

CONSULTATION 1

This quarter we take a look at consultations and question the conduct of the consultation industry. It is a topic we need to engage with, read on, this is important stuff. On this page we report on the Sandys Lecture, delivered by Sir Terry Farrell, reporting back on progress following the publication of his Farrell Review two years ago. It was an impassioned talk with Farrell urgently wanting design education and knowledge around "Place" to become much more part of our general knowledge. Proactive planning is his aim, to see communities having a say in what they would like to see built, not just the proposals of developers.

A small team from the Society has studied the process of consultation in some detail; not just how Herefordshire Council consults but the entire concept of seeking views from citizens? With the promotion of the Big Society, and communities expected to provide more services for themselves, there is the requirement for more input from the "locals". But to what extent and with what result? Historically we vote for a party and their manifesto; now the intricacies of change and development have to be trawled through in great detail by us all, if we wish to participate.

Considering the High Town Public Realm Improvement Consultation, the Herefordshire Council – officers and members – decided they wanted to improve High Town and commissioned Balfour Beatty to come up with a proposal, and so needed to consult.

Various displays were exhibited and interested parties and the general public asked to comment.

"We welcome your comments and views" and these can be submitted via the web or by filling in and posting the questionnaire. "This consultation seeks to understand the impact this scheme will have {on everyone}...enable feedback to inform the design and delivery of the scheme."

First there were three general questions: 1. do you support the vision, 2. the idea of a public realm improvement scheme and 3. will it generate economic benefits? Then seven undefined questions e.g. "in favour of new high quality street

furniture?" (But no details of style) "Do you support phased construction?" (I'm not a highways engineer) etc.. A coloured chart followed with restricted times of access, then questions as to preferred restricted times. An ambiguous question "How you travel to and park in High Town" (One cannot park there!) and how many visits per week. When you drill down these are not easy to answer in a holistic sense.

These consultations rarely give any information on the alternatives that might be considered – it's all or nothing. In the case of High Town it could be left as it is with just the necessary work done to get rid of the puddles - surely cheaper - and if money is available there are plenty of other places needing attention.

The HCS, as an "interested body", was given a priority meeting before the main consultation launch and were shown plans and received a pleasant chat. (No sign of austerity cuts here with a Balfour Beatty staff of three). The Council is conscientious in recording feedback but how will the answers be acted upon and how will they tell us about them? How will the views of residents be weighted with those of retailers and us self-appointed bodies (who think we know best) and data protection will blur the public presentation? As we go to press the final decision/recommendation has yet to be announced. We fear the analysis will be unclear, there will not be a list of changes/improvements but a general narrative which will not explain how the conclusion has been drawn.

This consultation, we conclude like most, is a token gesture; because an evaluation was required rather than a consultation. There was a need to weigh up the various alternatives some of which are quite technical. Surely an expert on townscape designer should have been retained to comment upon the proposals with an evaluation of the current state of the surfaces? An accountant to value the return on investment? Then a rational set of conclusions could be drawn on behalf of us, the citizens of Hereford.

However the LA is obliged to consult; but the realistic alternatives need to be clear and simple. Democracy in this country is based on one person, one vote, irrespective of their knowledge, education or land ownership. This is all very reasonable at a macro level, where individuals might have leanings to the left or right or local; but consultation on a detailed matter should also involve independent experts¹ who have the knowledge and breadth of vision to comment and advise and draw the right conclusion.

How can we all be experts on adult social care, highways, education etc. etc.? Democracy means we can have a say but we also need the help of experts working to the rules.

¹ I.e. not Balfour Beatty commenting on their own designs which might be delivered by another branch of their company.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

A relatively easy to follow consultation on the SCI is due to report soon. The revised SCI will replace the current document adopted in March 2007. Extensive review of the planning process leading to the publication of the Localism Act in 2011 and National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 means there is now far greater emphasis on early engagement with all potentially affected parties.

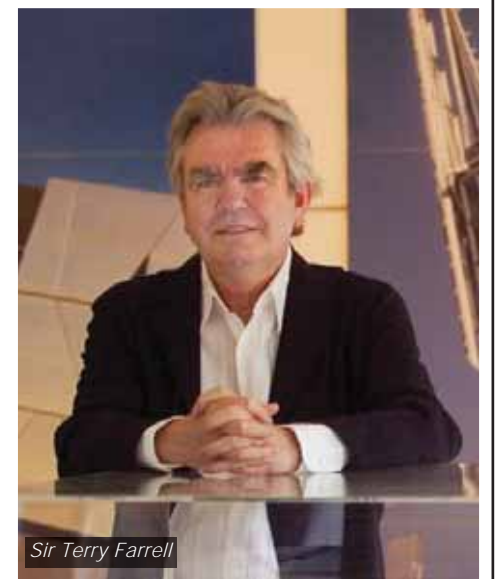
Over the last 8 years, use of online technology as a communication and information tool has increased extensively. It is accepted that more traditional 'offline' modes of communication are still necessary; however, these can now be used to a much lesser degree.

The basis of the Localism Act is to devolve power from central government. It gives communities the opportunity to take responsibility for the shaping of development in their area, within the parameters of the Core Strategy.

The Sandys Lecture

The Farrell Review Two Years On

At Portcullis House, on 31st March 2016, Sir Terry Farrell spoke passionately about the importance of "place" in all our lives. His life time's work has been, not just, signature buildings but master planning. He cited the Thames Gateway project and being told there was no overall plan just words on economic recovery and numbers of jobs. His firm mapped the area and identified existing open spaces and put together a plan suggesting 70 landscaped areas, and the best places for development. From this master plan communities and developers will fill in the spaces. He was highly critical of the architectural profession often awarding prizes for individual buildings rather than new places. In towns the emphasis has to be on the ease of walking around. Concluding he was pleased to see the take up of many initiatives proposed in his Review and hopes there will be a gradual move to more Proactive Planning. Currently developers make



Sir Terry Farrell

a planning application, it is considered and granted consent if it meets various criteria. A somewhat bizarre arrangement with no input from us the locals. Should not individuals have a say in the future of their environment, their place? The establishment of Urban Rooms continues across the country. Full Review from www.civicvoice.org.uk

What would you like to see in High Town?



Haringey LONDON

Supreme Court gave judgment in landmark consultation case

The Supreme Court, in October 2014, in a judgment with wide-ranging consequences for all consultation exercises carried out by public bodies, found that it was unfair and unlawful for Haringey to have only informed consultees about its preferred option without giving them an outline of the realistic alternatives and an indication of why they proposed to adopt their preferred scheme.

The court found that in wrongly presenting its preferred option as being the only option available to it the Council misled consultees and no assumed knowledge on the part of consultees could save Haringey's consultation exercise from a verdict that it was unfair and therefore unlawful.

www.supremecourt.uk/decided-cases/docs/UKSC_2013_0116_Judgment.pdf

Had enough of "Consultation"? Enjoy a day with us in Newtown, Powys



Summer Outing to Newtown, Powys Saturday 16th July 2016

Join us to visit this little known town with an intriguing history. Robert Owen museum, three decades of new housing from the sixties, contemporary Art Gallery, "Gregynog" Country House and more. Leave Hereford 9am. Return 6.30pm. Cost £20. Contact David Fowler:- 01981 541058 david693fowler@btinternet.com **BOOK NOW to ensure your place**

CONSULTATION 2

No Neighbourhood Plan - a case study

The aspirations of building developers are invariably at odds with the wants of local people and this was well illustrated on 11th and 12th March 2016 when the Duchy of Cornwall consulted parishioners in St. Weonards.

"What would you like to see here?" Many thought "nothing at all" and so the long process of sketches and reports will proceed until an application will be sent to Herefordshire Council confirming there has been local consultation.

The Local Plan clearly states St. Weonards must have 23 new houses by 2032. That will have implications on local facilities especially concerning the school which is very small. But if St. Weonards school is expanded what of the future of Garway School? The absence

of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for St. Weonards means there is little influence in setting the agenda for the type of place locals would like to see. NPs were never supposed to be for each and every little parish, an entire locality needs to be involved. (Country wide the average NP covers 5,500 voters). Locally Garway PC has thrown the towel in on their NP as has Orcop PC. Piecemeal unplanned development will ensue with the future of education provision in disarray.



Neighbourhood Plans progress

HCS continues to worry about the lack of real progress developing local plans, all part of the planning process, and urgently needed to support the Core Strategy. The Council's web site is somewhat misleading. An unknown number of parishes have thrown the towel in and yet are still coloured orange on the map. These figures were given to us on 31st March 2106 concerning progress.

- 1 awaiting full Council adoption
- 5 awaiting referendum
- 3 at examination and 1 pending the appointment of an examiner
- 7 submitted under Reg 16 (either completed or on consultation) – further 3 expected in April
- 11 completed draft consultation
- 6 undergoing draft consultation under Reg14 with 6 further expected in April
- 40 further active either drafting and evidence gathering
- 1 further neighbourhood area currently on consultation.

HCS comments on Street Parking, inc. residents'

(As part of our on-going input into new proposals – this is what we wrote) The HCS is pleased to comment upon the proposed on-street parking charges for the City Centre.

We believe that for an area the size of central Hereford

- full Shared Space principles should be adopted.
- vehicle access restricted to residents, taxis, those with disabled badges, drivers collecting heavy items and deliveries.

We justify these views on the basis that

- the area is relatively small.
- there are several adjacent carparks
- there would be great improvements to air quality.

Currently there is much traffic generated with drivers circulating looking for very short term parking spaces. Modern charging regimes via telephone are not customer friendly. Pricing structures

within the carparks are a political decision; most HCS members consider them to be too onerous especially for the poorly paid.

Some Society members are concerned that a full ban would prejudice those retail outlets with heavy items to be loaded into private cars; however Church Street seems to work well without close kerb car parking.

An exception could be made for the collection of heavy items, but only for the short time it takes to load. There is no reason why a 'loading only/except for loading' restriction could not be incorporated into any Traffic Order. Opportunities for such things as cycle delivery will spring from any adversity.

Bold decisions are needed to create a vibrant city – European cities have - Hereford has to as well. See what Cambridge has achieved in this short video - vimeo.com/133800244

25th February 2016

Weston under Penyard NP

Well done Western under Penyard – being the first parish to have a NP actually in place. We reproduce here the minutes of their steering group – some interesting facts!



Monthly Steering Group Report to Parish Council

Period	1 st February to 29th February 2016	
Meetings Held	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish Council Planning Meeting 	17th February
Meetings Planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Group 	3rd March
Achievements	1. Weston under Penyard NP Referendum completed 4th February 2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39.2% of the registered electors recorded their vote. • 96.4% of them said YES to the Neighbourhood Plan • YES votes - 317 • NO votes - 12 2. Communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circular No 16 and 17 issued 	
Concerns	HC had advised that the earliest likely time for adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan in their full council meeting would be May or July 2016. The Steering Group wrote to HC advising their disappointment that it could take HC up five months to complete this small formality. HC subsequently advised that the adoption of the NP will now be on the agenda for their full council meeting on 20th May 2016.	
Finance	The draft report on the total costs for preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan is being checked against the Clerk's records. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total cost is expected to be of the order of £8,500. • As a result of careful management of government grant funding the actual cost for the Parish Council over the three year period has been approximately £1,000. • The Parish Council allocated a total of £6,000 for the NP and so approximately £5,000 is currently unspent. 	

Comment

The slow progress of ratifying Neighbourhood Plans is the biggest indicator that the Big Society is failing. This ideal hope that good people will rise up and lead their communities to look after themselves is stalling. Whilst many have come to over rely on the state to look after them, the proposals now are abandoning us to fight for ourselves. With Local Authorities' funding in tatters there will be no one to organise and keep together the fabric of society.

LAs are needed to provide the services that we cannot provide for ourselves. This market driven society leaves the incapable, the poor, the disenfranchised to fend for themselves. Society needs institutions that know best. There is so much knowledge out there to be applied – individuals cannot possibly be left to flounder in a caring society.

SV

St Owen's Street Cycle Way.

HCS is concerned that here is yet another consultation on a contra flow cycling proposal for this Street.

Yet again we see another contrived scheme that fails to take account of current thinking and what is supposed to be a move towards proper shared space principles.

The Herefordshire Council adopted the Street Scape Strategy by Ben Hamilton Baillie (BHB) in 2009 but here is a proposal that ignores these principles. Whilst the Strategy incorporated expensive materials there is no reason why lesser materials could not be used – the reason often put forward why BHB proposals are not possible.

Here the suggestion is that a contra flow cycle lane is installed. This would become an area of exclusivity for cyclists – totally opposed to the shared space concept. Some cyclists would feel that they can proceed at speed without due regard for other road users. Consider the

bizarre, short cycle lane in King Street, known by officers as "not ideal" and the subject of many near misses.

Contra flow cycle routes are common place in London as we have previously pointed out. Yet again we have a proposal that does not meet with what has previously been agreed – a shared space concept.

HCS cannot understand why the brief given to Balfour Beatty is flawed as it fails to insist on a contemporary approach to street design.

25th February 2016