

news

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hereford civic society

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www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk

Hereford Civic Society

c/o Packers House, West Street, Hereford HR4 0BX

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Preface.....

There was a proposal to the HCS committee that we should devote one of our issues of NEWS to the influence by foreign architects on the built environment of Hereford. This was thought to be an exciting topic and two architectural assistants set off to explore the impact of foreign ideas, starting with the decoration on the outside of Thai restaurants in the City!

In the event the project was difficult to accomplish because, in spite of the large number of important and fascinating buildings in the City, it is usually

impossible to find who was responsible for the design. As time progressed it became clear that architecture is most often driven by style and fashion of the time rather than by individual architects; Georgian architecture in St. Owen's Street being a good example of a fashionable trend.

As my professor at architectural college said "nothing is new, just go out and copy good stuff". The articles on these two pages illustrate how some fashionable trends have been interpreted but often

we have been unable to ascertain the designer or instigator whether Herefordian or incomer.

We've also been perusing many recent planning applications including the big ESG one from Stanhope. Detailed analysis is on going but we have a full consideration of the proposed designs for the refurbishment of the Butter Market. And there are another two reports on retail – we really are moving into a different world order – let's hope our councillors catch on soon.

JB

Foreigners have always influenced Hereford!

The **Saxons** participated in the **Germanic** settlement of Britain during and after the 5th century and by the time Hereford was known as a settlement of any note in about 700AD it was known as the **Saxon** capital of West Mercia. The 1st Earl of Hereford was created in 1067, one of the earliest peerage titles in the English peerage. William FitzOsbern (c1020-22 February 1071) was a relative and close counsellor of **William the Conqueror**. He is thought to have been one of the first and most vigorous advocates of the invasion of England and is one of the very few proven Companions of William the Conqueror known to have fought in the Battle of Hastings in 1066. **FitzOsbern** was an enthusiastic warrior and was given responsibility for a large swathe of England and for pushing forward into Wales. As part of the assertion of Norman control over England and Wales, FitzOsbern was a major Norman castle builder. As well as creating and improving fortifications of the City, he is attributed with having built castles at Carrisbrooke, where he lived, Chepstow, Wigmore, Clifford and Monmouth. One man can only be in one place at a time and in 1070 trouble was brewing in Flanders where FitzOsbern had very substantial property interests. His brother-in-law had been left in charge and when he died a family row ensued. FitzOsbern rushed to grab the chance of being Count of the rich Principality in the **German Empire**, close to **Normandy**, but he died in the Battle of Cassel in February 1071.

The earliest portions of Hereford Cathedral are the choir, transepts and choir aisles, erected in 1079 by Robert de Losinga, the first **Norman** Bishop who was born in **Argentan, Normandy**. He is thought to have taken as his pattern the basilica of Aix-la-Chapelle in the west of **Germany**.

The nave and transepts were completed by 1148 by Bishop Robert de Betun who although born in England, was of **Flemish** descent. In about 1260, the Lady Chapel and crypt, the clerestory of the choir and the north transept – a remarkable piece of work – was transformed by pointed arches and windows of a very original kind under the direction of Bishop Peter de Aquablanca. Bishop Peter was a nobleman of **Savoy** who came to England as a member of the party accompanying King Henry III's bride, Eleanor of **Provence**. He left most of his money to the church but was described in a biography as having 'fox-like cunning...and that his memory exudes a sulphurous stench'.

Sadly, the magnificent **Norman** work of the triforium and clerestory was replaced by the Gothic architect James Wyatt between 1786-96. James Wyatt was thoroughly English and his work has been described as 'wanton destruction' by his contemporaries. By others, he was thought of as a brilliant but facial designer whose work was 'not characterised by any markedly individual style'. He acquired a reputation for taking on more work than he could handle and 'failing to give proper attention to the needs of his clients'. The architectural brothers, Adam,

complained that he had plagiarised their work and his efforts at Hereford and other cathedrals was bitterly criticised by John Carter in his 'Pursuits of Architectural Innovation'.

So, there are examples of how incomers have shaped one building in Hereford – and one of the most iconic and oldest in the city. It would be interesting to trace the architectural history of others and see how they've fared at the hands of architects – native and others – over the centuries.

MM



Every year, around 1.5 million people living in poverty in 12 countries are improving their quality of life with the help of Concern Universal!

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Good copyists

Sir Robert Smirke from **London** designed the Shire Hall in 1817 in **Greek** style, no doubt, following the usual Grand Tour. How intriguing that in 1806 he published the first and only volume of an intended series of books *Specimens of Continental Architecture*. His work was to crib the best **Greek** classical examples he could find and adapt them for English uses. Together with Soane and Nash he was in good company and his rapid rise of fame was down to political patronage. In 1813 they were instructed by the Church Commissioners to 'Desire each of the Consulting Architects of the Board of Works to consider the most economical mode of building churches with a view to accommodating the greatest number of persons at the smallest expense, within the compass of an ordinary voice'. Smirke produced several church designs for the Commission, of 6,000 to 6,500 square feet, to seat about 1,900 people, with an estimated cost without a tower of £25,000; another way of replicating fashion in a cost effective way. But he retired to **Cheltenham**, almost making him a Herefordian that would have excluded him from mention in this quarter's NEWS. KC

The Left Bank Development

Following many successful business years in Herefordshire, Albert Heijn, a **Dutchman**, wanted to put back into Hereford something of lasting validity and enhancement for the City, and commissioned a **Scot**, Angus Jamiesan, to design it. He put a development site together just north of the old bridge including some dilapidated shops. His idea was to create a contemporary entertainment centre and to enhance the retail viability of the existing shops by opening them out onto a courtyard in Gwynne Street.

The resulting turn of the century design [20 TO 21ST] paid due respect to the views of the cathedral from the bridge and the elevations onto Bridge Street. Local stone was used and, although with considerable floor space, provided a large function facility without dominating the scene. Several floors, stepping back from, the riverside provide outside balconies with river views.

(It is shame to report that Mr Heijn was frustrated by the planning process and the time that it took to realise his dream; which now seems to be acknowledged as a positive enhancement to this often forgotten quarter of the City. It is further disappointing to report that management of the facilities over the last decade has failed to produce a consistently buoyant venue). KC

Will and Kate

No respectable News provider cannot but refer to the forth coming royal wedding. From our perspective of the built environment, we wonder what will be the couples' view of their likely new home at Harewood Park?

Well-respected classical architect, Craig Hamilton, www.craighamiltonarchitects.com believed to be of **South African** origin, gained planning consent for a small, but rather grand, neo classical country house in 2006 for the Duchy of Cornwall. But what does Kate think about her future father-in-law's choice?

The estate has been beautifully restored with barns into work units, upgraded estate workers cottages and a fine old oak framed farm house as a holiday let.



Stables converted into flats and the church into a workshop complete this most attractive small estate.

Is she a Soanian Georgian? Is this reworking of classicism entirely valid?

Some think it looks like a water pumping station. Architectural style and taste are so intertwined we can only hope they both like and enjoy their new gaff.

And to secure the 2006 consent, shouldn't work be commencing? JB

Italian jobs

Approaching the wonderful Italianate church of St.Catherine at Hoarwithy on a hot summer's day one could easily think you were in **Tuscany**. Designed by J.P.Seddon in 1885, it was a job that encased and embellished the original brick built church of 1843.

A huge campanile dominates the steep approach which leads into an arched cloister and turns through 180 degrees to enter the church enhanced with **Byzantine** marble columns. As I write this on a cold winter's evening, I long for those dry summer evenings, taking friends both English and **foreign**, to our own little bit of **Italy**.

In Hereford, remember the Baptist Church [1880] in Commercial Road next time you are passing. A pleasing and respectful countenance, which steps back from the building line, rather well without upsetting the street scene. Built in yellow brick and stone, the windows have **Venetian** tracery and the entire façade sits below a pedimental gable.

The former National Provincial Bank [1863] in Broad Street is in the **palazzo** style with pedimented first floor windows and a top balustrade.

Gone is the home [c1850] of the founder of the Hereford Times that was on Aylestone Hill about which Pevsner wrote [*Hereford Buildings of England 1963*] "the style is turning debased and **Italianate**" and that might have been the view of many with few other examples of **Italian** style in Hereford. Which sets me up to be proved wrong. Do write in. JB

An advertisement for Architype. The top part features a black and white photograph of a modern building with large glass windows and a balcony. Overlaid on the image is the text: "Committed to achieving a sustainable Herefordshire through designing high quality buildings". Below this, the word "ARCHITYPE" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. To the right of "ARCHITYPE" is the text: "working collaboratively, to design beautiful buildings, that significantly cut carbon footprint, and dramatically reduce running costs". At the bottom right is the RIBA logo. At the bottom left, there is contact information: "Please contact: Jonathan Hines, Architype, Upper Twyford, Hereford HR2 8AD. t: 01981 542111 e: jonathan.hines@architype.co.uk". At the very bottom, there is a list of awards: "RIBA Sustainability Award, Sustainable Architect of the Year, Hereford and Worcester Chamber of Commerce Green Business of the Year, Sustainable School of the Year, Civic Trust Award".

Planning Matters.....

Here we list recent planning applications and any action that our executive committee has taken. Our Society is concerned about the built environment and we peruse all new applications and assess against a schedule of criteria. When we feel applications justify a comment we submit a letter to the Planning Department. These letters are shown on our web site and are the opinions of the committee at the time of the letter.

To view plans on the web go to www.ukplanning.com

Click on 'select another council' (highlighted in blue)

Click on Herefordshire Council

Click on 'Search applications' (on the left hand side)

Scroll down to 'Application Number' and enter the relevant six figures

Criteria used when considering new planning applications

- Architectural / design merit
- Suitability of the scheme / design in relation to its context or surroundings
- Layout of interior spaces and suitability of circulation routes
- Design relating to use and functionality
- How the character and structure of the scheme relate or convey its intended use
- Sustainability credentials (materials sourcing, water use, energy consumption, waste minimisation)
- Construction and detailing
- Civic contribution – social, cultural, environmental or economic benefit to the local community

- 101980 3/4 Castle Street. A development at the corner of Castle Street and Ferrers Street. Sub division of 3 Castle St. into 2 apartments, and erection of 3 terraced dwellings along Ferrers St. An improvement in this area; an intensive use of space, but considered workable.
- 101154 East Street. These plans have been seen before, and there is little change, except for the demolition of a small warehouse at the rear corner of the site. The design appears to consider the height of the church hall, at one side, and by steps arrives at the cottage roof height on the other side.
- 102152 Plough Lane car park. The Council proposes to use brownfield land for a car park for its employees. Some of the land was used, previously, by Bulmers as a lorry park, but this new car park will have access on to Yazor Road, and a right of way will need to be realigned. All this will have the Yazor brook running along one boundary. Whilst potentially a flood plain probably a suitable place for carparking. It is a pity more tree planting has not been

incorporated to break up the sea of tarmac.

- 102137 Bridge Inn, College Road. Demolition of pub, and the erection of 14 dwellings. A very cramped development of terrace houses. Not attractive and whilst meeting aspirations of dense development this is not a good example of attractive city residencies.
- 102404 28 High Town. Canopy over the entrance to Church Street. A mixture of an Arts and Craft panel and a 1920 canopy. Interesting? – committee split!
- 102408 30 High Town, Map, Notice Board, showing businesses in Church Street.
- 102594 Hereford Sea Cadets new Headquarters. A very functional building and a great improvement on the present ad-hoc buildings.
- 102805 44 Tower Road (previously refused) 5 apartments, one and two bedrooms. This remains an example of "garden grabbing". The land is covered with building and car parking. It does not contribute to the social, environmental or economic benefit to the local community.
- 102997 Raven Motors, Burcott Rd. This scrapyard and metal recycling firm is coming under new ownership. Refurbishment of the existing yard is required, with new fencing, metal recycling facilities, resurfacing etc....plus a two storey office/welfare cabin. This represent an improvement of the site, but there may be an increase in lorry traffic.
- 102921 Land to the east of Holywell Gutter Lane, Hampton Bishop. Development of grass and all weather sport pitches; clubhouse; indoor training building; car park and landscaping supported by enabling residential development of 190 dwellings. Application from Hereford Rugby Club. This is the boundary of Hereford City and Hampton Bishop. It is a very large development of the old style essentially in open country without much consideration for environmental matters.

A comprehensive critique is being submitted questioning the logic and justification of building a private car dependent development in this location. Copy on our web site.

- 102266 Holme Lacy College. A master plan for redevelopment. The materials proposed are very much of today, Corten steel panels, green walls, cedar boards and cedar slats, atrium pods constructed from curved timber, as well as Hollowcore ventilation system, renewable technology strategy, waste treatment etc.
- 103001 Chave and Jackson. A replacement shop front. This is conservation stuff and the proposal fails to respect any of the previous incarnations with an out-of-character large pane version. The committee has written to HC.
- 103136 Cattle market redevelopment. The long awaited outline application by Stanhope. Deposited 3rd December 2010 submission deadline 28th December 2010, target decision date 25th March 2011.

One of our members has asked for more time because of Christmas, only to be told that a holding submission should be lodged and to follow up with detail later. Hardly the way to proceed on such a major project, with hundreds of documents to consider on the web site which often fails to display. All late submissions are put forward to committee but one doubts they will carry the same weight if not lodged by 28th December. We are submitting a letter with what we consider are major failings – lack of valid research on the need for retail, no landmark building by Tesco roundabout, air quality, traffic, linkage with city centre and more. Full details on our web site.

Next issue - Main Feature

Transporting Hereford to a low-carbon future through quality streets for all.

The essential measures to benefit all road users and enhance our city.

Publication April 2011.



Shortlisted Butter Market designs

Our committee's views

The last eight years have seen many plans for regeneration of our City, none of which has had the universal public support that improving our Butter Market has commanded. High Town and the Butter Market was the place where regeneration of our City should begin. It's pleasing to see a serious effort by Herefordshire Council to improve the Butter Market. A clear vision is needed of how this market should function in the heart of our City, complementing and enhancing the very special character of what is acknowledged to be one of the best preserved historic townscapes in Britain.

Hereford Civic Society wishes to emphasise the crucial role to be played in any regeneration scheme by the Butter Market traders, who are just the most important resource in this enterprise. Without them the market will die, however palatial the improvements or however much is spent on the building. It is not enough to offer them a choice of pre-selected plans, unless their needs and preferences are first taken into account in developing these plans.

The Butter Market is characterised by:-

- A long wedge shape with its wider end on Maylord Street,
- A single narrow entrance under the grade II listed clocktower in High Town,
- The encroachment of buildings at the High Town end on what could naturally be expected to form part of the Butter Market's footprint.
- The service yard on the east side of the building.

These features have all conspired to reduce the presence of the Butter Market in High Town. Despite this, the Butter Market remains a popular destination for local shoppers and supplies a range of goods and produce not always obtainable from other shops in the town.

HCS sees the importance of the Butter Market increasing as the drive to sustainable city living increases the numbers residing in the town. In the long term, it will need to increase its floor area to accommodate the increase in sales and the many additional functions required of a prime attraction in the tourist heart of the city. In the process, its southern entrance in High Town might have to be improved to match its importance to the historic core. Better access from its north aspect in Maylord Street and from Widemarsh Street will also be needed, to realise the full potential of incorporating the Guildhall into the site, and improving the Tiffany café area.

In our view, the long term aim should be one of acquiring the buildings immediately to the east of the High Town entrance and using this site together with the service yard to expand and develop the Butter Market and its context. The High Town entrance could then be extended and improved, while a developed service yard could accommodate additional shop frontages in continuity with those in High Town and in Maylord Street.

The committee of HCS has concerns about the short-listing process and the methodology by which the four designs are to be assessed. It seems that about thirty five designs were submitted in the competition but there is no information about the selection procedure. Given the failure of the Council to provide the public with benchmarking criteria by which the various designs should be judged, the HCS has selected 12 factors which we consider to be useful measures for assessing the shortlisted designs. These are detailed in the adjacent grid. Ideally a set of such guidelines should have been incorporated into the questionnaire accompanying the four proposals displayed to the public.

Brief details and flashy images of the four shortlisted designs can be accessed at http://shophereford.co.uk/herefordfutures/?page_id=319. All four propose a

major upgrading of the Maylord Street entrance and largely neglect the vital High Town access. Notwithstanding the fact that there is the obvious constraint of the imposing, but narrow listed front to work with, none of the shortlisted designs make any effort to creatively suggest ways to seriously promote the Butter Market commercially from High Town.

Happily, all four designs recognise the importance of utilising the building internally to promote local food and drink. As the opening statement of M Burns' 2001 Butter Market regeneration proposal states, '...Market Halls represent an under-exploited city centre retailing resource. Their imaginative refurbishment and re-branding to specialise in the sale of local produce could act as a catalyst to the regeneration of many run-down city centres.' For full report go to <http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk/issues/>

All four designs incorporate a fully, or partially, glazed roof and seek to exploit the various floor levels – most commonly by the development of a mezzanine level.

Three of the designs would involve an almost complete restructuring of the Butter Market – essentially to create a quite different, modern shopping experience. We understand when the Council consulted briefly with the public last year, people overwhelmingly voted for a design that married the traditional with the contemporary. Only one design appears to value the existing context and the heritage of the building as it currently stands, using what is there to 'build' on, but none appear to have formally consulted with the existing traders.

Two recognise the opportunities for evening use; this is of crucial importance to the wellbeing of the city centre as a destination after the 5.30 commercial watershed, both as a potential continuum of commercial footfall into the evening, but also for the many cultural events such as food festivals, creative industrial and art events etc. A sensitively regenerated Butter Market, utilising all its many parts and potential, is exactly what is needed.

1	Work with existing context		B	
2	Work with existing traders			
3	Preserve and enhance the heritage of Buttermarket		B	
4	Utilizing natural daylight to enhance interior	A	B	C D
5	Increase opportunities to showcase local produce, crafts and products	A	B	C D
6	Complement scale and character of historic city centre		B	
7	Improve access to and from High Town			
8	Increase tourist appeal		B	D
9	Recognize importance of Buttermarket for creative enterprises		B	D
10	Opportunities for demonstrations and leisure/information activities.	A	B	C D
11	Green sustainability	A	B	C
12	Opportunities for some evening use.		B	D

OPINION

This review, based on twelve criteria, is measured and logical. Certainly well thought through and, I fear, the discarded entries weren't given the same thorough consideration.

But lets be pragmatic, the adjacent buildings are not available and the service yard is just that. The narrow approach from High Town will give both the new visitor, and the regular patron a truly "wow" factor as they emerge into this recreated big space.

JCL

Dr D's Diagnosis.....

David Thame lives in Lingen, near Presteigne, and writes for Estates Gazette and the Manchester Evening News. He's been professionally worrying about regeneration since 1988.



Have you met Jessica or Jeremie? Can you tell a TIF from an LEP? A new government provides an excuse for new regeneration jargon and more irritating TLAs (three letter acronyms).

Faced with this torrent of nonsense the natural temptation is to make it simple by focusing on the faces who will sit on the board of the new Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Marches LEP will look after Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and - more or less - replace Advantage West Midlands, the soon to be defunct government regional development agency. The prejudice against agriculture in the "regeneration" world is immense and very silly.

However, at least one familiar face has made the transition from AWM to LEP, Herefordshire Council leader, Roger Phillips survives from the AWM board to join MLEP. Phillips will be sitting next to Angela Smith of the local branch of the Federation of Small Businesses. Smith is also acting chair of the quasi-official Herefordshire Business Board which is just establishing itself. I'm sure both Phillips and Smith, and the other council folk and "business leaders"

on the board, are good people doing their best, but seeing their names made my heart sink.

If LEPs are to amount to anything they need to be fizzing. Instead we've got the same familiar committee room faces, policy insiders and trusted safe pair of hands representing the same old established we-know-what's-best-for-you interests. That's a shame because the new regeneration structure being created by the government has enormous strengths.

For instance, TIF - tax incremental financing - finally allows councils to spend on bold projects, using as collateral the future tax revenues generated by their investment. TIF has been popular in the United States for years and scored some enormous successes. It could be brilliant in the UK, too. Even Lord Heseltine's new £1.4bn Regional Growth Fund (RGF) promises to bring a fresh approach which relies less on top-down guesswork and more on intelligent bottom-up regeneration.

So why have old-style policy insiders and reliable businesspeople been chosen to sit on the Marches LEP? It seems odd that the new government should remain wedded to the idea that business people know best about regeneration. This is one piece of 1980's dogma the Coalition might usefully have

junked. By sticking with this old bad habit, and stuffing their board with suits and local government insiders, they have handed their potentially very useful new regeneration system over to the same unimaginative folk who've successfully suffocated new thinking in regeneration for the last twenty years.

Proof that the new Marches LEP will be a grand disappointment has not been slow in coming. One of the two Herefordshire bids to Lord Heseltine's fund endorsed by the new Marches LEP is to tidy up roads ready for the (ungreen, unsustainable, old fashioned) retail development at the Edgar Street Grid.

* In case you were wondering, Jessica and Jeremie are both European Union regeneration projects, Jessica perhaps the most important. It stands for Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas and will involve regional funds making loans to fund the development of new office and industrial space. To nobody's surprise the West Midlands hasn't been very dynamic about these excellent initiatives (big smiley wave to Advantage West Midlands), letting London, Manchester and Wales steam ahead of them.

Letter

SCRUTINY OR SECRECY

On 15th and 16th of November the Community Services Committee of Herefordshire Council (Chairman Coun. Terry James) took evidence from a range of people and organisations - including the Hereford Civic Society - to enable them to consider the present strategy for the Edgar Street Grid. This produced a wide range of views, information and comment ranging from Stanhope, the developers, Herefordshire Futures to the businesses that are and will be so badly affected by the proposed Link Road.

The Committee met again on 6th December to discuss what they had heard, but this discussion was held in closed session. Why should a so-called Scrutiny Committee wish to operate in secrecy? It should surely be an open process where the public can hear and judge the various contributions of the committee members. What we are going to get is a report from the committee to come to an open meeting on 13th January but we shall apparently never know how and why they reached the conclusions they came to.

This surely is not open democratic government and seems typical of how Herefordshire Council

operates. I did email the Chairman asking him to open the meeting to the public but have not had a reply.
John Faulkner

Nooks and Corners

The Point, Aylestone Hill.

Replacing a much loved building - Carfax - within a Victorian Conservation area was never going to be an easy task, but here, IE Developments with their architect Warren Benbow from Kington have scored 10/10. Taking the rhythm of the Edwardian Villas running up the hill, they have reintroduced this classical based proportion and achieved a sublime light touch, the emphasis on horizontal and vertical elements, a delight from every viewpoint bringing the very best of modernism into a park setting. The density of accommodation could only otherwise come about from garden grabbing. The grouping of the buildings, with their adjacent coach houses,



Photographed by Richard Weaver photography.

have a simplicity and elegance which is rarely achieved. This development rewards further inspection as its attention to detail and finishes is well worth another look. We should all be very proud and celebrate this scheme.

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Two new major retail reports

Revisiting the Impact of Large Foodstores on Market Towns and District Centres

Wrigley, Lambiri and Cudworth - University of Southampton – December 2010

An Executive summary of a three year research project by the University of Southampton funded by Tesco PLC

New high-quality, up-to-date research on the impacts of supermarket development on UK market towns and district centres has been long overdue.

This rigorously designed and executed University of Southampton 'before/after' study conducted in eight centres 2007-09, provides the missing research needed to move forward highly polarised debates on the nature of those impacts

Evidence from over 8000 consumers and 1000 traders surveyed finds that:

Supermarkets built on the edge of town centres encourage significantly fewer local residents to leave those towns for their main food shopping.

The new supermarkets are not just being used for 'one-stop' shopping. Via the mechanism of linked trips the existing town centres experience increased footfall and urban 'buzz', helping to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability.

The new supermarkets encourage a significant decrease in car usage and increase in walking on main food shopping trips amongst local residents.

A year after the opening of the new supermarkets two-thirds of consumers believed the new stores were beneficial to themselves, local residents and the town centre. Only 8% believed otherwise.

Feedback from traders was consistently positive about the new supermarkets' impact on local residents and the town centre. Contrary to popular opinion, traders also took a generally positive or neutral view on the impact on their own businesses.

Detailed study of changes in retail composition of the eight centres provides little support for widely held views linking supermarket development to the decimation of existing centres and their retail diversity.

National Survey of Local Shopping Patterns - CB Richard Ellis report on latest findings (2010)

New research shows, that the age of giant shopping centres means that chain stores need far fewer shops to claim a big slice of the market, than was the case 40 years ago.

The property services firm CB Richard Ellis found retailers were increasingly favouring large "flagship" stores, and needed only 90 stores to achieve a 50 per cent market share, compared with 200 in 1971. The firm, which used census data and research from the National Survey of Local Shopping Patterns, said this was driven by improved infrastructure and the "advent of major regional shopping malls". That was having a big impact on small towns and secondary shopping centres.

Jonathan De Mello, head of retail consultancy at CB Richard Ellis, said "There has been a sea change in how people shop, moving to a new pattern of shopping less frequently, saving up, then spending a lot more than they would have in the past. These changes in behaviour have seen shoppers spending more time and money in retail hubs like London's West End, Manchester and Glasgow, or major shopping centres like Cribbs Causeway, Meadowhall and Westfield London – often to the detriment of smaller towns and 'secondary' locations. This change has benefited the larger shopping centres most, with fashion sales increasing by more than 50 per cent in one such mall versus this time last year. Some secondary centres have experienced an increased flight to value – with pound shops, charity shops, pawnbrokers and discount supermarkets increasingly dominant – and unfortunately also a rise in vacancy rates that are high and increasing."

He said that while this consolidation was beneficial for large shopping centres, it was getting worse for smaller ones. "We are going to see underlying vacancy rates that are high and increasing."

Herefordshire Council, Hereford Futures and Stanhope PLEASE NOTE.

Widemarsh Street Reborn

At the beginning of December the refurbishing of Widemarsh Street was completed and it is now possible to judge the result as a whole. It looks good and shows what good, detailed design and decent quality materials can produce – thank you Ben Hamilton-Baillie [the designer]. What a shame that High Town was not repaved to the same standard and maybe we can now look forward to other similar schemes to improve the historic core of the city.

Yes, there has been the problem of tripping over the kerbs and the use of plastic tape, which does not improve the appearance, but this just shows you cannot satisfy all the people all the time. A sensible suggestion to help the visually impaired has brought problems, probably because the kerbs are not continuous. This raises the question as to how the poorly sighted find their way across the areas that are not kerbed. Time will tell whether we will get used to the kerbs, or whether another solution is needed.

Introduction to the Localism Bill

The Bill, due to go through Parliament in 2011, provides real opportunities for civic societies to play a much stronger role in shaping planning decisions and securing the future of important buildings and public services but it is not without its risks. There is a strong expectation from the Government that "in many cases....civic groups will become neighbourhood forums" to prepare the new neighbourhood plans.

Civic Voice features in many of them and has been lobbying hard on behalf of civic societies with Ministers, their advisors and the senior civil servants drafting the legislation. Civic Voice is well placed to influence the legislation on behalf of civic societies. It is the only community based group on the Government's Planning Sounding Board, and has already had significant influence.

Members of HCS should belong to this organisation, which is much slimmer than the old Civic Trust, and they should press the committee to join.

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Recent Meetings

27th October 2010 – **The Regeneration Game, does it make economic sense?** – Dr. David Thame

Over a hundred crowded into the Kindle Centre to hear the respected Estates Gazette journalist break his 23 year silence about the daft approach we have towards regeneration. Normally having to write for earnest and optimistic developers, in his own words he "spilled the beans" about the profligate spending of Regional Development Agencies. Even the highly acclaimed Eden Project hasn't made economic sense, and the spin that government and others put on their reporting is often dubious.

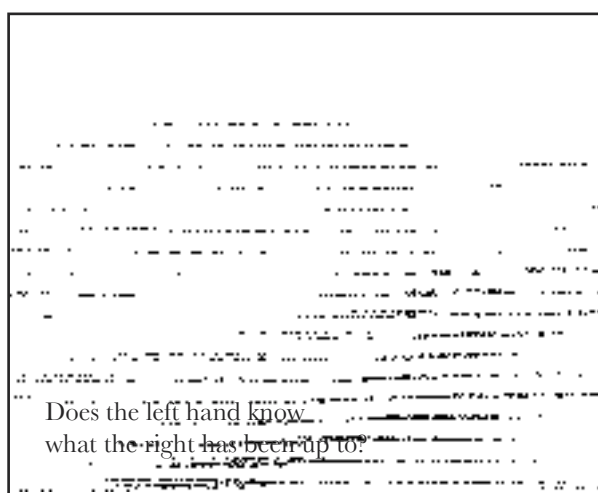
The bulk of the 199 page report on Eden ("all reports are 199 pages and mainly cut and paste jobs") failed to refer to the £50m. millennium grant!

"Politicians like to make laws or show they've done something" – so they regenerate; but some shiny new factory units, on an expensively remediated site, merely draws in tenants from the surrounding areas that, in turn, become derelict and unloved. If, at all, economic support should be directed towards helping companies create additional jobs with financial incentives.

Diplomatically Dr. Thame didn't refer to ESG, but when questioned by members, he felt that Stanhope weren't thrilled about their prospects in Hereford or Hereford's prospects with them! JB

24th November 2010 – **Developing Civil Society in Eastern Europe** – Christine Fowler

Following the rise of communism in eastern Europe and, particularly, since the second world war, a gap has opened up between the holding of views and expressions of opinions in private, on the one hand, and the apparatus of state prescribing how public affairs should be organised on the other. In a democracy, a host of civil bodies fill this gap, giving the people a means of expression of their views as well as opportunities to influence the conduct of public affairs. It is Miss Fowler's mission to advise governments and their people how to fill this gap by establishing such civil bodies, wherever possible, within an overall framework approved by government. The difficulty of this task is great and is compounded by many factors, including those of language, custom and official resistance to change. Her work, which has taken her to most countries in Eastern Europe, is supported largely by the British government as a part of its overseas development programme. The talk was well received. Time did not allow all of the interesting questions members wished to raise with the speaker. HEP



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- Upgrade our vitally important network of tourist information centres
- Re-write the county's housing agenda with a strong emphasis on sensitively designed, community-focussed schemes
- Regeneration of the Berrington Quarter

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8th December 2010 – **The Half Timbered Houses of Herefordshire** – Penny Platts

Penny Platts delighted us with a clear and entertaining presentation on our heritage of half timbered buildings, some of which were originally built in the late fourteenth century. That is over six hundred years ago or in the reign of Richard II. Geoffrey Chaucer had not long written his Canterbury Tales and events like Agincourt were still in the future. Penny reminded us of how the half timbered house had often developed from a basic Mediaeval Hall of 'Cruck' construction, with later crosswise additions of a 'Solar' at one or both ends. The skill of the mediaeval carpenters still amazes us, not least because their work has lasted for so long. The tradition of building in 'green oak', [unseasoned], is still preserved by local craftsmen and may be seen in many new half timbered buildings in the county. We all became infected with her enthusiasm for preserving these gems in their original condition, particularly without paint or other coatings on the oak. Left uncovered, oak not only lasts much longer, but goes a wonderful silvery colour and hardens to a degree, which makes it impenetrable to woodworm and to the weather. Armed with the information Penny imparted, one can have great enjoyment seeking out these old buildings and savouring their special features and their history. HEP

Member Profile

Hugh Heatherwick

How long have you been a member of HCS?

It must be twelve years or so now.

What originally made you join?

Once I found out about the Civic Society it seemed a very natural thing to do. For many years I've been interested in how villages, towns and cities evolve - their architecture - and also the quality of their residents' life experience at work, rest and play. And given that planet Earth is so rapidly becoming urbanised, I think Civic Societies have an important part to play in stimulating the public's interest and involvement in resolving the complex 21st century issues which confront planning and designing for the sustainable development of our urban and rural communities.

How can we encourage more young people to join the Society and become actively involved in its work?

I think we forget that movement precedes thought in the development of a human being, and that young people learn best through extensive amounts of action-based reflection. Our Civic Society has to identify civic issues and topics which matter to the young, and to which they feel able to actively respond. Only after assisting the successful realisation of practical projects which evolve from such a process can the Society expect the young to wish to know more about its aims.

Next Four Meetings

Wednesday 26th January 2011

Shire Hall
'Dovecotes and Pigeon Houses'
Illustrated Talk by Robert Walker,
Author & Senior Conservation Officer for
Herefordshire Council

Wednesday 23rd February 2011

Shire Hall
'Hereford's Historic Townscape'
Presentation by Dr. Nigel Parker,
Urban Archaeologist for Herefordshire
Archaeology

Wednesday 23rd March 2011

Shire Hall
'Flood Defences and Developments at the Weir
Garden'
Talk by James Sharp, Rural Surveyor – Land
Agency, The National Trust

Wednesday 20th April 2011

Kindle Centre
Holme Lacy Campus – its relevance to the
County and its future plans'
A talk by Rob Dunn, Assistant Principal, Holme
Lacy Campus, Herefordshire College of
Technology

HCS Contact Details

Secretary: Andree Poppleston, 33 Breinton
Avenue, Hereford HR4 OJZ 01432 343333
apoppleston@fsmail.net

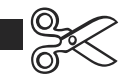
Chairman: Garry Thomas, 25 West Street,
Hereford HR4 OBX 01432 278707

Vice-chairman: Hubert Porte, Springwood,
Madley, Herefordshire HR2 9NX
01981 250561

Advertising enquiries: Mo Burns 01432 352559

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 official policy of Hereford Civic Society



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Please send membership information, subscription rates and an application form to:-

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.....Postcode.....

*e-mail address

* optional information which HCS will not share with other organisations.

Return to: Andree Poppleston, 33 Breinton Avenue, Hereford HR4 OJZ

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