

FREE



Place Hereford Civic Society

The City's built environment forum

Major Green plans by the Council

HCS suggests there is only one way to achieve it

Autumn 2019

New station at Pontrilas or Tram Inn

Momentum is gathering

The Hereford Garden Suburb

Decent public housing in the 1920s

Planning Matters

Updates and worries

Hereford Now

Premier Inn

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- Visits to historical buildings and contemporary developments
- Regular programme of evening talks with a glass of wine – usually in the Kindle Centre, near ASDA
- Annual Lecture in April

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See back page for all contact details

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PREFACE

Well the new administration at Herefordshire Council has had their first 100 days and what have they achieved on built environment matters? Somewhat arrogantly, last quarter in our Summer edition, we suggested there were four major decisions to be made. Well they have certainly created waves and are in the process of further investigations.

One – the Hereford Area Plan – instead of cracking on with it they have side lined it proposing that the issues are best dealt with through a Special Planning Document. This will be part of the revised Core Strategy which is due for review this year although it could take several years!

Two – the By-passes – consultants' work on both have been suspended and work on the Southern Link Road halted, bold decisions reflecting their manifesto pledges. The General Scrutiny Committee has considered these actions and recommended that work should continue until a final decision is made! And Councillor Bolderson has even suggested a referendum! Together with a lobby group in favour of the roads this looks like becoming a Brexit style fiasco.

Three – Review of Partnership agreements – these are difficult to untangle and I hear much discussion is in progress but suspect the lawyers are benefitting most.

Four – Review of Highway, Design and other services – again there are complicated contracts and some work is supposed to be done well. But with the ugly, traffic light governed City Link Road staring us all in the face HCS will continue to lobby for much better design services. After nearly two years there is still no clear signage for the



developer Engie's white van

use of the shared cycle and pedestrian route. 'Shared space' philosophy must surely be embraced.

In this edition we consider housing from different aspects. Historically, the Bulmer's Garden Suburb of the 1920s (page 6). Inspirationally, again suggesting a much enlarged Ewyas Harold to provide more housing and services for those living in the south west of the County (page 4). Controversially David Thame is back writing about the need for all these extra homes (Page 5) and Clive Stainton proposing a new station (page 4) As always do share and talk about our views – we have no HCS policies - we're a forum for debate about the built environment.

John Bothamley - Editor

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NEWS & COMMENT

MHCLG

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is teaming up with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) to overhaul the national enforcement handbook. The handbook is intended to provide the latest best practice and expertise on shutting down illegal building and preventing it from happening. Updates will also aim to guarantee that developers obtain full planning permission before work starts. Three launch events are due to be held across England in Spring 2020. See page 7.

Funding Ha Ha

Local government secretary Robert Jenrick has announced that 100 towns are eligible for support from the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, which was founded in July. Jenrick said: 'Ensuring that prosperity and opportunities are available to everyone in this country, not just those in London or our biggest cities, is at the heart of the mission of this government.' Clear politicking which further demeans our incompetent politicians.

'I will now work with local people from the 100 communities announced today to agree proposals to invest up to £25 million in each place. I hope these deals will provide the investment and the impetus for long-term renewal ensuring each town can look to the future with a new optimism.' Hereford is on the list but will it be £25 million?! And what about all the other towns in need that failed to get on the list – what a way to distribute taxation.



NMiTE

HCS is concerned about historic buildings and would like to see a start on the update of the university's Victorian buildings and respectfully suggest a new sign is needed. We had been told students were coming in September 2019 following the 'design' cohort last year. But we are pleased about the proposed use of Peacocks by NMiTE (see page 7)



Hereford City Design Forum

Vicki Tomlinson, Director of Development at Connexus, Herefordshire's major housing association hosted a meeting on 25th September 2019, which HCS attended, to discuss design matters and the approach to their new developments in the City. With over 11,000 homes it is heartening to know and see how seriously they take design issues; and to hear of some of the complexities of managing such a large estate. The Oval regeneration is completed having demolished the unloved old Cornish PRC blocks of 198 units, including negotiating with 14 families who had acquired their flats under the Right to Buy scheme, several now moving back into new accommodation! Work continues on the Bath Street site where the decent, Victorian, red brick buildings are being refurbished and new flats built behind. Scheduled completion for 27 units is June 2020 and a further 47 flats in March 2021, there will be some for private rent and some affordable flats. Work is to start on the design of replacement homes for the post war prefabs in Pine Avenue, Belmont, whose twenty year design life has been somewhat extended! The forum is due to meet quarterly.

Central Heating

Apparently Herefordshire Council has long had a plan to develop a heat network to serve the city centre and the 'regeneration' zone around the station. So they have just put out a tender document for companies to bid for the consultancy for 12 months until November 2020. That can only mean the unused area behind the plastic bollards will remain undeveloped for years; possibly even until the Urban Design Panel from English Heritage return on their ten year review cycle due in 2028.

Local Access Forum

Did you know that there are more miles of Public Rights of Way (2,113m) across

Contributors

John Bothamley – Former chairman of HCS, chair of charitable grant making trust

John Faulkner – Chartered Civil Engineer, former chairman of HCS

David Fowler – Accountant

Jeremy Milln – Conservation archaeologist and former chairman of HCS

Clive Stainton – Railway enthusiast and champion

David Thame – Journalist

Stanley Vincent – Planning Visionary

David Whitehead – Hereford historian and author

Design & Layout – Gary Nozedar

Front Page

Herefordshire Councillors 26th September 2019 – HC photograph

NEWS & COMMENT

Herefordshire than there are miles of road (2,020m)? The Herefordshire Local Access Forum (HLAF) is a statutory advisory body that helps Herefordshire Council in this task. The Forum provides views and advice to the council and other organisations, such as Government departments, Natural England, Forestry Commission, English Heritage and Sport England.

The Forum is currently looking for Herefordshire residents or others with a strong interest in using rights of way, or views on how access to the countryside should be managed, to become new members.

Garden Town in SW

Somerset and West Taunton Council has granted approval for 2,000 new homes, which will be part of a new community. Designed on garden city principles, the neighbourhood will be built in south west Taunton. It also includes a primary school, mixed-use local centre, employment and a 'park and bus' facility for 300 vehicles. Of the 2,000 homes, 350 have been designated as affordable.

Barry Williams, urban design director at Barton Willmore, said: 'By using the garden city principles, we have designed an environment that celebrates its landscape setting, promoting opportunities to adopt a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

We've provided opportunities to 'grow-your-own' food throughout the scheme, created an extensive network of footpaths and cycleways, and integrated large areas of attractive public open space, to create a neighbourhood people will love living in.'

Just what some members of HCS would like to see in Ewyas Harold. (See page 4)

Community Rail Partnership

Talks are afoot to establish a well-tested mechanism that connects key stakeholders to form a group dedicated to gaining rail improvements, business growth and measurable local regeneration. The philosophy being that all partners reap rewards and results.

The top five aims of a CRP are: 1. Putting stations back into the heart of communities, 2. Local stations functioning as economic and social assets for the areas they serve 3. Bringing empowerment and closeness to communities 4. Helping with wider economic and social regeneration 5. Increasing volume and quality of rail usage with happier passengers! Apparently there is potential and possibility for Ledbury, Colwall and Hereford to form a Community Rail Partnership. Refer to Rail and Bus for Herefordshire www.rbhf.org.uk

Modular homes

Bristol City Council has granted planning permission for 11 modular houses to be built above the Chalks Road car park, next to St George Park. To be delivered by ZED Pods, a company set up to design, build and install 'high quality, affordable low carbon homes' for keyworkers and young people close to city centres and public transport, the scheme, includes nine one bedroom pods and two pods with two bedrooms.

Unreasonable

We have been told that our magazine should no longer be delivered to councillors as all information exchange has to be electronic. We respect the new administration's principles but object to being told how to conduct our lives in such detail. 'Place' is designed to inspire, educate and reflect viewpoints often best exchanged and shared over conversation. Populations are fast moving to communication only through the internet. An efficiently printed and shared magazine does a lot to keep us talking. Does free car parking for councillors meet the criteria they are demanding of us?

Community-led housing

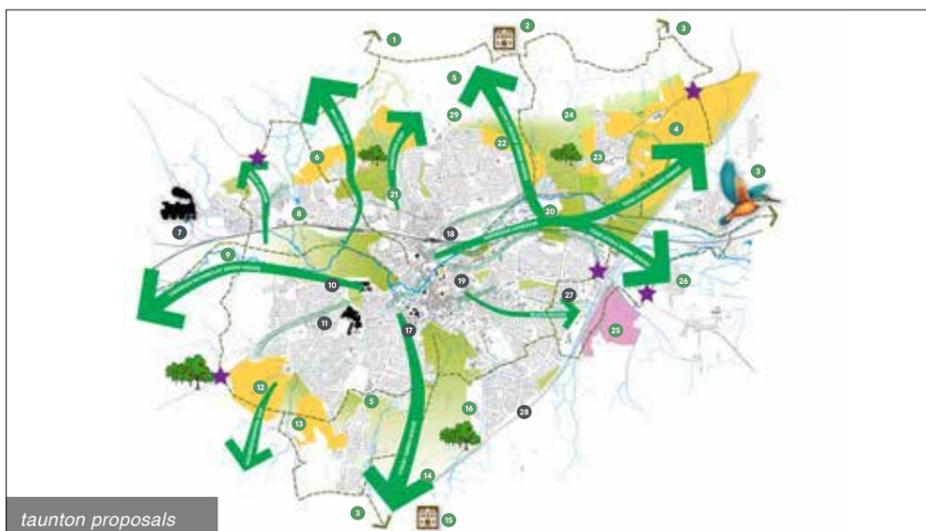
Community First Yorkshire aims to help local authorities support the delivery of community-led housing development in the region and beyond, with the publication of a new guide. The

organisation, which works with voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises and rural communities, says that the guide draws on experience from urban and rural planning authorities to demonstrate how local plan policy and development management practice can support community-led housing. It also highlights how it can be promoted through neighbourhood plans. No doubt our own Hereford CLT is studying the plan.

And another fund

The Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) has announced the Transforming Places Through Heritage fund, (just £15m), which aims to reinvigorate England's high streets and town centres into thriving hubs of community, through the redevelopment of local historic buildings. That will be some achievement!

The initiative is part of the High Street Heritage Action Zones and Future High Streets Fund, run by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Suggesting much will be spent on administration and little on workers physically undertaking the work. Matthew McKeague, chief executive of AHF, said: 'With the right support, thriving social enterprises and charitable ventures can inject new life into our great but underused buildings, and begin to reimagine and re-establish our high streets as places of social and commercial prosperity, and common identity.' Crikey that sounds easy.



taunton proposals

HEREFORD NOW

Premier Inn Blackfriars Street

HCS schedules mainly new build projects for this page and had hoped for a shiny new hotel, on this premier site, being ready for this issue. We had shuddered at the planning application drawings, and have objected to the signage still to be added. But the quality of the brickwork is abysmal. We suspect there have been sub-contractor disputes. Two types of brick have been used with inch wide mastic joints keeping them apart. Our photograph shows apparent remedial work being undertaken after the scaffolding has

been taken down.

This project brings more anonymity to the City – a tedious hotel from anywhere. We must press our Planning Committee to establish and insist on some reference to our locality on our new builds. Our second picture shows another new Premier Inn, in Marlborough, also at a similar stage of construction, with a certain nod to the architecture of the area. Pastiche is sometimes better than poorly detailed buildings as ours in Blackfriars Street clearly shows. JB



premier inn - hereford



premier inn - marlborough

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DECISION TIME

A plethora of new ideas for the built environment

As the new administration – a coalition of Greens, Independents and It's Our County - grapples how best to deliver its manifesto one could worry about how many innovative projects are to be developed. We've heard about 100 electric buses, trams snaking through the City centre and we've been told to walk and cycle. Then on 26th September the Council resolved to set a target of zero carbon emissions by 2030!

Elected members agreed to:

- Accelerate a reduction of emissions and aspire to become carbon neutral by 2030/31.
- Deliver an updated carbon management plan and associated action plan for Council emissions by April 2020.
- Work with strategic partners, residents and local organisations

to develop a revised countywide CO2 reduction strategy aspiring for carbon neutrality by 2030.

- Use 100% renewably sourced energy where this provides the best carbon reduction return on investment.

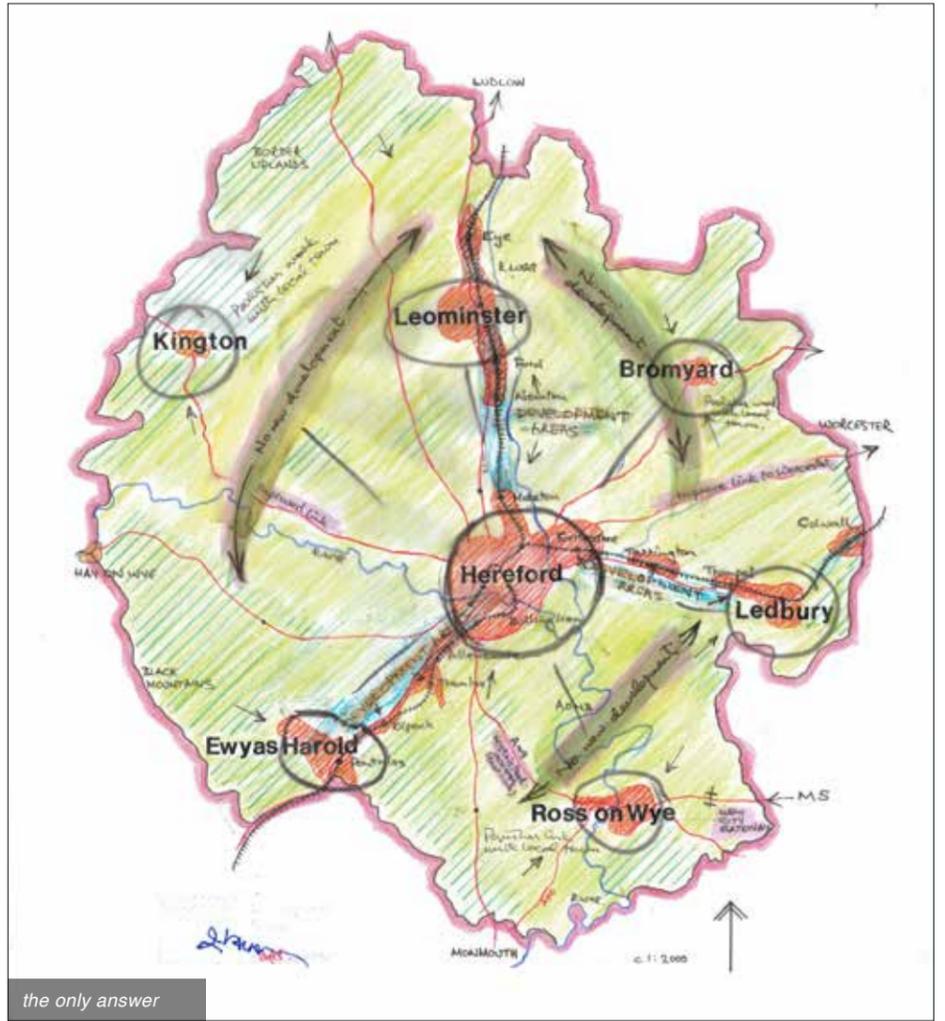
Wow – the only way to achieve all of that will be to take note of this article!

Only one way to reach their target

The huge changes in lifestyle that the Council, and teenage Greta, want will only come about through major changes to our infrastructure; the houses we live in and the way we move about. Current consideration using consultants and reference to multifarious reports can only provide piecemeal considerations. A huge strategic decision needs to be made – much bigger than whether to cancel the western by-pass and southern link road – and that is whether to fully grasp green credentials.

At last there seems to be some move to place communities at the heart of our planning, started by the Tories undelivered Big Society. Positive development is best delivered with local people. Further we need to accept the centuries' long hierarchy of villages, towns and cities, understanding that scattered communities cannot be fully

serviced to the standards expected in the 21st century. We need to understand that personal transport will eventually become driverless and that convenience will out-strip all other requirements; waiting for a bus and visiting a GP just won't be part of everyday life! How we get to that nirvana is difficult to say.



HCS has so often called for an overall vision for the County. Surely we can agree that:

- Our outstanding countryside should be maintained as a tourist generator and for our relaxation and enjoyment
- New housing should be built within walking distance of public transport www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk
- Our unique industries should be supported and expanded, especially providing opportunities for young people.
- Children should always attend their nearest school to help to build community

We need to see Herefordshire as a largely self-contained organism able to look after itself; whilst also being well connected to the rest of the world. That then points to the proposal first

promoted by HCS in Summer 2015 - a much enlarged Ewyas Harold providing market town facilities for the South West area of the County. Initially that proposal was loudly repudiated but over the last four years it has received more measured consideration.

There is growing interest in opening a new station at Pontrilas (see below) there is query over the housing we need (see page 5). With more Neighbourhood Development Plans across the County than any other county in the Country, now is the time to revise them to support a revised Core Strategy, for a truly revolutionary approach. Now is the time to put community at the heart of our planning, where we will all work to the overriding policies incorporating good housing and good transportation routes.

John Bothamley



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Ewyas Harold Market Town

Some really big decisions need to be made. Strategic routes for the transport of goods and people both on highways and in trains. New development restricted to the transport corridors running north, east and south-west from Hereford and a much enlarged Ewyas Harold. All as we move to the artificial intelligence society of an automated life style and days of relaxation. Let's hope we can still maintain personal contact and learn to properly communicate with each other.

The Future Population of Herefordshire?

This document from the Council's 'Intelligence Unit' is based on projections commissioned from Edge Analytics Ltd, a Leeds-based firm of demographic geographers who will have used a dwelling-led formulation of the POPGROUP software with 'forecasts' of population growth driven by a trajectory of new housing.

In other words decide how many new houses you want and work out how many people you need to fill them, add that number to the existing population and there's your answer. It has little to do with indigenous housing need or population growth. On that narrative the number of new houses needed for the County by 2030/31 is nearer seven thousand, for a 6% additional population requirement over the plan period on current trends. Not eighteen thousand for a 17% growth across

the County (42% near Hereford). The latter would depend upon a massive boost in inward migration and as 70% of our population increase since 2004 has been due to migration from the EU, it is questionable whether this can be sustained, let alone increased, especially in a Brexit scenario. The new administration might prefer to put the horse back before the cart in terms of housing requirement when it comes to revising the Core Strategy.

Jeremy Milln

DECISION TIME

Pontrilas Parkway – a new station?

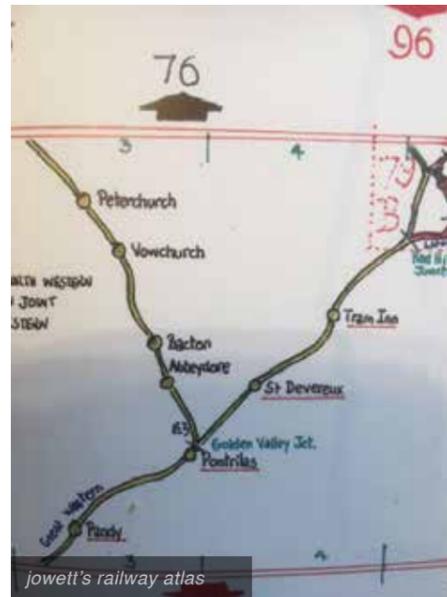
Rail travel is booming in the UK. Passenger journeys have doubled over the last 20 years while freight transport is steadily increasing. However some areas are poorly served, the Welsh Marches being one, so reopening a station to serve the 24 mile gap between Abergavenny and Hereford has long looked an attractive option. Pontrilas Parkway could bring benefits far outweighing its relatively modest cost. It has the potential to be used by 500 passengers a day, and for freight for Pontrilas Timber, Black Mountain Quarries and the Pontrilas Army Training Area. Its place in the NDP underscores its popular approval. Politicians of every hue support it and it has frequently been feted by local media.

In 1998 Dr Nigel Harris of the Railway Consultancy Ltd, predicted 150 users a day from a five mile radius. Now with greater demand precipitated by population growth, worsened congestion in Hereford and projections of need from expanding colleges the case for a rail-based hub near Ewyas Harold is excellent. Providing direct services between Cardiff/ Newport and Manchester and Birmingham via Hereford it offers far better value than a 'bypass' in terms of stimulating investment and relieving central Hereford of traffic.

The villages of Monmouthshire and the Black Mountains find themselves

in a railway vacuum. Their choices are the remoter stations at Abergavenny, Pontypool or Cwmbran where parking is difficult. For these more distant communities Pontrilas Parkway promises a solution.

A station served by safe cycle routes and an efficient local bus network should limit the land take required for station parking. Even so a hub here will require a footprint of perhaps a couple of acres sufficient for parking and freight loading. A site either between Pontrilas and the old station at St. Devereux or across the Welsh border at Llangula would be chosen. Pontrilas Parkway as a stop for all services,



local and express alike, would be the objective.

An alternative would be to develop the hub at the Tram Inn at Allensmore which offers plenty of space and might also serve the extensive nursery and

feed mill there. National funding is being sought from the UK and Welsh Governments to scope these options. It is appreciated such a project will take time, but given the growth projections for the area, the need to reduce emissions and the existing rail infrastructure it is hoped Transport for Wales (TfW) and Great Western (GWR) will become partners.

The old Pontrilas station served the local community for nearly 100 years. Demand is higher now from commuters, business people, students, shoppers and tourists than it has ever been. Reopening a railway station here has huge potential for sustainability and economic growth. The situation today is markedly different from that prevailing when the idea of re-opening the station was considered 20 years ago and the need and enthusiasm for seeing this project through to completion should not be doubted. Pontrilas Parkway would bring clear, direct benefits and is achievable.

Clive Stainton

New home owners – where will they work?

Assuming the economy isn't heading for a crash or a slowdown, and assuming the residential sector doesn't deflate too rapidly, residential developers from big national names to local minnows will take an intelligent interest in the opportunities for large-scale development Herefordshire Council is providing. Not all sites will be worth bothering with or economic to develop, and they may (or may not) provide the right mix of properties and tenures. But one thing is fairly certain: the kind of money that gets things built is engaged. They are seriously interested in Herefordshire.

Can you say the same about the other side of the property coin, the commercial developers and investors? Because without the amenities and workplaces commercial developers provide the housing is ultimately pointless (or will rapidly devalue, which in the property world amounts to the same thing). Some already have. British Land, one of the giants of retail property investment, took a punt on the Hereford Old Market scheme. They are busy re-shaping their portfolio away from retail property which, for obvious reasons, is an investment disaster area. In 2010 about 60% of their portfolio was in shops, today it is 45% and by 2024 it will be 30% (they are investing in London offices instead).

Will anyone else invest the kind of big numbers that produce significant developments, particularly in the workspace sector? The answer, for the big funds at least, looks rather grim. The answer boils down to a big shift in the way familiar named pension and insurance funds like Aviva and Legal & General do their property spending. It is a trend others are watching and following. The rule deployed by so-called 'patient money' used to be this: spread your money around the country, and around the property sectors, and you will be safe and earn steadily. So the insurers and pension funds would buy the best-in-class asset in each town – the best office block in Worcester, the best shopping centre in Hereford, and so on.

Now they have looked at the long-term trends and had a rethink. In a changing world they want to future-proof, and they realise that the future

will depend on locations with growing populations, very well educated work forces deployed in fast-growing sectors of the economy, and diversified local economies. They have literally rooms full of data to provide this.

And having studied the data, they have taken some extraordinary decisions. So, for instance, Aviva Investors has decided that London, Manchester, Birmingham and Cambridge meet their check-list of places in which to invest in property. Everywhere else their aim is to sell property, not buy. This means disinvesting in cities that you might have assumed had a good future ahead of them, like Glasgow or Nottingham. It certainly means there is no time or space for Hereford.

Others, like Legal & General, are concentrating on buying assets across all property sectors in their chosen locations. Their list is a little longer than Aviva's. So in Leeds they have spent about £1.5 billion investing in offices, apartments and all sorts of property. They reckon each investment supports and reinforces the others in a mutually beneficial cycle of growth.

But will they be buying in Hereford? Never say never, but don't bet on it. Herefordshire will need capital from other sources if it is to build workplaces and amenities. And by definition that capital will be fairly impatient capital – money in a hurry – because the 'patient' capital has largely decided to go elsewhere. Developers in a hurry often make choices which those with a long-term interest such as local people (and their elected councils) would do well to resist. The time to do that resisting may be coming very soon. David Thame



70 houses at Wormbridge?

An Environmental Impact Assessment won't be required under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. This appears to be an odd decision which is still in the course of a formal planning application. But this scheme meets the above suggestions including being sited by an existing bus stop. Planning App. 180948

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AMAZING PLACES OF HEREFORD

The Hereford Garden Suburb

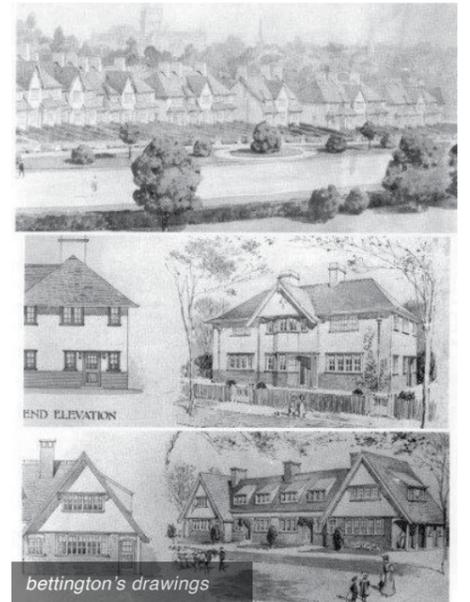
The Woolhope Club recently had a talk on 'Hereford in 1919' and, as you can imagine, there were many problems – the influenza epidemic, a national railway strike, rationing etc. – but there was one great success story. Hereford responded very quickly to the urgent need to build houses 'fit for heroes'. We can still admire today the fine houses built on the Portfield estate, in Breinton Road and the lower end of Ross Road – all completed in the early 1920s. With their rendered and whitewashed walls, a touch of Tudor in the gables and multi-light Critall windows they represent a high-point for municipal housing in Hereford. Remarkably, 100 years later new housing is creeping again over the green fields of Holmer and Lugwardine and still employing some of the picaresque vocabulary used in the 1920s, notwithstanding five decades of modernism since the Second World War.

Hereford responded well in 1919 because in the immediate pre-war period it had engaged in a pioneering project to develop social housing, in what became known as the Garden City, adjoining Barrs Court Road. This was fundamentally the vision of three eminent citizens: the mayor of the city, Frederick Bulmer, the young architect, Edward Bettington and his father-in-law, the builder, William Bowers. Frederick (1865-1941) had the concept and the energy to implement it, all of which has recently been discussed in his biography by James Alexander (2009). He was the son of the Revd. Charles H. Bulmer, the founder of the cider company and an enlightened product of Kings College, Cambridge. He stood as a progressive Liberal for both the County and City Council and when speaking on topics such as 'Wealth and Wages' he was often mistaken for a socialist, but he firmly believed that socialist objectives could be achieved by capital and philanthropy. He was much influenced by John Ruskin, who,

of course, is often recruited as one of the founding fathers of the socialist movement. Also high on Fred Bulmer's political agenda was the minimum wage, education for all and good, cheap housing. In 1908 Bulmer was mayor of Hereford and chairman of the housing committee, and determined to cut the Gordian knot: how to break the monopoly of private landowners who sustained slum dwellings, such as the 'stews of Bewell Street' and substitute modern community housing. Since the passing of the Houses for the Working Classes Act in 1890 the government had been making grants for these purposes but Hereford City Council was not prepared to take-on private landlords- such as the church, which profited from slum property. The moment for decision arrived in 1907 when William 'Billy' Bowers, the local builder informed Bulmer that the Penngrove Estate, on the western slopes of Aylestone Hill was for sale. Just beyond the Barrs Court Station and within easy walking

distance of the inner city, it was ideally suited for artisan dwellings. Bowers kept the higher land, close to Venn's Lane, in his hands and Bulmer, with the help of a government loan of £1700 bought six acres close to the railway. Additional money was promised by the government to get rid of the sub-standard housing in Bewell Street, once the tenants had been re-housed at Barrs Court.

But how was the site to be developed? Bulmer was already familiar with the concept of the garden city, which had at its roots in William Morris's aesthetics, and of course, Ruskin's socialism but he also contacted the Birmingham business-man J.S. Nettlefold who recommended the establishment of a co-operative housing company, which had worked well, in similar circumstances, in Birmingham. The new company had an 80 year lease for the new estate from the Council and all the tenants were shareholders, paying variable rents. The lowest was 4s 6d a week – much lower than on any equivalent estate in the West Midlands. Hereford's premiere architectural practice, Groome and Bettington, designed the houses, basing their ideas upon Bourneville in Birmingham and Bowers built them. Clearly, the profit margin for such excellent houses, let at affordable rents was minimal but architects and builder were compensated by developing the upper slopes of the Penngrove estate as a freehold middle class suburb. The simple vernacular of the 'cottages'



blended imperceptibly with the more overtly Tudoresque of the houses on the hill and as an affirmation of confidence in the product, Edward Bettington built for himself The Croft – designed in a slightly more modernist style. Allotments were made available behind the street frontages and the King's Acre Nursery supplied a wide variety of street-trees so that Janet and John (or Jane and Peter) could learn their names on the way to school. To add a touch of utopian idealism, on a level plateau where the artisan houses ended and the 'posh' houses commenced, a cricket ground was established with a pavilion, where all classes could relax on equal terms. Since certain 'noxious activities' were forbidden on the estate, they may not have shared a cocktail or a pint of mild.

David Whitehead



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Holmer Park Summerhouse

We are saddened by the state of the listed summerhouse (formerly an aviary) on Attwood Road, just to the north of Holmer Park. The building was erected in the later nineteenth

century apparently by Alfred Watkins who had bought the parts from William Davies who had salvaged them when Hereford's Tudor Market Hall was taken down. Of the 27 richly moulded wooden piers of this iconic ancient building there are four of them reassembled with carved spandrel braces and pendants to form a square structure open on three sides under a pyramidal clay tiled roof topped by a lantern. The structure seems very much at risk, decaying, overgrown and filled with unsuitable materials. We urge the Health Club that now owns it to look after it.

Jeremy Milln



PLANNING MATTERS

The Highway Network

Herefordshire Council is seeking views on the draft plan that will map out the future of the county's highways network and John Harrington, Cabinet member for Infrastructure, is keen for all to contribute. The Network Management Plan 2019- 2034 is a strategy that governs how the council manages our highways network and ensures that residents, visitors, businesses and local communities get the best out of this important asset.

'Our objective is that the updated Network Management Plan will help to:

- Encourage economic growth
- Provide a good quality highway network for all users
- Promote healthy lifestyles, particularly through active travel
- Make journeys safer and easier
- Ensure access to services for those living in rural areas'

The consultation concluded on 4th October 2019.

It is another consultants' money tree. 'Objective Supporting Information' for example includes -'Continue to develop hierarchy or routes and identification of key conflict points through ongoing and emerging projects, such as: Hereford Transport Package, South Wye Transport Package, Hereford City Centre Transport Package, Market Town studies and Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plans'. How is it possible

for individuals to comment sensibly unless they are working full time with supportive back up staff? Harrington has to consult because that is what is accepted practice but all these transport reports are based on unrealistic modelling; because no one knows what the pattern of development and redevelopment will look like in fifteen years' time. We have some vague ideas about possible residential sites but nothing is scheduled and now there is a new proposal south of the railway line which had been considered to be the limit of the suburban sprawl. What is needed is one plan drawn up by elected representatives, with expert support, which is quickly ratified in the revised Core Strategy, due to be updated but delayed because of the change of administration. Multiple reports just confuse the picture.

Latest Updates

193042 Grafton Lane

Proposed housing development for 300 plots off Grafton Lane, Hereford. Our initial concerns have been lodged with the Council; we wrote:-

'The Civic Society is concerned that the proposed development would require a major departure from adopted development plan policies for the subject area, adjoining the City of Hereford. HCS has particular concerns about the impact of the proposed development on this environmentally valuable rural/urban edge area. Also it is an important function as a gateway area to the City. HCS urges Herefordshire Council to resist the above application, and will consider making further representations to support the Council in this respect'.

193221 Peacocks

The ground floor of the former Woolworth's store is to be refurbished into facilities for NMITE with student accommodation above. A separate application is due for updating the

facades. This looks like being just the sort of refurbishment which would be good to see throughout the City. Times change and here the use of a good building is adapted for a new use.

Design Guide

The £70,000 Hereford Design Guide due to have been published in the spring of this year seems to have been side-lined. HCS criticised the selection of the architects who wrote it and the brief appears not to have been adhered to. Did we pay for it?

The future prosperity of our City depends on it being developed sensitively with reference to history and incorporating the very best of new ideas. This matter is urgent as is a Design Review Panel. We hesitate to add more requests of the new administration but these two matters are on our list for our winter edition.

Shire Hall

On 27th March 2019 Herefordshire Council applied to itself (application no

191123) to take down the original lath and plaster ceilings from the ground floor rooms at the Shire Hall (grade II*). These had been damaged recently by unsympathetic alterations, hung services and suspended ceilings which have spoiled the handsome proportions and denied these spaces much of their natural illumination. Although they had survived essentially intact, we learned that most of the plaster ceilings were taken down in Feb/March without listed building consent. We objected, as did the Georgian Group and City Council, eventually forcing the matter to Planning Committee on 18th September. The Committee, seeing that the work done was essentially irreversible, had little choice but to pass the application. Officers occasionally need to be reminded that the Council's affairs are a matter of public record and that they are expected to set a good example. The breach was no accident and put them at risk of prosecution. Fortunately HCS's intervention came just in time to save one ceiling; that to a room at the E end of the building which has a moulded cornice.

192904 Whitecross Road

HCS submitted a comment on this innovative application. 'This is a contemporary design well maximising the use of the site. City living requires high densities which is achieved with this application, but city living relieves the need for car ownership and surely only one parking space should be provided to meet the new administration's green policies. Secondly, there is no reference on the drawings, and little in the D & A Statement regarding the materials

to be used. Good design must make reference to the locality and detailed information should be made on the colour and type of local bricks to be used.'

Planners' opinions

Not an easy job weighing up whether an application is valid, but the HCS panel that vets applications is increasingly of the view that personal preferences might sometimes get in the way, or overtake policy. In a recent Design and Access Statement we noted-

'We have taken on board the comments of the planning officer within their pre-application advice response on the basis that the design would need to be very design specific and promote a building which would read to be formerly agricultural in nature rather than a traditional house type design'. Where is that policy? Does this mean contemporary is frowned upon? Who is running the show – councillors must fast clinch their opinions and ensure our planners translate correctly.



whitecross road



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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01432 272280



graffton lane layout

MEETINGS

Saturday 13th July 2019

Bewdley, Severn Valley Railway and Morville Hall

A fine day for the summer coach outing, together with Leominster Civic Society, we went to Bewdley. What a stunning place, red brick buildings and a promenade along the River Severn with a buzz of activity. We were ably shown around by the local Civic Society complete with anecdotes and historical stories we would never have gleaned from a guide book.

Lunch was taken at the Severn Valley Railway sheds at Highley, sitting beside a dozen old steam locos, rather well polished and retired from service. In the afternoon to Morville Hall an 'Elizabethan gem with a Georgian makeover', this exceptionally fine house and enchanting gardens were especially open for us. A charming day out efficiently organised by David Fowler. Where next year?

Thursday 19th September 2019

Bill Laws, local author and historian

Herefordshire's Home Front in World War Two was described with pictures and quotes from those who lived through the war, including from some in the audience! Elinor Kelly, who works with Bill on Herefordshire Lore



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magazine, spoke about Conscientious Objectors and her ongoing research with a request for any information about them kellyelinor@live.co.uk



OPINIONS

Urban Room

HCS has long promoted the need for a place in which our built environment can be discussed, openly and constructively. HCS is a member of the Urban Rooms Network part of the Place Alliance. Now, with a more engaged administration we think the time might be right to push for some sort of small facility, in a central location, where discourse and discussion can consider grand plans and details of small planning applications. A suggestion for Hereford? A room in NMiTE? Your views please. More in our winter edition.

Community Engagement

Placed is a Liverpool based Social Enterprise that engages people in



cheltenham urban room

design, planning and development; delivering creative education and engagement programmes that connect communities, decision makers, schools and businesses across the North West to make better places. They believe we can only create great places if we bring people together to have a conversation and develop ideas. Their work helps to diversify the voices that shape our towns and cities. Their core team is supported by a large network of over 90 volunteer ambassadors - built environment professionals, engagement and creative specialists and university students who share their collective knowledge and skills to help build better places. We could do with them setting up down here!

Beryl Bikes

The arrival of these bright green bikes scattered in various spots around the City is presumably to inspire us to cycle. It is disingenuous to be too offhand but this is surely tokenism? To get us out of our cars we need much improved road infrastructure, cycle routes, level crossings at junctions, shared space and much more. Jeremy Smith

Protecting trees?

Apparently local planners across the country are failing to use the changes, published in July 2018, to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

which afforded trees and ancient woodland the same protection as listed buildings, according to the Woodland Trust. Paragraph 175c1 of the NPPF states that 'development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused.' We're sure our planners are well aware.

Five year housing supply

We don't seem to hear much about this contentious issue. Perhaps our councillors are behaving like our PM and ignoring stuff they don't like.

Forthcoming Events

7.00pm for 7.30 Kindle Centre by ASDA, Belmont, Hereford HR2 7JE

Thursday 21st November, 2019

Marsha O'Mahoney, local historian River Voices: The stories of swimmers, walkers, anglers, ferry women and men, canoeists, bailiffs, poachers on the River Wye.

Marsha draws upon oral and documentary history to make this a lively and engaging evening

Thursday 12th December, 2019

Elly Deacon-Smith and Matt Hayes of Arbor Architects

Meeting the challenge of carbon descent: leading by example and the opportunities for genuinely sustainable housing in Herefordshire, being advocates of Passivhaus design.

Thursday 16th January, 2020

Alex Coppock, RIBA, Director of the award winning local architects Communion Architects

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