

# news

FREE

## hereford civic society

the city's built environment forum

Spring 2012

### Space - appreciating our precious spaces

Nine opinions by the City's brightest thinkers

### Dr.D's Diagnosis

Latest worries about retail and ESG

### Planning Matters

Everyone waiting for the new rules?

### HCS – interim report

What we have been up to in the last 6 months

### Herefordshire Now

Yazor Brook outflow

### STOP PRESS

The Herefordshire Council Cabinet has voted through the ESG development. (5.4.12) Much has been written by our Society, and other experts, over the last decade opposing many features of the proposals. Together with events in the wider world this project is now clearly flawed. Collectively the seven members of the cabinet have committed Herefordshire to a grim future, with the only benefit, if any, going to outside investors. We'll continue to contribute to the debate.

### future event

Saturday 23.6.12

10 am to 4 pm

Hereford Civic Day  
High Town

*A posse of members will be discussing all things BUILT ENVIRONMENT.*

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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](http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk)





# Preface.....

Your editor was fortunate to receive an invitation to the Welcoming Reception for the new Dean of Architecture, Prof. Alex de Rijke, at the Royal College of Art. He spoke inspiringly and warmly about the new staff he was recruiting to maintain the College's reputation. The reception was in the Henry Moore Gallery with many models of work in progress by the architecture students. I was struck by the range and quality of this work, but especially by the ideas and good sense that was portrayed. No pompous

speeches, no famous names but youthful positive enthusiasm. How about these statements by an unnamed student:-

- By reducing planning to a system practised by experts alone and wedded to party politics, we limit society's potential to produce change on its own terms.
- Planning knowledge is a social product and as such should be shared by the whole of society. The rhetoric of localism, and its

public reaction, has created an unusual opportunity for the redistribution of this knowledge, and for the recovery of models outside the current system.

Perhaps we should invite this RCA student to talk to our Society next winter. This quarter Nick Jones has assembled a set of views on Space; different views and opinions continuing our role as the City's built environment forum.

John Bothamley Chair

## News

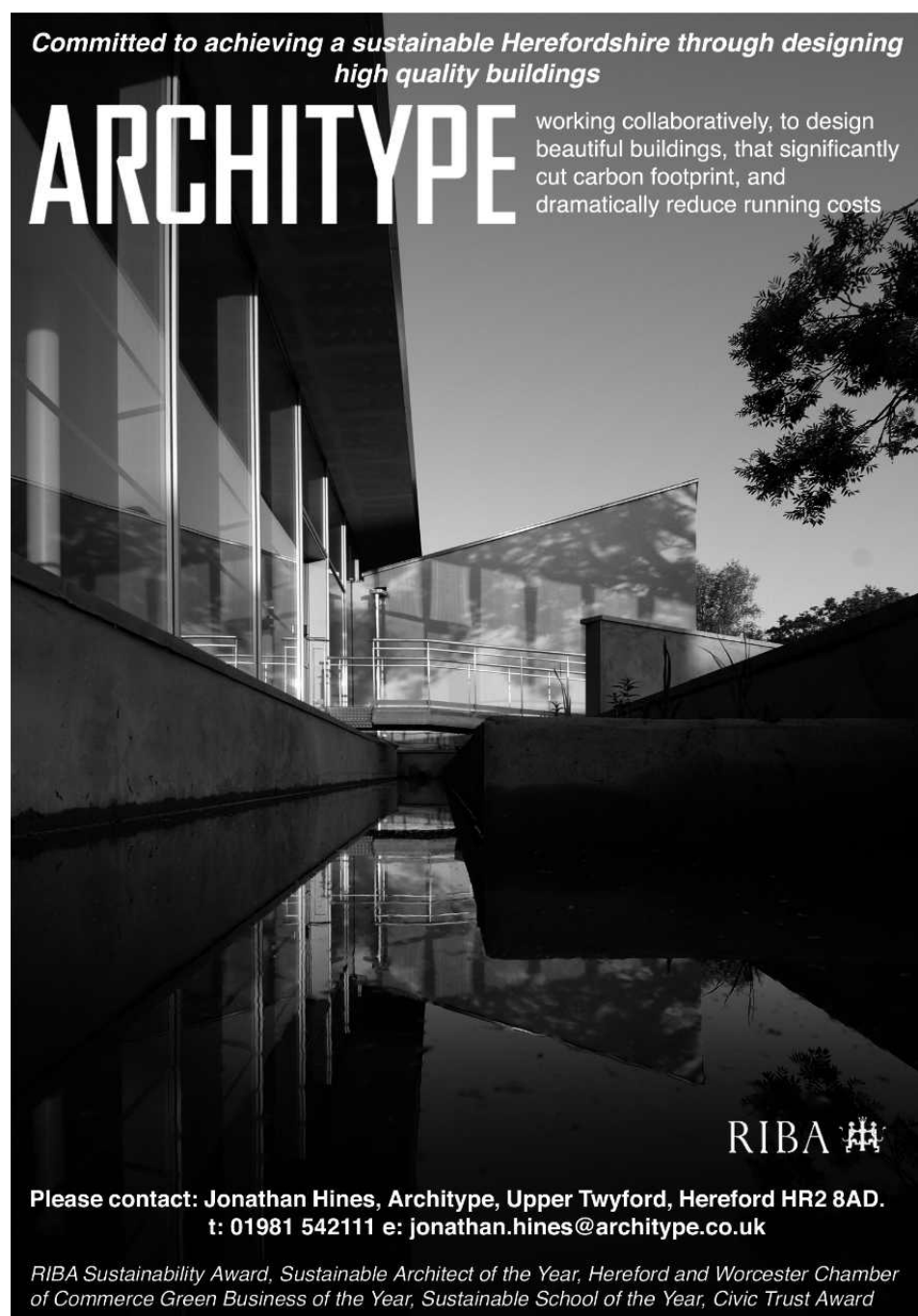
### Surprise Budget change to VAT on alterations to listed buildings.

The repair and maintenance of a protected building is standard rated, whereas the approved alteration of a protected building is zero rated. Although some alterations restore or enhance the unique character of a building, or prolong its active life, the majority of the work covered by the relief consists of extension work, which is not necessary for heritage purposes. The current rules therefore give a perverse incentive for change, as opposed to repair. Alteration work on other types of building is standard-rated, so owners of listed buildings receive a tax advantage over owners of other types of building. Removing the zero rate removes the perverse incentive to change listed buildings, rather than repair them, and ensures that all alteration work receives the same tax treatment.

There is a short consultation period until 4th May 2012 but it is intended to implement the change from 1st October 2012.

### The man who sold six million trees

There were mixed emotions at the Courtyard Arts Centre on Friday 24 February, when well-wishers met to pay their respects to the late Peter Williamson, founder of Wyevale Garden Centres, and an enthusiastic benefactor of many local arts events, including the Borderlines Film Festival, which opened that day. The Courtyard event included the planting of a flowering cherry tree in a corner of the car park, performed by members of the family, and a screening of the animated French film 'The Man who Planted Trees'.



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### Sky-high success

Rarely has officialdom responded so promptly and enthusiastically to a 'grass roots' idea. As we noted in February on the HCS website, the new Rotherwas Enterprise Board has taken up the suggestion – first mooted in the *Hereford Times*, then latterly endorsed in *HCS News* last summer – that, following the 60th anniversary of the Festival of Britain, a Hereford location should be found for a replica of the steel-framed Skylon structure, which dominated the festival's South Bank site. Painter Brothers of Hereford was responsible for the fabrication of all the steel components. And the Enterprise Board has gone farther than anyone could have hoped, announcing in February that the new enterprise zone would be re-branded Skylon Park, with a two-thirds scale model of Powell & Moya's cigar-shaped structure, forming a dramatic new gateway entrance.

### Neighbourhood planning.

New regulations in place from 6th April 2012. A lot of work ahead for many volunteers with plenty of spare time. – here's a link to comprehensive information all about it. [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1985896.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1985896.pdf)

### Green schools

One of the county's most 'decorated' architectural practices – Architype – has achieved the unique distinction of designing two of the first three schools buildings in the UK to achieve formal certification for conforming to the rigorous energy efficiency standards of the German Passivhaus principles. Both the accredited buildings – Bushbury Hills and Oakmeadow – are primary schools in Wolverhampton. The core focus of the Passivhaus standard is to dramatically reduce the requirement for space heating and cooling, whilst creating excellent indoor comfort levels.

### Left Bank changes

Usually it is standard planning policy, when a publican wants an easier life, that changing consent to residential is not permitted. Why, then, did Herefordshire Council permit the change of use of the Left Bank, from A3/A4 (restaurants and drinking establishments) to A2/B1 (financial, professional services/office use)? Jamieson Associates' stylish copper-roofed complex, with its broad projecting terraces, sits perfectly alongside the Wye's Old Bridge, a fitting gateway to the City. The loss of this premier entertaining space is a crime and.

### Portas Pilot City

A group of worthy business people, landlords, residents, City and County Councillors have set out to bid to become a Portas Pilot; sharing a pot of £5 million with 12 other towns.

Their key visions are:

- A new community town hall
- Development of the Truffle loyalty card
- Deregulated High Town markets
- Hydroponic Garden

Whilst city pride and a desire to create better places is laudable, one can only deduce that most of this volunteer effort across the country will be wasted. The current fashion of bidding for relatively small pots of money is extremely wasteful of well intentioned, volunteer effort. (Leominster, Ledbury and Ross on Wye are competing as well)

Isn't there a case for each and everyone to make the best of their lot?

Instead of relying on charitable and other handouts, if we are lucky.

### Bristol parking levy

Bristol office workers are reported to be up in arms over the city council's proposal to 'tax' off-street privilege car parking spaces, often used as perks by senior staff in local businesses. The council says it will use the money raised from the levy to pay for additional bus-only lanes. Nottingham introduced a similar scheme last year, with at least one employer 'passing on' 50% of the levy by debiting employees' wages.

Behind the commercial buildings (predominantly occupied by estate agents, solicitors and accountants) in Hereford's Bridge Street, Broad Street and St Nicholas Street, there are in excess of 200 off-street car parking spaces. At £288 per space (Bristol's expected 'levy') that would produce an annual income for Herefordshire Council of more than £57,000. ■

### COVER

The 45ha Bodenham Lake & Nature Reserve. These former gravel pits now form the largest expanse of water in the county. Enhancement of similar water habitats are likely to feature in improvements to be recommended by Hereford Tree Forum's Green Initiative (see SPACE report, ps 3-6).

# ... Space ... Space ... Space

*"This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England"  
Shakespeare's Richard II*

## Precious Space

From the open rolling spaces which surround this county, the space between buildings in the market towns and our beautiful cathedral city, to the spaces we work, shop and relax in and drive or cycle through; this report is a brief resumé of what is happening in our natural and built environment at the moment: of changes and aspirations and opportunities. Of places and spaces we, as members of Hereford's principal forum for the built environment, must do all we can to protect and enhance. This is not a polemic, but it may raise controversial questions / suggestions about how, perhaps, we could be doing things better to appreciate our precious space. **Nick Jones**  
Hereford based architectural pundit

## Enterprise Space

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.* Now you might think that Juliet's honeyed words of love have little to do with the Rotherwas Enterprise Zone, and you would be right. But names do matter, because they set expectations; so the recent renaming of Rotherwas as Skylon Park is potentially rather important.

If it is properly developed, Skylon Park could play a vital role in powering the county's economic growth. But it must be locally led. And its key notes must be a focus on the long term and high quality: in building design, in landscaping, in construction, and in the kinds of companies that are encouraged to set up there. By using Skylon – an icon of national success and made in Hereford – Neil Kerr and his colleagues have sent an important signal about their aspirations.

What does that mean? Ideally, it would mean bringing in a mix of really good companies from home and abroad as anchor tenants; building out slowly to a well-thought-through master plan; insisting on green space and sustainability; paying the extra for the best communications; but above all, creating a sense of being somewhere special. If the council's new Records Archive can sit alongside a celebration of local Rotherwas history, then so much the better.

The challenge for Herefordshire over the next decade is to translate the county's beauty, community and liveability into higher wages and greater economic growth. That's why faster broadband, now under procurement, is so important. The win of an enterprise zone was the second stage. A third will be a greater focus on higher education. A fourth will be a second river crossing to create links between Skylon Park and the rest of the country. Now we just need to get on with it. **JN**

## Space Invaders

Clutter and squalor on our streets accumulate insidiously. We do not notice them at first, but gradually they begin to annoy us, until finally

we are outraged at the state of our towns and cities.

Much ratepayers' money has been spent on Hereford city. 'Mixed' would be a charitable description of the results. Apart from the unnecessary kerbs, Widemarsh Street is vastly improved. The campaign against chewing gum is very welcome and largely successful. We now need prosecutions of the owners of badly-maintained vehicles which drop engine oil on the new paving.

But High Town is a dog's dinner. Despite that, it is a comfortable and welcoming place. Its largely 18th century properties and streetscape are unique and have hardly changed in 150 years. These are precious. "Wow! This is lovely" has been a frequent comment by visitors from other cities on entering High Town, at least until 2002.

Since 2002 we have seen the erection of 12 overpowering black posts ('the gibbets' as one wag christened them), with cameras and lights on the north side of this civic space. These are entirely out of keeping with the genteel 18th and 19th century frontages which characterise High Town. More recently, two revolting rectangular boxes were erected at the west end of High Town. These declare that it is a pedestrian zone (something we have known for years) and stand like two obnoxious totems, obstructing the visitor's view of the Old House and westwards of High Street.



We grumble if there are not enough litter bins, but is High Town with 11 over-provided? So long as the bins are not allowed to overflow, could we not manage with fewer? Besides, they can hardly be described as either beautiful or tasteful. Six public telephones – two of them of the old red variety – are too many in this space, or indeed anywhere, considering how little they are used in this mobile phone age. Benches and cycle racks are welcome, but their arrangement is not ideal.

As to shopfronts, A-boards, signage and the general maintenance of buildings, there is still much improvement needed. Weeds growing two storeys up the frontage of a building does nothing to enhance the character of the district. And this is just High Town: our most treasured civic space, which now needs an overall redesign by some agency with skill and experience in street design.

Elsewhere across the city, the visitor may be confronted with rusty poles, unnecessary and confusing signs, puddles and broken road surfaces. There is no doubt that Hereford badly ▶ 4



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## NEXT ISSUE

### Lost Gardens of Herefordshire

David Whitehead, local historian and founder of our Society remembers and recalls some forgotten gardens.

And the latest comments on the built environment.

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# ... Space ... Space ... Space

needs some TLC and an administration which appreciates its unique character. To discuss these issues, HCS officers have now held a meeting with council representatives where it was agreed that the city has problems which need to be dealt with. HEP

## Space

Space. Not the bit with the stars in it but the bit we live on. The Government is planning that we have less of it. Its new National Planning Policy Framework is the biggest shake-up of planning for over 50 years. CPRE believes it will place our countryside under increasing threat. Ministers have failed to commit to the principle that the countryside should be protected for its own intrinsic character, beauty and heritage. The new Framework could expose the countryside and local character to damaging and unnecessary development.

The Government assures us that policies to protect the Green Belt, and designated landscapes, will be retained – a classic case of word play. Most landscape is *undesigned*. In Herefordshire, it is 81%.

And there is more. In his Autumn Statement, the Chancellor said 'I am worried about the combined impact of the green policies adopted, not just in Britain, but also by the European Union....We are not going to save the planet by shutting down our steel mills, aluminium smelters and paper manufacturers. All we will be doing is exporting valuable jobs

out of Britain'. So the habitats regulations are under review.

Not only is the space of our landscape being threatened, but the spaces we live in are getting smaller. Britain is one of the few countries in Western Europe to have no national space standards for homes. New homes in the UK are the smallest in Western Europe. In Ireland, new homes are 15% larger, in the Netherlands 53% larger, and in Denmark 80% larger.

Remember Parker Morris standards? It said that "the important thing in the design of homes is to concentrate on satisfying the requirements of the families that are likely to live in them" Abolished in the 1980s to "free the market", we are seeing the results. BW

## Retailing Space

PROPOSERS of the architectural competition always argue that a sponsor will reap the rewards of the cost of the prize money by the sheer number of fresh ideas the competition will generate. While its opponents (usually wicked property developers, waiting in the wings) will say the time taken in organising and judging a competition isn't worth the candle.

Herefordshire Council – and latterly its development arm Hereford Futures (HF) – seems to have been caught between a rock and a hard place. For several years Hereford Civic Society lobbied hard for a competition to be launched for design ideas for the council-owned Butter Market, which had languished under a yoke of non-maintenance for decades. Then, in 2007, it was announced that the HCS dream was to be realised – although nearly two further years elapsed before the RIBA-organised competition got under way.

The four finalists in the two-stage national competition, which attracted only 34

entries, were announced in the summer of 2010, with the Cardiff office of Austin-Smith:Lord emerging as winners. In November last year, Hereford Futures announced that it was seeking a developer willing to carry out the architects' winning scheme, with a joint venture arrangement eventually being set up with Trebor Developments and Wren Bridge. It is understood that HF is currently considering locations to which the market's traders can be temporarily re-located, with a view to refurbishment work starting inside the High Town building in early 2013. NJ

## Storage Space

I recently had to make a west-east cross country car journey from Herefordshire to Suffolk. I instructed our satellite navigation lady to avoid all motorways and in consequence, she routed us via Milton Keynes.

It is more than a decade since I'd witnessed this 'brave new world' city, which I remembered as being liberally provided with decently-designed spec housing estates (small clusters, as opposed to the current 'carpet bombing' approach), generous landscaping and tree-planting, and a crisp, angular city centre. It has now become Shed City. By virtue of its proximity to the motorway network, it is the location of choice for any national retailer needing to build a new distribution centre. I passed a River Island building that would comfortably accommodate two jumbo jets, nose-to-tail.

News that Herefordshire Council has set aside £6-million in its current budget for a new Archives Record Store, to be constructed at Rotherwas, will have caused happy heart fluttering amongst the salesmen of the UK's hard-pressed design-and-build contractors. £6-million will buy you a very large, steel-framed, crinkly-tin-roofed hangar.

The alternative approach would be to commission a piece of contemporary architecture, which could act as a beacon of quality on the campus of the re-branded Skylon Park. The same beacon image which the park's replica of the Festival of Britain structure, at its gateway, will create.

By their very nature, archive buildings must be secure; not usually open to the general public But there are precedents for multi-use

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# ... Space ... Space ... Space

buildings, and one of the best and closest examples is Ludlow's Library and Museum Resource Centre, which opened in 2003. It comprises the town library, an archaeological archive and store, conservation rooms and a splendid exhibit of the famous Shropshire Woolly Mammoth.

Herefordshire's equivalent of this mammoth is the Bronze Age Dinedor Serpeant, sadly now languishing beneath the concrete of the Rotherwas Relief Road. But countless photographs of the excavations were taken by Worcestershire archaeologists at the time of its discovery. So what more logical place to exhibit them (along with the numerous Roman artefacts uncovered) than in a 'public section' of the new Rotherwas building?

Neil Kerr, Vice Chairman of the Enterprise Zone Board, has already gone on record as saying that Skylon Park should "be an inspiration to the world class leading technology and communications businesses we intend to attract to the site." A bespoke piece of 21st century architecture with 'tourist appeal' seems the perfect solution. NJ

## Shared Space

Ben Hamilton-Baillie is no stranger to Hereford. His first project was the successful traffic calming scheme for the St James & Bartonsham district, completed in 2004. This was followed, in 2009, by the comprehensive refurbishment of Widemarsh Street. He has also advised Hereford Futures on improving the traffic / pedestrian segregation that might be introduced for the Ring Road (Hamilton-Baillie terms it 'shared space': basically, the removal of all visible demarcations) which currently acts as a barrier between the Edgar Street Grid and the city's commercial core. H-B pioneered the concept of shared space in the Netherlands town of Bohmte in 2007, working with the Dutch traffic engineer Hans Monderman.

The Bristol-based practice's latest Hereford project is a £2.8m re-planning of the traffic and pedestrian flows along Broad Street, aimed at restoring the urban character here which, over the years, has become eroded by pressures for on-street parking and unsightly layers of 'highway clutter'. Extending from High Street to Hereford Cathedral, the proposals are based on H-B's Hereford Streetscape Design Strategy, incorporating his shared space principles. If, as this visual (*left*) suggests, the scheme can reduce the dominance of motor vehicles in Broad Street, it will be no bad thing.

## Spiritual Space

When Jemma Pearson's competition-winning bronze of Sir Edward Elgar, leaning nonchalantly against his trusty Sunbeam ('Mr Phoebus'), was first unveiled in Cathedral Close in 2005, a position had been carefully selected for the statue's stone plinth to give the impression that the maestro's unsmiling face was gazing up, in reflection, at the tower of Hereford Cathedral. Both the artist and the Elgar Society (who funded the project) approved of the positioning. Under the newly re-modelled Cathedral Close (by Robert Kilgour & Associates), Sir Edward has been unceremoniously shunted 20m east, in front of



SPACE 3

Relocating maestro

the restored Cathedral Barn. He no longer gazes up at the tower for inspiration, but gives a pensive sidelong glance at the east window.

There are numerous other irksome 'irregularities' to be found in this costly refurbishment, masterminded by Hereford Cathedral Perpetual Trust. The 3m-high railings: without historical precedent, since an archive photo of the originals, published by the *Hereford Times* at the time of the scheme's official inauguration last year, shows them to be two-thirds the size! Many also question the opulence of the cast iron gate posts that carry no gates; and the fussy and ornate faux-Victorian steel wall brackets carrying 21st century electric lights and CCTV cameras. And isn't three sets of remote-controlled, mechanically-retractable bollards, somewhat excessive?

The original pedestrian routes which criss-cross the Close have been retained – but why surface them in drab old tarmac, when the epoxy-resin-based pea gravel surfacing used in front of the Shire Hall demonstrates how much better a hard-wearing modern material looks if it adds colour. And unless the contractors Bayliss are waiting for the spring planting season, it doesn't look as if this £5-million refurbishment is to be blessed with any flowering shrubs to soften the edges of the large expanses of turf. The oak-framed Capps & Capps stone carvers' workshops are a delight; but, sadly, there are no longer Capps & Capps stone carvers to use them.

The lettered kerbing is neat and tidy (what a pity that local stonemasons weren't invited to tender for this prestigious sub-contract), but the circular Apple Tree stone mosaic is, perhaps, the biggest disappointment of all. The idea is good, the site in front of the great West Doors adjacent to the public entrance to the Mappa Mundi Museum couldn't be better. And Forest Pennant's workmanship is exemplary. But the natural stone materials chosen (sandstone, slate, porphyry and granite) are – well – lacklustre. A huge two-dimensional sculpture of this ilk has to be bright, bold and joyful! Think what Anthony Gormley would have made of such an opportunity. NJ

*An alternative viewpoint on the scheme will be presented by Rev Michael Tavinor, Dean of Hereford Cathedral, at the 25 April meeting of the society at The Watershed, in a talk entitled 'Redefining Spiritual Space'.*

## Green Space

In the Autumn 2012 edition of *HCS News*, the Woodland Trust's Mike Townsend put forward persuasive arguments for more tree cover for Hereford. In December last year, Hereford Urban Tree Forum's\* Green Infrastructure project was launched. To date, through funding offers, charitable donations and in-kind contributions, £182,000 has been raised for the forum's first pilot project, which is due to be completed by next March.

Approximately 100 hectares in the central and western parts of the city have been chosen as two of the zones for this first GI study, with the principal objectives being to identify environmental deficiencies and recommend improvements.

Among the check-list of improvements which the forum has produced are: the identification of pockets of urban land suitable for tree planting; tree planting schemes in school grounds, cemeteries and churchyards; the identification of land for new allotment sites; the ecological enhancement of the banks of the Yazor Brook; the expansion of pedestrian and cycle routes in the areas; and the enhancement of the water habitats of gravel pits. NJ▶6

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# ... Space ... Space ... Space

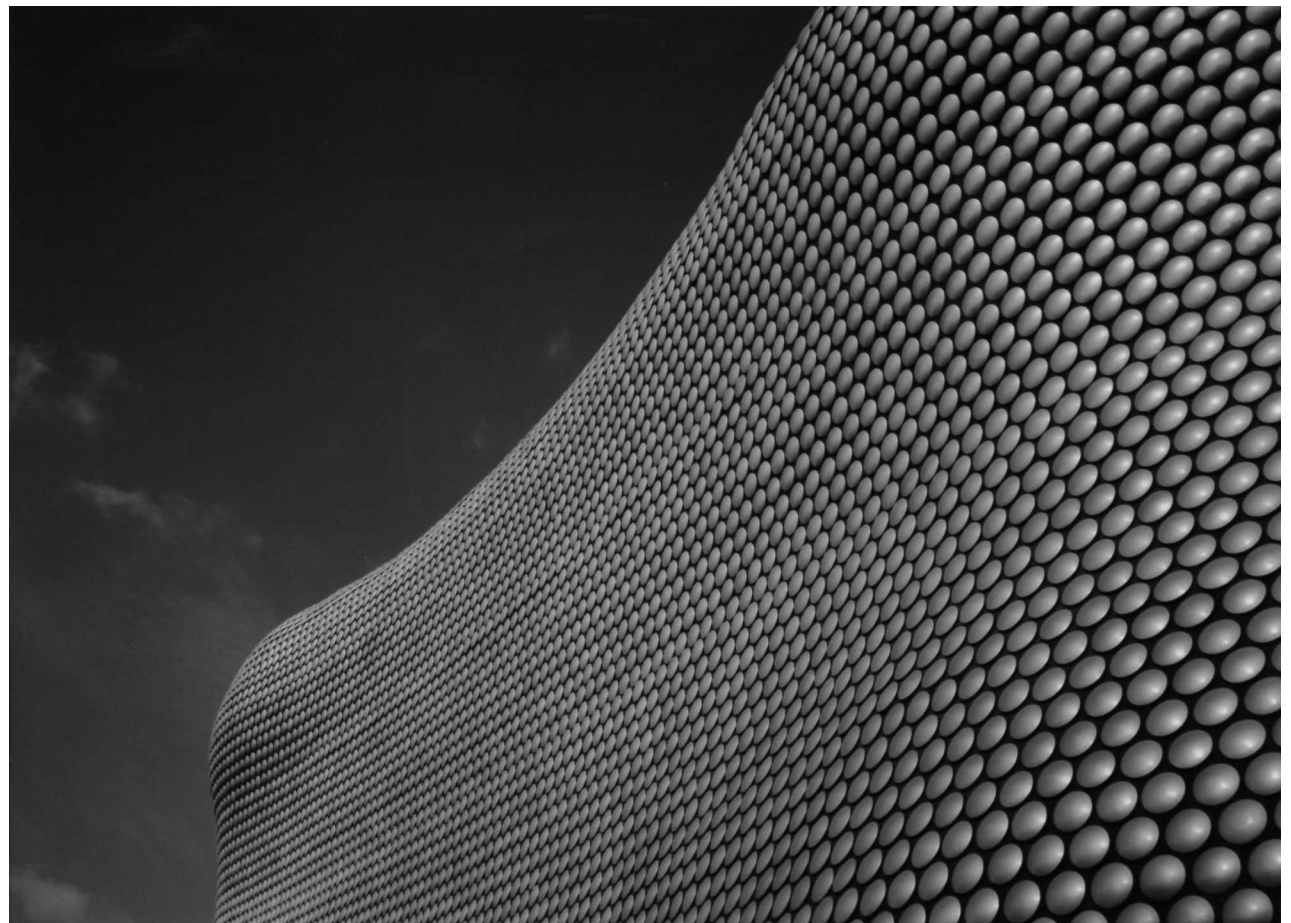
## New Screen Space

The Courtyard Centre for the Arts seems to be bucking the national trend of declining attendances to subsidised theatres and recently reported an 8.7% year-on-year increase, against a national drop (over the last two years) of 9%. Ticket sales at this year's Borderlines Film Festival, which offered 128 screenings of 50 films over 17 days, show that Herefordians certainly have an appetite for the movies.

So perhaps there's a commercial case for retaining the operation of the Edgar Street Grid's 6-screen multiplex (iff it ever comes off) and handing it over to the Courtyard's management team.

The location of the first-floor multiplex on the Stanhope site is less than ideal and suffers from being an 11th-hour 'add-on' to pacify local objections to the Grid's shopping bias. Anyway, who wants to go to the movies in a building sat over a row of shops facing Newmarket Street? The pre-war designers of the epic picture palaces knew all about encapsulating glamour in their designs. The 12m-high foyer of the Granada, Woolwich, looked like the inside of a Greek Orthodox cathedral (admittedly it was designed by a Russian émigré), and the auditorium of the New Victoria, London, was like a huge underwater grotto.

Before signing away this golden goose, perhaps Hereford Futures should consider leasing a small site on the edge of the Grid's retail area to the Courtyard for a peppercorn rent, with a proviso written into the agreement that revenues collected from (say) 150 car parking spaces would go to support a stylish new cinema complex.



Courtyard 2 could be Grid's 'cutting edge' landmark

Courtyard 2 (as it would be known) could offer afternoon and evening screenings of two blockbuster movies seven days a week - to pull in the out-of-town shoppers - and evening screenings of art house movies for cineastes. In collaboration with Hereford Art College and the highly-successful Rural Media Company, Courtyard 2 could also look at fostering film-making skills. And if the Courtyard's existing sponsorship programme was expanded, box office takings at the multiplex (plus the guaranteed car parking income) might well be sufficient to enable Herefordshire Council to phase out its annual subsidy.

The existing Courtyard (Courtyard 1) would then be able to concentrate on live theatre, comedy, pantomime, jazz, dance, experimental theatre (and theatrical instruction), craft shows, art and photographic exhibitions. Plus its popular café-bar.

The design of the new Courtyard shouldn't be handed over to Stanhope (they've got their

hands full at the moment keeping the SS Grid Concordia afloat). Organise a fast-track, restricted entry competition - perhaps restricted to west midlands architects and design students. Who knows, perhaps something as 'cutting edge' as Future Systems' Birmingham Selfridges building might emerge.

NJ ■

## OPINION

What a fascinating lot of ideas and views. All soundly based and it would be hard to disagree with the sentiments. But I worry; it's easy to write a few hundred words of worthy narrative, what is hard is turning these ideas into actuality. That doesn't mean I think these suggestions are pipe dreams, some are proposals that I would much like to see happen. But it is the journey getting to the completed project that is so complicated. Let us hope the new National Planning Policy Framework, due out as I write, will make it a less complicated route. I guess it'll have a new name.

JB

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## Hereford Now

The new overflow pipe from the Yazor Brook at Credon Hill is now operational. Designed to prevent flooding in the ESG development area, water will now be diverted down the 2m diameter pipe directly into the Wye, when the brook is in spate. The inlet arrangement is huge and, on a beautiful spring morning it was difficult to imagine the brook ever requiring such massive concrete walls. But what is odd is the stone cladding to the concrete, most of which cannot be seen from the public realm. In Europe it would have been beautiful, fair-faced, shuttered concrete; who specified stone cladding?

JB



# Dr D's Diagnosis.....

David Thame writes for Estates Gazette and the Manchester Evening News.



**E**xactly what counts as "work on site" at Hereford's Edgar Street Grid retail and leisure development site has become an almost metaphysical question.

Hereford Futures, cheerleaders for the £80m Stanhope/British Land shopping scheme, say hoardings will go up round the site imminently (as I write) - indeed, they may even be up today (as you read it). Work on site has begun, they say, even if it might not be apparent. Putting hoardings around a derelict space is "work on site" in the strict sense - but actually building the new 275,000 sq ft centre is quite another matter. Real building work - not just hoardings, but hard hats - costs lots of money, and involves contracts with penalty clauses.

The chances of seriously expensive building work starting this spring seem slim - unless Herefordshire Council is prepared to foot the bill. Here's why.

First, the funding calculations behind the scheme don't look as good as they did in 2007 or 2008. If the capital value of the scheme has now shrunk to about £80m, and the land is valued at £30m, then it barely works at all - unless Herefordshire Council discounts the price of the land severely, or simply hands it to Stanhope/British Land as their contribution-in-kind to the project. Some kind of profit share might also be agreed. This isn't an ideal solution - it means a big revenue hole in the Council's budget. Finding another £27m for the necessary road works raises extra problems. To be sure, the Council could overcome them - but only at a cost it might judge to be disproportionate.

Second, although Waitrose, Debenhams and perhaps Next have signed up as tenants, Stanhope might be finding the revenue-side of their plans looking bleak. Anchor

department stores like Debenhams know their value to developers - they are magnets for shoppers, and for other smaller stores who like to cluster around them - and as a result they negotiate hard, and rarely pay much rent. Sometimes they pay no rent - or are paid a reverse rent.

So Stanhope's hopes for rental revenue depend largely on the smaller stores, and the national chains who control them aren't in an expansionist mood. Earlier in March a much less ambitious retail scheme in Burnley, anchored by Primark and Next, got the chop when developers Henry Boot said they couldn't attract enough smaller retailers.

UK retail sales figures provide no serious reason or imagine their mood will change. Forget the monthly retail figures - they don't tell us much - and instead focus on the basics as explained by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, one of whose jobs it is to value retail businesses. In a press statement issued on 22 February - Ian Logan, one of PwC's senior valuers, said: "Despite strong growth in consumer spending during large parts of the 1990s and up to 2007, the value of total retail spend in the UK since 2002 has been flat on a real basis. The growth in consumption largely came through increased spending on services, rather than on consumer goods. Taking this into account, profit multiples (a key indicator when assessing values) for retailers have fallen to their lowest level for 30 years."

In other words, we've not been spending much in shops since 2002 - and retailers' profits are harder hit than any time since 1982. Mr Logan is probably right - though my reading of ONS figures suggests things have been more or less flat since 2005, not 2002. But the difference isn't significant. The point is lots of new shops have been built since 2005, but there's been no sign of new spending to support them.

Hoardings may well go up round Hereford's old cattle market site. But there could be a long wait before anything happens behind them. ■

## Planning Matters.....

Here we list recent planning applications and any action that our executive committee has taken. Our Society peruses 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.

With many small applications, here is a listing of those of possible interest.

**To view plans on the web go to [www.herefordshire.gov.uk](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk)**

Click on Environment and Planning

Click on Planning

Click on Planning Applications

Click on Search and comment on planning applications

Enter Planning Application Number and click on Search

**Criteria used when considering new planning applications**

Architectural merit

Suitability of the scheme

Layout

Design relating to use and functionality

Sustainability credentials

Construction and detailing

Civic contribution

This last quarter there appear to have been less interesting applications for planning consent. Does this mean developers are hoping the new National Planning Policy Framework rules will allow more controversial decisions. See comment on the new regulations just published 27th March 2012 in the blue panel.

**113341** Romany Way, Ross Rd. A.Haughton. Gospel Hall and parking.

**113476** 146 Eign St. agent A.Topping. Change of use from class A shop to Financial and Professional services. New shop front. Two air conditioning units and satellite dish to rear.

**120020/F** 16 The Crescent, Roman Rd. Mr & Mrs Anstiss. Demolish existing house, build new.

**113575** Sainsbury's. A.Shearer. Biomass boiler in service area. From Biomass boiler Eco Link Resources: "burning wood and other biomass as fuel is classed as Carbon Neutral". Sainsbury's have installed Biomass wood pellets boilers in 15 of their UK stores

**120102** 16-18 High Town. Amendment to planning application No.111795. Raising roof and parapet to rear of shop unit 2.

**120183** Retail Park, Holmer Rd. agent Ms J.Bowater. Variation to 100496. Alteration to 3 retail units to form 2 units.

**120228** ASDA. agent RFS. Development of Petrol Filling Station. HCS comments on line.

**120281(L)** 17 St Owen St. D.Allison. 1st.floer extension above existing rear building.

**120317 (L)** 22 Widemarsh St. Mrs F.Roberts. Retail fit out of ground floor area to create shop floor, two therapy rooms.

**120326** 44 Tower Rd. B.Shaw. Demolish bungalow. Build 2 semi detached houses with garages.

**113513 (CD)** Waterfield Rd. Carpark. Member's request. Letter sent to planning officer.

**120410** 304 Kings Acre Rd. Mr & Mrs Lane. Replacement dwelling and garage. Revised plans No 111645

**120411** 2 Bishopstone Rd. G.Roberts. Removal of conservatory. Erection of granny annexe to rear.

**120391** 57-59 Blue School St. Council owned. Change of use from shop, A1, to employment agency, B.

**120539** Blackmarston School. Council Owned. Extension-part single, part double storey to school building. Amendments to layout and appearance of school.

**120489** 74 St Owen St. J.Owens. Change of use from launderette to restaurant (A3) and Takeaway (A5)

**120663** Old Market site, Edgar St. G.Bourne. Amendment to condition 38 following grant of outline permission...to enable development to commence on site prior to the commencement of the highways work on Newmarket and Blue School St.

**120859** Adjacent to Old House High Town. C.Hall. Proposed sculpture (Bronze Bull) on stone plinth. HCS letter on web site.

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### NPPF II promises 'sustainable growth'

Publishing its revised National Planning Policy Framework at the end of March, the Department for Communities & Local Government (DC&LG) described the new document as a key part of its reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, providing protection for the environment while promoting sustainable growth.

In his parliamentary introduction, Planning Minister Greg Clark said councils must encourage brownfield sites to be brought back into use. And his new document certainly got a better reception than the first draft, published last summer. One thousand pages of planning guidelines have been distilled into a document of just 50 pages.

The National Trust, which collected ¼-million signatures to its petition against the earlier document (written, according to Simon Jenkins, largely by 'cowboy lobbyists') welcomed the revisions, though the Green Peace reaction had a horse-and-stable-door resignation about it: "The final test of this policy will be the types of development given approval."

The CPRE said it was 'reassured' that the five principles of the UK's 2005 Sustainable Growth Strategy had been incorporated into the new version. But it expressed concern about the brevity of the 12-month transition period preceding the new guidelines' implementation, an observation echoed by Caroline Lucas, the Green Party MP. At a time of deep cuts, many local authorities, she suggested, will find it difficult to have fully-developed LDFs (Local Development Framework) in place to meet the DC&LG's deadline. In Herefordshire, some local politicians have been giving this warning for months.



## Recent Meetings

25th January 2012 – **Brian Hatton and the changing landscape** – Robin Thorndyke

All Herefordians know of Brian Hatton, the prolific artist who died so young fighting in the First World War. He lived on Broomy Hill and spent much time drawing and painting in Breinton. Using different materials he would create thoughtful pictures, individual figures looking into the distance, groups of working men and women, and visiting gypsies. Robin compared some of these paintings with photos of the same scene today. After a hundred years little has changed, (but on the route of the proposed western relief road!)

What a stimulating presentation, and all were aghast to think that there are hundreds of his work, safely stored at the Museum and Heritage Centre in Friar Street, but seldom seen by us. There is to be a wall dedicated to his work in the Library Museum shortly.

Shouldn't this Hereford resource, to use contemporary jargon, be better publicised. Why has his work not been promoted? The pictures Robin showed us clearly stand well alongside other artists of the day. Perhaps we need Damien Hirst to do the publicity for us, not just for the money, but to shout about yet another reason why Hereford is the place to be. JB

29th February 2012 – **Plans to take forward Herefordshire Tourism** – Sir Ben Gill

Sir Ben is Chairman of 'Visit Herefordshire Limited' the recently revamped Tourist Board for the county, which now operates independently under a service agreement with the Council. In setting up the new organisation he started with a blank sheet of paper; he said he wanted a board of 'doers' so he has brought in a wide range of experienced but already busy individuals from industry, B&Bs and stately home owners.

He emphasised the huge diversity of what Herefordshire has to offer, scenery, churches, history, crafts, produce; a series of festivals is planned to develop these themes. He felt that the county would benefit from a larger high quality hotel.

Regarding Hereford itself he bemoaned the poor approach to the cathedral, poor signage and the pressing need to exploit the attractions and benefits of the river. The establishment of the Enterprise Zone only reinforced the necessity of spreading the word on the attractions of the county; if new businesses are to be attracted to Rotherwas.

In the question time that followed, he argued that there was no conflict between tourism and farming, was scathing about the bureaucracy of the Highways Agency, and the need to encourage younger people to stay in the county. JBLF

28th March 2012

– **Skylon Enterprise Park** – Neil Kerr  
– **Burghill American Aircrash** – Neil Taylor

Neil Kerr, chair of Herefordshire Business Board, having been inspired by Garry Thomas's talk in October 2011 about the Skylon, explored the possibility of a similar feature, as a symbol for the new Enterprise Zone, to be built on the A 49 roundabout at the south end of the link road. His pictures showed a 100 to 150 ft high stainless steel lattice structure with internal illumination which would be a welcome and striking symbol for both the EZ and the City. The EZ is to be called the Skylon Enterprise Zone. An architectural competition is in progress to appoint master planners for the zone, and the intention is to ensure that all buildings on the site will have a high standard of design and eco principles. The site around the old munitions plant will be protected and a new use found for the one remaining building.

Neil Taylor described the research his group had done about the USAF B.24 Liberator crash at St. Mary's Hospital, Burghill on 18th August 1944. The plane was part of a Night Leaflet Dropping Squadron, based near Luton, and was on its first training flight after arriving in the UK. The ten crew were all killed. The cause of the crash was not clear but was probably engine failure, the B24 hit the brewery chimney and roof at St. Mary's. There was a surprising lack of eye-witness evidence from local residents. Contact has been made with relatives of the crew in the USA, and some have been over to Burghill, where a memorial plaque has now been placed in the church yard. JBLF

### Update from governing team

Nearly six months on from the AGM and this is what your committee have been working on.

#### Planning Matters

Team leader – Andree Poppleston [apoppleston@fsmail.net](mailto:apoppleston@fsmail.net)  
01432 343333

Detailed consideration of every planning application submitted for Hereford city. Letters submitted when team is unhappy about proposals. Particular concern about the proposed petrol station on the ASDA site in Belmont, surely a gateway to the city.

#### Local Development Framework

Team leader – John Bothamley [john@johnbothamley.co.uk](mailto:john@johnbothamley.co.uk)  
01981 580002

Whilst commenting, we remain concerned about the slow progress on the LDF, meetings with several council staff and councillors.

#### Integrated Transport

Team Leader – Andy Simmonds [andy@simmondsmills.com](mailto:andy@simmondsmills.com)  
01432 353443

A huge subject with many different ideas as to the best way forward, we are considering how best to present new proposals.

#### Enterprise Zone

Team leader – Julie Orton-Davies [jod43@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jod43@hotmail.co.uk)  
01432 760772

Meetings with the Chair of the Herefordshire Business Board confirm that design is to be of the highest priority. We have commented on the draft Local Development Order for the new Skylon Park.

#### Tourism

Team Leader – Peter Gwatkin [pmgaccountancy@gmail.com](mailto:pmgaccountancy@gmail.com)  
01432 359973

We had hoped to run Heritage Open Day this year but unfortunately the Herefordshire Council was unable to make the arrangements within the time restraints.

#### Street scene

Team leader – Hubert Porte [office@hubertporte-shenmore.co.uk](mailto:office@hubertporte-shenmore.co.uk)  
01432 250561

A meeting with the cabinet member and staff confirm that we all want to see a tidier City, but we remain concerned that policing the proliferation of street clutter is not best organised. Meeting with Amey about pedestrian signage – a surprisingly complicated matter. And with smart phones proliferating do we need them?!

#### Trees

Team leader – Mo Burns [moburns@live.com](mailto:moburns@live.com)  
01432 352559

We continue to be represented on the Hereford Tree Forum which is establishing a robust programme keeping trees at the top of the planning agenda.

John Bothamley, chair [chair@herefordcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:chair@herefordcivicsociety.org.uk)

Do come to one of our regular monthly lecture meetings, open to all – we would like to meet you. Check out our programme to August – some new venues and ideas.

Saturday 19th May 2012

10.30 am

Holmer Parish Church Centre, HR4 9RG

**Romantic Landscapes and Revivalist**

**Architecture** – David Whitehead

Herefordshire Estates during the Age of Revolution  
1790 - 1830

A meeting arranged by the Friends of Herefordshire  
Museums and Arts, £10 charge for visitors.

## Forth coming events

Wednesday 25th April 2012

7:00 pm for 7:30 pm

Watershed, Wye Street, Hereford, HR2 7RB

**Redefining Spiritual Space**

Michael Tavinor, Dean and Glyn Morgan, CE

Hereford Cathedral Perpetual Trust

The recent works on Cathedral Close, the intentions and the delivery of this high quality project

Wednesday 23rd May 2012

7:00 pm for 7:30 pm

The Barrels, 69 St Owen Street, Hereford, HR1 2JQ

**Mark Aslam, Herefordshire CAMRA**

Latest news on the establishment of community owned pubs in the County, from the man who advises, negotiates and helps to establish.

Wednesday 27th June 2012

7:00 pm for 7:30 pm

All Saints, High Street, Hereford HR4 9AA

**City Launch of new Herefordshire Pevsner**

Alan Brooks, Author, will describe the rationale behind the enormous job of surveying, researching and describing every notable building, new and old, in the County. Discounted copies available

Saturday 23rd June 2012

10 am to 4 pm

High Town

**Hereford Civic Day**

A posse of members will be discussing all things BUILT ENVIRONMENT. A quiz, a competition, new ideas - and all light hearted.

Wednesday 18th July 2012

6:30 pm to 9.30 pm

Meet at TRP, Netherwood Road, Rotherwas, HR2 6JU

**Summer walk and drinks at Rotherwas Chapel**

Update on the Skylon Park (Enterprise Zone) by Ray Stone, chair, walk through site and the flood meadows, concluding with drinks at the little, now deconsecrated chapel

Tuesday 24th July 2012

10:00 am to 2 pm

St. Peter's Church, St. Owen Street, Hereford.

**Welcome Kidderminster Civic Society**

Our sister society visit Hereford. Coffee, lead City walks, picnic lunch (bring your own) and optional Cathedral visit in the afternoon.

All HCS members welcome, come and show off Hereford.

We will be visiting Kidderminster in the Autumn.



I am interested in joining **Herefordshire Civic Society**.

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

Mr / Mrs / Ms .....

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\*e-mail address .....

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

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

**JOIN HCS  
NOW**

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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.