

news

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hereford civic society

the city's **built environment** forum

Winter 2013

Contemporary Libraries

Four page supplement highlighting latest ideas

Accessibility in Hereford

Corinne Westacott likes it here

Five Year Housing Land Supply

Joan Simple questions the validity

ESG Challenge as work starts

Unnamed group to take action?

future supplements

Church reordering

Spring 2013

Hereford Now

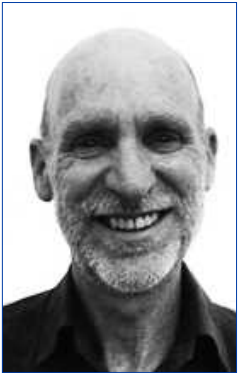
Sophie House

The City's forum for discussion about the built environment.
Check the back page for details and meetings in different locations.

www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk



Preface.....



Our AGM in October reappointed me as Chairman and need to tell you that I've been elected to the national board of Civic Voice. What's that? – you might be thinking. Perhaps you'll remember the old Civic Trust; that went down three years ago after becoming too reliant on Government funds that ceased. This new body rose from the ashes with a streamlined agenda to represent the built environment of our cities, towns and villages, led by Griff Rhys Jones. Many civic societies, including our own, joined up believing we need to be part of the bigger picture. CV lobbies against some of the daft proposals that Government want to put through [huge house extensions without planning consent etc.] and publishes an excellent e news that updates societies on developing issues. It has set a National Civic Day (last Saturday in June) to stimulate interest in matters civic, and supports societies with ideas and strategies to best influence our decision makers. With nearly eighty thousand members it already has a mandate – my particular remit is to promote membership. CPRE has huge influence on countryside matters – Civic Voice should be as big, representing the built environment. My first targets are our sister societies in Leominster, Ledbury, Ross on Wye and Kington – at only £1.50/member it's a snip or a sip - (half a pint of beer)

It is now 2½ years since the results of the two-stage architectural design competition for the refurbishment of the City's market building were announced.

Sponsored by Herefordshire Council and organised by the RIBA precious little has been achieved. Last year, Hereford Futures selected Cambridge-based Wrenbridge to carry the scheme through to fruition. There is a well-informed rumour circulating that a fresh structural survey must be carried out, "in order to inform the Cabinet of the priority which should be given to the old market hall's refurbishment".

My particular gripe is this inexcusable behaviour of the cabinet. Nearly forty architectural practices were persuaded to spend time drafting ideas, then four were paid to work up their drafts before a winner was chosen.

Architectural competitions often have a bad press; but to go ahead and spend other people's time, and council tax funds, before it is known whether and how the project is to be built out is disgraceful.

When I took on the role as chairman of this Society I set about working with the Council (Broad Street, cycling etc. etc.) and chose to be positive. But this sort of carry on and playing at property development – work had started on the ESG site when Stanhope threatened to walk away without another half a mill – is of huge concern to us. How Hereford maintains and develops its built environment is central to the entire future of Hereford.

In this edition, contributors highlight some worrying thoughts on the current situation in our City. But you might prefer to walk with David Whitehead on page 5 and ramble around Hereford, south of the river. John Bothamley

News

Planning Minister Nick Boles



Recently announcing a new multi-million pound cash boost to help more communities, Boles said "The cash will help more communities take centre stage in planning the shape, look and feel of their local area."

But the small print refers to payments with a limit of £1.5 million – what about the vast majority who won't get any funds? It is tokenism of the worst kind.

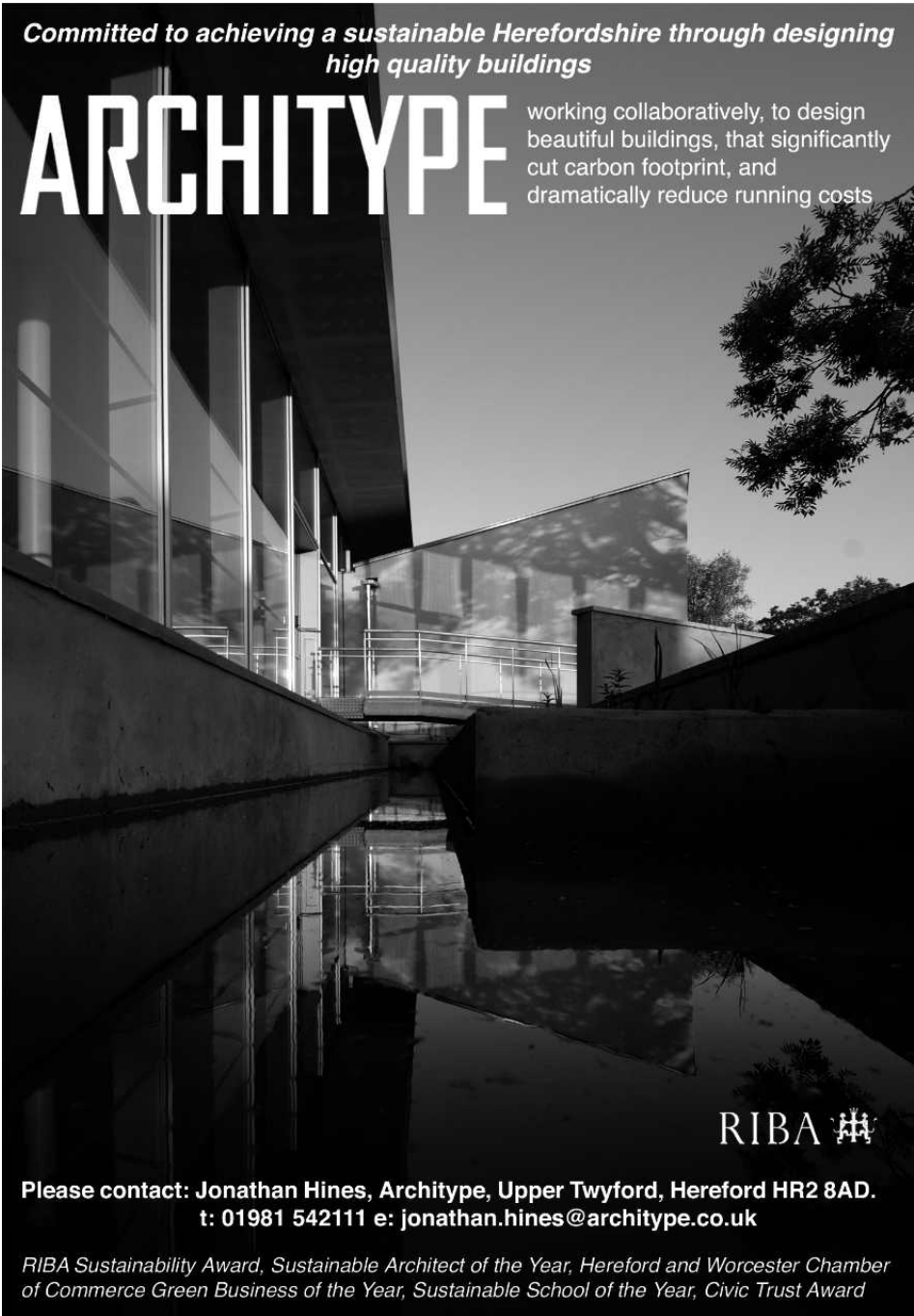
The press release goes on:-


'This money recognises the duties that local authorities have in relation to neighbourhood planning. These are to: provide advice and assistance; to hold an examination; and to make arrangements for a referendum.'

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Riverside rescues


Is it really possible that after more than 15 years, the city's most notorious eyesore is finally to be expunged? Offers in the region of £900,000 for the derelict Campions Hotel on Greyfriars Avenue are sought, with detailed planning approval already secured for 14 apartments. The riverside site has changed hands at least four times since the 1990s, with virtually every local architectural practice attempting a commercially-viable solution.

Further downstream, The Friends of Castle Green (FCG) have secured the responsibility for the old art college building on the north bank of the Wye, close to Victoria Bridge, from Herefordshire Council. Mark Hubbard's leadership of FCG and his dedication to the future of the City clearly played a major part in this sensible decision. Once known as The Pavilion and the Canoe Centre this despoiled Regency gem was originally built as Reading Rooms and Bath House. Suggestions for possible future uses for The Pavilion (and offers of funding and/or volunteer work) will be welcomed by FCG (14-16 Quay Street, Hereford HR1 2NH).

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
- Nick Jones** – journalist on architecture and environmental matters
- Andree Poppleston** – researcher and architecture critic
- Joan Simple** – auditor and local activist
- Corinne Westacott** – former television producer and journalist
- David Whitehead** – founder member of HCS, historian and author, secretary of the Woolhope Club

FRONT PAGE IMAGE: Hereford Library, Broad Street.



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Link Road latest - see plan —>

Way back in February 2009, Hereford Futures’ predecessor ESG Ltd unveiled plans for a new east-west cross-city highway, christened the Link Road. At a special presentation at the TGS Bowling Centre, the road’s project manager confidently predicted that work would start later that year. Latest indications are that Spring 2014 is now to be the start of construction work, although with around 25% of the estimated construction cost of £27-million already gone on the Rockfield DIY buy-out, Hereford Future’s highways consultants may have to drastically trim the road’s specification. That’s even before the considerable costs of re-locating the Royal Mail Sorting Office’s vehicles park.

Food festival

To art, energy, film, literature, music, photography and poetry, Hereford can now add food as the generic theme of another successful county-based festival. The annual ‘Flavours of Herefordshire’ food festival ventured into the city centre for the first time this autumn, better promoted, with no admission charges and over 80 exhibitors spread around specially-prepared locations on Castle Green, Cathedral Close, High Town and the Shire Hall. The show’s organisers report that 32,000 people attended the two-day event.

Lancaster redevelopment moves

Herefordshire Council’s “partners” on ESG have struck a similar deal in Lancaster. British Land has acquired the 2.3 acre Canal Corridor North site in Lancaster city centre. The land includes the former Mitchell’s of Lancaster brewery. A development agreement is also in place with Lancaster City Council for the acquisition of its adjoining land to enable the delivery of a significant canal-side, mixed-use scheme across the 10-acre site.

Bound to the east by the Lancaster Canal and with two working theatres, the site, which is next to the city centre, “provides the only real opportunity to significantly improve the city’s retail offer,” so it is said. Is it needed? Do Lancaster residents want it? What of the existing rather pleasant retail environment? Richard Wise, head of retail development for British Land, said: “Working closely with Lancaster City Council and English Heritage, our aim is to deliver a scheme that complements the site’s historical setting.”

We’ve heard that one before! He then said “We are confident that a relatively modest initial investment could lead to a future development with a targeted end value of over £75m.” We’re still keen to see the details on the ESG deal.



Skylon Enterprise Zone in good company?

HCS was disappointed to read in Building Design that Hereford doesn’t have exclusive rights to the Skylon name.

- Skylon Tower on the South Bank
- Skylon Hotel in Dublin
- Skylon Conran restaurant in the Festival Hall
- Skylon Samsonite suitcases
- Skylon Nike trainers
- Skylon space module
- Skylon at Niagara Falls

But ours will be the only look alike – perhaps this is a job for Herefordshire’s new PR chief Ben Proctor. Shout around a bit, threaten legal action and everyone will be talking about Herefordshire and hopefully not saying Hearfordshire, where you can do it.



Not a real Skylon at Niagara

Grid protection

Last year, when a planning application by Sainsbury to expand the non-food element of its Barton Street store was mysteriously withdrawn at the 11th hour, it was hinted that Stanhope felt such a unit might pose a threat to the proposed John Lewis unit destined for the Edgar Street Grid. The developer’s concern for the commercial success of the city’s new retail quarter emerged once again this autumn, when Hereford Futures suggested that the re-location of fashion trader Next to a shed unit in Holmer Road would “affect the function and vitality” of the scheme. At the cabinet’s emergency meeting in October, the five first tenants to move onto the Grid were named as Debenhams, Next, TK-Max, Odeon Cinemas and Waitrose. At the November full Council meeting, the administration declined to reveal the names of the 30 city centre traders who have been ‘ring fenced’ against being offered incentives to move onto the Grid.

Hereford Now
Sophie House

Less than three miles from the city centre, the local charity Martha Trust Hereford has found this most idyllic of sites for its new residential home, Sophie House, designed by Jamieson Associates. The Trust’s work is dedicated to providing lifelong residential care for profoundly disabled children. Seen from above, the single-storey Hampton Park building’s plan form is like two inter-connecting letter Cs, with the overlapping area forming a long glazed courtyard. Fourteen residents have individual rooms grouped around this internal space. The building’s gently curved roofs are clad in cedar shingles, with vertical pine boarding echoing the curves internally. Main contractor for the £3.5M project was Bowmer & Kirkland. A special charity sale organised by Brightwells in December, raised nearly £8000 towards specialist equipment for Sophie House.

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Down from the hills.....

Corinne Westacott – former television producer and journalist who works from a small remote settlement in south Herefordshire continues her thoughts on our City.

Here – You Can?



I wrote in this magazine recently about how my friends and neighbours shop in Ross, Monmouth or Abergavenny in order to avoid the painful entanglement of Hereford. Then it occurred to me: I spent several years pushing my disabled mother around in a wheelchair. We went far and wide, undaunted by cobbles, deep gravel tracks and one in five inclines. If there is such a thing as extreme wheelchairs, we probably did it. And I have to say that, compared to many towns, Hereford was actually a relatively easy place to get around. Please note the word *relatively*. There are still howling problems regarding disabled access in Hereford's built environment but, compared to our smaller market towns with their formidable slopes, narrow, bone-shaking pavements and small, inaccessible shops, our flat, open, largely pedestrianised city centre makes for *comparatively* easy going. The city is also more manageable than Bristol, Birmingham or Cardiff which are daunting if you're disabled (unless you're Tanni Grey-Thompson or David Weir).

So, if we are looking for Hereford's USP, a means for the city to survive town-centre blight, this could be our unique selling proposition: Hereford should market itself as a centre which champions access for all.

This is one of those situations where the right thing to do is also a commercial opportunity. About eleven million people in Britain are disabled and their estimated annual spend is 80 billion pounds. Another six million people are carers. That's without counting the people who are not officially disabled but who still find mobility difficult, or have poor vision, or hearing, or those who are temporarily disabled by broken limbs or illness. If you add in accompanying family and friends you are talking about a very large number of people, all looking for easy places to go and spend their money. Hereford has the size, structure and topology to become a barrier-free environment and would benefit economically as well as socially from doing so.

We are also one of the few town centres with a planned redevelopment. This means that the new retail areas, both on the old livestock market site and in the Buttermarket, could incorporate, from kick-off, some of the latest ideas in 'universal design,' the term coined by Ron Mace in 1997, to define the creation of an environment that offers equitable, flexible and easy use for people with diverse

abilities. And building in universal access features is a great deal easier and more cost effective than adapting older buildings.



This is an opportunity for creativity and innovation – a chance to work with colours, textures and technologies to do something new. I'm hoping that the new developments have taken on board the needs of the disabled although it doesn't augur particularly well that, on all the artist's impressions I've seen of the new retail quarter, not one of the happy shoppers is in a wheelchair, is accompanied by a guide dog or is walking with a stick.

I write this too in the wake of the disbanding of the campaigning group Hereford Access for All which, for twenty three years, has lobbied MPs, the council and local businesses for improvements in accessibility. The group has now had to call it a day due to the age and infirmity of its members. Jim Lawes, erstwhile president of the group, praises Herefordshire Council for its willingness to listen and cites improvements in access in the County Records Office, the Shire Hall, the Library and the setting up of Shop Mobility as examples of progress. Other lobbyists from Mencap, the Royal National College for the Blind and Disability United also say that Herefordshire council does generally try to listen to them. The open ear of the Council, combined with our effective lobby groups, constitutes a good base on which to build an access strategy for the future.

The EU, in partnership with the European Disability Forum makes annual awards to cities of over 50,000, inhabitants, which have displayed efforts to achieve greater accessibility for the disabled. Cities with far more cobbles and old buildings than ours, have stepped up to the mark and been given honourable mentions. Nowhere in the U.K. has so far figured in the Access City awards. Setting up a plan which, over several years, aims to put Hereford in a position to go for this accolade would, I am sure, bring customers, revenue, publicity and kudos to our city. Okay, there's not much money sloshing around, but the same is true for the rest of Europe, and things are still being achieved with the help of public/private partnerships and available grants. I think we should go for it, carve ourselves a niche and make Hereford live up to its new "**Here** you can" motto.

Next time: a good starting point – spending an easy penny...



ESG Challenge

There is no doubt that the people of Hereford are pretty fed up with the wrangling over the future of the ESG sites. HCS believes that it is important to record the progress of this project – is this a good way to achieve change, does public private involvement achieve the best results? Here is the latest news from our own reporter -

Work progresses on the "Old Cattle Market", with the demolition of those buildings that are to disappear on the site almost complete, just the former Garrick House to go. The ground stabilisation works appear to be in full swing with large amounts of construction plant moving about the site, and from our side of the grey hoarding it looks like dinosaurs roaming around an urban wilderness – so that's that then- is it? All the protests stopped – the concerns about the use of public money to support a private sector scheme abandoned, the potential for the destruction of our city's historic retail core, the schemes lack of connectivity to the City, all forgotten about and our Council's capitulation to the developer's last minute demand for £500k knocked off the price of the site just to make it a bit sweeter for them forgiven?

HCS hears otherwise – a small band of Herefordians are to challenge this flawed decision.

We will bring further details in next quarter's edition.

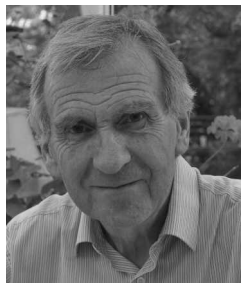
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Rus in urbe – country in the city

David Whitehead – Hereford historian and author
This quarter David travels south of the river

South-East – to Rotherwas



If you follow the Wye Valley Walk for about half-a-mile from the Hampton Park Road, through Braemar Gardens, to the river bank – where the Wye Invader was tied up for many years – there is a small island in the middle of the river. It's not worth claiming since it floods in winter, but with the river low in a traditional summer, you can wade out to it. My children made it their little kingdom on several occasions, two to three decades ago. However, they never reached the Rotherwas bank, as even when the water is low; it runs deep and swift here.

Notwithstanding the presence today of the outfall from the new sewage works just above this spot, the Rotherwas shore still looks most inviting with vestigial parkland masking the Recycling Centre and adjoining depot, and appearing to run up onto Dinedor Hill – as it did in the Middle Ages when the woodland here was annexed by the crown for the royal forest of Haywood. When the new bridge for the cycleway is built across the Wye, Rotherwas will be an easy walk from the city but today it is necessary to walk across the Bishop's Meadows, through Putson and Lower Bullingham. There's plenty of interest on the way – Putson Manor, the site of Panson Cottage, designed by John Nash for the Rev Charles Bird; Manor Farm, Lower Bullingham, one of the earliest brick buildings in the city; the St Charles Almshouses (1887) by Peter Paul Pugin and the Officers Mess (1916) by Frank Baines, good Arts and Crafts architecture. Don't forget to pick up the key to Rotherwas Chapel from Barton's garage to admire more Pugin (1884) and think of Elgar.

Beyond the chapel at the heart of Rotherwas there is an attractive relict landscape. On your left as you walk to the river is the raised platform of the mansion of the Bodenham, built in 1732 but integrating earlier work, and demolished in 1926. In the spring daffodils still burst from the terrace, as they did when the family was in residence. Further on there is a crumbling walled garden of c.1820, which was open towards the house, suggesting that it contained pleasure grounds rather than a kitchen garden. Until 20 years ago it was still cultivated as a market garden and lead labels were still fixed to the wall, naming exotic fruit trees, long gone. The gardener's cottage stands in the SE corner but the northern stretch of wall has been undermined by the proximity of the river. There is a fine walnut tree here, which now feeds the squirrels but, if I remembered in July, would provide a basket full of green nuts for pickling. Good with ham on Boxing Day.

At the riverside there are traces of stone-walling, the foundations of a quay where, in the 18th century, trows unloaded their coal, brought from the Forest. In recent years there has been a thriving sand martin colony in the steep bank on the other side of the river and you are almost certain to see a kingfisher here. Return from the river along the east wall of the garden through the overgrown box hedging, which, no doubt, was once neatly cut, to entice the women of the Bodenham family to promenade to this delicious spot. Of course, this wonderful piece of edgeland has no protection. It could be bulldozed out of existence tomorrow.

Rather ominously, the Rotherwas Relief Road, which ends uselessly on an island on the straight mile, is looking straight at Rotherwas – this its reserved corridor. But so what, I hear you say, perhaps its transitory and insecure status provides the necessary frisson, which makes it an exciting landscape to visit.



Garden wall of Bodenham's house

and South – to the Forest

Albeit Hereford has expanded considerably to the south since the 1970s, something of the magic of the royal forest is still present here. It might still be possible to find a leafy hollow somewhere close to Belmont for a re-enactment of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or Milton's *Comus*. Even before the Norman Conquest, Hereford was a favourite place for hunting. The royal palace on Castle Green – as it became – was used as the base and below it, across the river, was the 'king's garden' – a bower, perhaps, where patient queens awaited the return of their exhausted consorts. Beyond, Rowe Ditch, which appears to have been constructed in the 11th century, the forest began with an open area called the 'pig's plock' where the citizens gathered their swine in the autumn in readiness for the acorn harvest. Until the 16th century Hunderton, Newton and Red Hill were all in the forest of Haywood, so named because of the *haia* or *haga* 'enclosure' where the deer were corralled to make hunting easier for the king, who generally hunted on foot.

To reach the forest today a walk is necessary through Hereford's post-war suburbs, which ought to be a compulsory and regular activity for every councillor – and inhabitant of Tupsley, Hampton Park and Broomy Hill. Of course, the easiest way is to take the cycleway from Hunderton Bridge and drop off into the playing fields at Grosmont Grove, from where one can walk up to Merry Hill – the hill on the *mere* – 'boundary' of the Liberty, which is marked by similar stones to those found in the Lugg Meadows. These record the extent of the original land-grant made by the Mercian kings in the 8th century to the newly established bishop of Hereford and which remains the boundary of the city today. Schoolchildren in the 1930s were given a holiday to 'beat the bounds' implying that they were physically thrashed on the site of each stone, so that they would remember the spot in later years. With city government in eclipse today we should revive the ceremony, as economic collapse will probably lead to the disintegration of county government and we citizens will need to wrest control of our ancient patrimony from the rustics of the countryside. There are three stones to be found up here, stretching towards the lower of the Belmont Pools.

On these up-land slopes there are a number of veteran trees, which one might be tempted to associate with the royal forest but several maps and a massive amount of documentation in the Wegg-Prosser collection in Hereford Record Office shows that John Matthews of Belmont (d. 1826) bought the Haywood estate – the rump of the royal forest – and proceeded to landscape it. The Belmont Pools were made by him out of disused quarries – perhaps, those mentioned in the 13th century that provided stone for the city walls. Matthews also planted Newton Coppice and the adjoining woods. However, there were certainly woods here in the 1605 when a number of catholic conspirators, sympathetic to the Gunpowder plotters, arranged their own rising and ambushed the sheriff of Hereford and his men here – this event was known as the Witsun Riots. Lady Bodenham of Rotherwas – 'a lady of high stomach' had a hand in this! The woods are now in county council ownership and, although full of rather juvenile trees, give something of the atmosphere of the royal forest. As you go past the upper pool – occupied by escaped terrapins, so I have been told – notice the cottage sitting above the lake, next to the A465. This is Lake Cottage, designed for John Matthews by John Nash in c.1810. It originally had a copious thatch on its roof, exaggerated chimneys and a veranda. The design still exists in the Brighton Pavilion Notebook kept by Nash's assistant, George Stanley Repton and was repeated at Blaise Hamlet near Bristol. In all Nash provided perhaps nine designs for cottages at Belmont but Dewsall Lodge is the only one that survives in something like its original condition. Traces of another one can be found on the southern boundary of Spring Grove, next to Newton Coppice.



Lake Cottage - John Nash

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Five Year Housing Land Supply National Planning Policy Framework

Joan Simple – auditor and local activist

Many people, including many parish councillors, have yet to be advised by Herefordshire Council that at present the county has no five year housing land supply. You might wonder what relevance this has to all of us. Sadly, this affects every single person living in Herefordshire. This is because the new planning legislation, introduced in 2012 by the Conservative Government, called the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), explicitly states that “where a planning authority cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land, with an additional 5% buffer, the relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be regarded as up to date” (para 49, NPPF). This means that whilst Herefordshire Council has no new forward plans, or adopted Core Strategy to replace the previous Unitary Development Plan (UDP), Herefordshire has no planning policies.

This means developers can put forward planning applications for housing on any site in the county, regardless of any previous local planning policies, and it is already happening. Developers are very aware of this in Herefordshire, and can be expected to make maximum use of this lapse in policy. Planning applications for sites such as the historic parkland called Home Farm, Belmont; a number of applications around Holmer (north of the Roman Road) and Breinton, all outside the defined settlement boundary of Hereford, have already been submitted. Some have been refused at planning committee, but without a 5 year housing land supply, it means that each application refused by the Council, is at risk of appeal, and much could depend on how the Courts will determine “sustainability”. Courts determining housing allocation sites in Herefordshire could be a huge cost to the local tax payer, this, despite the fact that over £4million of local taxpayers money has already been spent on forward plans, called the Local Development Framework. Sadly, the plans that have been produced so far over the last four years, have repeatedly been condemned as failing in so many respects, not just by local residents, but by national organisations such as the Planning Inspectorate and Natural England.

Herefordshire Council could just be unlucky or incompetent, not being able to develop a robust forward plan, but some feel that it might actually be something more sinister. If you go behind the calculation of the 5 year housing land supply calculations it seems that sites, previously in the UDP, have either “accidentally” been omitted (e.g. Lioncourt Homes application, off Attwood Lane); whilst other sites, such as the 800 home Urban Village, part of the original ESG plan, cannot now be delivered until after 5 years! If these sites were included in the Council’s calculation of supply, it would have the necessary 5 year supply, and part of the 5% buffer needed to continue to carry forward its policies. The fact that the lead officer for the Forward Plan has been away on sickness leave since the summer of 2012, when the public raised their concerns over the Council’s failure to deliver a 5 year land supply, have further fuelled speculation that this situation has actually been engineered.

Until Herefordshire Council can deliver a robust, viable and deliverable strategy for housing in the County, every planning application will now be determined by the NPPF and not local planning policies. The NPPF states that any new development should be “sustainable” and brownfield sites developed ahead of greenfield sites. This is the only protection currently available to prevent development on out of settlement, greenfield sites. As “sustainable development” has yet to be determined in law, this could prove expensive for local taxpayers, should developers choose to challenge planning refusals through the Courts.

In 2013, is the Forward Planning department of the Council yet another department, to add to those already identified in 2012, as failing? I don’t know, but I anticipate I will be contributing to the cost of unwanted development/legal challenges; as well as continuing to pay the salaries of officers unable to deliver a robust 5 year housing land supply!



Obituary – Graham Roberts



Graham Roberts was the last of a long line of local administrators who took a strong personal interest in the city they presided over. Timothy Curley – City Engineer from 1853 – who ‘watered and drained’ Hereford – was probably his model and figures prominently in his excellent book *The*

Shaping of Modern Hereford (2001). Mr. Roberts (I could never call him Graham) lived at Holmer and often walked to work in Hereford, mentally taking note of the state of the city. Woe betides the lazy allotment holder who allowed his plot to become weedy or the neglectful householder whose overgrown front hedge impeded pedestrians. Without fail, the following day, they would receive a sharp but courteous letter from the surveyor’s office, insisting on improved behaviour, always signed by Graham J. Roberts. At that time, in the 1960s -80s, when the city was still self-governing, a small lorry with a couple of workmen was always kept on stand-by to deal with minor environmental matters e.g. a blocked drain, an uneven paving stone or some persistent litter. Graham Roberts would come back from lunch, having walked across High Town, and the little gang were soon at work. The Surveyor, unlike anyone since in his position, insisted that the city was well-groomed.

After seeing through such great engineering projects as the ring road, Greyfriars’ Bridge, the arrival of Henry Wiggins & Co and much new housing, Graham Robert’s life changed for the worse in 1973 with the founding of the Hereford Civic Trust. This busy little self righteous organisation had its own opinions about the state of the city. Rather generously – bravely, even – Messrs Roberts and Chadwick, (City Architect) were happy to address the infant Trust and welcome it into existence with a ‘Pinky & Perky’ show (their words!), eulogising the virtues of modern Hereford. However, very soon the Trust was discussing long agendas which included grievances about new roads, central area redevelopment, demolished buildings, garish shop fronts etc etc. Letter after letter was despatched to the Surveyor’s office, as this was the very visible face of Hereford, soon to be promoted to the more familiar Planning Department. The letters were full of youthful arrogance and deplored, implored and threatened in the same paragraph. Remarkably, Graham Roberts always replied in person - and explicitly - with sadness, confusion, indignation and reproach – in different order for different letters. He entered into a dialogue, spleens were vented and the matters raised were, occasionally, deferred or even changed. This correspondence is, hopefully, on its way to the Hereford Record Office and later historians, if they bother to enquire at all, will probably applaud the arrival of the national amenity movement (as it was called) in Hereford, which, at the time, we were told was the last city in England to have an amenity society. The same imaginary historians will also, no doubt, admire the patience and forbearance of Graham Roberts. There can be no doubt that he went through purgatory for the love of Hereford, but his love was not quite the same as ours. However, from today’s perspective, when letters from planning officers are as rare as swans’ teeth, the engagement of Graham Roberts with his critics made it a golden age of public participation. Long may he be remembered in the city he nurtured.

David Whitehead, Hon. Secretary of the Hereford Civic Trust 1973 -2003

Spring edition

Stephen Hill - surveyor and author of ‘Time for a citizen’s housing revolution’ writes on community planning and how we should organize ourselves.



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Planning Matters.....

Andree Poppleston continues to monitor all planning applications and highlights interesting and controversial proposals; where we see major reasons to query we write to the Herefordshire Council.

Rather than list many planning applications we now detail those applications that have been considered in some detail by our committee. All applications are accessible using the Herefordshire Council website - www.herefordshire.gov.uk

Recently approved applications

121798
28 Southbank Road, Hereford (modern Passivhaus)

122252
The Salmon Pub, change of use to nursery school.

122730
74 Penn Grove Road, Hereford, home office/garage extension

HCS was intrigued to see this application which appears to be for a separate dwelling, in the grounds of a large Edwardian house of, apparently, only three bedrooms. Drawings show a double sink unit in the "Home Office", a Guest Bedroom and Shower Room. A self contained bachelor pad, which is contrary to policy. However consent has been granted. We would respectfully ask how the Council will monitor the condition! *"The ancillary accommodation hereby approved shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the dwelling known as Oak Gable"*

122754 (C)
Kings and Co Friars St. demolition of light industrial buildings.which doubtless will be developed as housing, probably apartments, which would be a good use of a city centre brown site. The buildings .." do not make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, their loss would not represent a substantial harm to the Heritage asset", "as such the proposed development would accord with the requirements of Policy HBA7 of the Herefordshire UDP".

Recently refused applications

122560
41 Westfaling St. demolish garage, build 2 flats. HCS objected, this is believed to be the third application for this site. It would be detrimental to the adjoining properties, depriving them of light and privacy.

122619
Land adj. to 1 Burden Rd. J.Snowzell New dwelling within curtilage of existing semi. "A conspicuous feature of the site is the protected Copper Beech tree,....it plays an important role in providing some relief within the street scene and is thus of local

amenity value" The development would affect the long term retention of the tree; the access and manoeuvring areas are insufficient, the parking spaces inaccessible; ...contrary to Policy DR3 of the UDP. HCS is especially pleased to see the HC taking a robust view on the preservation of established trees.

New applications

122600
13 houses on site of Bridge Inn, College Road, Hereford. The removal of a community asset, such as a public house is of serious consequence. Whilst it is accepted that running a pub successfully is not easy, there are examples of innovative solutions that benefit the local community. Demolition and filling the site with cramped, small houses does nothing for Hereford, HCS firmly believes the fabric of society must be maintained. A decision has still not been made at the time of going to press.

122877
Land rear of 129 Aylestone Hill. Higham Construction Ltd. Proposed development of 4 detached dwellings. HCS has not commented adversely because it is development within the city which is positive, it approves of the discreet landscaping and is confident that drainage queries can be dealt with positively. Some use of local stone would help to tie the modern style to the location



123177
Land east of 20 Belmont Avenue. West Mercia Housing Group. Erection of three storey sheltered accommodation with parking. The architecture is fairly non descript, but it would fit in the area. If the

accommodation is to be sheltered it is likely that the residents will have some health problems; possibly mobility problems. The "flats" are cramped. Beds are pushed against walls! There is not enough space for ease of movement. When commenting HCS is aware of current policy on size, and believes it is not suitable for use. Our comment included:- *HCS is concerned by the confusing submission which refers to a new parking area for 25 cars. This is shown as an unrelieved bank of 25 spaces in chevron formation. This is considered to be an unsuitable layout for a residential area. The "Indicative Street Scene" shows two high flying condors above the housing, these may cause concern to pet owners and suitable protection should be provided.*

123246 (O)
Land adjacent to 53 Barrs Court Rd. Berekdar Entreprises. Proposed erection of 2 houses. This previously appeared in November for 3 houses.

123287
78 Stanhope St. Mr & Mrs Morris. demolition of garage, construction of 2 flats. HCS commented:- *Whilst HCS agrees that cities should have dense development this application is flawed in our view. It is out of scale looking rather pathetic next to it's taller and bigger neighbour. The highway requirements force the applicant to turn the majority of the amenity space into parking areas. It is too close to neighbouring properties.*

123288
27 Tower Rd. Mr & Mrs White. Site for possible single dwelling

123382
Three Elms Pub, Greene King Plc. Illuminated totem sign.

123391
The Monument, Greene King Plc. Illuminated totem sign. Both signs look like an advert for Greene King rather than for the pubs. They are rather large and could be a distraction to drivers.

Stop Press

Home Farm at Belmont – new housing refused by officers

JB

Opinion on Libraries supplement

The current trend to super libraries, many highlighted in the excellent supplement with this issue, appears to overlook:-

- the dire state of the world economy; presumably most new libraries were planned in the good old days
- the high cost per user to access information most of which is available in our own homes

Our society is becoming increasingly polarized between those who are educated and an underclass of hopeless people – surely that is where our taxes should be spent.

Is it not time for education to be intertwined in every publicly accessible building? Better sharing of expensive school facilities, easily accessible work experience in businesses – let's draw in the hapless to our businesses and our homes to get them engaged with society at large.

Sorry, the days of "grande projects" are over.

JB

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Recent Meetings

17th October 2012 – Hereford 2032 – Four Viewpoints

Four influential speakers had the opportunity to give their vision for the city as it might be in 2032. Chairman Luke Clements kept good order and allowed each speaker to outline their vision for seven minutes, before they faced a range of questions and challenges from a lively audience.

Jamie Baldwin, of Caplor Energy, spoke of making sure Hereford harnessed all its energy sustainably to create a future in a greener and carbon neutral city. He spoke of the need for each of us to be more aware of our footprint on the planet. Alec McHarg, local property manager, wants more and deeper involvement by citizens, more open minded planning laws and pointed out the difficulties in running commercial enterprises in historic listed properties. He also wanted more action and fewer vague promises from the council.

Dave Atkinson, Chairman of Garway Parish Council spoke out for the rural communities, reminding the audience of how tough it was for young people to find affordable housing and work and live in the communities they were born in. Cllr Graham Powell rounded off the presentations with an impassioned and challenging vision of the future for Hereford, if only we could face up to the opportunities. In his version of 2032, Jesse Norman will be Prime Minister and Hereford will be a cycling city.

Heritage Open Day



For several years the HCS has been critical of the running of the Heritage Open Day long weekend which occurs at the beginning of each September. The main reason for the event is to enable us to see inside buildings that are not normally open to the public. Unfortunately Herefordshire Council organises the event around

museums and churches that are available all year round. HCS has tried to influence to no avail. Last year we

6th November 2012 – Visit to Kidderminster

This was a return visit to Kidderminster Civic Society following their visit to Hereford last summer. Kidderminster is not one of those places you instinctively feel that you must visit, and perhaps that explained the poor turn-out from Hereford.

We started at St. Mary’s church with a welcome cup of coffee and a guided tour of what is the largest parish church in Worcestershire. A walk along the canal, which was the main transport for the carpet weaving factories, that have now mostly gone. One converted into a Debenhams and another into flats and a college. Next a visit to Caldwell Tower, the remains of the original castle beautifully restored and lived in by the present owner.

At the very handsome 1850’s Town Hall Music Room the organist explained the workings of the organ and gave us a short recital which demonstrated the excellent acoustics. After lunch we had a tour of the new Carpet Museum, housed along one side of a new supermarket; being part of a planning deal. The museum was fascinating and we saw highly complex carpet weaving machines working, and well presented information about the social history and processes of carpet making.

An excellent day thanks to all the effort that the Kidderminster Civic Society had put in to arrange it.

21st November 2012 – Hereford Station – Gordon Wood

A dedicated expert gave us very full information about the station and its origins; being one of many Hereford stations in the early years of the railways. It was a lesson in planning, competing train companies just couldn’t obtain enough business for them all to survive. Window, stone and brick details were compared and the entire composition considered to be of the very best. Up dating of the footbridge is due shortly with the installation of lifts (input on the design from HCS) but the empty first floor remains empty. Little effort appears to have been made by the agents to find a tenant for a building that requires a lot of expensive work before it can be occupied.

18th December 2012 – Christmas at Belmont Abbey

On a chilly December night we were welcomed to the warmth of Belmont Abbey by Father Simon and Brother Bernard, Benedictine monks both of whom have lived at Belmont a long time.

What an amazing space, very Gothic but only about 150 years old – and designed by Edward, the son of the famous Pugin, architect of the Houses of Parliament. Up to date in liturgical matters with the altar centrally placed, it blends past designs with those of the present. Following a perambulation around the abbey, like most churches, it has been extended and altered over the years, we were invited to attend Compline. Most members stayed and appreciated the atmosphere and singing of the monks in a most orderly fashion.

Over wine and mince pies we heard further from Father Simon on the work of the monks, both within the abbey and much work outside, supporting local parishes, but no longer a school which closed in 1994. A peaceful place to visit at any time if you haven’t seen it.



offered to run the event with expenses being paid, but unfortunately HC didn’t arrange in time. This year we were told there would be no expenses. These could be considerable and would need to cover printing and publicity costs even if administrative time was covered by us. Our society is hugely disappointed that HC won’t fund.

Report of first Governance Committee of 2012-13

Our smaller but keen group of members met on 19th November 2012 to discuss how we could best meet our objects of:

- Encouraging high standards of architecture and town planning in Hereford
- Stimulating public interest in, and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of the city and it’s surroundings
- Encouraging the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.

We agreed this is accomplished by

- A full programme of meetings, already in place, including presentations on historical inspiration and discussions on current topics affecting our future.
- By publishing four issues of HCS NEWS with provocative and thought provoking ideas from respected writers and commentators.
- By engaging with Council staff and councillors on developing projects. [monitoring planning applications, reviewing cycle proposals etc.etc.]

Prime areas are covered by
Ben Nash – CPRE/HCS interests
Gareth Davies – Integrated transport
John Bothamley – Council liaison
John Faulkner and Nick Jones - HCS NEWS
Mo Burns – Green infrastructure
Peter Gwatkin – Finance and governance

In particular it was recorded that we need extra input from members, like many societies most of the work falls on the few. Those interested in spending just a little time on HCS matters should contact us – we won’t impose or lumber you!

But to keep abreast of events and play our part as the forum for the built environment requires active members. Please call John Bothamley – details bottom right.

Forth coming events

Tuesday 19 February 2013 – 7.00 for 7.30 pm

Kindle Centre, by ASDA, Belmont HR2 7JE

Work, Rest & Play

Directors of the Enterprise Zone, Hereford
Housing and Halo discuss how they relate to serve the citizens of Hereford

Tuesday 19 March 2013 – 7.00 for 7.30 pm

Kindle Centre, by ASDA, Belmont HR2 7JE

The Early Years of HCS at 40

Joe Hillaby & David Whitehead

An evening of nostalgia (and public enquiries)

Wednesday 17 April 2013 – 7.00 for 7.30 pm

St Peter’s Church, St.Owen St. HR1 2HX

Church Reordering in Herefordshire

Alex Coppock of Communion Architecture
Herefordshire at the forefront of breathing new life into our churches

Linked with HCS News Spring Supplement

Wednesday 15 May 2013 – 7.00 for 7.30 pm

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

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in the letters, reviews, news and features in this issue are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of members of Herefordshire Civic Society.

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