked in the street.

100717

Grimmer Road 2 metre high plinth to receive the Bulmer Woodpecker.

102921/Q Hereford Rugby Club

HCS felt that it was necessary to ask the following questions in the assessment of this application, the full letter submitted to the Council is on our website.

Does Hereford need a rugby sports facility of such magnitude?

The Rugby Club is said to have stated that the use of the current site is limited by its proneness to flooding. Yet no material evidence has been presented of interference with the club's activities by flooding events.

Why cannot the current site, or an aggregate of other existing city centre sports sites, be used to meet the needs of the Rugby Club in a more sustainable way? Consideration should be given to modes of access as currently the application states, in excess of, 600 parking spaces.

Does Hereford need more housing?

Given that the preserved policies within the UDP do not make provision for housing on this application site, which sits outside the settlement boundary, and given that it appears that the site is also not being progressed as an exceptions housing site, in association with a Registered Social Landlord, the application is not in accordance with UDP planning policy H7 and H10, and should therefore be refused.

The proposed site forms an important landscape feature on the periphery of the City, and its close proximity to the river along the Wye Valley corridor makes it unsuitable, in the view of HCS, for housing and the planned extensive sports infrastructure. The application is not in accordance with UDP planning policy LA2.

Is the site suitable?

It would appear that this application gives very little weight to design, and, whilst HCS recognises that this is an outline application and design is a reserved matter, it should be a material consideration for the Planning Department to consider the design practicalities should it be granted permission. It is, therefore, not in accordance with UDP policy DR1.

The proposed application documentation states site levels, which suggests that over half the side of the sloping escarpment is being levelled to form a 3 m bank at one end, and a 4 m excavated bank at the other. Such a dramatic change to the landform is so severe that it could create detrimental impact upon the ecology. Other design concerns are the impact of the 30ft high and 240ft long domed structure and the large number of pitches with associated floodlighting. This type of development is eminently more suited to a city centre site.

ESG gets the Go Ahead

THE HIGHWAYMEN (a farce) A one day only performance at the BROCKINGTON THEATRE – 23rd March 2011

All members of the planning cast played to each other the merits of a big new retail development, apart from three, **broad minded**, black sheep, in our historic city.

All had lines about the benefits to their own grandchildren, in spite of the fact that is not a ground for granting planning consent.

The supporting cast, the planning department staff, thought the play was terrific **with no hesitation in recommending endorsement** (although previously they had insisted that the link road was essential to resolve the traffic issues in Newmarket Street).

But Act 2 saw **14, out of the cast of 20**, expressing **huge doubts about the highway chaos that will certainly prevail**. The Highways Agency has changed its mind and now supports the proposals, but they are only responsible for the A49 (Edgar Street) and not Newmarket Street; but a special appearance by that old highwayman Brian Wilcox put paid to the waverers. He of Widemarsh, the tripping street that "shoppers will get used to", declared we must "go on what is given to us by the professionals" and his punch line **"we never get all the pieces in place before proceeding"**. Which is a clear admission that the Council considers its own projects to a different set of rules than apply to the rest of us. Another cabinet old hand, Adrian Blackshaw, admitted to "salivating" with excitement at the prospect of **all those retail profits**, [which will all fly out of the County].

So Act 3 saw our elected representatives ignore the baas of the three, sensible, black sheep, who called for a **deferment to resolve the highway issues**, and the full outline consent was **granted**. So their and our grandchildren will have to learn to spend many hours gridlocked.

KC

hookmasonarchitecture
41 Widemarsh Street, Hereford
hookmason.co.uk 01432 352299

Dr D's Diagnosis.....

David Thame lives in Lingen, near Presteigne, and writes for Estates Gazette and the Manchester Evening News. He's been professionally worrying about regeneration since 1988.



One of the big problems with a democracy is that the people are often wrong. They want their cake, and they want to eat it. Public opinion is often confused, frequently contradictory and sometimes frighteningly short-sighted.

So what happens when, sooner or later, you come across an issue that seems to demand quick clear action? Where getting it right feels more important than getting people's approval?

We are about to find out. The coalition government's Localism Bill - now going through parliament - will give you and me more direct control over local planning decisions. Providing we can be bothered to learn about things like Local Development Frameworks and Neighbourhood Development Plans we can exercise much greater influence on what is built, how, when and where. Simultaneously the government are replacing thousands of pages of national planning guidance with a 20, or 30, page National Planning Framework.

So how, many are now asking, does this mesh with the government's sustainability agenda? Where exactly does this leave sometimes unpopular things like low carbon building and alternative energy, housing, roads, or warehouses?

The fear among the cheerleaders for sustainable development is that the government has removed the targets, beloved of the old Labour government, and that, without compulsion, local people will not go green. Friends of the Earth have launched an impressive lobbying effort designed to change the Localism Bill. Property developers are worried too, but for slightly different reasons, they think that localism hands power to the NIMBYS.

If you talk, as I have done, to senior figures in the sustainability industry (that's what it is these days) and in the property world, they will tell you how important it is that mechanisms exist to get the

decisions right - which means - get the decisions they want. The more honest among them admit this means forcing people to do things they do not want to do. Not control by local people, but control of local people.

As yet nobody knows how the changes introduced by the Localism Bill will resolve this. The courts might have to intervene, or localism could turn out to be a damp squib because local people might turn out to be amateurish and apathetic, leaving the planning system in the hands of local councils. Developers and the sustainability industry would very much like this to happen, whatever they say in public. What could happen is a reformed community infrastructure levy (CIL) which will effectively allow developers to buy their way out of trouble by handing over wedges of cash to unhappy local communities.

An important part of finding a way forward might be for developers to be more careful, and local people to become more enquiring; slapping the word "sustainable" on projects in the hope that it's a trump card that will still, or stifle opposition, hasn't been very clever. Cry wolf once too often and we all know what happens.

Listening to the public is something local councils have not found easy. "We know best" is always a chilling expression particularly in Herefordshire where public consultation on the forthcoming Local Development Framework, on Edgar Street Grid and the curious plans for a Hereford bypass have all failed to satisfy. And although Herefordshire has some magnificent parish councils, it also has others who combine "we know best" with "and you should be grateful" in a way which it is hard to like. Handing more powers to these bodies - as the Localism Bill could do - might easily backfire.

Without the freedom to be confused, short-sighted and contradictory freedom means nothing. We must hope that developers, sustainability campaigners and local people all learn to be sensible and to find mutually agreeable solutions. When democratic push meets bureaucratic shove, you have a problem.

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Nooks and Corners

TRP at Rotherwas

TRP have their production facility at Rotherwas, and needed extra space for development and research, as well as client and visitor reception areas. Herefordshire Council required a building of some presence on this important entrance site. Jamieson Associates have answered this brief with their usual skill and deft touch. A sublimely simple, elegant building with classic proportions, superbly detailed, includes double height entrance glazing, giving a lightness, that conceals the size of the structure. The building appears to hover over its site hardly impacting on its surroundings. TRP are to be congratulated on their commissioning of such a gem, surrounded as it is by rather lack lustre sheds, it shines out as an inspired jewel. Well worth a look.



Sustainability and Resilience for Herefordshire.

A workshop organised by Herefordshire Friends of the Earth, Herefordshire in Transition Alliance, Cycle Hereford, Hereford Civic Society, Herefordshire New Leaf and Localise West Midlands

On 12th February nearly a hundred intelligent and concerned individuals gathered together in the Shire Hall to try to get to grips with the new Planning and Sustainability issues within the new Localism Bill. It was like a religious convention, all wanting the best but most unable to understand the complications of the proposed amendments to Local Development Frameworks (nearly 80 per cent of LAs have yet to complete them and Herefordshire has postponed its ratification beyond the May elections!).

Hugh Ellis from the Town and Country Planning Association led the pilgrims through the intricacies of Local Neighbourhood Plans. Most liked this local involvement but with an estimated cost of £17,000 per plan and no funding how many Parish Councils are actually going there? And they must be in accordance with the LDF, so Hugh's advice was to get stuck in at LDF level and attempt to get issues resolved there.

But the big moan was around consultation; much criticism of Herefordshire Council's token approach and, also, of the lack of involvement of locals in matters that affect them.

Now it seems that the planning scene needs to educate individuals to become active citizens, and to understand the "...procedurally complex new neighbourhood planning process" TCPA Parliamentary Briefing on the Localism Bill 18.01.11. (see our web site for full report) KC

Major retail developments rejected on appeal

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has recently **rejected** two separate appeals for major new food stores proposed for **edge-of-centre or out-of-centre** locations.

The first involved an appeal by Derwent Holdings for a **new food store and two new non-food retail units plus car parking** at a site at White City Way, Old Trafford, Manchester which had been blocked by Trafford Borough Council.

Like the inspector who held the appeal inquiry, the Secretary of State concluded the proposal would be acceptable in terms of climate change, accessibility, design and impacts on economic and physical regeneration and social inclusion.

However, he also concluded that, as the proposal was not in an existing centre, and not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan, the fact that it would result in a **significant adverse impact on Stretford Town Centre meant that planning permission should be refused.**

Pickles has, also, rejected an appeal over a mixed-use regeneration scheme which included proposals for a major new convenience food store, restaurants and a hotel for an out-of-centre site in Worksop.

He argued that despite the scheme's significant benefits it breached both local and national planning policies and **threatened the viability and vitality of the existing town centre.**

The scheme, proposed by Dooba Developments Ltd for the site of the former Vesuvius Works in Sandy Lane, Worksop had been refused by Bassetlaw District Council. The Secretary of State's decision was in line with the recommendations of the inspector who heard the appeal.

[Read the decision letters on the Communities website](#)

DIY Streets – Beech Croft Road - Telling your story in your street

DIY Streets are an affordable alternative to homezones, DBFO (design-build-fund-and-operate) at the most intimate scale of the public realm.

They are based on three clear principles: reclaiming space, designing for people, and using shared space and 'psychological traffic-calming' techniques to slow down traffic. DIY streets value 'the personal touch' to give a street 'a strong sense of identity and individuality.' The touch could hardly be more

personal when you physically paint the road with a tiling pattern, and colours characteristic of the houses on your street.

Beech Croft road is 250m long with 50 properties. In addition to the fancy licks of paint they used bike stands, planters and trees 'to add more colour and shade to the street' and 'a picnic table to contribute to a lively and sociable space.' Cost of materials: £4,000. Labour supplied by the community.

www.sustrans.org.uk/what-we-do/liveable-neighbourhoods/diy-streets



Beech Croft Road

Photo: Hamilton-Baillie Associates

Blots on the Landscape

On Thursday 24th March our own popular columnist, Dr David Thame, beautifully presented a lecture on how these blots come about. He thinks we all want to do our best but so often get it wrong. Our chests rose as he blamed councillors, and then we were embarrassed when he blamed us, the community too. Fully researched, he questioned assumptions that are, too often, taken at face value especially the seductively authoritative consultants forecasts. And it's all down to poor consultation, which must be based on facts, but all too often aren't; both sides must learn the art of engagement.

David is standing for the Mortimer ward for Its Our County in the May election.

Hereford City Plan

The Hereford City Plan, produced by Community First and Hereford Voluntary Action has been completed and submitted to the City Council on 22nd March. The Council set it up to find out what residents wanted to do "to make the City an even better place to live and work". This project is claimed to be different to the other big consultations that have been going on as it is "more about local improvements and the little things that can be done to improve daily life".

What is in it we don't yet know; it is going to the printers and will be launched at the city's Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 26th May at 6.00pm in the Town Hall.

The Bower House

Holme Lacy's Georgian manor house has been listed; which scuppers the masterplan for the college to redevelop the campus. The plans had suggested this rather interesting house could not be sensitively updated to provide practical accommodation for the college. But it appears that the retained architects are appealing against the decision.

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Recent Meetings

26th January 2011 – **Dovecotes and Pigeon Houses of Herefordshire** – Robert Walker

This was a fascinating talk, well illustrated with rare photographs of dovecotes, many of which have now disappeared. Dovecotes in Herefordshire were generally round towers constructed of stone or brick. They had no windows but an opening centrally on the top for the entrance and exit of birds. Later, this opening was covered by a louvred lantern. The interiors were always regularly arranged rows of nest holes for birds. Young birds, called squabs, were 'harvested' for the table or for market when still covered by rudimentary feathers. Ladders were used for the purpose of harvesting, and were usually attached to a couple of horizontal booms, pivoted on a central vertical pole. Most interesting were the differences between the dovecotes of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, where greater wealth showed in the standards of construction and ornamentation of these buildings. The earliest dovecotes dated from the 14th century, but some were built, chiefly as status symbols, as late as mid Victorian times. Contrary to popular belief, doves were eaten, not as a substitute for scarce meat in winter, but as a delicacy throughout the year. The right to own a dovecote was often restricted to the lords of the manor or to the church. Now, the tradition of dove keeping has all but died out. HEP

23rd February 2011 – **Hereford's Historic Townscape** – Dr.Nigel Baker.

A fascinating lecture by one of our Council's archaeologists explaining the pattern of the City's development, with slides using the latest IT software, one of which showed a contour map of Hereford without buildings!

There is a clear ancient division between the commercial area, to the north of the line of the old Anglo Saxon defences, approximately along the line of West and East Streets, and the Norman area to the south and the cathedral.

Nigel stressed the importance of the canonical tenements around Castle Close, with no changes from medieval times; apparently one of the best preserved examples in the country with large areas of green space we seldom get to see.

But we can all see the major chunks of our City walls, and there are proposals to better respect them and their settings. The Hereford City Defences Conservation Management Plan is out for public consultation until 22nd May. see www.herefordshire.gov.uk/conservation

Did you know about the very rare, and entirely original piece of Anglo Saxon wall hidden behind flats in Mill Street? Our Society was shown it on our summer City walk, last year, and all felt more should be made of it; well it looks as though the Council is acting. JB

23rd March 2011 – **Coping with Change** – James Sharp

James Sharp is the rural surveyor, covering Herefordshire, for The National Trust and he described the detailed negotiations with Hereford Futures and Natural England regarding the Yazor Brook Flood Diversion. Under flood conditions water will divert from Credenhill to a discharge point on the River Wye, where it crosses NT land at The Weir.

The Weir has been in the ownership of the NT since 1959 and was declared inalienable in 1960. In theory, this would have allowed the NT to refuse to consider any scheme affecting the Weir, but chose to enter into detailed negotiations to achieve minimum impact on their property.

James explained both the internal and external factors that the NT took into account in deciding how to deal with the proposed large discharge pipe that would cross their property together with an energy dissipation chamber and outfall sited immediately above the river bank.

A considerable number of alternative designs were considered, together with the landscape, discharge and flooding implications for each, until a design satisfactory to all parties was achieved. This resulted in an energy dissipation chamber and outfall, sited immediately above the river bank, with virtually no adverse effect on the grounds of The Weir. Construction of the scheme has just started. JBLF

Membership

As announced at our AGM October 2010 our present chairman, Garry Thomas, intends standing down this year. Therefore we need nominations for a new chairman and for committee members to support and understudy the Minute Secretary, the Membership Secretary and the Programme Secretary, who all intend to retire in 2012.

Please contact any Committee Member if you are willing to be nominated or want further information; we attempt to work in an inclusive way and all helpful input is appreciated.

Hereford Civic Society is now a member of Civic Voice, the body that replaces the Civic Trust, which closed following the loss of external funding. This new body appears to be more dynamic, under the leadership of Tony Burton, and chairmanship of Griff Rhys Jones.

It comments widely on built environment matters; public policy, planning, politics and campaigns. It has an excellent website www.civicvoice.co.uk Our society should be inspired by their activities.

from page 2

The innovative drainage system collects, cleanses, stores and recycles rainwater run-off. It has set new standards for water conservation and management for future development, and is already being used as a precedent for other Local Authorities.

There has been a marked reduction in serious accidents, average speeds have dropped from 40+ mph to 21.4mph, air quality has improved, journey times have not been affected even though traffic volumes remain the same, at 10,000 per day.

This article is a précis of an article on the Landscape Institute website, www.landscapeinstitute.org/casestudies/casestudy.php?id=38

NEXT ISSUE – MAIN FEATURE

An integrated approach to low energy low carbon development in Herefordshire - cutting through the confusion and misinformation to illustrate what the possibilities might look like in the county.

Forth coming events

Wednesday 20th April 2011

7.30pm Kindle Centre next to ASDA
"Holme Lacy Campus – its relevance to the county and its future plans"
Talk by Rob Dunn, Asst.Principal, Holme Lacy College.

Sunday 8th May 2011

Visit to Stratford upon Avon and refurbished theatre
Full day visit – details Ginny Garman - 01432 890469

Wednesday 25th May 2011

7.30pm Shire Hall
"Herefordshire's Historic Mills"
Illustrated talk by Alan Stoyel, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Wednesday 22nd June 2011

7.30pm Kindle Centre next to ASDA
"The Saturation of Hypermarkets and Supermarkets"
Presentation by Peter Wynne-James, Managing Director MPC Associates.

Wednesday 27th July 2011

7pm Greyfriars Carpark
Summer River Walk
Led by Andree Poppleston

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in the letters, reviews, news and features in this issue are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of Hereford Civic Society



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