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Winter 2016/17

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Expanding on the views of Sir Terry Farrell, and the Farrell Report of April 2014, John will consider how our built environment is created by site owners and developers rather than the community. A concise run through of the history of the creation of Hereford and how we can best look forward to creating a unique city that we all enjoy.

Thursday 23 March 2017 Arrival from 7.00pm, for 7.15pm start, 8.30pm close

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PREFACE



Simplicity is the most efficient business tool but obstacles often prevent us all from making essentially crucial decisions. Our Councils are now forced to

consult us, our road stewards have to undertake a safety assessment before clearing a blocked culvert, a teacher has to record every step in a child's education. Although these strategies are there for good reasons, they often fail to produce the desired results because the ticks tick the wrong boxes. Who considers whether the consultation asked the right questions (see PLACE Autumn 2016), why the culvert was blocked and whether the child is receiving a rounded education?

Parsons Brinckerhoff, consultants to the Herefordshire Council (HC), designed the cycle improvements in Holme Lacy Road. Our correspondent, James Copland, commented in full in PLACE Autumn 2016 with his misgivings, backed up with photographs. I raised the issue with Geoff Hughes our Director for Economy, Communities and Corporate at one of our very occasional meetings to exchange views and to ensure that I am informed correctly of current issues. These short meets, often over a pint, have been professional and helpful. But now I am aware that,

with the massive staff reductions and yet the same number of boxes to tick, Geoff is under considerable pressure to keep some sort of order to the whole operation. So we wait to hear of the procedure for assessing consultants' work, why the contra flow cycle measures for St. Owen's Street are due to come out for a third consultation drawn up by a third lot of consultants, and how we might feed into the Hereford Development Plan. As an observer I don't see a clear overall plan for the future of Herefordshire.

The Herefordshire Council's approved Draft Economic Development Strategy (DEDS) appears to have little reference to the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, scant input from the market towns and marginal influence from the City Council. The still outstanding Hereford Development Plan must be properly organised with everyone contributing.

From an infrastructure perspective I read DEDS has some surprising aspirations. A new "river quarter from Greyfriars bridge westwards" - where flooding is an issue? "New retail on Blackfriars Street" - in what was supposed to be an urban village (Original ESG Plan). Berrington Quarter with mixed housing and small retail. Whose ideas were these? The community surely has some rights to input as the Council, rightly, looks for private sector partners. But as we have written in previous editions consultation is a vexed and complicated issue. Apparently there is some talk of co-production of plans; a

term usually referred to the provision of public services. But this could be applied to developing proposals for the infrastructure of our City. Citizens contributing ideas into schemes such as the contra flow cycle route in St. Owen's

Street, a wealth of local knowledge is there to be mined by cycling experts not generalist highway engineers! I'm pressing Geoff Hughes to seriously consider this.

John Bothamley



Herefordshire Economic Plan

PS In March I'm presenting an assessment of how our built environment is created, not just here but nationally – details on the front page.

NEWS & COMMENT

Room size matters

The government has announced proposals to introduce a minimum bedroom size for houses in multiple occupation, including the introduction of a minimum bedroom size of 6.52 square metres in shared houses that are classed as houses in multiple occupation (HMO). The size would be applied for each individual or couple living in the property, so landlords could not squeeze in bunk beds. Other proposals include - extending mandatory licensing rules for HMOs to flats above shops and other business premises - requiring landlords to provide decent storage and disposal of rubbish - and tightening up the "fit and proper person" test for landlords.

Neighbourhood Plan respected

The Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, refused a development in Bartestree for 100 homes partly because of conflicts with the neighbourhood plan. Javid's decision letter, which also involved proposals for open space and a community orchard, acknowledged that Herefordshire Council could not demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land. However, he gave significant weight to the adverse impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. He agreed the development would represent an "inappropriate level of growth" for the village that conflicted with the emerging development strategy for the village.

Fracking

Councillors have voted to try and protect the county's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty from fracking. At a full council meeting in December 2016, a motion, put forward by Councillor Paul Newman, requesting the government consider withholding any licence which would allow fracking, and any associated hydrocarbon extraction processes in or under Herefordshire's vitally important Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), was fully supported. An amendment, proposed by Councillor Felicity Norman, to extend the request to the whole of Herefordshire was not agreed.



Councillor Newman, who is the chairman of the council's audit and governance committee, said: "I personally am not anti-fracking but I was very surprised when a licence was issued for my Ward, where the 18th century 'Wye Tour' established Kerne Bridge Ward as the very cradle of UK landscape tourism". HCS does not understand why we have dedicated special areas and then allow unrestricted development. Conservation areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural

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RIBA

Contributors

John Bothamley – Chairman HCS, developer and chair of charitable grant making trust
Mo Burns – HCS membership secretary
James Copland – master planner and architect
John Faulkner – Retired chartered civil engineer, chairman of HCS 2003-2006
Tony Geeson – Retired Civil Servant, environmentalist campaigner
David Whitehead – Hereford historian and author
Design & Layout - Gary Nozedar

Front Cover

Proposal for a refurbishment and extension of Franklin Barnes House on the corner of Blueschool Street and Commercial Road, Hereford by HCS

TREES

Generally viewed as a positive contribution to our built environment the maintenance of trees is often overlooked. Here Jerry Ross, experienced arbourculturalist, www.jerryross.co.uk comments on the Eign Gate fiasco and the on-going concerns about the trees in Bishops' Meadow. HCS considers that the trees in Eign Gate must be replaced this spring as a matter of urgency. Apparently there have been many meetings attributing blame to others but no decision on what to do. Whilst the details of the contract with Balfour Beatty to maintain the City's infrastructure is not divulged; it is clearly within their remit and failure to manage this City asset must be put right.

The saga of the Ginkgo trees in Eign Gate is a farrago of ignorance, stupidity and missed opportunities. They were planted back in 2005 following exhaustive research and consultation to ensure that a variety was selected that would grow large enough to make an impact without causing the problems that were caused by the Silver Maples that preceded them. The

variety 'Fastigiata Blagon' was selected, this being a clone that forms a neat, narrowly conical crown that would not obstruct CCTV, would not conflict with the buildings on either side and would not cause excessive shading. Planting in an urban street is by no means a simple matter and considerable care had to be taken, including the supply of hardware both to provide support and protection for the roots underground and to protect the growth above ground. A Freedom of Information Request has revealed that the cost of establishing these trees amounted to about £20,000. It was understood that they would require some formative pruning to create clear stems and to encourage a single, dominant leader, yet apart from some desultory watering for the first few months, no aftercare and no formative pruning was provided. Rather the trees suffered in their early years from losing their tops to vandalism. This removed the leaders and resulted in a proliferation of side shoots. Yet still no arbourcultural expertise was expended on them. Instead, after years



well maintained ginkos - London



vandalism by contractor



no maintenance on ginkos

of neglect, a representative of the Business Improvement District, acting after discussing the matter with one of Balfour Beatty's 'Locality Stewards', took a carpenter's saw and lopped off the entire upper parts of the trees. The trees can never be expected to grow back to anything like the forms for which they were so carefully selected. Currently they stand as a (just) living insult to those who went to so much trouble to try to beautify this otherwise rather dreary street. It is to be presumed (or at least fervently hoped) that they will be replaced. But will their successors fare any better? The fundamental issue is a failure of those involved to fully appreciate the very real contribution that trees make to the health, well-being and financial viability of the city, as a result of which trees are regarded merely as a source of nuisance and danger. In fact research clearly shows that the presence of trees in retail districts increases profitability, with consumers prepared to pay an average of 11% more for goods in landscaped areas than in treeless ones. It's also been shown that the presence of properly selected and well maintained trees actually *reduces* crime, while the environmental benefits are huge. Until the council and its agents begin to take account of the degree of material benefit that the City gains from its trees I fear that more events such as the dismal treatment of the Eign Gate Ginkgos must be anticipated.

Hereford BID made a mistake and the Herefordshire Council must take action, otherwise the protection and maintenance of trees will never be taken seriously. Replacement standard trees need to be installed NOW. The costs of the previous lack of maintenance by Balfour Beatty and Amey in failing to prune the trunks over the years will never be recovered. (Presumably BID are insured so there should be no real cost to this organisation that generally has been doing so much for the City).

Bishop's Meadow and King George's Playing fields originally had about a hundred beech trees. At the last count there were twenty one stumps: something like 20% have been lost, nearly all within the past twelve years. What's more, the most recent safety survey has identified a further seven that are recommended for removal on grounds of ill-health and suspected instability. What's going on? In nearly every case

the problem has been the presence of the fungus *Meripilus giganteus*, the Giant Polypore. This is not uncommon on mature beeches, where it can lead to a decay of the root system that can greatly increase the risk of windthrow. This is not to say that the appearance of the fungus should be regarded as a sign of imminent instability: I've known beech trees that have produced fungal brackets for years and yet have continued to flourish. However by the time large numbers of fronds appear, especially when the tree's crown is becoming thinner or is dying back, the increased risk has to be taken seriously. Unfortunately the seven trees currently slated for removal won't be the last. My own walk-round inspection in late November 16 revealed the fungus on some *twelve* trees; further losses must be expected in the coming years. It should be made clear that *Meripilus* is not an infectious disease: there is no evidence that it is capable of spreading from tree to tree. The question therefore arises as to why it is so prevalent amongst these trees. My belief is that the critical factor was the floods of 2007. The area has, of course, been flooded many times over the 100 years or so that the trees have been here, but while beech trees can generally tolerate being waterlogged for short periods in the winter, in 2007 there were floods which left this area inundated for about two weeks in June. I suspect that this event that put the trees under stress thereby permitting *Meripilus* to develop, building up over the years to cause the losses we are now seeing. The problem is made more severe and its effects more striking because this is an avenue: the trees are all of the same species and age and therefore all show the same susceptibility. What's more, the symmetry that is intrinsic to an avenue planting means that any losses, by breaking that symmetry, will be all the more visible. We must get used to the idea that the existing trees will continue to be lost and the formal nature of the avenue further degraded: only a programme of clear felling and replanting could re-establish it. But this would leave the new planting open to a similar problem some time in the future. My own preference would be to replace trees as they fail, but with a range of new species, creating a sort of 'linear arboretum'. Increasing species and age diversity not only improves resilience but might also be more visually interesting.

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AMAZING PLACES OF HEREFORD

The Case for Brockington

Brockington, a country house lost in a Victorian Suburb, until recently the smart HQ for Hereford Council, is to be demolished to make way for a 70 bed care-home. Although extended when it was the police headquarters, the core of the building is still the large mansion built for William Bowers in 1909. In its day, before the 2nd World War, this was the most iconic house in Hereford. Should it be bulldozed into a pile of rubble?



Derek Foxton Collection

By 1900 the greater part of the west side of Hafod Road had been built-up, leaving on the east side a large field on the brow of the hill. The property belonged to William Bowers who owned the adjoining Hampton Park Brickworks. He was one of the principal building contractors of late Victorian and early 20th century-Hereford and was the chief undertaker of a number of important buildings including the Town Hall (1902), Lloyds Bank (1928), the north wing of the General Hospital (1929) etc.. Bowers, however, like earlier craftsmen/designers, sometimes acted as his own architect. In fact he had already designed and built the six tile-hung Arts and Crafts houses below the site of Brockington, on the east side of Hafod Road in 1894. Other houses with plans signed by Bowers occur in Chandos Street, Grenfell Road and St James's Road.

In 1909 Bowers decided to build his own mansion on the highest point of Hafod Road and decided he needed an architect, choosing Edward Bettington (1866-1939), a pupil of F.R. Kempson (1838-1923), the principal Hereford-based architect of the previous generation. Bettington was also Bowers' son-in-law and at this time was in partnership with Arthur Groome (1873-1943), creating the pre-eminent architectural practice of the county. Brooks states in the introduction to the recent edition of *The Buildings of England: Herefordshire* (2012) that the firm 'produced most of the (architecture) of interest' in the Edwardian period and notices their work on thirty seven occasions. The list shows how easily the partnership moved from the Arts and Crafts milieu to the Modern Movement, especially when Bettington's son, Harry, joined the partnership. Notable early works with Groome were the Bulmer Garden Suburb, the Penngrove estate and Venn's Close in Bath Street. There were also some notable country house commissions including Dinmore Manor, Bryan's Ground (1911), near Presteigne, and Vennwood near Bodenham rebuilt after a fire in 1909. This is a replica of Brockington and shows how well a

Caroline design (i.e. mid-17th century) sits in a country park. It is constructed of stuccoed brickwork under a hipped roof, with a pediment and Ionic porch – just like Brockington. Like many Arts and Crafts architects Bettington was persuaded by his well-to-do clients to abandon the vernacular – half-timbering and rendered walls – which we so admire today, for something more classical and posh.

Brockington had a great deal of money and craftsmanship lavished on it, which is very much in evidence in a schedule of the house drawn up in 1939 by Bettington and Son, when it was requisitioned for war-time use. From attic to ground floor the high quality of the interior fittings were itemised from the bronze window catches, oak floors and doors, 'expensive patterned paper' on the walls, copious use of marble and mahogany in fireplaces, bronze grates, moulded plasterwork on ceilings, Bath stone thresholds and much else. This was a precious house and the surveyor describes on every page the 'excellent condition' of everything he found. The requisitioning body promised to return the house to the Bowers family as it was found after the War. When being used recently as local government offices, it was still apparent, even to the casual visitor, that much of this embellishment was still present.

Brockington was thus designed by Hereford's best early 20th century architect for one of its richest citizens. It is probably the premiere house of its period in the city. The original plans are still available at Hereford Record Office and a photographic record of all the principal rooms in c.1920 also still exists. It is surprising that Brockington is not listed but, of course, it sits in the Hafod Road Conservation Area, which should give equivalent protection. In terms of its setting, the developer of the new care-home has shown considerable sensitivity in maintaining most of the mature vegetation so that the new building will sit in a pleasant parkland setting. However, the Conservation Area is more than just the trees and grassland, and the

guidance notes refer essentially to the built environment down to details like boundary walls and gate piers. The townscape is dependent upon the backdrop of period buildings and a glimpse of the classical facade of Brockington from the road, hints at the dignity and aesthetic qualities associated with a country house landscape. This picturesque composition will not be replicated by the new central block connecting the wings of the care-home and the Conservation Area will be seriously compromised, especially when viewed in conjunction with ribbons of car parking proposed along the entrance drives, not to mention the new residential development to be developed on the south car park. A skilled conservation architect could easily adapt the original house as a useful space for the care-home. The large ground floor rooms could be used as social space and what is left of the old enrichments - oak woodwork, cornices etc – would provide an opulent country house hotel atmosphere for residents and visitors. At the public event put on by the developer at the College for the Blind it was stressed that this institution would be a 'community hub' – whatever that may be. If only the original house could be incorporated into the new design and given that the new building will only have a short useful life it may well be that when it has all been swept away in c.2080 the Bettington/Bower house will remain, still the anchor of the historic conservation area.

David Whitehead

163646 Brockington redevelopment (north site) Planning Application

This application is made by the HC, as it owns the site, and we have been concerned that "in house" applications have not followed the standards required of other developers. (e.g. Blueschool House). This application only appeared to be short of arboriculture information that we have now been informed is complete.

We should, perhaps, review our initial indifference to the scheme inspired by David Whitehead's article. His suggestion to retain the original building as the hub for the care home seems to be entirely sensible; the additional cost should be balanced against the historical importance and ambiance that it could provide.

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IDEAS & VISIONS

Franklin Barnes Building

This iconic building on the junction of Commercial Road and Blueschool Street is loved by some and disliked by many, but that is no reason for it to be demolished. It is earmarked for use by the new university NMiTE but knowing how consultants like to highlight problems, and aspirational new university chancellors like flashy new infrastructure, HCS needs to make a valid point. Cities we like are those that evolve over the centuries, look no further than High Town and St.Owen's Street. Those we dislike are those anonymous places that we need not mention.

Franklin Barnes buildings are parts of Hereford, both here and in Bridge Street, which has been well refurbished. Here we make a pragmatic suggestion. Currently the building footprint doesn't cover much of the site and the "wings" carry little useful square footage. Our suggestion is that the corner unit is retained, incorporating new window

frames, and two newly constructed blocks are added containing the purpose built facilities that NMiTE requires. If you feel our idea is valid please lobby your local councillor and Karen Usher at NMiTE – we mustn't have another Blueschool House fiasco.
John Bothamley



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Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts have been around for some time but are still not in the mainstream of housing development. Hereford is fortunate in having a group determined to make a difference in the supply of community-led housing. These individuals have a vision for new housing in "places" rather than "developments".

Hereford Community Land Trust (HCLT) is aiming to provide genuine and permanent affordable homes for sale or rent to local people who cannot afford open market housing. Herefordshire's Core Strategy sets a minimum target of 16,500 new homes in the county before 2031. The 6,500 proposed for Hereford City envisages it becoming a "home to innovative design and sustainable construction" and "residential and employment areas integrated into the existing urban fabric and surrounding countryside" Both the County and the Local Enterprise Partnership's development plans also emphasise 'housing-led economic recovery'. HCLT has been launched to create 'exemplar community-led housing' because:

- Large companies usually build new housing of a standard dormitory style with minimum consideration of sustainability or affordable provision.
- Profit-driven development does not always address the long term local demographic, health and social needs adequately. Communities become imbalanced and unsustainable when people cannot afford to buy or rent a home and leave, so commercial development is inherently damaging to social capital.



- Large scale housing construction minimises local sourcing of design, material, equipment, skills and labour, reducing benefits for Herefordshire's economy.
- Community-led development enables residents to create and control associated assets like open spaces, communal facilities and workspaces.

Members of HCLT are following over 170 UK CLTs that are achieving something much better. High quality homes are being designed with community input to be energy-efficient, low carbon and affordable to live in.

CLT's are using local materials and skills to create housing in sustainable settings including food production, renewable energy, waste management and eco-friendly green spaces. Homes usually remain in community control, are not sold onto the open market and remain 'permanently affordable'. To achieve this some compromises are needed. For example, maximising the number of units that are affordable both to buy/rent and run almost certainly means some homes for open market sale to cross-subsidise the project. To keep costs down and allow for local involvement there is often scope for self-build/self-finish options. HCLT aims to provide a single-figure number of units first then projects with up to 100. Some of these could be on Hereford's northwest boundary if the Three Elms strategic site is ever approved. HCLT has already talked to the landowners and county planners, and envisage a partnership with other organisations like housing associations. Active support from local authorities is important. HCLT has been formally endorsed by Hereford City Council. HCLT is keen to get things underway. First, obtaining suitable land at low cost helps so tell us about any likely piece of land or building in or near Hereford.



Second, to demonstrate community support and so influence decision makers, HCLT is actively recruiting new members from Hereford itself and across the county. The 'one off' cost is £5. Full members contribute to decision-making and elect a volunteer board to run the trust on a daily basis. If you wish to know more contact herefordclt@gmail.com, text 07957 348885 or call 01432 830204 / 01544 327344. Information is also available at <http://www.herefordcitycouncil.gov.uk/hclt/>
Tony Geeson and Nick Sherwood
of the HCLT Steering Group.

Bath Street Former Boys' Home

Application submitted 15th December 2016 – we'll be commenting positively. See HC's excellent website for all planning applications and decisions.



PLANNING MATTERS

HCS continues to monitor all planning applications for projects within the City and sometimes beyond. We have a non-voting seat on the Hereford City Council planning committee. Here we list some prominent cases, but we continue to comment on those small side extensions, and a like (?) that if designed and built badly reflect on an entire street scene.

In PLACE Spring 2017 we visit York to see how the innovative Derwenthorpe development of public and private housing and community facilities is shaping up under the watchful management of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust.

162264 Brockington redevelopment (south site)

This application, for new houses and a small block of flats, has been under consideration for a number of months. HCS concentrated its concerns on the proposed gates believing that gated estates are contrary to the NPPF and risk further turning our society into one where trust and respect is lost. Our article in last quarter's PLACE Autumn 2016 explained. We were pleased to see in the updated officer's report, dated 2nd November 2016



4.34 The removal of the entrance gate and piers is a fundamental improvement. The relatively minor adjustment to the Hafod Road elevation is a small improvement. It is considered to be the least successful elevation on the building.

The Civic Society was consulted on the amended proposal (excluding the gated entrance) and made the following comments: No further comments but of course pleased with the outcome.

5.2 A total of 4 letters of objection (including 1 from the Hereford Civic Society) have been received. These responses can be summarised as follows: - Object to a gated development as contrary to paragraphs 61 and 69 of the NPPF and counter to the previous use of the land for street parties - Overdevelopment of the site - An estate of identical properties is not in keeping with the area.

163699 Kyrle Street Flats

HCS lodged an objection feeling this proposal was a further demolition of Hereford's history, and whilst attempting to be contemporary in design we had concern over sizes and layout. John Venn's legacy is well known to most Herefordians –here is the relevant history.

Kyrle Street was built by Rev John Venn in the 1880's and was known as Venn Road at that time. It was an extension of his work at the Steam Mill (now Berrows House) and the adjacent public baths (now the Masonic Hall). Rev John Venn was the vicar of St Peter's Church in Hereford and was the City's greatest benefactor, devoting his life to dispelling poverty, constructing a welfare system for the poor of Hereford through numerous projects, some of

which continue to this day.

Ten semi-detached houses were laid out along the new Venn Road, designed by architect Thomas Nicholason, (?) (who had worked on many of Venn's projects, including the adjacent public baths as well as the original St James' Church and St Peter's Vicarage in Ledbury Road). This was to be the first model garden estate in Hereford and preceded the Garden City houses in Barr's Court Road (which have their own Conservation Area) by 30 years. The application site was one of those model cottages. Tenants were expected to use their gardens to be self sufficient and to recycle all of their waste.

Two of the cottages were demolished some years ago to make way for the present car park, but all of the others remain and contribute to an open and pleasant street scene.

Transport Hub Meeting

In December, along with Rail and Bus for Hereford, we met with the Council to hear of the latest proposals. The link road is due to be completed by Autumn this year (2017) with work on the hub, in front of the station, scheduled for 2018. Not all buses will use it and St. Peter's Square and Tescos will still be integral to the organisation of services. It was agreed that there should be proper waiting facilities, rather better than those proposed in the Economic Strategy which show a windy shelter in a sea of tarmac! HCS stands by its view that the facility should be fully integrated with the station facilities.

161565 Blueschool House - update

In spite of numerous objections and the clear doubts of many members, the Council's Planning Committee decided in September to grant permission for the very poor application from the Council itself to modify Blueschool House. In October, our Vice-chairman, John Faulkner, acting in his personal capacity, lodged a formal complaint with the Council on the grounds that:-

- There had been insufficient acknowledgment of the Council's financial interests in that part of the building was to be leased to DWP with consequent benefit to HC.
- There had been insufficient consideration of the Edgar Street Grid Masterplan and the conservation area.
- The very poor application and the design of the building which was inappropriate for this important site and, if implemented, would delay

the improvement of this important area of the city.

- The Planning Officer's report to the committee gave insufficient attention to the objections raised.

As is only to be expected HC's Head of Regulatory and Development Management Services replied to the complaint rebutting the points made - "financial interest is not a material planning consideration" "were not relevant to the planning decision"

"The materiality of the ESG masterplan to the decision making process was also, in my view, adequately covered." Following receipt of this, advice was taken from Planning Aid. This advice acknowledged the case was complicated but agreed with the Council that finance was not a relevant issue and that Councils have wide powers in dealing with their own applications.

Although this view was not very supportive John decided he would refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) on the basis that the decision was misguided, and a matter of maladministration with particular emphasis on financial implications and the application of the ESG masterplan. On the applicability of the ESG Masterplan it will be interesting to have the LGO's view. This is due sometime in January 2017.

162284 Old Barracks, Harold Street.

After much local lobbying against this application for a boarding house by the Cathedral School the planning application was refused. Our Society's

members were split over the proposals, some impressed by the modern approach for what would have been a low key residential proposal within a dense residential area. The School has now applied for a change of use on a former hotel at How Capel. If this is successful our roads will suffer additional traffic morning and evening. Meanwhile the HC has the problem of finding a future for these former barracks with a fascinating history – well recalled by our David Whitehead in Place, page 5, Autumn 2016.

162913 and 163663 Booth Hall

HCS objected to the former application suggesting that individual letters on this Grade II* building and a projecting sign might be more suitable. We are pleased to see a much improved approach – good signage is often integral to building design.



booth hall signage

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 the members of Hereford Civic Society.



Steven Thomas of Watkins Thomas

Steven Thomas first joined the company in 1987, and became Director of Watkins Thomas Ltd in 2012. Born in Hereford in 1964, Steve graduated with a BSc. in Estate Management in 1986; is a Fellow of the National Association of Estate Agents (FNAEA) and a Member of the Association of Residential Letting Agents (MARLA).

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proposed kyrle st flats

MEETINGS

Thursday 20th October 2016

Neighbourhood Planning (NP)
David Clark, who master minded the Fownhope Village Neighbourhood Plan, gave the meeting a most inspiring talk about the history of NPs and the complicated process of establishing one. Whilst enthusing about the benefit of these plans he reflected on the schisms that had arisen within his local community. Intriguingly no landowners had been permitted on the steering group! It is not a cheap process with each plan permitted to spend between £8 and £15 thousand pounds on consultants. The true cost is that of hundreds of hours of volunteer time.

Thursday 20th October 2016

Hereford, City of living history
Bill Laws, editor of Herefordshire Lore and In Our Time, gave a most fascinating presentation of images and words of Hereford and Herefordians. To guess where a building might have stood, and then to listen to the words about its proposed use was intriguing and informative. Bill, and his small team of researchers, do well to maintain an impressive archive now housed in the new Hereford Archive and Record Centre.

Thursday 15th December 2016

Proposed New University for Hereford.
Karen Usher, the inspiration and driving force behind the new university— for the present known as NMiTE (New Model in Technology and Engineering) gave the Society an interesting and enthusiastic

update on progress towards realisation of this project. It would be the first totally new university in the UK for 40 years, which had not emerged from an existing institution. She explained the unique features of the proposed university, its concentration on producing well rounded engineers to satisfy the national shortage, the two year fulltime bachelor and three year masters degrees, the support it was receiving from Warwick and Bristol universities and the financial requirements in the shorter and longer time scales. A new university in the city would clearly be of great benefit to the economic future of the county. NMiTE was at present waiting to hear if its application for a £20million plus start-up grant from government had been granted. Work was in hand, with architects appointed for the buildings of the campus. In the first stage the university would take over, modify and extend Franklin Barnes House as its headquarters. Other sites being examined for teaching, accommodation and laboratories included, the Bastion Mews area, the Essex Arms site, Berrington St and at Rotherwas. Existing buildings would be used where possible. Also opportunities would be grasped to construct high quality new buildings, where appropriate. First students are expected in 2018. Karen invited the society to be closely involved in the project and contribute to its future plans. See image on front and page 6

Herefordshire Economic Vision

The Herefordshire Council has published its Draft Economic Development Strategy, sometimes referred to as Herefordshire Economic Vision, for the next 15 years. It is a glossy document in two parts, "Invest in Herefordshire" and a "Pitchbook" outlining the major projects available for investment. It is primarily aimed at private enterprise investors to encourage them to finance these projects and act as development partners with co-funding from public funds. There is little reference to the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership which HCS thought were "in charge" of investment matters.

This is the key to the viability of the strategy. The objectives are:-

- 1 to support the growth of the Herefordshire economy by identifying priority projects.
- 2 to attract investment to Herefordshire and guide it within the County.
- 3 to raise the profile of Herefordshire and the investment opportunities.
- 4 to provide Herefordshire with clear priorities for negotiations.

There is no mention of coordination with the County's planners. How is this strategy to be fed into the future planning of the city and county? It has major planning implications and needs to be fed into future strategic and local plans such as the long awaited Hereford and other Local Plans. There appears to have been little real consultation with the market towns which should have started earlier. A group leader commented that the strategy was focussed on Hereford City, but that there had been a lack of involvement from Hereford City Council. The projects listed for Hereford are:-

- The Rotherwas magazine site.
- A new business quarter on the Bath and Gaol Street carparks but excluding for some reason

the Police Station which is due for replacement to Edgar St./ Link Road.

- The Urban Village. This is said to include space for the new University and a district heating scheme. Good but again it is time we saw more details of proposals for this area.
- The Berrington Street Quarter with mixed housing - particularly student housing and small retail. Refurbishment and development of this area is long overdue.
- The new university, rightly seen as a major driver for the economy.
- The football club. Refurbishment of the ground plus a hotel and retail area on Blackfriars Street .
- Outdoor leisure facilities across the county.
- The river quarter from Greyfriars bridge westwards.
- The racecourse with a new hotel, conference centre and sports areas.
- New multistorey carparks at the County bus station site, St. Martins/ ASDA area, Eign Street and Friars Street.

There is no indication that the public is to be asked their opinion, although there is mention of annual "think tank" sessions -who with? John Faulkner

YOUR OPINIONS

Gated Communities

Walking through Colwall on a sunny Boxing Day morning I was shocked to come across a new gated estate – Lime Tree Gardens - it would be difficult to find a more attractive village, with a diverse collection of houses and I guess occupiers, in what must be one of the safest places in England. How did this get past the planners? A small close of cheaper homes, built at the same time, are outside of the gated enclave! Why? I thought your article in the Autumn issue of Place was succinct – and gated communities clearly are contrary to the NPPF as you stated. We must relearn our ability to treat all as honest people – and in my turn I will take out a membership, instead of borrowing my neighbour's copy of your informative journal. Richard Deveral

Ushuaia, Argentina

Visiting the southernmost city of the world in December I was not expecting to compare it with Hereford. There are some remarkable similarities although it doesn't have an impressive cathedral and centuries of historic buildings. What it does have is a similar population size, technical assembly and engineering, tourism and wonderful scenery around together with a lot of sheep. What I didn't like was the sprawling new housing developments pushing out into the surrounding countryside without much of an overall plan. Something for us to grasp onto and I'm not sure there is anybody really getting to grips with our long term plan. John Bothamley



Join Us

If you want to influence the future of the City and 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 and, web site and publicity costs. It does not cover members' time - all of which is freely given.

Subscription: Single £15 pa. / two memberships at the same address £25 pa. Questions?

☎ 01981 580002

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Forthcoming Events

All meetings at the Kindle Centre, by ASDA, Belmont, Hereford HR2 7JE. 7.00pm refreshments for a 7.30pm start unless highlighted

Thursday 16th February 2017
Public transport solutions for Hereford. A presentation by Transport expert, Gareth Calan Davies. In the news for proposing a tram system for Hereford. Could this be one of, perhaps, a number of initiatives to end Hereford's transport conundrum for good?

Thursday 23rd March 2017 at University Centre, Folly Lane, HR1 1LT
Hereford Civic Society Annual Lecture
Planning Hereford?! How to get it right. An illustrated lecture by John Bothamley.

Thursday 20th April 2017
Community Archaeology. Professional archaeologist, Christopher Atkinson, specialises in landscape archaeology, and in projects which involve local communities. Illustrated with some notable success stories from Herefordshire, increasingly engaging public interest and active volunteers.

Thursday 18th May 2017
Open House - 27 Southbank Road, Hereford HR1 2TJ - Clare and Huw Rees' new home. More than a "Grand Designs" project this new house is built to exacting Passivhaus standards. Hear about translating one's dream home into reality. Park nearby in Chartwell, Rockfield and Elm Roads, and walk!