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Place

Hereford
Civic Society

The City's built
environment forum

Autumn 2014

Suburbia is Coming? Planning Guidance Allows

New Housing Development

The rules that apply

Place Review Panel

A pragmatic proposal

Amazing places of Hereford

Walking to Rotherwas

Hereford Tomorrow?

A Civic Room

Hereford Now

Aylestone Rise

Special Event - Meeting with CPRE

“This house believes that town can never be reconciled with countryside.” - Debate with Herefordshire CPRE

Thursday 20 November 2014

Kindle Centre, by ASDA

Belmont, Hereford, HR2 7JE

Member of



Hereford Civic Society

hcs
the city's built environment forum

www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk

PREFACE



This quarter I write politically. Having often said that HCS is non-political we have to address the fact that our future built environment is guided by our politicians. Some days I am encouraged, albeit not by politicians, – the thought that the Business Improvement District will invigorate the centre of our City, the prospect of the New University upping our profile and the Old Market (why not call it ESG?) bringing in more spenders.

Other days I dwell on all the unanswered questions. The futures of the Butter Market, the Library, the location of the One-Stop Shop; when will the transport interchange happen, the Link Road (Edgar Street to Commercial Road), the completion of the cycle network improvements, the contra cycle scheme in St.Owen's Street. Will there ever be another river crossing, improved access to the

River and truly shared space within the urban areas? These are all political decisions and money is not an excuse. We are here, and "here you can". So please let us have some real plans.

HCS has a plan, a proposal that I floated at our AGM. See page 6 for an abbreviated transcript. Essentially we want PLACE, as suggested by the Farrell Review, and quickly adopted by us as the name for our rebranded magazine, to feature more often in our lives. We want Hereford to have a Civic Room, a PLACE where residents and visitors can consider our past, present and future. A model of the City going forward, possibly virtual, proposals about how we can all shape the future.

Secondly, we would like to see an independent PLACE review body that would consider major

planning applications, relating them to the vision to which we have all contributed. Meetings with the Herefordshire Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and ourselves are continuing. But we need a PLACE for this Civic Room!

And where that will be will depend upon political decisions about where our Councillors decide to locate services for us all. They made a decision to refurbish their Plough Lane offices, so they must decide on the future of their other premises. These decisions need to be made across party now, we cannot go on and wait for the new administration in May 2015 and more prevarication after that.

- John Bothamley - Chairman

NEWS & COMMENTS

Mary Evans

The tragic death in Broad Street, following a collision between a cyclist and a pedestrian in August, highlights the realities of shared space. Putting to one side the precise sad details of the accident surely the crux of the matter is a lack of respect for another road user. All road users need to look out for others, observe rules and most of all

consider what might happen in the next few seconds. Our egalitarian society gives weight to our rights but not always to our respect for others' rights and wishes.

The current trend for getting pedestrians and cyclists to share routes is potentially very risky. There might be a line down the middle, but wandering walkers and children

can easily impinge on what cyclists might see as "theirs". Cyclists want to maintain speed to save their energy regaining momentum if they are required to slow up. What is required is more respect and concern for each other, perhaps a gentle ping on the bike bell to warn wavering pedestrians but, above all, our duty to respect each other. That should be the message we take from this sad event, not more bans and more rules.

encouraging cycling one would expect to see the same attention given to proper cycle routes. We are pleased to see no reference to park and ride which we consider would not work in Hereford, with volumes being too low.

HCS members are intrigued by the drawn out "consultations" including the "affected persons" only consultation last year, which referred to compulsory purchase of land for the southern link road. Nor is there any reference to the proposed western bypass, which is in the Core Strategy, and, presumably, will link with the Southern Link Road. Why not?

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Space for Cycling

A campaign to give cyclists more space was launched in August by Jon Snow. www.ctc.org.uk HCS endorses this but would like to see an education programme to instil in all cyclists the need to be respectful of other road users.



Space for cycling

South Wye Transport Package

Consultation closed in August and we await the results. The consultation contained a number of suggestions which the Council believes will improve transport in the South of Hereford, including:

- A Southern Link Road from the A49 Ross Road/Rotherwas Access Road roundabout to the A465 and the B4349 Clehonger Road
- A bus lane on Belmont Road
- A number of additional pedestrian crossings

Little attention has been given to the needs of cyclists. With all the talk about

High Town Eyesores

It has taken Herefordshire Council (HC) over four years to take legal action against the owners of the fire damaged buildings in High Town. So many people, including HCS, have been lobbying members to "do something". In July 2014 HC issued a Section 215 notice requiring the owners to repair the building. These notices are easy to issue and there are guidelines on the government web site. Over the five years to 2012 ninety per cent of s.215s resulted in a successful conclusion. If the building owner refuses to undertake the repairs then a council is permitted to undertake the work and charge the owner and, if not settled,

Contributors

- John Bothamley** – Chairman HCS, architect developer and chair of charitable grant making trust
- Mo Burns** – Community champion
- John Faulkner** – Retired chartered civil engineer, chairman of HCS 2003-2006
- Liz Lloyd** – Returnee Herefordian
- Andree Poppleston** – Researcher and architecture critic
- David Whitehead** – Founder member of HCS, historian and author, secretary of the Woolhope Club
- Design & Layout** - E. Currie - Lead Designer, L. Baugh & W. Daulphin

NEWS & COMMENTS

can apply for a charge to be placed on the deeds of the property.

Hopefully, from the six "expressions of interest" received by HC to take on the refurbishment of the Butter Market one will emerge as a feasible option. This is another on-going saga of prevarication illustrating, again, the need to have an overall plan for the City. HCS pleads with the Council to do a deal and let us see this prime site restored, updated, modernised, refurbished, rebranded – whatever but do something positive.



Herefordshire Tree Forum Autumn Update

Herefordshire Tree Forum (HTF), (HCS is a founder member), puts trees and other permanent urban green infrastructure firmly in the heritage resource camp, as they inform our sense of place the same way our building heritage does.

Quite a bit of new 'green heritage' has been planted across the city - Five limes at Whitecross; the Roman Road 60 will be a wonderful avenue in a few years; the Greenway's Harold and Nelson St. trees; over 1000 new trees on the new Cattle market site – to more recently, the Newmarket Street limes and oaks, plus the 'Old Market' site trees, all examples of new planting designed to enrich the cityscape for generations to come.

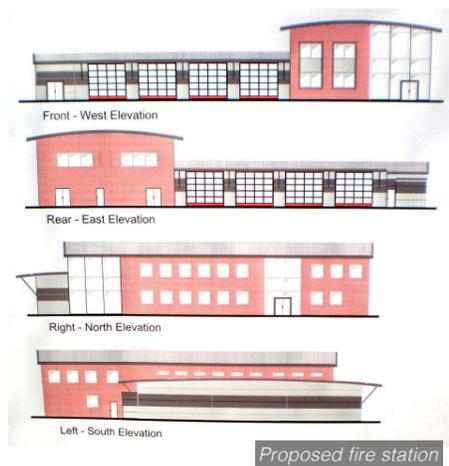
But the city's existing historic trees are continuously under threat; cuts to contractor budgets and thoughtless

developments can impact badly on the public realm; if the former Working Boys Home is lost so will its magnificent veteran pines, a key part of Bath Street's heritage.

So as we fight on to protect our urban landscape and the benefits it brings to society, please join us to celebrate National Tree Week 2014. Go to www.herefordshiretrees.net for full programme of events.

New Fire Station in Bath Street?

The consultation date has passed and now we await the date of the planning committee; where we will be speaking against this application for a large garage in a most inappropriate location, with complete disregard for the historical context.



Bromsgrove

Bromsgrove's new multi-million pound emergency station opened earlier this year. This new site replaces Bromsgrove police and fire stations. Reasons given for the merger, included its ability to deliver improved local services for the public and better value for money.

The two individual bases were costly to keep running, while they both not only needed lengthy renovation

work but would also necessitate additional maintenance in the future. As much as 20 per cent has been saved on building costs thanks to this collaboration. In terms of funding, the police have contributed the money, while the fire service has agreed to commit to a 25-year tenancy agreement on the premises.

Ageing Populations!

We hear that measures to tackle local authorities' failure to plan for an ageing population are next on the Department for Communities and Local Government's planning reform agenda!

Bloor Homes

Those opposed to large scale developments in Herefordshire might be hardened to hear that Bloor Homes, the UK's largest privately owned house-builder, has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Design Network to ensure the quality of its future developments. The ground breaking agreement will see the Network's member organisations providing design support on dozens of Bloor developments around England.



Annual Report to August 2014

A summary of the report given by the chairman, John Bothamley, to the AGM on 16th October 2014.

Possibly a year of doubting for us in HCS, concerns about the progress of the Core Strategy, concern about the reduction to just one conservation officer for the whole of Herefordshire and worries about the decision making process on asset disposal by Herefordshire Council.

We continue to comment on planning applications, attempt to remain positive wherever possible and proactive with inspirations, such as a better redevelopment of the former Working Boys' Home in Bath Street and a pragmatic approach to contra flow cycling in St. Owen's Street. Shared Space remains high up on our agenda for future improvements.

As we look forward to 2014/15 we want to launch a Design Review Panel as recommended by the Farrell Review. (See Hereford Tomorrow?) Our finances remain healthy and we welcome input from interested members on the various facets of our work.

HEREFORD NOW

Aylestone Rise is a development of four large (c 2,500 sq.ft.) new homes built to a stylish modern design. The houses incorporate many eco friendly features and attractive fashionable fittings such as under-floor heating, travertine work surfaces and oak flooring.

However, the agent's description of the spectacular views chooses to

ignore the immediate view which is directly into the neighbours' open plan living areas. It's a real pity that the designs were not more carefully considered alongside the layout of the site – a little more thought about the configuration of the 'upside down' accommodation would have exploited this lovely and most attractive location.



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FEATURE

New Housing Development

A big worry for many living in Herefordshire is the thought that suburbia will arrive and swamp our attractive rural county. Here we set the scene – the planning regime,

- **Where Herefordshire is with its Local Plan,**
- **Major applications (page 7)**
- **Then we consider how we, all of us, might best**
- **Create a master plan for the city**
- **Consider new planning applications**
- **Read a transcript of the presentation by John Bothamley 16.10.14**

The Planning Regime

Planning is now controlled by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). NPPF came into force in April 2013, and is now renamed Planning Practice Guidance and is web based at www.planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk

Highlighted by a Savills' briefing note is:

- The NPPF is intended to be strongly pro-business and thus pro-development.
- The NPPF does not, contrary to some views, release unbridled

development upon the nation.

- Important checks & balances remain in place, such as the plan-led approach.

A clear message is being sent out that the planning system should better support the delivery of growth, jobs and homes than it has often done in the past. It is intended to refocus planning policy on encouraging growth, and thus includes a powerful presumption in favour of sustainable development (see Paragraph 14 of the NPPF document). Government expects that this presumption should run as a "golden thread" through all plan making and decisions on planning applications henceforth.

A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

"Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan. The Planning Policy Guidance must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. "Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused"

This new guidance does not change the statutory status of the development plan (the old UDP) as the starting point for decision making which means:

- Approving applications that accord with the plan without delay
- In the absence of a plan or policies, granting permission unless adverse impacts would demonstrably outweigh benefits when assessed against the NPPF. The NPPF establishes the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles including the supply of housing - required to meet the needs of present and future generations and creating a high quality environment.

Policies in Local Plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Neighbourhoods should:

- Develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans,
- Plan positively to support local development,
- Identify opportunities to use Neighbourhood Development Orders.



Core Planning Principles from the PPG (formally NPPF)

Planning should:

1. Be genuinely plan-led
2. Be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve places
3. Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development
4. Always seek to secure high quality design
5. Take account of the different roles and character of different areas
6. Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate
7. Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution
8. Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land)
9. Promote mixed use developments
10. Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance
11. Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling
12. Take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all

Where Herefordshire is With its Local Plan (LP)

Herefordshire Council has just lodged the LP with the Planning Inspectorate. This follows years of consultation with five major reports, the most recent running to over 250 pages. Whilst claimed to be a model process many considered the plan so complicated as to give up contributing to the discussion. The latest occasion for submissions was in July 2014 and was intended for comments on the amendments that had been made following the major consultation. This required a response via the web and repetitive submission of ticks in boxes.

Now we await the comments of the Planning Inspectorate and a date for the Public Enquiry, likely to be in the

New Year. A majority of LPs across the country have been returned for further reports and justification. Whilst there is no LP in place the PPG rules apply.

Currently Herefordshire is flooded with applications from developers seizing this window where the PPG applies but with no local influence. So Herefordshire remains vulnerable to inappropriate development because "we haven't got our act together".

The reasons?

- Complicated legislation requiring additional consultants.
- Poorly presented material that is difficult to understand by most people, unless working on it full time.
- Unhelpful requests for unnecessary minor amendments.



We need a LP in place, as soon as possible, so that we can influence the sort of Place that we want to live, work and play in. The absence of a Local Plan, and a five year housing land supply, has resulted in a flood of applications for large developments all over the county; this has enabled developers using the requirements of the NPPF to override the wishes of local communities.

The Planning Committee may reject proposals but the immediate reaction is for developers to appeal and in many, but not all cases, the inspector citing NPPF requirements will give permission.

The Definition of Sustainable Development

"Resolution 24/187 of the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future set out five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development: living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly."



FEATURE



Design Review Panel

Create a Master Plan for The City

In our Summer 14 edition we reviewed the Farrell Review on the built environment. Regular readers will know that HCS members have "bought" many of the ideas in this report, including changing the name of our magazine to Place.

One of the proposals in the Review is that every town should have a room that tells the story of the history and development of the Place, together

with ideas and proposals of how the Place should develop. So HCS is talking with the Council and wants to become the Civic Champions behind this proposal. The Room could be located within the One Stop Shop, the Library or the Town Hall, but until the City has a plan we are not sure where we would most like to fit in. A model, physical or possibly virtual, could be developed with input from everybody. We could look forward and suggest how the City and its environs could develop over time. Developers could consider this and submit plans that fit into the overall plan. Whilst not being over prescriptive a plan ought to set out some general criteria.

Consider New Planning Applications

With an overall plan in place we have a positive process to consider planning applications. Currently Pre - Application Advice can be sought from the Planning Department. This tends to comprise discussion around what might be "got away with". Hardly an informed way of proceeding. HCS is proposing a Design Review Panel. This suggests there should be a design panel to consider all applications for housing developments of ten or more houses. The panel would comprise

architects, planners, developers, engineers and qualified people able to contribute to a mature discussion at the pre-application stage. For a fully functioning Design Panel an area including the whole of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership might be feasible. See "A discussion paper - A PLACE Design Review Panel for the Marches" for the full report on our web site - www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk

We are hoping that Herefordshire Council and the LEP can be persuaded to take the ideas forward. Watch this space – discussions continue. Read the transcript of presentation by John Bothamley, chairman, HCS at the AGM on 16th October 2014 on Page 6.



Good refurbishment by Hereford Housing

AMAZING PLACES OF HEREFORD



Canary Bridge

Walking to Rotherwas Across the New Bridge

The construction of the new cycle bridge over the Wye, beyond the Crozens, opens up new possibilities for dog-walkers, joggers, and those with a general ambulatory disposition, that live in the eastern suburbs of Hereford. The bridge itself is a very elegant structure, being a bijou version of the great suspension bridges of the world, and a fine platform from which to observe the Wye as it turns sharply to the south under Eign Hill, beneath the Victorian railway bridge with its three-arched brick viaduct. In the summer there are private beaches here, where young fish are to be found basking in the shallows and the wild flowers press in on all sides, animated by butterflies and damsel flies.

The backdrop is provided by Eign Hill where the Victorian planting is at its

climax, dominated by the towering Wellingtonias and cedars of St Margaret's Road and two well-placed copper beeches. They provide the perfect setting for the adventurous display of some recent modern architecture, which teeters perilously on the river bank, all balconies and broad picture windows, desperate to soak up the sun and the south facing views. Houses that look so bland on the Hampton Park Road have Hollywood qualities when viewed from the riverside path. Not at all restrained by the steep slope, many of the gardens are a tour de force with steps and paths zigzagging down to the river wall where discreet anchorages, summer houses and dining areas are enhanced with all the frippery that Wyevale can provide. The planting is equally good with much topiarising and bright bedding in the

most inaccessible corners. One is left awe-struck by the race of gardeners, who laboured in this vertical landscape providing the perfect setting for a gin and tonic on Friday nights and a bar-b-cue on Saturdays.

As the river progresses southwards the steepness of the bank declines and the stone retaining wall gives way to well-mown lawns, running down to the water's edge. Here there is less hard landscaping and the expanding gardens are planned in a series of glades, shaded by the ubiquitous weeping willow. The houses tend to have been built earlier and their architecture more conservative. Below Vineyard Croft the garden expands into a veritable landscape park, with copious springs feeding pools before running into the river. A further climax is achieved with the spacious grounds of Litley Court, planted with discrimination by James Jay, who created the Hampton Park suburb in the 1850s. The last housing to engage with the river are found in Braemar Close, where the river-side has been blitzed and sub-divided with wire. But Rotherwas Chapel is just a few minutes away and if you are in need of solace, like Sir Edward Elgar, the lovely interior by the younger Pugin, will certainly inspire new creativity, if not a symphony or two.

Elgar enjoyed the walk to Rotherwas and probably crossed the river from Plas Gywn by borrowing the boat

kept by Alfred Watkins in his thatched boathouse beneath Vineyard Croft. Over a century before Daniel Powell brought his family to the highest point of Eign Hill, long before there was a Hampton Park Road, and built a prospect house and called it The Vineyard after medieval vinery that belonged to the monks of St Guthlac's Priory. The house was sketched – probably by Humphrey Repton – and published in the Polite Repository for November 1802. Seen from across the river it had a serpentine path winding through dense shrubberies; there are sailing boats on the river and two well-dressed ladies, presumably from the house, sitting relaxing beneath a tree on the far bank. The house remains, with some Georgian elements but gothicised and extended in the 1860s. The Powells bought their house coal from Eign wharf where there remains the stone-built quay, adjoining the spot where the Eign Brook enters the Wye. It was a busy place in the late 18th and early 19th centuries with timber, bone and lime traded, as well as coal. To reach the quay the barges had to navigate around Eign weir via a deeper channel on the Rotherwas bank. A scattering of Georgian bricks, where the river still runs white, marks the site of the flash-lock. Having unloaded their wares the bargees could slake their thirst at the adjoining Whalebone Inn – today used as the vets.

David Whitehead –
Hereford historian and author

HEREFORD TOMORROW?



Our Society's Aspirations

At the HCS AGM on 16th October 2014 chairman, John Bothamley, launched an ambitious proposal to take over some of the work that he considers the Council is under resourced to undertake. Well referenced and pragmatic, the proposal is innovative and a forward looking approach to the complicated matter of creating a positive built environment. This is a precis.

The world is full of knowledge, and we have easy access to it. Yet we often fail to apply all this knowledge to our benefit. We knew that the web would wound the high street, yet remarkably few retailers grasped the fact early on. We knew that the

banks were overcomplicating their businesses and we know that Europe may implode. Yet the world continues to re-mortgage and build more debt for our children.

I suggest that we need to plan, as far as we are able, a balanced environment taking care of natural resources, simplify our complicated lives and enjoy ourselves. But where do we do that? Within our built and natural environment, and that is what I want to concentrate upon – where we work, rest and play. Most of us like those places that have developed over time, probably most of it before 1947 when planning procedures were introduced. But now, with Central Government demanding that we have a 5 year land supply we need to consider what that new environment will look like? Only if we get that Local Plan agreed and are not left

open to any alleged “sustainable” proposal by developers. Will it be a dreary new suburbia, developers’ standard designs? Or can we create communities? What will the PLACE look like?

In March 2014, Sir Terry Farrell published The Farrell Review – a consideration of how we approach the built environment. His team looked at every angle and referred to PLACE – standing for Planning Landscape Architecture Conservation and Engineering. It emphasised how important the PLACE we inhabit is to our everyday lives, and he wants to see it brought further up the political agenda. Overall, this impressive piece of work refers to looking forward and creating spaces that best suit modern needs, whilst conserving the best of the past.

Planners and planning committees need more training about design – how about including architecture in the school curriculum and encouraging young people to be aware of their built environment? Civic Champions could drive the debate about PLACE. The Hereford Civic Society is a forum for the built environment and:

- arranges lectures and debates
- comments on proposals and promotes ideas for the future, from here and abroad, in our quarterly magazine
- comments on planning applications and inputs into amenity forums

Our Local Authority is overwhelmed with work and has little time for strategic forward thinking. With the government backed Farrell Report, the new BID (Building Improvement District) launching and a degree of optimism in the air, HCS considers now is the time to throw our corporate hat into the ring. We are offering to be the City's Civic Champions - not just another committee but an energetic organisation thinking about the future and reaching out to schools, colleges and communities. The Civic Champions will be an information and consultation base for councillors and officers inviting input from the public.

What we need from the Council before we start is:

- Space in a high profile Council facility - such as the Town or Shire Hall – to showcase ideas and show off our history.
- Get the Local Plan agreed – so that Herefordshire can establish what it wants rather than what the NPPF proposes

The good news is that HCS has funding!

From this initial project would grow an independent Design or PLACE Review Panel. Design Review was debated at our April 2014 meeting. There was a view that an effective Review Panel should reach throughout the Marches.

Talks with the Marches LEP are progressing along ‘cost neutral’ lines to create a review panel for planning applications, at the pre-app. stage for all sites of more than ten houses and a comparable limit for other applications. The well respected and established design organisation MADE, based in Birmingham, has indicated its willingness to be involved.

There are examples of good practice within the county including the proposal by Architype at Kingstone. This development will recreate the Herefordshire cottage in a modern idiom, subtly incorporating local materials and imaginative designs fit for the modern world. Meanwhile, there is Bovis working in Aylestone offering no community facilities in a cul de sac – where is the Local Plan? There is a real risk this disappointing application will succeed at Appeal stage.

The Farrell Review is an important document, a useful reference – but more important – it suggests a great opportunity for us to get stuck in to ensure that Hereford doesn't end up as yet another anonymous, bland same as everywhere else place without personality or heart.

Do I have your support?

A full update on our progress will follow in the winter edition of PLACE.

Developers Say They Supply What the Market Wants

In Milton Keynes Richard Rogers designed 50 contemporary houses that were built and developed by Taylor Wimpey. But the developer's experience was such that the second phase of another 50 units was in their usual standard type! Rogers' designs were possibly a little uncomfortable to the eye, and the construction couldn't have been that straight forward. They were supposed to be part of John Prescott's ideas for a £60,000 cost per house. (And boring fencing panels clashed with the sleek lines of the houses – demanded by the new residents in case the prisoners from the adjacent jail escaped!)

Karl Sharro

A presentation recorded at Hay Festival and broadcast on Radio Four.

Let's remove the planning system is his call – after all it has only been around since 1947 and much of the old buildings we like are pre 47.

Instead of pouring over proposals and finding reasons to prevent development our planning should be about the long view. Looking to the future and sketching out a frame work in which individuals can create.

We talk about freedom and yet deny the very possibility of extending our own homes as we would like to.



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PLANNING MATTERS

HCS criteria when assessing planning applications.

Over the years we have established some design guidelines against which we consider new building proposals. These are the criteria we use:

- eco minimalism – including orientation, thermal mass, high levels of insulation
- logical layout - respecting landscape, creating a sense of place
- local reference
- respect for adjacent buildings
- creating communities

PLACE Northern Ireland – Why Not Here?

In the last issue we changed our magazine name to PLACE. This followed the publication of the Farrell Report which we summarised and reviewed,

That report supported the adoption of the concept of applying PLACE – Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Conservation and Engineering to the review of future projects both nationally and locally. This is aimed at improving the present situation regarding planning where we appear

to be in a situation where no one is fully satisfied with the results.



Professor Sir Peter Hall, who died this year, was one of the country's leading planning 'gurus' argued that "planning should be grounded in an understanding of the real world; informed by a deep knowledge of history; inspired by a sense of optimistic cultural possibility; and, above all, should remain focused on improving lives and creating spaces where people actually want to live and work – not what planners think is good for them".

PLACE's objectives, as put forward in the Farrell Report, clearly match this concept and has been operating since 2004 in Northern Ireland. Belfast PLACE was set up by the Royal Society of Ulster Architects and Belfast City Council. It focuses on improving the design quality of buildings and the environment and appears to have been successful in doing so. It has a wide scope of work including:

- Running programmes of exhibitions, debates, tours and workshops.
- Setting up education and community projects.
- Providing independent advice on developments, masterplans, planning policy and specific designs for projects.
- Encouragement of collaboration between communities and developers
- Carrying out project design reviews by an independent panel of experts covering all the aspects of PLACE.

It has been shown that the use of this independent advice speeds up the planning process, reduces appeals, saves design time and results in better quality results thus bringing better economic value.



The Need to Get Neighbourhood Plans in Place

To further complicate planning matters a letter from the Secretary of State about a council's lack of plans wrote in September 2014 "as the council has yet to complete an up-to-date objectively assessed housing needs analysis against which to measure the overall neighbourhood plan proposals, he considers it appropriate, as things currently stand, to tip the planning balance in favour of the emerging neighbourhood plan proposals".

With over 200 parishes in Herefordshire only two have submitted Neighbourhood plans, which are not straightforward to prepare and is complicated by the fact that the Local Plan (the County Council's responsibility) is still not agreed. Why don't parishes group together?!

Major New Housing Developments

What we have and what might be coming.

We have explained the complications of the present planning system and the problems that are arising with the lack of a Local Plan. The other major problem is the standards to which many new housing developments are being designed and built. In the past few years there have been some rather uninspiring schemes built around the city. Many of these are developer's standard designs and layouts where, not surprisingly, the objective has been to match what is seen as meeting the market and maximising returns.



Pictures

Our photographs show some uninspiring standard designs that we consider are not good architecture, with high energy efficiency standards, which the Council agreed last March should be the objective. Presently several major applications are going through the system. These include:

Crest Nicholson 52 houses east of the A 49 opposite Holmer Church. This is immediately adjacent to another approved scheme for 13 houses on Church Lane and is outside the development boundary, with access from the busy A49.

Bloor Housing 450 houses at Holmer behind the church and north of Roman Road. This is a scheme which is on land designated for housing in the Strategic Plan. A public exhibition for the scheme has been held and a planning application awaited.

Gladman Developments 110 (reduced from 120) houses on land which is outside the original city development area south of Hampton Dene Road opposite Bishops School, for which consent has been given. This may well not have been approved if there was a proper designated supply of housing land.

Bovis 135 houses between Aylestone Hill and the Lugg Meadows. Planning Officers recommended acceptance but the Committee rejected. An appeal is expected.

Inca 2013 60 houses on land adjacent to the playing fields south of the A438, in Bartestree Planning Officers recommended approval, the Committee rejected. An appeal is expected.

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MEETINGS

19th July 2014 – Summer study day –
South Wales

A day of variety with Shared Space Home Zone in Magor the first stop. Our presence was quickly noticed and locals informed us, as we sat in one of the several coffee shops in informal groups, about their misgivings of this ten year old scheme. See "Your Opinions" below.

In Bargoed we were taken around the rejuvenated Baptist Church, by the architect who conceived the scheme from Pentam Partnership. This provides a community base, including a one stop shop for the Local Council, study spaces, a library and café, whilst presenting a positive elevation into the valley. On this steeply sloping site a new seven storey element provides the services core, lifts, café and offices. The library fits in the original church,

including shelves of books tidily fitted into the former church gallery, whilst the church has been moved down a couple of levels, reduced in size for the smaller congregation, and sits across the site.

Lunch was served in the Pavilion at Parc Taf; whilst we ate the Ranger gave us a history of the restoration of the valley from the ravages of the, now defunct, coal industry. Finally we stopped at Merthyr Tydfil and saw the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, housed in one of the mine owner's extravagant homes.



Bargoed Library

18th September 2014 – Question Time - St.John's Church, St.Owen's Street, Hereford

Local politicians and activists answered our questions.

Jake Bharier managed well, chairing an evening of controversial questions, put to Lucy Hurds, Liberal Democrat candidate; Cllr.Tony Johnson, conservative Leader; Liz Morawiecka, Here for Hereford; and Cllr.Anthony Powers, It's Our County.

Largely well humoured but some outbursts from the audience confirmed that Herefordians are well opinionated. As we waited for the results of the Scottish referendum, there was agreement from all on the changing face of local government; concern too that future funding is likely to come via the, essentially,

non-elected Local Enterprise Partnership. The panel was split on the New University with the present Council and IOC supporting but worries about asset transfers from the Council.

No meeting on the built environment would be complete without further wrangling over the western bypass. Certainly there was animosity between those favouring a cycling/walking environment and those wedded to their cars. There appeared to be little understanding of each other's points of view, or knowledge and understanding of the facts. The Butter Market was not forgotten, with a suggestion that the rents could be set at the same low return that is received from the new Auction Mart on Roman Road!

YOUR OPINIONS

John Townsend Writes on Magor Shared Space

Since our HCS visit I tried to ascertain the current state of play on undoing some of the aspects of the Home Zone at Magor, but can find very little up to date information on the internet. A DfT report - Shared Space Project, 1: Appraisal of Shared Space (November 2009) emphasises that the range of user responses to these schemes seems to be highly site specific, and it may be that the apparently negative reaction to the Magor Scheme could be led by a particularly highly vocal business section or mothers at the school.

Our immediate impression was that some of the shared space concept was negated by the use of many different materials to differentiate the perceived uses of various areas. This may perhaps have resulted partly from the need to keep the cost to a minimum by utilising the existing pavement surfaces which thus continued to shout out "pedestrians here".

HCS will continue to monitor the situation as many members are Shared Space enthusiasts and anti-traffic light campaigners!

John Walker Writes on Our Hitchhiking Proposal (Summer 14)

I think your idea is a good one which horror films have made seem silly. Perhaps it could be re-branded within car-sharing, car-coops, ride-sharing apps, etc. as part of initiative to encourage multiple-occupancy car journeys. The one thing that Herefordshire has, which other places don't, is limited main roads with numerous lay-bys including ones with food vans and porta-loos. These would make ideal pickup and drop off points for hitchhikers. Once



Magor cars

established commuters (especially young workers without cars) would tend to match-up with a regular driver which would make it more reliable.

All we need to do is remove the fear (for both sides) and make it feel like the obvious thing to do. I'm sure it would really take off and give freedom to travel to many people who don't have a car, or don't want to use it all the time and share the fuel costs of those who drive long distances.



Liftplatz

Sister Societies

We meet regularly and all societies welcome visitors. Information on talks and news from:

Kingston History Society -

www.kingstonhistorysociety.com

Ledbury Civic Society -

www.ledburycivicsociety.org

Leominster Civic Society

www.leominstercivicsociety.co.uk

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The Treasurer, Hereford Civic Society,
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Forth Coming Events

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

Thursday 20 November 2014

'This house believes that town can never be reconciled with countryside.'
Debate with Herefordshire CPRE

Thursday 18 December 2014

Time Lapse on Hereford – Jason Hodges

Artistic study of Hereford Museum artefacts & reconstructions of Gatehouses. Christmas drinks

Thursday 15 January 2015

Business Improvement District
John Jones improving our City

Thursday 19 February 2015

Old Market House, Ledbury
Asset transfer & restoration
Alex Clive and Andy Tector
Ledbury Civic Society

Thursday 5,12,19 & 26 March 2015
HCS and Hereford Times invigorates the HUSTINGS

Politicians and commentators discuss the local and general elections

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.

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