

# news

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## hereford civic society

the city's built environment forum

Autumn 2013

### CV report on Shared Space

An in depth review by experts

### Is there a future for Retail in the High Street?

John Faulkner reviews three new reports

### City Centre Improvements

20 mph zone and decluttering

### Amazing places of Hereford

Richmond Place

### Hereford Now

Devereux House

The City's forum for discussion about the built environment.  
Check the back page for details and meetings in different locations.

[www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk)

### Next Event

**Local Plan – Progress so far, and more**

A conversation with Geoff Hughes,  
Director, Places & Communities  
Directorate, Herefordshire Council

Local Plan, Link Road, City Centre  
plans, Buttermarket, property  
disposal – the up to date situation.

7 for 7.30 Thursday

21 November 2013

Kindle Centre

– next to ASDA, Belmont

Member of



# Preface.....



This quarter we return to Shared Space with an in depth review of the subject by members of Civic Voice. Many members believe SS is the panacea for resolving movement issues within our towns. The idea originated in Holland but are we applying the principles in the best way? CV researchers came

up with more questions; but answers could lead to a better and positive application of the idea.

Civic Voice continues to lobby the Government on permitted development rights and the need for local councils to be able to make decisions about their own street scapes. "Greater flexibilities for change of use" is the consultation material, best accessed through [www.civicvoice.org.uk](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk)

Former HCS chairman, John Faulkner, has been reviewing the many reports on town centres and

their future. Leadership is required to make positive change, but is there the political will? Our financial year ended on 30th September and a short report on the back page highlights our input into the discussions on the built environment. We have a full programme for the next twelve months and welcome visitors to our meetings, most of which are on the third Thursday of the month at the Kindle Centre, next to ASDA (free and easy parking).

I struggle to remain positive about the future of our built environment!  
John Bothamley

## News and comment

### Hoarwithy Bridge re-opens

Hoarwithy Bridge, which has been under traffic management for over six months whilst carriageway repairs were undertaken, has now reopened to traffic. The enforced closure in February 2013 was due to undermining of the carriageway, caused by a local badger sett. Badgers and their setts are strictly protected by law. But down the road in Gloucester we are culling them. Apparently it is beyond the wit of man to do a trade off. The cost is in six figures. Whilst we continue to act like this we will further deteriorate as a nation and fast become a "previously developed country".

### Buttermarket

In September Herefordshire Council finally decided what to do with the fast deteriorating Buttermarket. Get shot of it. In spite of thousands of pounds spent on an architectural competition, hundreds of free time spent by architects punting for the work and four practices paid to work up some

schemes, it has all been wasted. The recession will be blamed but the City urgently needs its central and well-loved building in a pristine state to stimulate neighbouring businesses. The City Council is the preferred recipient, but do they have a champion to drive this forward?

### Edgar Street trees

The felling of these lime trees one Sunday in September is considered an act of awful incompetence. What is especially worrying is that the roundabout appears to have been considered in isolation. With the new Link Road due to open in April 2015 there will be much less traffic needing to use Newmarket Street and the "extra lane". If absolutely essential the extra lane could have been taken from the Old Market Site in the usual sort of arrangement between developers and the Highways Agency.

### 20 mph zone

Consultation letters and plans were sent to "stakeholders" on 30th September. Whilst the plans don't show a lot of detail they do move the process forward. This is good news because there is a chance the changes could be put in place by next March 2014. But at a meeting on 1st October Amey, now Balfour Beatty, staff reported that this date might not be met. Our rep. at the meeting was exasperated as this is all part of the "one city" drive. Also HCS would have liked to see this zone extended to include the station and the urban village.

### Destination Hereford

HCS is concerned about lack of detail on new pedestrian signing for the City which was supposed to be of the same style both in the Old Market development and the existing centre. Cllr. Jarvis was supposed to have dealt earlier this year but Stanhope has yet to agree.

Plans are well advanced for a contra cycle lane in St.Owens Street, although many cyclists already travel the "wrong way"! With vehicle speeds further reduced there is a case for proper Shared Space, but

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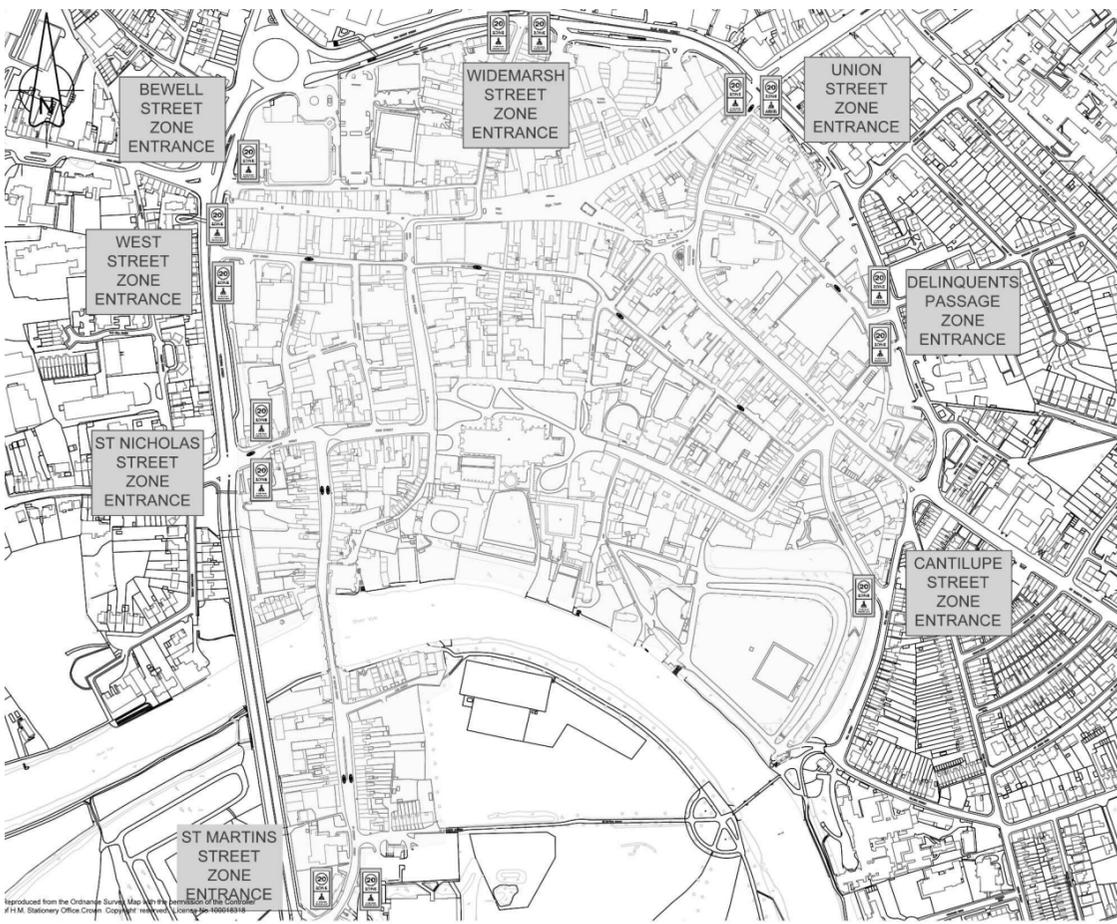
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t: 01981 542111 e: [jonathan.hines@architype.co.uk](mailto:jonathan.hines@architype.co.uk)

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

- ### Contributors
- John Bothamley** – Chairman HCS, architect developer and Chair of charitable grant making trust
  - Mo Burns** – green activist and researcher
  - John Faulkner** – retired Chartered Civil Engineer, Chairman of the Society 2003-2006
  - Gareth Calan Davies** – freelance transport geographer
  - Alistair McHarg** – Hereford property manager
  - Andree Poppleston** – researcher and architecture critic
  - Joan Simple** – auditor and local activist
  - Judith Talbot** – Civic Voice Team Leader
  - David Whitehead** – founder member of HCS, historian and author, Secretary of the Woolhope Club

### Front Page Image:

Fredensberg, Denmark – Shared Space taken over by retailers and A boards



regulations and prevarication seem to intervene at every step. See illustration above.

### Bridge Street/King Street

Within Herefordshire this location is in the top ten accident spots with 13 personal injury accidents in the last 5 years (nearly all pedal

cycles) and numerous damage only incidents reported by local businesses. To address this Herefordshire Council has secured extra DfT funding under the Cycle Safety Scheme initiative.

“The design seeks to adopt an approach which is consistent with the aims of providing shared

space for different users and reduces clutter, the use of new materials to support this is limited by the available budget. However, there is no reason why an enhancement scheme couldn't adjust this in the future when money is available, but at present we have to try and tackle the accidents with the budget we have". HC statement, but HCS is concerned this is not proper shared space as it retains a cycle lane and we dislike the stance of improving the work at a later date.

## Hereford Now Devereux House



A rather standard modern block of flats now stands proudly in Aubrey Street – there is a demand for small flats and it is positive statement that these are in the City Centre. Reduced parking provision of only nine places for 23 flats reflects current thinking.

But who chose the type and colour of the bricks? No reference to Herefordshire, no reference to its important location. The picture shows the rather uninspiring entrance, the chance visitors could step off the porch immediately into the road (pedestrians don't need vision plays!). Surely a neat stainless steel barrier must be erected here to prevent an accident. The rather disjointed entrance could have been a little more special and better organised. Let's hope this is the start of rejuvenating the Berrington Quarter – it is long overdue.

JB

# Shared Space

This review, by a small team from Civic Voice, took a dive into the complexities of this innovative approach to street planning by considering the application of Shared Space (SS) schemes across the country. Here we try to discover the best approach to applying a design concept that seems to offer a positive solution to the movement of people and vehicles.

.....  
**The report – shown here.**

## Shared Space Examples -

[www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk/SharedSpaceExamples](http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk/SharedSpaceExamples)

## How it started

First proposed in 1991, the term is now strongly associated to the work of Dutchman Hans Monderman. He suggests that an individuals' behaviour in traffic is more positively affected by the built environment of the public space than by conventional traffic control devices and regulations. Traffic lights are considered to be an impediment to progress, sometimes holding back traffic unnecessarily, and encouraging speed between junctions.

## Definition

Shared Space is an **urban design** approach, which seeks to minimize demarcations between vehicle traffic and pedestrians, often by removing features such as kerbs, road surface markings, traffic signs, and regulations. Schemes are often motivated by a desire to reduce the dominance of vehicles, vehicle speeds, and road casualty rates.

To describe streetscape enhancement and traffic management schemes, a number of descriptive terms are used. Many road improvement schemes are described as SS when, in fact, they are **watered down approaches** to taming or removing traffic. Not all towns, cities, villages will have the same needs; it follows that not just one approach will solve problems.

**Shared Space: a street or place accessible to both pedestrians and vehicles that is designed to enable pedestrians to move freely by reducing traffic management features that tend to encourage users of vehicles to assume priority.**

**Pedestrianised precincts** clearly do not fit the definition of SS when there is only occasional vehicular access. Shopping streets with little traffic might be an easy **proposition for SS** (Long Acre, London), whereas a busy through route down a high street with a complicated cross roads, an especially **challenging one** (Poynton). Kensington High Street has de-cluttered but still retains pavements with kerbs and the original highway. Exhibition Road, beautifully designed at huge expense (in spite of inappropriate residents parking signs), works without instructional signage.

## Philosophy

Some advocates of SS are like evangelists converted on the road to Damascus. A sudden realisation that this is a new way of moving about. One where you respect your fellow person and his or her wishes. A generosity of spirit is engendered - "after you" rather than "race you when the lights change". **The power of SS is that it can benefit everyone.** During quiet periods there is no need to wait on a red light! But getting this message across is not easy. To experience it, especially as a pedestrian, can be so positive - so welcoming, so inclusive. We just have to get it right.

When considering how Shared Space works, it is necessary to move away from reliance on "rights and laws" and to recognize the potential for conventions and protocols. Here a new respect for other road users quickly ensues. Eye contact acknowledges other road users and their intended direction of movement. With vehicle drivers there is an instinctive habit of giving way to vehicles approaching from the right.

## Evidence Base

"Shared Space examples", see our web site, describes several schemes and outcomes. This is not an exact science, but reflects the opinions and experiences of experts and users as to how the space has – or has not, been improved.

The team researched many reports and visited several sites. There is a lack of data on safety, journey times, economic improvement and even the perception of users; but there is much **anecdotal evidence, both for and against.**

Shared surfaces, which are generally used in shared space schemes, can cause concern for the blind and partially sighted who cannot visually negotiate their way with other road users, as the lack of separation implicit in these features has also removed their safe space.



## Politics

Getting new ideas across is never easy, especially to a sceptical public full of individuals with their own valid agendas. Examples from across the country show the need for each council to fully consult with its public. But most schemes needed **a champion to drive the process**, to stay focused on a proper scheme and to educate the public on how SS can work successfully.

## Where best to apply?

Remembering that most SS schemes fall short of a full embrace of the principles (adding a pedestrian crossing being the biggest crime!), the team considered where best to suggest the use of SS. It appears that crowded roads and hectic junctions were often the reason for its consideration, promoted by an enlightened highway engineer or local activist; but these situations are a huge challenge. The Dutch **Sustainable Safety** approach (to be featured in our Winter edition) attempts to balance users speeds. A "dilute" SS scheme might not need notices like "Welcome to SS", but some instruction and overseeing appears to be necessary. The scheme in Fredensberg, Denmark (featured on our front cover) shows a SS taken over by retailers and A boards procreating! This is where seats, bicycle racks and planting could have fully embraced the concept.

## The Perfect Scheme

Perhaps the team was looking too hard for the perfect scheme. Perhaps there is nothing wrong with half-baked schemes. A clear realisation that much of our road and pavement surfaces and signage is of poor quality must be a spur for councils to upgrade. Also we noticed little overall "house style" throughout a town. Each schemes' designer wanting to be individual and missing out on the overall character of a place. What is clear is that a scheme needs to adhere to the best of local design and, undoubtedly, needs a **local manager** to see it is operated properly.

## Conclusion

Lack of real evidence that SS works and the myriad of different schemes, make objective appraisal difficult. What is clear though, is that when places are de-cluttered, improved and generally more attractive, they are **better places** in which to spend time. That inspires us all, **encourages enterprise** and may reduce crime.

**SS schemes are designed to change the way public space can be used, and to improve the local economy and environmental quality. Clearly an improved feeling about the spaces we inhabit must impact on prosperity. But it is difficult to measure as the Evidence Base shows. Comparisons between different schemes are also unhelpful as prior condition and local problems are seldom factored in. The aims of SS vary but usually embrace place making; economic regeneration; ease of pedestrian movement; reduction of traffic dominance. Perhaps it is best described as a catalyst for improvement on many fronts.**



All images - Poynton scheme by Hamilton Baillie Associates

## References

Shared Space Examples – [www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk)

Background go to Hereford's transport consultant [www.hamilton-baillie.co.uk](http://www.hamilton-baillie.co.uk)

Hereford Streetscape Design Study go to [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/268551/Hereford\\_streetscape\\_design\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/268551/Hereford_streetscape_design_strategy.pdf).

Proposals for St.James and Bartonshaw, report by Mo Burns [www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk)

Short video of the highly acclaimed Poynton scheme view [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vzDDMzq7d0&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vzDDMzq7d0&feature=youtu.be) (easier to access through Hamilton-Baillie site, see above)

## Shared Space in Hereford?

The long-awaited link road between Edgar Street and Commercial Road is at the design stage and there is confusion within the Council as to whether this will be a Shared Space route. Whilst many built environment thinkers might enthusiastically support this, it must be considered as a whole. Here the proposal appears to be: traffic lights at the junctions at each end and shared space principles between. This is thought to meet Highways Agency directives. Isn't this a typical example of how not to apply SS? Frustrated drivers held back by the traffic lights will suddenly have to assume a new caring and respectful persona, for just a few hundred yards, before rejoining the maelstrom of another junction. Surely this is too much to ask?

### Destination Hereford – a step towards Shared Space

This programme intends to invigorate the City centre and to encourage the **one-City concept**; by imposing a 20mph zone throughout the old City, essentially the area within the City walls. Whilst not being a fully SS concept, it will **slow speeds** with planters, remove many unwanted signs and form a more harmonious and accessible place. Vehicle drivers will be informed as they enter the zone. Cyclists will unfortunately still have their few lanes creating an unnecessary hierarchy and pedestrians will still be second-class citizens.

### Widemarsh Gate

The crossing between the Old Market and Widemarsh Street is supposed to be a **SS concept** but, until the Link Road is open, (we're told April 2015) there will be temporary traffic lights.

### A proper approach

With high road-infrastructure costs, Hereford urgently needs an overall policy towards its public spaces. Examples shown, point to the need to have proper fully SS zones so that the concept can be properly embraced. With a half-measure City Centre and a bit of SS on a link road, this won't do it for the City.

Now is the time to embrace the concept; building on the ideas proposed in **Hereford's Street Scape Strategy** (Ben Hamilton-Baillie) We need gateways into the City, declaring "Welcome to Hereford – Give way to all". We could have a new City of citizens watching out for each other as they traverse our hallowed streets and alleyways. A new respect for each other – do we have a champion to drive this change?

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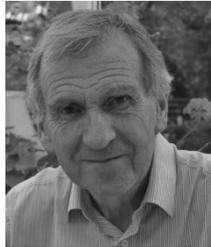
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# Amazing places of Hereford

David Whitehead – Hereford historian and author

## Richmond Place, Edgar Street – a lost Georgian Square



The Georgians made a unique contribution to the development of town planning in the form of the 'square'. Worcester had its elegant Britannia Square and Hereford, Richmond Place – better known today as Edgar Street. As one early 19th century commentator put it:

'squares carried the finest amenities of patrician life into the domestic habits of the narrowest income families of the middle class'. John Nash, the developer of Regent's Park, expressed it more succinctly, squares, he said, had 'the attraction of open space, free air and the scenery of nature'.

One of the earliest maps to indicate the presence of the development is the first edition of the 1" OS plan of 1831 but it was not until 1854 that a local guide book noticed the 'well-built brick residences, situated in the midst of gardens; of these the most spacious are Moorfield Place and Richmond Place'. Today, facing the modern traffic island is Moorfield Place – a single pedimented terrace of six dwellings, each with a long garden. Next door, the first house in Richmond Place is Clyde House (earlier Moorfields), which always sat in isolated splendour, surrounded by its private gardens. Further north the three detached blocks – originally designed as semi-detached houses – formed the largest portion of Richmond Place. Here the inhabitants looked out onto communal garden – like a London square. A coach road gave access to the houses via pillared entrances at either end of the development. Beyond the square was Portfield Street, which was a quiet backwater overlooking to the east, meadows

and allotments, part of which were later to be developed for the new market. Later maps suggest that the square was planted with large trees, probably elms, for when the present writer lived in Richmond Place in the 1970s, he watched several large specimens succumb to Dutch elm disease. The garden square is still evident on the OS plan of 1904, but the last block in the group – the Richmond Club today – seems to have enclosed a private garden from the northern end of the square.

By 1904 Portfield Street had become Edgar Street and provided a useful short-cut to Newtown Road and the highway to Leominster. Successive improvements to the road degraded its green character and the building of the ring road between 1966 and 1969 re-directed all the A49 traffic into Edgar Street. The communal square seems to have disappeared in the early 20th century when the central block in Richmond Place was divided into four narrow dwellings and each house took its share of the common garden. With the widening of the road in c.1967 and the reconstruction of the Cattle Market, Edgar Street became a dual carriageway and a line of lime trees, perhaps planted in the 1950s on the east side of the street, ended up on the central reservation. More land was taken from Richmond Place and a new uniform brick wall was erected along the street. When I moved into No. 63 in 1976 there was very little planting in the reduced front gardens and presumably, many mature trees had been removed. One survivor was a memorable horse chestnut in the grounds of No. 67. Subsequently, there has been much new planting in the front gardens and this now provides some front-line shelter for the residents of Hereford's most dignified Regency development. Once again, with the demise of the lime grove, Richmond Place has had its fragile character assailed by anonymous road engineers, claiming to be working for the common good.



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# Herefordshire in the hands of developers

Joan Simple – auditor and local activist

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Last winter I wrote an article about what would happen if Herefordshire Council failed to deliver a strategy for the 5 year housing land supply for the county.

Sadly, despite the last Herefordshire Full Council meeting approving a Core Strategy in July, it would seem that still no 5 year housing land supply calculations have come forward from the Council's Planning Department. The Council now has to defend a number of planning decisions which developers are challenging on the basis that the Council has no 5 year housing land supply, as required by National Planning Policy. The risk to the environment is that considerable developments could take place, mainly on greenfield sites, in areas not previously allocated for housing in the Core Strategy. (e.g. the historic parkland at Home Farm, Belmont).

In villages such as Lugwardine and Bartestree, housing proposals are coming forward in the next 18 months that could take up more than the entire Core Strategy allocation for that area over the next 20 years. A further 95 homes are planned to the east of Hereford on another site opposite Bishops High School which is not an identified site in the new Core Strategy.

But do Herefordshire Council really want to stop unplanned housing development? All these planning applications will deliver much needed Section 106 money direct into the Council's funding stream at a time when they are desperate for money. No accounts have been published for what has happened to all the previous S106 money received from developers, despite elements of this being to support library services and other community needs arising out of new house building.

Sadly, I do not think the situation on planning the future for Herefordshire will improve as the County Council seems determined to spend money it does not have on ill conceived road projects, whilst considering redundancy for the archaeological, planning and conservation staff at a time when the workload in these areas is due to increase significantly. Without proper staffing the result will be poor or delayed planning decisions, which could lead to yet further costs to Herefordshire.



## Hereford Tree Forum

Mo Burns – green activist and researcher

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Herefordshire Tree Forum (HTF) is now busy organising the county's second celebration of National Tree Week (Nov 23rd – Dec 1st) with the theme this year of 'celebrating our ancient and notable trees'. Sadly, recent tree 'events' have not been as positive for those of us who value our mature urban trees would like – so it feels like a useful time to report back on progress from an HCS perspective. HTF has two main objectives:

- to increase tree cover across the city and market towns by planting new trees and green infrastructure
- to protect our existing tree stocks of old and notable trees from the vagaries of state whim and over-enthusiastic developers.

There are far too many treeless spaces within our city and towns - not least along streets, in car parks, between buildings, and on school and industrial grounds. The forum aims, wherever it is possible and appropriate, to fill these for the ultimate benefit of the aesthetics of a space and our own human health.

HTF started two years ago in response to a growing public concern at the often surreptitious, occasionally overt, loss of this county's endangered and invaluable urban trees. The Forum's approach is to try to counteract these 'acts of vandalism to our public spaces' by working with all partners. Hereford Civic Society is a founder member of the Forum, which also includes our County, City and some market town and Parish councils (so far), Jesse Norman MP, The Woodland Trust, New Leaf, Bulmer Foundation, Friends of the Earth and others.

HTF and HCS are as concerned about our ancient tree heritage as they are about our heritage buildings - they are both of profound importance to our urban landscape. All too often, especially in these cash strapped times, trees are seen as an expensive luxury. HTF has had great success since its creation. In partnership with the council's Conservation and Landscape department, schools, individuals and organisations (including the Lions Club) we planted several thousand trees in the last growing season – although sadly only a very few in the centre of Hereford City. We have a long way to go to convince some sections of local and central government about how important urban trees are to civic well-being as well as a sense of civic place: that they are an asset with value that cannot be measured simply in terms of financial cost: that once lost can't simply be replaced. So, no more 'crimes against urbanity' please – let's get on with the protecting, the digging and the planting - together. [www.herefordshiretrees.net](http://www.herefordshiretrees.net) or [www.h-trees.net](http://www.h-trees.net)

“This town, is coming like a ghost town...” -  
The Specials 1981

Alistair McHarg – local property manager

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Herefordshire Council is continuing to identify yet more of their reversionary freeholds to be sold off through the Lambert Smith Hampton property auctions in London. Over the last few months many such investments have been sold in order to generate cash. These auctions have not been identified through any local media forums and so the opportunity for local people or groups to purchase any of these has been limited.

Our Council has proposed the handover of the historic Buttermarket in High Town to Hereford City Council to administer and redevelop, but in doing so does not intend to provide any reasonable level of funding to assist with the investment needed.

You will recall that our Council promised that the redevelopment of the historic Buttermarket would become the centrepiece to the City core and that it was to be contemporaneously delivered with the Old Market Retail redevelopment on Newmarket Street in order to bring some sense of balance of investment. This strategy would now appear to have been abandoned presumably on the basis of cost but not necessarily through a cost benefit analysis looking at the City core.

Our Council has failed to deliver any vision for the core of the City that it once promised. There appears to have been little or no effort given to preparing co-ordinated planning briefs for sustainable alternative uses for the redundant commercial space that has appeared through the streets of Hereford including Commercial Street and Eign Gate. These voids are only likely to increase as the efforts to let the Old Market Scheme intensify. The Council appears to have failed to address the poor streetscape issues associated with the former "River Island fire site". In defence of the freeholders of that site they were unlikely to invest significant monies from their insurance receipts in redeveloping a building for which they have not secured a long lease to a quality covenant.

One might reasonably conclude that when combining our Council's decision to off load numerous freeholds around the City, its failure to deliver a vision and sustainable strategy for the City core, including honouring the commitments it made with regard to the Buttermarket investment coupled with the fact that it has provided so much financial and political support to the Stanhope Old Market Scheme, that it has now decided to walk away from our City Centre. Might this apparent abandonment be the price that we have had to pay for the short term political decisions taken a few years back regarding the former Cattle Market site and a system of administration which has allowed non professionals to play "fast and loose" with the commercial security of the City core. In a previous article I suggested that those involved in the political decisions to proceed with the old market site would be long gone by the time the impact of this project was truly known, upon reflection I may have been a little hasty in this suggestion.

# Planning Matters.....

## John Faulkner – How Do We Save The High Street ?

Over the past 18 months considerable attention both nationally and locally has been given to the future of our high streets – something that has particular relevance to Hereford. There have been three reports and numerous articles in the press and TV programmes. Back in December 2011 we had the Portas Review - an independent review of the future of the high street by Mary Portas (“Queen of Shops”). This year has seen the Grimsey Review by a panel chaired by Bill Grimsey ex CEO of Wickes and Iceland and a paper by the Centre for Cities “Beyond the High Street”; plenty of arguments, disagreements and suggestions but not much action.

In spite of the differences of opinion between them these reports do agree on certain common problems. These can be summarised as:-

- The effect of the internet and mobile technology
- The rise of out of town superstores
- Business rates
- The lack of coordination and action by both retailers and local government and excessive red tape
- The need for more community involvement
- The role of landlords
- Parking and pedestrianisation

The rise in internet shopping has been large and fast. Well over 10% of all shopping is now on the net and 50% of retail growth between 2003 and 2010 was on the web. 80% of all shoppers now use internet to check out and reserve products on-line and 44% use the net for research before buying in a shop. This is an unstoppable trend but too few high street retailers saw it coming or have established their own web sites. So, we have to recognise that there are too many shops. But we still need the High Street.

While the growth in the number of out of town superstores has slowed considerably due to the internet and planning restrictions there is no doubt that their convenience and range of stock has badly affected the High Street. It has been suggested that such stores should have a range of smaller retailers sited alongside them (I saw this working at a Carrefour in France) but it does not do much to help city centre shops. The Grimsey review suggests there should be a one off 0.25% levy on all retailers with a turnover of over £10million raising £550million and this be invested in local economic development – no surprise that it has not been met with much enthusiasm.

Business rates are a hot topic with much lobbying for changes. The UK has the highest business taxes in Europe. It is proposed that there should be a full review of the whole process and there are now signs that all political parties have got this message. Suggestions include concessions on new start ups and small businesses; business rate relief for charity shops be reduced by 10% and part of the balance be allocated to town centre



development; 50% relief if someone opens up a shop that has stood empty for 12 months.

There is common ground on the need for much greater community involvement – the High Street is now not just shops- and for the use of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or Town Centre Commissions to coordinate local government, landlords and retailers. (A BID for Hereford was proposed some years ago but has it happened – no). The importance of markets in attracting shoppers is emphasised – think what a refurbished Buttermarket could bring to Hereford. Another proposal is that there should be a presumption in the National Planning Policy Framework in favour of town centres. There is still too much planning red tape tying up change of use and providing housing over shops.

The role of landlords (many of whom are banks who have become owners from foreclosures) is criticised. Shops are allowed to stay empty too long and there is a lack of willingness to adapt. One in six shops across the country is empty. Local Authorities could make more use of compulsory purchase orders or empty shop management orders on deteriorating properties.

Parking and the street scene have a huge effect on footfall in city centres which should be “attractive, accessible and safe”. Two hour free parking and pedestrianisation of streets have been shown to have major beneficial effects on high street shopping. Councils rake in large amounts of money in parking fines but little or nothing finds its way back into city centre improvement.

So where does all this lead us and how does it affect Hereford? There is no doubt that there are too many shops but we still need those that offer the right service, experience and specialisation. To ensure they survive will need a real drive from the local authority, the public and retailers with a major rethink on business rates, parking and city centre management.

As the Centre for Cities report on “Beyond the High Street” says “More and more attention has been paid to the High Street in recent years. Many policy documents, column inches and even TV shows have been dedicated to the woes of the High Street. All too often, they portray retail as an isolated activity. In reality the reverse is true - the fortunes of the High Street are dependent on the fortunes of the wider city centre in which they are based. The debate must be about jobs and city centres, not just about shops and High Streets”. So, there is certainly plenty to do in Hereford.

## Recently approved planning application

**Site of old public toilet, the Oval, Belmont. (122009) J.Chung.** Erection of three storey building. Hot food take away, storage, staff accommodation. We commented on the original application for this proposal especially seeking clarification of bin storage, as we were concerned about the possibility of untidy and unsightly refuse in this very prominent position. The drawings now show “Bin store shown dotted”.

We expect more of our planning department!

## New applications.

**Former Whitecross High School, Baggallay St. (132226) Miller Homes Ltd.** This scheme is the usual boring developer stuff that does nothing to improve the image of the sector or of our County. Essentially one large cul-de-sac, with no attention to orientation of the “standard” designs. This does not meet the first requirement for sustainable buildings.

**11 Aylestone Hill (132386) C Barnes.** Conversion of front garden to car park. One wonders what Aylestone Hill would look like if everybody converted front gardens to parking. Here the interests of society are more important than the individual house owner. It is unfortunate for the home owner but the atmosphere of our City must be preserved for all to enjoy.

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## Recent Meetings

17th July 2013 – **Architype and Archihaus** – Jonathan Hynes

A most inspiring evening was hosted by Jonathan Hynes, the principal of Architype, at his rural office just two miles from the City centre.

His work from the '80s started with helping self-build groups to create real homes and has grown to encompass school buildings and much more. His awards and commendations are a tribute to his great success and the high esteem in which he is held.

Now, exasperated by the standard fare of developers, and a major influence on the design of properly sustainable building, he has turned his attention to housing development. Archihaus is wanting to transform the quality and sustainability of housing: to "rethink" the design of the site, to "rethink" the concept of home and to "rethink" the process of construction. As an evangelist for Passivhaus, the German standard for highly insulated buildings, Jonathan is applying simple eco minimalism – high insulation, orientation, mass and draught proofing.

The new Hereford Records' Office in Rotherwas will be the first Passivhaus storage facility in the country, with no air conditioning and low running costs. Rotherwas will also be the location of Archihaus' first factory to manufacture the timber framed buildings to minimise on-site work.

Hynes' fresh and exuberant approach might just change the face of housing development throughout the country. [www.architype.co.uk](http://www.architype.co.uk)

20th July 2013 – **Summer Coach Trip** – Stroud/Swindon

Members and friends spent the day in an air conditioned coach pondering the merits of two alternative lifestyles in contemporary housing.

At Springhill, Stroud a cohousing group of 34 families live in their own highly insulated houses, (Architype 2001), but also have communal facilities. In a centrally located position, on this very steeply sloping site, there is a communal living area; families often share meals and discuss the running of the site. Cars are discreetly parked and are unable to access the winding paths between the houses, inhabitants share the garden areas. Several homeowners gave generously of their time and showed us their homes, all with unusual layouts, and having access to balconies and semi private patios. There was a positive enthusiasm for this style of living from all we met.

Lunch, al fresco, at St.Marks in Swindon and the adjacent mid 19th century railway village which was the inspiration for the Triangle. This development of 42 homes (Glen Howells) was commissioned by Kevin McCloud to demonstrate that social housing can be well designed. Trying to forget the problems that have been reported in the press, we were impressed with some details of the house we saw, but sad to see the community garden overgrown, some bizarre detailing and the overall site layout. It would appear that relationships between McCloud, Hab, the developers Greensquare, and Willmont Dixon the builders, did not coalesce to create the best homes, nor a vibrant community.

17th September 2013 - **Hereford's Future Plans**

This public meeting was designed to obtain the views of a panel - Councillors Tony Johnson and Patricia Morgan and Chief Executive Jonathan Bretherton of Hereford Futures. Fiona Phillips, Editor Hereford Times asked the questions.

Both Councillors gave a brief introduction emphasising the parlous financial state of the county and the work done on asset transfer to the community. The questions asked were almost exclusively about present rather than future problems in the city and demonstrated the continuing deep feelings that people have about such matters as the Link Road, the Edgar Street trees, the future of the Buttermarket, shopping in the historic core, displacement of businesses, transport, traffic, parking etc.etc.

There were many complaints about the Council's links with the public, lack of consultation and their poor explanation of proposals and decisions. Points that did emerge were that the Council had no intention of reducing business rates, that the likely disruption during the reconstruction of Newmarket Street should be less than with the recent work by Welsh Water and Shared Space would be considered for the Link Road.

While the panel said they welcomed the questions there were few convincing answers and there was no real discussion on the future plans for the city.

### Annual Report to August 2013

Your Society continues to press for positive change and improvement to our built environment and over the past year we have

- held ten interesting and sometimes provocative lectures and meetings
- visited unconventional and unusual housing developments
- published this magazine, quarterly, attempting to stimulate the debate around our built environment
- partaken in meetings with the County and City councils, the Tree Forum and others attempting to bring a measured and positive view to their endeavours.
- celebrated forty years of Hereford Civic Society

JB



HCS at Springfield

### Join us

If you want to influence the future of the City and you enjoy lectures and discussions about the built environment, old and new, JOIN US – your membership fee covers printing and distribution of our magazine, meeting expenses, web site and publicity costs. It doesn't cover members' time – all of which is freely given.

**Subscription: Single £15 pa / Two memberships at the same address £25 pa.** Questions? Phone 01981 580002 or email [chair@herefordcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:chair@herefordcivicsociety.org.uk)

### Join online

[www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk)

The Society assumes this is gift aided, allowing us to claim back from HMRC. If it is not, please add NOGA (No Gift Aid) after your surname.

### Join by cheque

Send a cheque to The Treasurer, Hereford Civic Society, 60 Broomy Hill, Hereford HR4 0LQ.

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## Your Opinions

### Alan Wylie on libraries

As a Public Librarian and Library Campaigner I was, to say the least, a little taken aback at the comments you made about there being "no future for our local libraries". Coming from someone who chairs a society that deals with matters of heritage, legacy and culture that is, in my opinion, a very worrying and frankly misinformed statement.

A sizeable proportion of 'ordinary people' don't have the means to do as you suggest that's why they need local libraries run by paid, trained and knowledgeable library staff that provide free access to books, IT and information.

### Call to action

Our Society works on very low overheads funded by membership fees and some advertising and sponsorship; we have a small committee that only meets six times a year. Beyond that we need more help in small ways, no big obligations, just a bit of help. In particular:-

- IT savvy person to set up computer and screen for lectures
- Envelope stuffers – just four times a year for the magazine
- Magazine deliverers in the City to save postage
- Minute taker for six meetings
- Programme coordinator to ensure smooth running of the programme
- Sales person to sell advertising space and find sponsors
- Drinks monitor for meetings
- Receptionists to convert visitors to members

Just a little lightening of the load for the stalwarts would be much appreciated. Please call me – John Bothamley on 01981 580002

### Forth coming events

All meetings at the Kindle Centre, by ASDA Supermarket, Belmont, Hereford, HR2 7JE. 7:00pm refreshments for a 7:30pm start (unless specified otherwise).

**Thursday 21 November 2013**

**Local Plan – progress so far**  
**Geoff Hughes, Director, Places & Communities Directorate, Herefordshire Council**

Progress so far on Herefordshire's Local Plan; Link Road, City Centre plans, Buttermarket and more.....

**Thursday 19 December 2013**

**Hereford's Historic Pubs**  
Five HCS Committee members select their favourite Hereford pub – history and images – followed by Christmas drinks and a pub visit

**Thursday 16 January 2014**

**Buildings & Ancient Monuments at Risk in Herefordshire**  
**Sarah Lewis, Principal Advisor, Heritage at Risk, English Heritage**

An illustrated talk on buildings at risk in Herefordshire

**Thursday 20 February 2014**

**No more conservation?**  
**Sarah Lowe, Senior Building Conservation Officer, Herefordshire Council**

An illustrated lecture on the future of conservation services in these cash-strapped times

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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 opinions of members of Hereford Civic Society.