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Preface.....



It is clear – the Draft Core Strategy is seriously flawed

A team of us at HCS, together with other interested groups, have been getting to grips with the plan for the future of Herefordshire, out for consultation until 22nd April 2013. Central Government demands all local authorities submit to the Planning Inspectorate a plan for infrastructure projects up to 2031. Given the state of the global economy this is an unrealistic task, but some proposals are needed so that we can attempt to plan new roads, schools and housing etc. What is needed is a broad proposal that has an overall object, is fully costed, together with fall back positions if conditions dictate. So it would be reasonable to expect a pukka business report with baseline information [anticipated economic growth figures, etc] a pipeline of projects and easy links to supporting documents.

Instead we have 286 pages of PR narrative extolling the virtues of Herefordshire, together with poor links to supporting reports and the supporting evidence. To some extent we sympathise with officers – there is so much to cover, rules and justifications and we live in difficult times. Consultants have had a field day. Some of the supporting evidence is outstanding, or in draft, don't we need the facts before we draft the policy? Edgar Street Grid is a classic example of clumsy procrastination working on out of date information – the property market and world economy had already collapsed by the time the deal was struck. The signs are that this will happen again with unjustified housing and no road or bridge; unless we develop a sensible, measured plan. This draft is not that plan. Our full response is on our web site www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk but here are some major worries.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan - Risk Analysis – Funding Availability 7.1 “A key risk to the delivery of the infrastructure required in Herefordshire is that of funding....it is not clear ... very difficult to predict...contributions from development will notbe sufficient on their own to fund the entire infrastructure provided”.

Bear in mind the infamous Link Road, to cost £27m, is still short of £23m, and we were told would be in place before ESG opens in April 2014, to assist easy crossing of the down graded and two laned, Newmarket Street. Thousands of new homes and no new bridge is a very likely scenario.

Para 7.3:-“Even where sufficient funding for an infrastructure item may be available over the life of the IDP, it may be difficult to fund the item as early as it is required. A lack of accessible provision to meet demands of new development will mean greater pressure and consequential reduction in service at existing facilities” (our emphasis). How can a valid plan for new development admit that it will damage existing infrastructure? This means more unrepaired potholes and more expense for the future. And no plans of the refurbishment of the Butter Market, or the talked about Transport Hub at the Station!

Housing is referred to in Para 3.1 – “16,500 new dwellings by 2031” and Para 3.3 – “by 2031 there will be 22,450 more people”. If we presume the extra people will inhabit the new 16,500 dwellings, these new homes will on average house about one and a half people. Some inhabitants of the existing housing stock will transfer to new properties, but it does seem that the two statistics don't marry up.

HCS believe our submission highlights just how complicated this strategy business is. The eye has been taken off the ball, too many consultants' reports, too many rules, all conspiring to halt positive development; too many changes of emphasis. And the consultation surveys running to over 80 questions, to be completed on line, will deter all but the most conscientious. Personally I'm backing the new Chief Executive, Alistair Neill, quoted as saying 'we should be concentrating more on core services and performance and less on structure'. He went on to say that previously there had been too much work on strategy for strategy's sake and not enough on potholes.

Joan Simple provides her concerns on page 6 together with Alistair McHarg's views on the missing Retail Impact Study. But there is some positive, innovative planning of new housing described by Stephen Hill, our views on the Kingstone housing development by Archihaus (page 7) and our Summer Study Trip information on the back page. John Bothamley

News

Hereford City Vision - Destination Hereford

One man's inspired vision of Hereford's public realm was unveiled to a small group of interested stakeholders, including our Society's chairman on 9th January 2013.

Cllr. Powell provided an overview of how he would like to see the City develop with 20 mph streets within the City walls, car parks on the periphery and cycle routes from the suburbs.

Much detailed work to undertake, but essentially making low cost improvements to road layouts, including moveable planters, cycle racks etc.etc. all funded by the sustainable transport money that was to have been spent on Broad Street. The City, Visit Herefordshire and ourselves were all keen to see quality items and a uniform approach throughout including the ESG development. HCS is to propose

signage styles. Watch this space and local newspapers for much more news coming soon on this new approach.

Lost landmarks

The city's former Conservative Club in East Street has now been converted into eight private apartments, bringing to an end an unbroken link with the national political party of more than a

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Contributors

John Bothamley – chairman HCS, architect developer and chair of charitable grant making trust.

John Faulkner – retired Chartered Civil Engineer, Chairman of the Society 2003-2006

Stephen Hill – planning and development surveyor

Nick Jones – journalist on architecture and environmental matters

Andree Poppleston – researcher and architecture critic

Joan Simple – auditor and local activist

Corinne Westcott – former television producer and journalist

David Whitehead – founder member of HCS, historian and author, secretary of the Woolhope Club

Front Page Image:

The concept of Church Reordering (the subject of supplement) may be older than we think. This work by the Italian Renaissance Master Antonello da Messina, entitled 'St Jerome in his study', was painted in 1475.

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century. Two other familiar faces have disappeared from the local landscape with the recent demolition of Garrick House and the closure of the 17th century Farmers' Club in Widemarsh Street, to be sold at auction as we go to press. It was in the upstairs meeting room of this building that the fledgling Hereford Civic Trust held its first meetings in the 1970s.

Rotherwas rescue

With the centenary of the anniversary of the outbreak of WW1 barely a year away, local conservationists are hopeful that a rescue mission can be mounted to save the semi-derelict (and unlisted) Empty Shell Shed (ESS) on the Rotherwas Estate's North Magazine. Apart from a handful of reinforced concrete 'blast walls' (roofless shelters) and the Grade II-listed Picric Acid Expense Store, these are the only physical remains of a military munitions complex which once employed over



HCS visit Summer 2012

3,000 people, the creation of Minister for Munitions David Lloyd George in 1916. Under the direction of its new chairman, local estate agent Bill Jackson, the Enterprise Zone's board has agreed to mount a full Heritage Lottery Fund bid to convert the restored interior of the ESS into three 'historical experience' exhibits, one of which - 'Women at War' - will commemorate the women munitions workers based at Rotherwas during two world war. There will also be a restaurant, meeting and conference facilities.

Sanctuary launch

More than four years in gestation, the chrysalis of Sanctuary Housing's 800-unit Urban Village has finally emerged. The Worcester-based housing association says it hopes to submit an initial outline planning application for Phase I (designed by Savills) soon, comprising up to 180 units, of which 35% will be affordable homes. Prevailing market conditions may delay construction (by the private sector) of the other 65% of Phase I, located in the north-west sector of the Edgar Street Grid.

Minister dismisses talk of planning free-for-all

Planning Minister Nick Boles has insisted that the end of the transition period for councils to ensure local plans are compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework should not be a cause for concern or prompt a planning free-for-all.

Groups such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England have claimed that now the transition period is over there will be a wave of unplanned development in areas without up-to-date plans (such as Herefordshire)

Meanwhile, Mr Boles told MPs that the Planning Inspectorate has completed (only) 17 examinations on local development plans submitted after publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) a year ago; and that some 71 per cent of local planning authorities in England now have a local plan at the public consultation stage.

Potholes and gravestones

Hereford Times 28th March 2013 reported that stress tests had been relaxed on the leaning gravestones in the Cemetery and the temporary scaffolding holding some up for seven years was to be removed. We await an answer to our request for the cost of this exercise; anticipating that many potholes could have been filled for the same cost.

Civic Voice responds to comments from Sir Terry Leahy about decline of the High Street

Responding to former Tesco boss Sir Terry Leahy who has described the rise of supermarkets and the closure of small shops as "part of progress", Civic Voice Chair, Paula Ridley, said:

"Our collective sense of community and wellbeing is intimately connected to the health of our high streets which play an important social role in bringing people together. The rise of supermarkets, with the infrastructure needed to sustain them and their purchasing power has helped to crowd out competition. As a result, small independent shops are increasingly missing from the high street. This is not progress, but it is change."

"Vacancy rates of UK shops have risen from 2.8 per cent (2008) to 14.2 per cent at the end of December 2012 and are likely to continue to rise, leaving towns with only large national chains surviving".

Civic Voice once again calls for the following measures to better protect our high streets (in priority order):

- transfer business rates from out-of-town development to reduce rates in town centres
- block retail development which close local shops and bring empty shops back into use
- provide free parking and more reduced parking fees
- allow planning authorities to control the mix of shops
- free up councils to offer rate relief
- introduce community right to protect valued local shops and services
- tackle landlords who leave property vacant.

Hereford Now Merton Court

Ringed by a wall lined with Victorian headstones, Idyllic Homes' small town house development off Canal Road has the dubious distinction of being billed as Hereford's first 'gated' housing scheme. Hopefully other developers will not follow suit. Infill sites abound in the city (there are currently four in East Street alone), but ingenuity is often called for where site footprints are small and enclosed. Architects Hook Mason's compact solution, on the tiny site overlooking the graveyard where Rev John Venn is buried, has achieved four new-build units, plus the conversion of an adjoining Edwardian cottage. Local timber frame specialist Taylor-Lane erected the framework for the complex in only 10 working days.



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Down from the hills.....

Corinne Westacott – former TV producer and journalist writes from her remote hillside home in south Herefordshire

Spending the Public Penny

“Bathrooms mean Business” – so says the American Restroom Association which campaigns in the U.S. for better public toilet provision. The recent closure of many of Hereford’s public loos would seem to be another downer for our struggling retailers. However, I am not so sure we should mourn the loss of these conveniences. They were pretty dire. I always felt rather sullied if I had to use them. It would almost have been better to take advantage of a medieval statute, still said to be extant in the City of London at least, whereby you are entitled to squat in the gutter so long as you first call out “en paine”*.

Hereford’s public toilets often suffered from being metal fortresses hidden down back alleys. They practically cried out “abuse me.” Possible health hazards and expensive social liabilities like this are not worth keeping open. But any functioning, thriving and humane city centre needs its toilets. And why not make them splendid in design and give them pride of place? “By our lavatories shall ye know us” is an invented motto which I would translate into impressive Latin if I could, but it is true. A society’s toilet provision tells us a lot about ourselves: where women and children come in the pecking order, how we treat the elderly and our attitude to the disabled. Public toilets are also an integral part of a sustainable city. There is no point in Hereford encouraging the use of public transport and getting us to cycle or walk if we then find ourselves stranded with nowhere to “go”.

To be fair, Herefordshire council is putting a Community Toilet scheme in place which will open loos in shops, businesses and offices for public use. This will, of course, include accessible toilets for the disabled. Councillor Russell B. Hamilton explained that the arrangement will be a formal one – a contract will be signed between the council and participating businesses. It should benefit those businesses, bringing in extra customers, while we, the needful public, get access to supervised, cleaned, well-appointed loos – often with a Glade air freshener thrown in.

Useful though this plan is, it still leaves a gap in public lavatory provision, one which is being filled to some degree by the welcome provision of a Changing Places toilet in the new retail quarter. This is an accessible loo par excellence, providing a curtained changing area for those with complex disabilities and other medical conditions. The toilet can also be used by wheelchair users, the elderly and parents with young children. But High Town shouldn’t have to lose out to the new shops across the road. Councillor Hamilton says the intention is to eventually site a Changing Places toilet in the historic centre, but that finding the correct venue is crucial. What a good opportunity then for a large retailer with city centre premises to offer to sponsor or house it. Great P.R., (with an emphasis, of course, on the P).

*Hereford Civic Society in no way condones this action.



Swish Swiss lavatories open 24/7

Green infrastructure

Leonie Richardson, Conservation Project Officer at Herefordshire Council reports on a major community driven project

The first phase of the Green Infrastructure (GI) Project led by Herefordshire Council in partnership with Herefordshire Tree Forum and Natural England is drawing to a successful close, having secured 96 hectares of GI enhancement and priority habitat creation within Central, St. Nicolas, Three Elms, Credenhill and Burghill, Holmer and Lyde wards. Thirty local groups and organisations worked tirelessly planting over 5,500 trees and shrubs (supplied by Wyevale Nurseries), and accumulating an impressive 1700 volunteer hours.

Aligned with Herefordshire Council’s GI Strategy, the projects aim to develop, protect and enhance a multi-functional network of green spaces, links and assets, helping conserve biodiversity, culture and heritage, whilst catering for and stimulating the economic, social and environmental needs of communities. An innovative approach to project delivery was adopted through setting up a ‘Challenge Fund’ enabling local groups and organisations to bid for up to £3000, facilitating a grassroots contribution to GI and fostering a sense of ownership and community spirit.

GI enhancements included: planting trees, shrubs, bulbs, wildflowers, climbers and native hedgerows; constructing outdoor classrooms, community share-gardens, shaded seating areas, pathways, wildlife corridors, green play areas, sensory and vegetable gardens; creating wildlife corners with log-piles, hibernacula, bird boxes and feeders; re-profiling and developing pond and wetland areas; removing invasive species; greening urban corridors; improving access to wildlife; and reviewing site management regimes such as reducing mowing and vehicular access.

Multiple benefits are realised through such projects, such as improving: biodiversity, habitat creation, wildlife corridors, connectivity, ecosystem resilience, aesthetics, public perceptions, community cohesion, cultural and heritage features, health, education and training opportunities, flood attenuation, irrigation, shading, urban cooling, air quality, local food production, walking and cycling routes, recreation, accessibility and proximity to nature for all.

The success of the project has already been recognised through acquiring additional funds from Natural England for a second phase in the south of the city. It is hoped these projects will act as a catalyst for future GI across the county. More information from GIP@herefordshire.gov.uk

The sixteen approved projects included:

- hedgerow creation at Hereford Society of Model Engineers Broomy Hill site
- planting in private front gardens in St. James’ with Greening the Village
- landscaping Hereford Skate Park with Wheeled Sports for Hereford Ltd.
- orchard creation at Hereford Cider Museum
- extending the Kings Acre Tree Avenue with Hereford Civic Society
- understorey planting and access improvements at Wyevale Woods by Herefordshire Nature Trust
- fruit-tree planting in Cantilupe Gardens supported by Friends of Castle Green
- tree planting at Hereford Railway Station with the Woodland Trust, Hereford Civic Society, Network Rail, Holme Lacy College, Hereford in Bloom and Aylestone Hill residents
- planting an avenue of trees along the Roman Road with Hereford Lions
- woodland planting at the new Hereford Livestock Market with the NFU, Herefordshire Council Rangers and Conservation Teams, and Ewyas Harold Beaver Group amongst other volunteers
- wetland creation at Burghill Valley Golf Course
- ground enhancements at Holmer, Lord Scudamore, Trinity, Burghill and St. Mary’s Credenhill Primary Schools, benefiting over 1500 pupils.

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Rus in urbe – country in the city

David Whitehead - Hereford historian and author, concludes his perambulations around Hereford

To the West – the Gentry Landscapes



Having enjoyed the forest experience it is now necessary to cross the Abergavenny road, the A465, like much else here the road seems to have taken up its present route in the time of John Matthews. We can walk through the precincts of Belmont Abbey where there are two generations of Pugin buildings. Taken with those at Rotherwas, Hereford has one of the highest densities of Pugin structures in England and in this year when we are celebrating the bi-centenary of the birth of Augustus Welby Pugin, the city should be promoting itself as a destination for Pugin enthusiasts –

have you seen any sign of this? Everyday there are Pugin tours of Ramsgate and if you wish to visit his home at St Augustines, on the cliffs, you need to book six months ahead. The old school at Belmont, now the parish centre, is a delightful building, and probably by Augustus himself, built in 1852, just before his death. The church and monastery were designed by Edward Pugin, still very much under his father's influence, whilst the church tower was completed by the grandson, Peter Paul Pugin. In this bi-centenary year Herefordshire Council is firming-up their proposal to run a dual carriageway close to the Abbey, making life intolerable for the community. If, as the abbot threatens, the monastery closes, someone will need to pick up the bill for the maintenance of an extensive complex of Grade II* buildings. This excludes Belmont House, also by Edward Pugin (adapting an earlier house by James Wyatt) which has been neglected from the ground-floor up since the 1980's and will be abandoned by the golf club as soon as it gets a whiff of a compulsory purchase order for the golf course.

By crossing Belmont Lane, opposite the cemetery, a convenient footpath will take you back along the Hunderton Brook to Hereford. This was the route of the old road, which was re-routed to create the A465. Here the parkland of Belmont House is very much in evidence. It seems almost certain that this was laid out for



Wareham House

John Matthews by Humphry Repton in c.1790. The greatest living authority on Repton, Professor Stephen Daniels, sets out the evidence for this attribution in his last book on the landscaper, but notwithstanding constant petitioning for at least two decades, Belmont has failed to get the status of a registered landscape of historic importance. Elsewhere in England Repton landscapes are regarded as the ultimate expression of Georgian landscape aesthetics and, accordingly, registered II*. On your right as you approach Dorchester Way, beside the original drive to Belmont House is a group of almshouses built for Francis Wegg Prosser in c.1853 – again by Edward Pugin. They are slowly being restored.

Seen on a Hereford street map the snake like curves of Dorchester Way, ending with two fangs – Tintern Close and Canterbury Close – suggests that when all this parkland is finally degraded by the intrusion of the Western Relief Road, suburban sprawl will wash across this wonderful landscape – aptly re-named Belmont from the more pedestrian, Old Hill, by John Matthews, who built his villa in 1788 to engage with one of the most ravishing views in the Wye Valley. In a better world this would be Hereford's country park, its lung, a provincial Richmond Hill and a place of quiet recreation within easy walking distance of the city centre.

As you walk into suburbia remember that in the 1930s the tourist brochures of Hereford recommend that in the evening visitors should take a walk up the right

bank of the Wye from the old bridge and cross the fields to Hunderton to take the footpath to Belmont to watch the sun drop down beneath the western horizon where those with sensibility could 'take upon themselves all the fabric of the celtic fringe'. In a few years time they will be able to stand on the Relief Road Bridge.

From the late 18th century the Wye, immediately above Hereford, began to attract a 'variety of seats of the nobility and gentry' and, as John Price put it, these 'polite settlers employed judicious taste to enhance the natural beauties of the country adjacent to the river'. This



River Wye unknown artist

was clearly evident at Belmont but equally so towards Breinton. Louisa Twamley of Birmingham explored the Wye from its source in 1838 and although she found Hereford Cathedral full of 'barbarisms (and) the ravages of Goths and Vandals', the river above Hereford flowed through a 'garden-like tract of country, with parks, groves, lawns, orchards and meadows skirting it in turn'. Three years later this was confirmed by Leitch Ritche who reported that two or three miles above Hereford he came upon 'various villas, which usually adorn the neighbourhood of a large town (he obviously had the Thames at Richmond in mind) and which are here a true embellishment to the landscape'. Soon everyone wished to go to Breinton – just as they did in the late 18th century. In 1935 Hereford City Council published a brochure called *Hereford for Holidays* which contained a long section entitled 'Rambles in Arcady' and highly recommended the 'energetic tourist' with a 'knapsack' to walk along the left bank of the Wye, enjoying the 'surrounding beauty' and following 'the mutable music of the stream that magically awakens strong and delightful rhythms in those who seek the song'. According to the same guide book you could take to the river in a boat provided by Messrs Jordans and row along 'a delightful stretch of water – the Henley of the West' – and take an alfresco picnic wherever the boat could be beached, and as a final indulgence buy a cream tea at the tea gardens at Breinton or Sugwas. The intrepid Arthur Mee visited Herefordshire in the year of the Munich Crisis (1938) and wrote about his walk to Breinton under the heading 'A Glorious Prospect'. He enjoyed his 'pretty' three mile walk to the Springs where there was a 'glorious prospect of woods and meadow to the sweeping lines of the Welsh hills to the west' and 'all around the everlasting loveliness of the trees and blossoming orchards'. Such, apparently was the magic to be found, so recently and yet so long ago, beside the Wye above Hereford.

As far as I know none of the gushing tourist literature produced today mentions that Hereford is so close to such fine countryside. Those who do the Wye Valley Walk have probably seen greater landscapes and the dog walkers – of which there are many – probably take it for granted. Yet, the scenery in the vicinity of Warham House is very fine, as it should be as the dower house of the Wegg-Prossers and the key element in their landscape when seen from the sitting room at Belmont House. Warham House is unlisted but probably designed by Augustus or Edward Pugin and the group of trees on a knoll to the SW of the house were painted by Brian Hatton. James Wathen painted the house just over a hundred years before. At Breinton Springs – a favourite station for painters to look back at Belmont House – history comes alive with the 'Camp' – the medieval fortified manor house of the Treasurer or the Cathedral, now protected by the National Trust. Of course, these painterly landscapes, so rare and so peaceful, are to be sacrificed on the altar of Time to save ten minutes at peak time when travelling through Hereford. Have any of our councillors been there, I wonder.

Last quarter David referred to wanderings around Rotherwas, please remember there is no public access beyond Rotherwas Chapel to the river and Garden Cottage and the walled garden surrounding it is a private residence.

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A Sound Core Strategy for Herefordshire?

Joan Simple – auditor and local activist adds her worries about the Draft Core Strategy 2011- 2031

The previous version of the Local Plan was the Revised Preferred Options which achieved the following response during public consultation:

"In the summer of 2012 an analysis of all the responses to the Revised Preferred Option 2011 consultation indicated that:-

- 84% of respondents were against the revised, proposed housing plans for the county;*
- 88% were against the proposed Western relief road;*
- 93% expected plans to be in place for additional water provision before a Local Plan was agreed;*
- 94% expected plans to be in place for additional hospital provision before a Local Plan was agreed."*¹

As well as the public rejection of key elements of the Revised Preferred Option, it was also identified as being "unsound" by both the Highways Agency and the Environment Agency, and likely to be found "economically unviable" (i.e. the costs of the infrastructure to support the planned housing & population growth were thought to be greater than developer and public funding available).

So what has changed in the last 18 months to address these weaknesses? Sadly it appears that the key issues thrown up by these consultation responses have not been adequately addressed. The current Core Strategy and its accompanying Infrastructure Plan, make no mention of additional hospital or health provision for the anticipated population growth during the life of the plan. The Western Relief Road remains in the Core Strategy and has been classified by the Cabinet of Herefordshire Council as "fundamental" to the delivery of the plan (a rank higher in importance than Affordable Housing; Sewage Treatment; and electric power). The additional water provision and sewage treatment issues still remain to be resolved, with just a Statement of Intent on a water Nutrient Management Plan between Natural England and the Environment Agency (N.B. Herefordshire Council is not a party to this statement)

The cost of the Western Relief Road is shown as currently costing £115 million and accounting for over 65% of the total key infrastructure costs. Herefordshire Council's own risk analysis states that "A key risk to the delivery of the infrastructure required in Herefordshire is that of funding"². The Council acknowledge that even with obtaining other sources of public funds, "that it might not be possible to deliver all of the infrastructure identified at the most desirable time"³. The need for the Western Relief Road as part of the plan has been queried by many independent and statutory bodies. In particular there is no cost/benefit analysis of the road to show that it is the most effective use of taxpayers' & developers' monies.

This means that the latest Herefordshire Core Strategy could end up in the same situation as that of City of York's Core Strategy (as well as many other Local Plans subsequently) which was criticised by an independent planning inspector. From his initial reading of York's strategy the Planning Inspector had "significant concerns regarding its compliance with the legal requirements and its potential soundness". The Inspector's note said "the strategy for the amount and distribution of development needs to be clear and based on a robust justification. It also needs to be realistically deliverable. I am concerned that this may not be the case with the submitted core strategy".⁴ The outcome was that the City of York had to withdraw their Core Strategy in July 2012.⁵

Herefordshire needs a sound Core Strategy with a robust plan for the next 5 years if Herefordshire residents are to be allowed to determine the future of their county rather than speculative developers. This plan needs to be properly financed to be found financially sound. Infrastructure requirements need to be properly assessed and evaluated to determine their deliverability and timing alongside key elements of the planned growth, and objectively prioritized by their benefit to cost ratios, considering all impacts the infrastructure has on economy; population, health, environment and its sustainability. This should ensure that any developer funding is wisely used and to the maximum benefit of all.

¹ Statistical analysis provided by Here for Hereford www.hereforhereford.co.uk

² Core Strategy Infrastructure Delivery Plan - March 2013 pg 42 para 7.1

³ Core Strategy Infrastructure Delivery Plan - March 2013 pg 42 para 7.2

⁴ Letter Mr David Vickery ref City of York Core Strategy Examination 18th May 2012

⁵ City of York Full Council Report 12th July 2012



A view from inside.....

Alistair McHarg – local property manager wonders what happened to the Retail Impact Assessment?

Herefordshire Council's latest Core Strategy Consultation has included its so called Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This essentially is a wish list of projects identified by the Council as being important to realizing its ambitions for the development of the County over the next 20 years.

It includes such grandiose objectives as a western relief road, increases in affordable housing and perhaps less important items such as new stands for the Hereford United Football Ground. The list is extensive and seemingly, in the majority of cases, unaffordable and is simply a "wish list".

I recall some of the undertakings given by our Council's cabinet members at the time of the controversial decision to proceed with the redevelopment of the Old Market Scheme. These included an economic risk assessment for the historic core of the City as a result of the decision to proceed with the scheme, albeit in the face of significant and legitimate objections and concerns - the economic climate, the changing face of retail etc etc.

Councillor Phillips, the cabinet member with responsibility for economic development, confirmed he would be taking appropriate action to enforce the owners, of the former River Island site in Hereford, to deal with the scaffolding and hoarding that has surrounded the site since the fire some two and a half years ago; it has blighted our historic streetscape for too long.



The retail impact assessment has not yet been done, but the Old Market Scheme progresses and the streets of Hereford appear to have more "to let" signs every day. A cursory look down Eign Gate, Commercial Street and now, even Widemarsh Street, reveals our historic core is losing retail presence but without a proper assessment of the issues. What proposals can our Council bring forward to re-invigorate these areas?

These two small pieces of work, which are the responsibility of the Council have not been done, so what hope do we have that our Local Authority can deliver this infrastructure plan which it claims is essential to the core strategy.

It would seem to me that in the current climate our Council should concentrate on "low hanging fruit" and simple wins, which will make a direct and measureable contribution to improving, or at least maintaining, the state of our County's economy. Producing unaffordable programmes which have little prospect of being delivered is disingenuous to say the least.

The Buttermarket redevelopment and all the other projects, that were promised as part of our City's regeneration with the Edgar Street Grid area, appear to have been abandoned. Presenting an infrastructure delivery shopping list which seemingly has little or no prospect of being delivered is pointless. Why can't we do the little things in the City that will make a difference like dealing with the seagull problem, repairing the potholes and ensuring that commuters and visitors have affordable parking? Wouldn't it be refreshing to be able to congratulate our Councillors and Senior Officers on delivering a reasonable programme, rather than spending time responding to a consultation process on a shopping list which is "pie in the sky" and will end up just a bag of broken promises.



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Trust us to build ‘sustainable communities’!

Stephen Hill is a planning and development surveyor and author of ‘Time for a citizens’ housing revolution’ in ‘Who should build our homes now?’ (CABE 2009). He is currently project managing a citizens’ building group project in Cambridge.



Words like ‘building sustainable communities’ fill the pages of countless Core Strategies and Design and Access Statements. But how do you actually do it?

I recommend reading about cohousing in Britain. It is a cruel reminder that there is nothing in current planning and housing policy and practice that can disguise the fact that every new home and every new place we are currently planning is already obsolete, socially, economically and environmentally, before we have even started to design it.

Whilst the rest of the industry tries to do as little as possible that is different from today, it is only cohousing groups, as well as community land trusts and cooperatives, who are actively designing for the future. They are working on how to live in a future with fewer natural resources, less energy, less land for food, less help for age and infirmity, and more people. Their experience shows us that sustainability codes and technology are irrelevant unless they relate to people’s lives and behaviour.

The LILAC cohousing project, now being built in an ordinary suburb of Leeds, does what it says on the tin: Low Impact Living... (permanently) Affordable (housing)...Community. But this is not new. Go back to a survivor from the 1970s heyday of co-ops, the Sanford Co-op, in Lewisham, using their major repairs fund, prudently accumulated over a generation, to leverage government grants for CHP boilers and solar panels. Deciding this was not enough, the residents also signed up to a way of living to reduce their collective CO₂ emissions by 60%, growing food on site and increasing walking and cycling: something we will all have to do quite soon, and cannot do efficiently or cost-effectively as individuals.

But talk to any mainstream housing provider about co-ops or community land trusts, and they will sigh and talk condescendingly of time consuming, costly, risky and difficult projects, and difficult people: meaning ‘this doesn’t fit our method of production’. Doesn’t that word ‘provider’ tell us so much?

This is a uniquely British problem for citizens wanting to exercise real housing choices; unlike mainland European governments and municipalities who have been supporting citizen-led

housing approaches, for a generation, as highly successful tools for building stable and adaptive communities. Yet, we admire the new suburbs of Freiburg, Tübingen and Karlsruhe, mostly built by co-operatives and citizens’ building groups, and wonder at the quality of place and sense of community they have created. But the more wondrous aspect of places like Vauban in Freiburg is the one sheet masterplan and ‘design code’ that manages to achieve to what ‘design codes’ of hundreds of pages here so often fail to do.

Why is this? According to Wulf Daseking, former Freiburg City Planner, the job of planners is not to be in the city hall, setting and policing rules, but to be out, helping the building groups negotiate the design of each street, and each area of public space to reflect the way that those particular residents want to live. Simple really...and what a great job to be a planner in Freiburg!

We have passively succumbed to the tyranny of the masterplan and the vocabulary of urbanism...perimeter blocks, permeability, gateways...whilst forgetting that every line of the masterplan diagram has to describe how we will live. As abstracted representations of a community, they mean nothing, unless we also think about how every street and space between buildings will actually be used...and to do that, at least some future residents must be involved in a process of co-producing plans; as designers, planners and housing providers have demonstrated that they cannot do this on their own.

‘Cohousing in Britain – A Diggers & Dreamers Review’ Ed. Martin Field (Diggers and Dreamers 2011)



Planning Matters...

Andree Poppleston continues to search planning applications for interesting and controversial schemes.

All applications are accessible using the Herefordshire Council web site – www.herefordshire.gov.uk

Recently approved applications

Recently approved applications

123067

Site adj. Coach House, Old Church Road, Colwall Mr.Beard An uncompromising modern house in a garden setting. Full Passivhaus credentials, chestnut cladding gives some local relevance, but just how to reconcile eco designs with the local context remains controversial.

122820

Fir Tree Lane Rotherwas, Council Archive, Herefordshire Council Planning permission for the council’s new 3,400sqm Archives Records Office (designed by Architype) was granted in January. It is due to open in the summer of 2014 and will incorporate the present Harold Street County Records Office’s facilities. Externally, the two angular linked blocks are in contrasting materials, the front 2-storey section of the building being cast concrete (necessary to achieve a 4hr fire rating), with horizontal cedar shingles cladding the rear, timber-framed 3-storey structure. The materials define the building’s different functions: storage and research. Architype says that its new Rotherwas building will be Britain’s first archive store built to the rigorous energy-efficient Passivhaus standards. Contractors for the £8-million project will be Kier Construction.

New applications

123342

Land to the rear of Western House, 1 Broomy Hill. N.Taylor Proposed 2 bed room dwelling. Modern building within the constraint of the site leaning towards a Bauhaus design. The Senior Building Conservation Officer says “...this scheme contains obvious nods to Mies van der Rohe...” no doubt thinking of Farnsworth House. The building suits the site, whether the site is suitable for a building is another matter.

130148

Land on A49 Edgar St. Highways Agency. Fell fourteen mature lime trees in Edgar Street to facilitate the A49 road improvement scheme.

HCS objects to this proposal by the Highways Agency:-

Trees and other particulate/pollution absorbing plants such as hedging, should be valued as an essential, designed-in

aspect of the urban road infrastructure, especially important for pollution reduction reasons along such high volume roads as the A 49

There is an alternative to felling the trees which is to achieve the desired result of widening the road by making a slight encroachment on the Old Livestock Market site – a small quid pro quo for the £500,000 ‘sweetener’ which was recently handed by the Council to the developers. Developers often make improvements to the highway network to permit access to their developments, usually this is attained by using the developers’ land – not the existing public realm.

This application doesn’t require vision just good sense.

123592

Land off Breinton Lee, King’s Acre. KA Land Developments. Outline application for a residential development of 18 dwellings. Crowded development with no attention to orientation, and indicative designs show little local reference.

130351

Land south of B4349 150 dwellings etc. Archihaus Ltd. A new style of developer submits an innovative scheme that we support.

This development of Kingstone, in the southwest of the county, has many of the qualities Hereford Civic Society admires – the village has an existing infrastructure of school, doctor’s surgery etc.etc. and this could be further developed with this extra development. The proposal has positive environmental features; it is laid out in a spacious and open manner and has many admirable details. Central government requires local authorities to provide sites for development and Herefordshire’s Core Strategy is likely to propose villages such as Kingstone.

This is the first application we have seen that breaks from the standard developer model; which crams as many standard design houses into as small an area as possible. The proposed density is low, allowing for community open areas, with logical links to the highway network. It’s particularly heartening to see that attention has been paid to orientation, the essential element of environmentally aware housing. Meanwhile, a mix of homes offering between one and five bedrooms suggests a pleasing demographic.

It is encouraging to see that there is provision for home working with live/work units and some commercial units. Whether another community hall is required in Kingstone may be debatable. There are many under used halls in Herefordshire. More housing brings a greater population that will stimulate the vibrancy of the village, and the continuation of local facilities and schools; but also imposes a greater strain on the road infrastructure.

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Recent Meetings

19th January 2013 – **Contemporary Libraries** – John Faulkner/John Hitchin

The two Johns presented a fascinating illustrated lecture [partly reproduced in the Winter News supplement] about new libraries across the country. Whilst most were stunning, all had other activities involved in the one building; several were linked to academic institutions. Funding of these palaces was not clear and, no doubt, the politicians preferred it that way.

There was discussion on whether books were relevant in the digital age. Whilst there was an acceptance of the magic of on line access, there was a large following for the retention of the physical book. In spite of the ability to access information from our homes the Hereford Library Users Group is adamant that a new purpose built home is required for the City. The recent planning consent for the new Records Office at Rotherwas was criticised for being located out of town. Cllr. Russell Hamilton reminded the meeting of the relative size of Hereford compared with many of the projects shown and, not least, the dire financial situation.

A plan that gradually establishes a new facility was proposed but unfortunately Hereford's record of establishing a proposal, and achieving it, is not good. A new library situated within the Edgar Street Grid Civic Quarter was the HLUG's dream.

19th February 2013 – **Work and rest** – Skylon Park/Hereford Housing

An inspiring evening with two dedicated leaders explaining the latest news on the enterprise Zone – Bill Jackson, chair of the Local Enterprise Board and on Social Housing – Peter Brown, chief executive of Herefordshire Housing.

Both enthused about their own projects – Bill talking of the latest negotiations with potential tenants for the Skylon Park, aircraft manufacture and other defence and security related industries. Also he explained the Board was able to operate more efficiently than the Council who are bound by more regulations. The fact that Herefordshire Council funding needs to be properly accounted for was acknowledged. There are already ideas to develop the old munitions building into some sort of heritage centre with other facilities, including telling the story of women in war. Funds are in hand to develop a bid to the Heritage Lottery Board.

Peter explained the set up of HH and their ability to borrow against their housing stock, showing some excellent examples of 70s blocks of flats updated with new insulated cladding and windows. The Oval is to be redeveloped in conjunction with a developer to create a better mix of tenure. HH is clearly an enlightened property manager who also runs an emergency call centre for tenants not just in Herefordshire but across the country.

19th March 2013 – **Early years of HCS** – Joe Hillaby/David Whitehead

A packed meeting, including many old members from the early days, heard some fascinating stories from Joe and David, the stalwart duo who contributed so much in establishing our Society in the seventies. Persistent lobbying saved Bewell House and doesn't it sit well against Tesco; proving that retention of the old can contrast and enhance the new. How many of us knew there were plans to demolish St. Francis Xavier? Again we owe much to the endeavours of HCS members, and David regularly contributing to this magazine.

Much was made of Hereford's connection with Breteuil in France and the exchange visits that were held; the influence and status that Hereford enjoyed in Norman times could have made this town an ideal twin for us. Inspired by Joe's leadership the Society enjoyed annual visits to Europe over many years.

All societies change over the years and originally Hereford Civic Trust, as it was known, was much involved with recording and trying to preserve the best of the old. Today that continues, but with more of an emphasis on new work and ensuring that new development respects its location; we continue to monitor all planning applications for the City. Part 2 of our history will be told on Tuesday 15th October 2013 led by John Faulkner, chairman 2003 - 07

Summer Coach Trip

Saturday 20th July 2013

A professional look at sustainable housing developments, led by Jonathan Hines of Architype, the award winning Herefordshire based architects.

Kevin McCloud's innovative Triangle in Swindon.

Architype's Springhill development in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

Both will include access inside private homes, and other interesting new housing to consider!

Visit the ecologically praised new National Trust HQ where we will have lunch.

Coach leaves Merton Meadow at 9 am and returns by c.7 pm

DETAILS BELOW

Join us

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

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

Join online

www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk

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BOOKING ESSENTIAL.

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The Triangle is a pioneering, low-energy, new housing development in Swindon commissioned by Hab Oakus - a joint venture between Kevin McCloud's HAB development company and housing group Green Square. The 42 homes are a contemporary interpretation of Swindon's mid-Victorian railway cottages – flexible, affordable and efficient to build and manage – using sustainable materials and set in a beautiful landscape. The project is part of a wider strategy to introduce One Planet Living principles, developed by the World Wildlife Fund and BioRegional, to Swindon.



National Trust HQ Swindon

Springhill in Stroud, completed in 2006, is the UK's first new-build 'cohousing' scheme. Designed by Architype, based on the established principles of cohousing. Springhill demonstrates a radically different approach to typical UK housing – self developed by the residents, with sustainable houses, shared gardens, a car free site, and a central community house.

Forth coming events

Wednesday 15 May 2013 - Woolhope Room, Library, Broad St. HR4 9AU
Cathedral Close Archaeology
Andy Boucher of Headland Archaeology
Illustrated lecture about the recent excavations followed by a walk in the Close

Wednesday 19 June 2013 - Halo Bike Hire, Bishops Meadow, HR2 7RQ
Bike Ride in South Wye
Explore new build and Greenway Cycle Route to Rotherwas
Own bikes or book with Mo Burns on 07710 715235
Pedicab Tour in City - assemble by the new bull in High Town
For the less energetic. Book with Mo Burns on 07710 715235

Wednesday 17 July 2013 - Architype, Twyford, HR2 8AD
A Sustainable Future for Housing Development
Jonathan Hines of Architype will describe the challenges in creating high quality housing development and explore new ideas for creating a new contemporary vision for sustainable housing in Herefordshire

Saturday 20 July 2013 - meet at Merton Meadow Car Park at 9:00am
Coach trip to New Housing Developments
Leave at 9:00am and returning by 7:00pm
Visit Kevin McCloud's innovative housing in Swindon, and Architype's
Stroud cohousing project, and National Trust HQ, professional input
SEE ADJACENT PANEL FOR BOOKING DETAILS

Tuesday 10 September 2013 - St Peter's Church, Hereford
10:00 am - 2:00pm
Visit by Cheltenham Civic Society
Entertain our sister society with guided walks and bring picnic for lunch on Castle Green

Tuesday 17 September 2013 - Kindle Centre, by ASDA, Belmont HR2 7JE
Hereford's Future Plans
Major players discuss the revitalised city we are creating

Tuesday 15 October 2013 - Kindle Centre, by ASDA, Belmont HR2 7JE
AGM & The Later Years of HCS at 40
A light-hearted look at how we work with Hereford Council

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Disclaimer

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