



NEWSLETTER

Winter 2011-12

Welcome to the Winter 2011-12 edition of our newsletter.

We are pleased to announce our new programme for 2012, which includes talks on a range of local and international topics, an outing to Northampton and a summer garden party in Hertford.

Our main feature covers the winners of the Civic Society Awards which are given for projects which have enhanced our townscape. These ranged in scale from the complete refurbishment of a major building to the restoration of an early C19 clock, showing that, important as our chief buildings are, it is also the small details that contribute to the quality of the public realm. The Awards were presented by Russ Craig, chair of the judging panel, at a well attended meeting in Hertford Castle on November 9. Russ gave us a thorough explanation of the panel's decisions, which were reached after a number of site visits and meetings.

Sadly, Tony Tarrega has decided to resign from the committee due to pressure of work. We will miss him at meetings but look forward to seeing him involved in some of our special projects in future and would like to thank him for all his past contributions to the Society's work.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all!



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PROGRAMME

Here is a foretaste of our events: further details will be provided in the programme. Lectures will be held in the hall of the Church of the Immaculate Conception and St Joseph in St John's Street at 7.45 for 8.00pm.

Panshanger: past, present and future 8 February

Dorothy Abel Smith is the Chairman of Hertfordshire Buildings Preservation Trust, which has been taking an interest in the restoration of Humphrey Repton's fine park and the future of the Grade II C19 orangery. She will talk not only about the history of the park and the vanished mansion but also about current changes and future prospects for a site that is very close to Hertford.

Modern architecture 14 March

Dick Henderson will focus on the ideas behind modern architecture, as shown in the work of great architects including Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier. He will also talk a little about Charles Rennie Mackintosh, as our excursion in May will take us to Northampton, and to Mackintosh's final

commission, among other places.

Planning, what a pickle following AGM, 11 April

Andrew Sangster and Terry Betts will talk about the Government's new planning regime, which has opened up major uncertainties.

Visit to Northampton 16 May

Our day's outing will be to Northampton, which has plenty of good architecture. We will make a group visit to Derngate (Mackintosh's final commission, recently restored very splendidly). There will also be opportunities to visit historic churches (Northampton has two of England's 'thousand best'), and the excellent Shoe Museum.

Summer party 27 June

Courtesy of Tricia Clark, our annual summer party will be in a gracious garden in Bengeo, in the evening, on one of the longest days of the year.

Hertford's canal: past, present and potential 12 September

Barrie Goldsmith will talk about Hertford's canal and

waterways. He will start by reviewing the interesting history of our canal, and how it currently works, before leading a discussion on how we can make more or better use of the canal and nearby wetlands. He is very keen to hear your views.

Alfred Russel Wallace

7 November

Tom Gladwin will talk about the life and work of a major nineteenth century scientist and traveller, who just happened to grow up in Hertford: Alfred Russel Wallace. Alongside Charles Darwin, Wallace was a key proponent of the concept of natural selection.

Signing off - and looking ahead - You may like to know that after a decade of planning events for Hertford Civic Society, Jill Eames has recently passed on her baton to Malcolm Ramsay. Without a doubt, we're all very grateful to Jill for this heroic stint. In future, if you have ideas or feedback, please contact Malcolm (01992 500002 or malcolm.ramsay789@btinternet.com).

Malcolm Ramsay

PLANNING MATTERS

- *Adams Yard:*

This site lies between Dolphin Yard, now redeveloped, and the Seed Warehouse. The recent application for residential reuse of this site is just the latest in a long-running sequence from a number of owners or prospective owners. We objected on the grounds that the layout of the units was such that some of them would have windows on only one elevation a mere two metres from the rear wall of adjoining units, leading to sub-standard living conditions. The District Council agreed with this view, which had also been expressed by the Town Council, and refused the application.

- *Riverside Garden Centre;*

The owner is seeking the removal of a condition of planning approval for the new building, requiring timber cladding to be provided. He argues that the planting in front of the building provides 'natural and attractive screening'. We objected on the grounds that the planting has a highly unnatural appearance and is manifestly trying to hide something. The metal building is still seen for what it is, and as an

industrial-style building it does nothing to preserve the rural character of the Green Belt in this location. Even if the planted finish were a satisfactory alternative, it is notoriously difficult for planning authorities to ensure that planting is retained and maintained in a satisfactory condition in perpetuity. To date this application has not yet been determined.

- *Local Development Framework:*

This autumn the District Council has started a strategic land availability assessment (SLAA). Its purpose is to identify land that could be developed for either housing, employment or leisure purposes. A list of sites was circulated for comment to interested parties and comprised sites submitted by owners and developers in response to the 'call for sites' last year and sites identified in a survey by consultants. This initiative is part of the preparation of the core strategy which will lie at the centre of the Local Development Framework. Next Spring the Council will publish a list for public consultation of those sites selected from the SLAA process. The public's principal interest will be in those sites where the large amount of housing needed in

the District could be accommodated. Throughout the Council has emphasised that these sites will be identified as where development could be undertaken, not should be undertaken. In our submission we supported further redevelopment in the Mead Lane area along Marshgate Drive and bordering the Navigation, development of the surplus land at the Post Office sorting office, redevelopment of Castle Mead Gardens and development on the top half of the former Christ's Hospital playing field in Mangrove Road. We opposed sites involving expansion of the town's boundaries into the Green Belt or the Green Fingers, and proposals for using existing employment land for housing.

- Viewing Planning Applications On-line

Until recently if you wanted to see the details of a planning application, i.e. the application form, the drawings and any other required information, you had to visit the East Herts Council offices at Wallfields where paper copies were available for public scrutiny. Now all this information is available on-line and can be viewed at home through the Council's website. Even if you

go to Wallfields, you will have to look at details of applications on a computer screen. However, some patience is needed if you are to find what you want. Many of our members will know how to do this, but for those who don't, the following should be of assistance.

1) Having got on-line enter the web address of East Herts Council -

www.eastherts.gov.uk
<<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk>> - in the address box at the top of the page and click the 'Go to' arrow box.

2) On the Home page of the Council's website click on 'On-line Planning' under 'On-line Services' in the centre of the page.

3) On the next page click on 'View Planning Applications On-line' in green.

4) On the next page there are three options - 'On-line planning - search page', 'On-line Planning - Decisions' and 'Week by week list of planning applications'.

5) A single click on the first brings up the 'Planning Application Search Criteria' page. If you know the full reference number, e.g.

3/11/2500/FP, enter it in the appropriate box and click on 'Search'.

This will reveal the 'Planning Application Search Results' page. Click on the Application Reference Number on the left-hand side, then click on the tab 'Media Items' on the next page, and on 'Associated Documents' on the following page to bring up a list of the information submitted under the application.

A click on any item in the list will lead to details being displayed on the right-hand side. These can be magnified by clicking on the + icon at the top of this section, but with a reduction in the field of view.

If you do not know the Planning Reference Number, enter a date range in the 'Date Registered From' and the 'Date Registered To' boxes in the form 01-05-2012, then the ward in which the application was made, e.g. Hertford. A click on 'Search' will reveal a list of planning applications, usually on several pages.

When you have found the one you are looking for click on the 'Application Reference' on the left hand side and then proceed as before.

6) The second option offers an alternative route to finding a planning decision. A click on this option leads to lists of decisions by the week in which they were made so it may be necessary to trawl through several weeks to find the one you want. Then click on 'Application Reference' and proceed as in 5) above. In the 'Planning Application Details' page click on the 'Conditions and Reasons' tab to view any planning conditions attached to an approval.

7) The third option merely repeats the list of decisions by week.

8) To go back at any time click on the arrow at the top left-hand corner, or if this not available the white cross on the red square at the top right-hand corner. If at any time in going back a 'Webpage has expired' page is displayed, click on the white cross in the red square in the top right-hand corner to return to Step 3.

It is hoped that this guidance will encourage members to view planning applications themselves. You might find the process frustrating at first, but with a little perseverance you will find what you want. You do need to recognise that changes are made to the web site from

time to time, so these instructions are only for the current version.

Andrew Sangster

PREVIOUS TALKS TO MEMBERS

A report on the talk on Hertfordshire Gardens Trust will appear in the next newsletter.

CIVIC SOCIETY AWARD WINNERS 2011

This article is a summary of comments from the Report of the Panel Chairman Russ Craig. Thanks to Andrew Goodman for photographs of the Oasis Cafe and to Terry Betts for the other photographs.

The Awards and Commendations are related primarily to the impact of the new development on the appearance and character of its surroundings. The emphasis is on good urban design, complementing the townscape. The criteria include the following:

- Architectural Merit
- Suitability of Treatment
- Sensitivity to the Surroundings
- Significance of Townscape (including consideration of what was there before) and
- Quality of workmanship

BIRCHERLEY COURT, BIRCHERLEY STREET

Alterations extensions and refurbishment of existing elderly persons' flats and erection of 14 additional flats



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Bircherley Court is situated on the edge of the town centre just a few metres from the bus station and town centre shops and easily accessible for visitors from Hertford East railway station. The complex replaced what one assessor described as a rather *uninviting building* - a very tired dull and bulky red brick 1970s structure with a slate roof that was slightly canted from the vertical.

The new Bircherley building is a refreshing change. It is one of a new generation of attractive homes for the elderly residents modelled more closely on the needs of the residents and their carers. Many fine innovations and facilities for residents have been provided, not least a roof garden and facilities for family, friends and visitors. With intelligent phasing of the construction of the new complex the disruption and noise was kept to a minimum. At the same time the need to decant existing elderly and infirm residents was avoided where possible.

Comments:

The building makes a strong architectural statement in a prominent town centre location, providing a kaleidoscope of colour as a background to an otherwise uninspiring bus station

forecourt and multi storey car park opposite. In contrast the elevation facing Railway Street is restrained in terms of its overall design and the use of materials. It is lower in height to respect neighbouring buildings.

Butterfly and other convoluted roof elements contribute to the skyline. Careful attention has been paid to the choice of brickwork, self finished metal windows and doors, roofing materials and rainwater pipes, although there was slight concern about how the latter would weather. There are signs that the landscaping is of an appropriate high quality, defining the public and private areas of the development and helping to assimilate the building in an otherwise harsh urban environment. Most importantly, it stimulates the interest and well being of the residents and passers-by.

The refurbishment of these flats was a great opportunity to uplift this former dreary part of Hertford and it has achieved its objective. The design is innovative and refreshing. It is a building of today and very fit for purpose - the wellbeing, comfort and happiness of elderly members of the community.

Recommendation:

The awards panel was unanimous in recommending an **AWARD**

WARREN LODGE, 38 PORT HILL

Single storey end and first floor rear extensions

Comments:

Warren Lodge is one of a group of several Victorian buildings lining either side of lower Port Hill on one of the main approaches to, and exits from, the town; it is prominent on a slight bend and visible from lower ground down Port Hill.

The panel considered the extension to be well sited. It is set back from the frontage of the lodge, is well proportioned and is

subordinate to the existing building. In contrast to the fine brickwork of the existing building, light coloured rendering helps to lighten its appearance. The use of elaborately carved barge boards that replicate those used in the lodge form the icing on the cake. It is a pity that the first floor window facing Port Hill is wider and located closer to the apex of the gable than its neighbour, but this is a minor point and did not prevent the panel from concluding that this is a building of high status appropriate for its location. It complements the existing lodge by way of its size, height and detailed design. It also enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Recommendation:

AWARD



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CARING FOR HERTFORD

HERTFORD THEATRE, THE WASH

Refurbishment with extension to main entrance lobby area, new windows to riverside and new windows and roof atrium to “hexagon building”, new lighting, riverside decking, railings and landscaping.

The recent alterations were the result of an architectural competition won by Architects Briffa Phillips. Their brief was to open up various parts of the building and to find new commercial uses for previously dead space and their key theme was ‘transparency’ and ‘accessibility’, making the people of Hertford aware of their facility. Recent statistics supplied by Mr Briffa indicate that the refurbished building has been very rewarding. Of the visitors to the new spaces, *80% had never visited the building before*. This is apparent at all times of the day and night with visitors enjoying refreshments in the Café or a quick look at an art exhibition. In architectural terms the modelling of the facade was quite a challenge given the strong brickwork



shapes that define the building. In his own words the architect *chose to work with this angular scheme only in glass.*

Comments:

The new entrance front is a refreshing change from its predecessor. The former horizontal metal clad fascia

above the industrial looking aluminium entrance doors and screen have been replaced with a more welcoming lightweight modular structure of glass panels within black metal frames.

The colours of the glazed panels range from deep purple to light apple green and white. At the same time the former brick built hexagonal toilet block has been converted to provide a new light and airy gallery and

café space. Natural lighting levels have been greatly increased by the new roof lantern. Through the construction of new large plate glass windows the new public space connects visually with the views and historic townscape of Hertford outside.

Externally there has been substantial improvement in the quality of the public realm by de-cluttering signs, repaving external surfaces, removal of bollards and miscellaneous additions that had accumulated over the years. New decking and railings have also been added and the sculpture commemorating the first meeting of the

Synod in the town in AD 674 has been re-located to a more prominent position.

The panel members were unanimous in their praise of the extensions and alterations. However there were one or two areas where improvements could have been made: I quote one of the judges as follows. *The River room, when not in use for functions (i.e. most of the time) appears to be used as a*

CARING FOR HERTFORD

store room, and randomly stacked tables and chairs and boxes are unattractive when viewed from the riverside garden; the door from the café area leads to what seems to have been intended as a small riverside patio, but it is unfurnished and unused and the planting untended.

The promotional posters work well inside the glass walls but the external display boxes on the brickwork are small and fragmented, with the electrical components very visible; while the front fascia is acceptable, the pale green fascia on the river frontage is rather flimsy and the joints are discolouring already; no provision of external seating. These are minor deficiencies compared with the benefits derived from an innovative and refreshing project. The panel commended all concerned with the project

which made the building more attractive, more welcoming and enhanced the townscape.

Recommendation:
COMMENDATION

OASIS CAFÉ AT THE METHODIST CHURCH, WARE ROAD

Front extension to the 1960s church incorporating a café

This is a front extension to an attractive church of contemporary design that had a fan-fold brick frontage in light yellow brickwork topped by a copper roof. Alongside is a tall slim copper clad spire surmounted by a cross.

Comments:

This was described as follows by one of the panel judges who wrote what we all felt about the extension: *a small gem with a very welcoming*

appearance, very successful, a great improvement on what was there before, opening up the building to the street and joining the existing structure so well that it looks as if it was always meant to be there. Another described it as light, open and welcoming. The design is uncluttered and does not appear out of proportion to the surrounding buildings.

The only criticism related to the small patch of worn grass between the new glazed façade and the footpath, which could be replaced by sympathetic paving or shrubs. Judging by the popularity of the café, this is a community asset which complements the use, character and appearance of the church and enhances the townscape.

Recommendation:
HIGHLY COMMENDED

The Methodist Church, before and after the building of the Oasis Cafe



LUSSMANN'S RESTAURANT 42 FORE STREET

Repainting Scheme

Known as the Egyptian House, it was constructed in 1825 and has a fine ground floor shop front with tapered window surrounds to the sliding sashes and a curved cornice with scarab beetle



decoration. In the 1960s the building was a Grocery Shop. Apart from the groceries the premises was famous for its bright sulphur yellow paint applied fairly liberally to most of the external wall and window joinery. The lower sashes of the ground floor windows were normally raised in summer months to show a display of fruit and vegetables. In subsequent years it was used as a restaurant. The present

owner has consulted widely with East Herts Council officers, paint specialists and manufacturers.

Comments:

This is an excellent re-decoration of the building frontage that is sympathetic to the Egyptian style and contributes greatly to the architectural variety and interest of Fore Street.

Recommendation:

SPECIAL MENTION

REFURBISHMENT OF CLOCK AT CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

Since the conversion of Christ's Hospital Girls' School into retirement flats in the 1980s, the clock (which dates from 1824 and is a rare 'special' made by Thwaites and Read of Clerkenwell) has not worked and its appearance was cosmetically poor. Chauncy Court Residents' Association was keen to have the clock restored and approached Smith of Derby Ltd, who restored the clock and dial to full working order by installing an electric motor that ensures the clock will be accurate, self correcting following power failure, and will automatically perform summer and winter time changes. The total cost was estimated to be in the region

of £6,000. The Residents' Association was unable to fund the work itself but sought some grants and raised the full cost through general donations. Restoration of the clock and dial was completed in March 2010.

Comments:

This was a relatively small project compared with most of the other entries. Nevertheless it is very important. It was due to the civic minded, public spirited and persistent Residents' Association that the clock has now been returned to working order. It is seen and appreciated by the residents of Chauncy Court and by hundreds of pedestrians passing the building every day. The working clock adds to the interest of the building itself and to the character, appearance and charm of street furniture and sculptures at Christ's Hospital.

Recommendation:

The Residents' Association are to be applauded in tackling this important project.

SPECIAL MENTION



WESTFIELD HOUSE WEST STREET

Two storey and single storey side extension and alterations to former music centre

No. 54, Westfield is a timber framed house, built in the C17. It was altered and extended in the C18 and C19 and last used as a school. A new conservatory has replaced a large mid C19C timber framed conservatory which had an ornamental fretted ridge and iron finials. However parts of it were beyond repair and not weathertight. Between this new structure and the existing main house a room

has been added at first floor level to provide a private office and a small dressing area. There is access at first floor level and by stairs from the conservatory.

Comments:

Inspection of the external brickwork confirmed that there was an excellent choice of bricks for the new work. This is due to the determination of the owners, builder and EHDC officers to get it right especially as there were three or four different types of bricks used on various parts of the building. Viewed from the garden in conjunction with the existing building the new work provides a near symmetrical composition as far as the massing and roofline are concerned.

The attention to detail is evident in the design and

construction of the new and refurbished work, particularly the new Gothic lancet-arched-traceried top sashes which have been modelled on the existing vertical sliding sash windows.

Recommendation:

This is difficult to consider for an Award as the rear and side of the building is not visible to the public. Nor is it part of the townscape as the extension is lower than, and set back from West Street. The panel considered the scheme to be outside the criteria for the Civic Society Awards. However the new accommodation has been carried out with special concern for the building as a whole. Also the workmanship was carried out to a very high standard. There was some disappointment about the new paved areas.

SPECIAL MENTION



PART A MEMBERSHIP FORM

I/We wish to become/continue as members of the Hertford Civic Society and

(a) enclose a cheque in the sum of £ being my/our subscription for 2011

(b) wish to pay by standing order and enclose my completed standing order form

(delete as appropriate)

FULL NAME (S)

CLASS OF MEMBERSHIP FULL PENSIONER JUNIOR CORPORATE

ADDRESS
(including postcode)

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

To renew your membership, please complete and send this form to:

Jean Riddell
Membership Secretary
30 Riversmeet
Hertford
SG14 1LE

Subscriptions are as follows:

Full membership

£9.00 per annum

Joint full membership at the same address

£14.00 per annum

Full membership with concessions

£5.00 per annum

Joint membership with concessions at the same address

£8.00 per annum

Joint membership (one full and one concession) at the same address

£11.00 per annum

Corporate membership

£20.00 per annum

Junior membership (under 18 years of age)

£5.00 per annum

PART B DECLARATION

NAME OF CHARITY Hertford Civic Society

I wish the above named charity to treat as a Gift Aid donation all subscriptions I have paid since 6 April 2000 (if applicable) and all subsequent donations until further notice.

FULL NAME

ADDRESS
(including postcode)

SIGNED

Date

PART C STANDING ORDER FORM

NAME OF YOUR BANK

BANK ADDRESS

SORT CODE

ACCOUNT NO

pay to the account of:

Hertford Civic Society at Barclays Bank, 12 Market Street, Hertford SG14 1BA; sort code 20-20-37; account no 40475807 on receipt of this order and on each 1 January thereafter, the sum of £

FULL NAME

ADDRESS
(including postcode)

SIGNED

DATED