



NEWSLETTER

Spring 2019

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Newsletter.

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Hertford Civic Society will be held on Wednesday 24 April 2019 at 8.00pm in the hall of the Church of the Immaculate Conception and St Joseph, St John's St, Hertford.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the AGM held on 25 April, 2018
2. Report of the Committee for 2018
3. Hon Treasurer's Report and Accounts
4. Election of Officers
5. Election of Members of the Committee
6. Any other business

The current Officers and Committee are listed on p6-7 of this Newsletter. All retire annually. The Constitution provides for up to sixteen Committee members in addition to four Officers. Nominations for election of Officers and Members of the Committee should be made in writing to the Chairman, Malcolm Ramsay, supported by a seconder and with the written consent of the nominee. Nominations for election as an Officer must be made at least seven days before the AGM, but nominations for the election of Members of the Committee will be accepted at the meeting. If you are attending the AGM, please bring this Newsletter, which contains the relevant papers. Refreshments will be served at the start of the meeting.

The AGM will be followed by a panel discussion on Hertford's last half century.

In our fiftieth anniversary year, we are reflecting on our history, starting by looking at how Hertford Civic Society came into existence, based on an interview with founding member, David Kirby, p12. If you would like to contribute some memories of our early years, please contact the editor, details p6.

On 4 April, James Brokenshire, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, refused permission for sand and gravel extraction at Bengo. His decision letter can be seen at <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewCase.aspx?caseid=3178839>. A fuller report will appear on our website soon.

Hertford Civic Society is a Registered Charity no. 266111. More information about the Society and our activities can be found at <https://www.hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk>

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PROGRAMME

Hertford's last 50 years: for better or for worse?
AGM, then discussion led by panel, 24 April 2019

Hertford has changed a lot over the last half century. A panel of local speakers will give their views on the changes that have affected the town, and we will then have a more general discussion, enabling everyone to offer their own views. We might even take a light-hearted vote at the end. The Civic Society is 50 years old in 2019, and our discussion might help us to reflect on town's future, and our own. Please consider nominating yourself, or someone else, for the panel - contact Malcolm Ramsay, (most people now do this by email) details p7.

Essex visit: Templar barns, Coggeshall and winery
8 May 2019

We will have an exciting outing in Essex. First we visit two of the most amazing medieval barns in Europe, at Cressing. They are like wooden cathedrals (built by the Templars). We get a guided tour of the barns, other farm buildings and Tudor garden. In the middle part of the day we will visit Coggeshall, one of the most delightful old villages in the County. There are plenty of places for lunch, including Paycocke's House (National Trust), 'one of the most attractive half-timbered houses in England' (Pevsner).

We will end the day with a visit to Bardfield winery. Just outside the beautiful village of Great Bardfield there is a winery even lovelier than Dedham Vale - complete with a Grade 1 listed Tudor barn (Anne of Cleves retired to the manor here after her marriage to Henry VIII was annulled). There will be an opportunity to taste some of the wines, all organic, and quite splendid. Alternatively, non-alcoholic drinks are available.

The cost is almost the same as for last year, at £26. This will cover the coach, and the guided tour of Cressing (those enjoying the wine tasting will need to pay a little more). And we will of course travel in great comfort. You can book your place by contacting Malcolm Ramsay (see p7).

This year we leave Hertford in our coach at a slightly later time (9.00 am), departing from alongside Hertford East or Tesco. And return by around 6.30 pm at the latest.

Visit to Sele: Network Homes development
Wednesday 22 May 2019, early evening, time to be confirmed

Network Homes (who gave us a talk in 2016) have invited members of the Civic Society to visit their substantial fresh development in Hertford. If you are interested, please contact Malcolm Ramsay.

Summer party

Sunday 30 June 2019, from 12.45 pm

This is the Civic Society's birthday bash, as we will be 50 years old. We are fortunate to have been invited back to Port Hill. Alan Melville lived at The Grove; alongside David Kirby and others, he was a founding member of the Civic Society and later, for a good many years, did much for the Society as its Chair. His daughter Jane and her husband Harold Chaplin are our main hosts at 39 Port Hill (Grove Cottage). We will have the run of a pair of linked gardens on a series of different levels. There is even a terrace with a seat presented to the Melvilles at the Society's 20th anniversary. And there will of course be some music and food - posh ploughman's. Plentiful free parking just over the road at Hartham: easy access from there to 39 Port Hill.

The tickets will be priced at £10 providing that they are purchased more than two days in advance (thereafter £12.50, and no admission without a pre-reserved ticket). They will be available from Malcolm Ramsay and some committee members.

Alternatively, it will be possible, after Easter, to book tickets by contacting Peter and Susan Brown. They have kindly agreed to go on taking bookings even though their shop has closed. They still live at 40 St Andrew St, and can be phoned (01992 589880) or visited or emailed: studio@peterandsusanbrown.co.uk

Achieving the best contemporary architecture in Hertfordshire

Lecture, 20 November 2019

Andrew Goodman is an experienced local architect with a strong interest in sustainable design. In Hertford, his recent projects in the public eye include the foyer extension to Hertford Methodist Church in Ware Road and the St Andrew's Centre for the church of that name. He will talk about leading examples of contemporary architecture locally, and about some of the difficulties faced by architects in this area, in creating good modern buildings.

Finally, we hope to have another event towards the end of 2019 (or, failing that, in early 2020), focusing on Bircherley Green. It would be good to hear about the progress of this huge development. Assuming this event takes place,

we will use email (for those whose addresses we know) and flyers in the library and other public places, to inform everybody.

Malcolm Ramsay

PLANNING MATTERS

The Gasworks site, Marshgate Drive

This is a prominent vacant site bordering the Lee Navigation. It is allocated for residential and employment use in the District Plan, and the prospect of its redevelopment is to be welcomed. However, we have objected to the current planning application on several grounds.

The District Plan envisages around 200 homes in total on the vacant site and the adjacent land occupied by Norbury's, but the application seeks approval for over 380 on the gasworks site alone. Bearing in mind the already high level of congestion at the Mill Road/Ware Road junction, it is difficult to see how the road network could take the traffic from so many extra homes. Moreover, the Plan calls for a mixed development whereas the proposal is for over 80% of the dwellings to be flats, which would contribute to the developing monolithic character of the Mead Lane area, out of keeping with the rest of the town. No affordable housing is proposed; the developers acknowledge their obligation to include at least some, but want to negotiate the amount at a later stage.

The scheme would deliver only half the employment floorspace which the District Plan calls for on this site. This shortfall is important because in recent years there has been an erosion of the area earmarked within the town for employment purposes, and if not enough land is designated for employment within the built-up area, the Council could in the long run be faced with the prospect of having to release Green Belt land for employment use.

The District Plan has only just been adopted; the proposals and indicative figures in it are based on many factors such as the character of the town, need for different types of development, traffic implications and infrastructure requirements. This is the first significant application in Hertford to be considered under the new Plan, and it is crucial that the Council stands firm.

Rickneys Quarry

In 2009 permission was granted for an extension to Rickneys Quarry at Chapmore End. The permission said that work had to start within three years. It did not, but the owners applied to put back the permitted starting date by another three years. Presumably the demand for gravel had slackened off, and they hoped it would revive. The County Council agreed to give the quarry owners more time, but only if they signed up to a Legal Agreement specifying in detail how exactly the quarrying and restoration would be done. As no such Agreement was ever signed, the permission for an extension of time was never issued, so technically the application is still pending. At the applicants' request, the County have now agreed to determine the application for an extension of time to start the work, and the cut-off date which they are considering is 31 December 2021.

The existing Rickneys Quarry has been derelict and an eyesore for some years and it is unconscionable that residents in that area and users of the countryside should have to suffer three more years of uncertainty and then the consequences of further quarrying. We therefore made a strong objection, as well as making a submission that (for legal reasons) the Council actually has no power to grant the permission sought. The original application to extend Rickneys was made in 2006. It included a large amount of technical data about geology, ecology, groundwater conditions, the economy's need for gravel and so forth. Since then circumstances have changed and it is not possible for the Council or the public to come to an informed view about the merits of the proposal on the basis of documentation drafted thirteen years ago with only patchy later revisions.

As the controversy surrounding the proposed new quarry at Bengo Field and the recent public inquiry into it have demonstrated, scientific knowledge about the effects of quarrying on water supplies and air quality has advanced considerably as have public expectations about the extent to which the adverse effects of quarrying should be mitigated. We understand that detailed information about the relationship between the gravel deposits and the underlying chalk aquifer,

presented at the inquiry, had a significant impact on the decision not to include the Rickneys area as a suitable site for further quarrying in the latest Minerals Plan. On the demand side, decisions made on proposals for quarries elsewhere in the County mean that the result of an assessment of how necessary it is to extract further gravel from Rickneys will now be completely different from what it was over a decade ago.

We urged the Council to make a fresh assessment of the extent to which the proposed extension to Rickneys is needed to meet local, regional and national requirements; to consider anew the whole range of potential environmental impacts in the light of up-to-date intelligence, contemporary scientific understanding and current public expectations; and to refuse the application.

Bircherley Green

Readers of the *Mercury* will have seen the article on 7 March about the redevelopment 'grinding to a halt'. If you're on-line you can read it at <https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/hertfordshire-news/redevelopment-hertford-bircherley-green-ground-2613742> As the *Mercury* says, the developers have proposed a number of changes to the scheme, most of which they described as 'non-material amendments'. These included a slight increase in the height of the hotel and a change in its roof form, as well as changes to the brickwork and to the shape, size and location of various windows. We made no comment as the changes seemed innocuous and in some cases improvements on what had previously been agreed. The Council, however, decided that they went beyond what could be considered as 'non-material' amendments and that if the developer wanted to pursue them a full planning application would have to be made.

We did comment on a much more significant proposal to revise Building B (where Boots used to be) by taking out 14 flats on the first and second floors and substituting some 1500 square metres of offices. Whilst we welcomed the introduction of the office space and the attendant employment introduced into the town, we expressed concern about the consequent realignment of the façade of Building B over the three upper storeys to

provide the necessary space. This would reduce the openness generated by the approved stepped-back façade, leading to a canyon like feeling, and probably reduce natural light levels in the mall, particularly during periods of sunshine.

Although the ostensible purpose of this application was to seek the Council's agreement to the change to Building B, it was in fact submitted as a fresh application for the whole scheme. But unlike the currently approved scheme, which includes a Legal Agreement allocating 10% of the residential units to affordable housing, no provision for affordable housing is made under this application. The Council will fail dismally to meet its target for affordable housing in the District if it allows the developers of sites with large numbers of units to wriggle out of their obligations under the approved policies, and so we urged the Council to refuse the application if the applicant is unwilling to reinstate the previous affordable housing commitment. This application has not yet been determined.

Affordable Housing Consultation

In January the Council issued a consultation on a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on affordable housing. We did not comment on it but there is little or nothing in it with which we would disagree. However, we are concerned whether the Council has the will to rigorously enforce the policies it contains. Already there are two planning applications for major redevelopment of former industrial sites where the developer is endeavouring to avoid providing forty percent affordable housing, as required under policy HOU 3 of the District Plan. The policy does permit release from this requirement where it can be shown that the proposed scheme would no longer be viable. To date no viability statement in either case has been made public.

Minerals Plan Consultation

The County have published the final draft of the new Minerals Plan, which they intend to submit for approval by the Secretary of State. At an earlier stage we submitted that the Plan should include a policy, as the adopted Plan does, to make it clear that extraction from non-designated areas will not be permitted unless certain specified criteria apply. A sentence to

that effect has now been added, but in a supporting paragraph rather than in the relevant Policy itself. We have asked the Inspector to include it as part of the formal Policy.

The Bridge House

In February 2017 there was a proposal to replace this former pub with a two-storey building with retail on the ground floor and 14 flats above. We objected to the design and appearance of the building. The application was refused and last month an alternative scheme for just nine houses was approved. Nevertheless the applicants have appealed against the refusal of the original scheme. The Inspector's decision is awaited.

Tamworth Road

The owners of the Hertford Mill site in Tamworth Road have applied to demolish the existing buildings and build 8 blocks of flats up to 4 storeys high and 11 houses, with office space at ground floor level in one of the blocks. No submission about the scheme has yet been made on behalf of the Society, but this application clearly raises, on a smaller scale, the same issues of loss of employment land, high density development in the form of flats, and pressure on parking space, as the much larger gasworks site proposal reported above.

Peter Norman and Andrew Sangster

AGM PAPERS

Minutes of AGM April 25, 2018

Apologies:

Sally and Terry Paque, Anne Miles, Shobha and Richard Edgell, Dorothy Anderson, Lesley Warne, Veronica Fraser, John and Jane Page

Minutes of 2017 AGM:

These were accepted.

Report of the Committee:

This was accepted.

Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer was asked if we had considered raising the subscription rate. He replied that this was last done ten years ago but would be a

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major undertaking as members would all be required to change standing orders with their banks and that the Committee was not considering it for the near future.

The Report was accepted.

Election of Officers:

Malcolm Ramsay was elected Chair. He invited Society members to join the Committee and thanked Terry Betts and Annette Robinson for all their work.

John Bevan was re-elected as Treasurer.

Election of the Committee:

The Committee was re-elected.

Report of the Committee

A bypass looms?

The District Plan for East Herts was signed off in 2018, including the concept of a Hertford bypass, as proposed by the Inspector. Any such suggestion is difficult, not least for the Civic Society and its members. Not all of us feel the same way about a bypass. Perhaps the best idea is to focus as far as possible on all the other transport issues that relate to it: particularly on other things that need doing anyway, given that any bypass would be years away.

The County Council is the Highways Authority, and the Committee has tried hard to establish a positive relationship with the key County Councillor, Derrick Ashley. For instance, in the autumn of 2018, Derrick Ashley was persuaded to hear a presentation from Civic Society member (and public transport expert) Reg Harman, proposing an East-West tramway for the County: see his summary in Autumn 2018 Newsletter. Bypass or not, towns in the southern part of Hertfordshire suffer grievously from traffic congestion and have little in the way of good quality public transport. Arguably, only a tramway is likely to make much difference, by way of alternative to car use.

Once the County Council launched a formal consultation in December 2018 on its 'A414 Corridor Strategy', complete with a Hertford bypass (route unspecified, except 'southern preferred') the Committee asked Councillor Ashley to give a presentation at a public meeting (held in the Roman Catholic church on 16 January 2019). He agreed, and we put considerable effort into publicising it in a wide range of ways (in the local paper, online, by flyers, etc), as impartially as possible ("come and have your say"). Over 200 people turned up, listened respectfully, and asked searching questions (see report p8).

Participants at this public meeting were given feedback forms on which they could briefly state their thoughts as they thought fit, at the end of the event. Over a hundred did so, of whom 59 chose to express their view about the bypass. Of this 59, only nine were in favour, while the rest were opposed. None of those in favour of

a bypass were members of the Civic Society. While this is not definitive, it tends to suggest that most members remain sceptical of the need for a bypass, as was also found in previous years when Terry Betts as Chair consulted members more than once on this issue.

For its part, the Committee continues to try to embody as broad an outlook as possible, and our final response to the County's consultation did include brief discussion as to how any bypass could be routed with the least harm possible. That report, like the one on feedback from the January meeting, can be found on our website. The Executive Summary can be found in this Newsletter on p9.

Bircherley Green, Panshanger Park and other planning matters

The work done during the year on general planning and gravel extraction is largely summarised by the Planning Matters report on p3 of this Newsletter. We continue to be represented on the Committee of Friends of Panshanger Park as they work with HCC and other organisations to secure the best possible outcomes in the development of the country park.

The town centre, the fountain and the markets

With the redevelopment of Bircherley Green approved in October 2017, and considerable demolition taking place in 2018, the town centre has had a slightly desolate air. Arguably, Salisbury Square and the fountain have become more than ever the focal point for the town. The re-paving of Maidenhead Street with light grey paving blocks (towards the end of 2018) tended to reinforce that emphasis; though, in fairness, perhaps we need to wait and see how the paving blocks 'weather'.

The fountain itself would benefit from some cleaning and renovation. With the re-paving now extending from Maidenhead Street to Bull Plain and even Salisbury Square (under the HUDS or Hertford Urban Design Scheme), the Committee has been attempting to interest the relevant Councillors in refurbishing the fountain.

We have also been taking a close interest in the weekly and monthly/Farmers Markets. With the District Council actively scaling back its financial support for the markets, we wondered what the outcome would be for the stallholders. Two members of the committee jointly interviewed all of them on the day of the Farmers Market in November 2018. While those who were 'weekly' stallholders were mainly stoical about being more self-reliant in the future, those taking part in the Farmers Market were less happy. We analysed all the responses and presented the end results to the relevant Councillors who acknowledged the need for some fresh thought. (A fuller report can be found in the Winter 2018-19 Newsletter.)

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Members of the Committee can also be contacted by email via the Society's website at <https://www.hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk>

A changing Committee?

In summer 2018, Terry Betts stood down as Chair, and was replaced by Malcolm Ramsay. The Committee remains in need of fresh talent. Significantly, both Terry and Malcolm have had to continue to do some of the things in their earlier roles. Thus, Malcolm continues to look after activities for members, while Terry still organises digital communication with members. And Terry organised a splendid summer party at Roxford (in July 2018).

There are signs of fresh growth on the part of the Committee. We have been joined by Mike Howarth, expert creator of videos, who provides some vigorous stimulation, particularly where modern media are concerned. With input also from John Bevan, Mike has crafted a personal video on the bypass proposal, which can be found on our website - and on You Tube, where it has been viewed by over 400 people. One or two other recruits are hopefully set to join the Committee. We have not had any response to the call for a new Events/Social person: do please consider whether you or someone you know might be able to take this on, in part or in whole. It's a varied programme for members, which can be fun to shape. In 2018 there were (besides the party, already mentioned), three well-attended talks (historic architecture in Herts; walking the Lea Valley path; Hertford's oral history; plus a combined talk/panel discussion on local media), and last but not least a coach outing to Sudbury and the nearby Bulmer brickworks, which were simply magic.

Malcolm Ramsay

Treasurer's Report

The Society would have been very close to breaking even in 2018, had we not given £500 towards the cost of building toilets at St Leonard's Church Bengeo, allowing building work finally to start, and enabling public events to take place in one of Hertford's oldest buildings. Also contributing to this position was a lower expenditure than usual on newsletters, as one less was prepared and included in the 2018 accounts (a technical matter). The long term trend of gently declining membership subscriptions continued. There was a small increase in maintenance costs for the Salisbury Square fountain. The level of our current assets remained substantially the same - a reduction in

the balance was not used to fund any special projects or other activities, as has been the case in previous years.

John Bevan *(The Accounts are on p10-11.)*

A HERTFORD BYPASS?

Public Meeting held on 16 January, 2019

At this meeting (mentioned in the Report from the Committee p6) Councillor Derek Ashley, assisted by HCC technical expert Rupert Thacker, explained the elements of the A414 Corridor Strategy (part of the County's Transport Plan) that relate specifically to Hertford.

This falls into three parts: a bypass to divert long distance traffic out of Hertford, a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system going through Hertford to encourage people out of their cars, and encouragement to local authorities and citizen groups to promote Sustainable Travel Town strategies. He emphasised that no specific amounts or sources of funding for either bypass or MRT schemes, nor time frames, had yet been identified and that no firm decisions had been made so far. Estimates suggested that a southern bypass could cost up to £500 million.

There were many questions at the end of his presentation, with a number focusing on the urgent and growing problem of air pollution. Unfortunately, this will probably get worse before it gets better because any solutions will take time to implement, but traffic is increasing now and is likely to continue to do so. Some people argued that building a bypass would simply attract more traffic and was likely to become a relief road for the M25; others, however, argued that this traffic would be faster moving and therefore less polluting than if it were moving slowly through Hertford.

There were also many complaints that when people did try to use public transport rather than their cars, services were infrequent on many routes and often unpunctual. Councillor Ashley explained that since the deregulation of bus services in 1986, although local councils were the strategic authority for transport, they had no powers to compel bus companies to provide services. Even when a company did provide a service, the bus was often stuck in traffic, leading to fines for lateness and customer dissatisfaction - fewer people

therefore used the buses and the service became commercially unviable.

MRT schemes can move large numbers of people with relatively low energy use and take up less road length than a string of cars. But there were also objections as the dedicated road lane required might concentrate more cars into the remaining road space than are there now, and could be a serious problem in residential areas such as Ware Road where it was not possible to make alternative arrangements for access and parking.

Ian Nash and Sue Jones

Executive Summary of our response to HCC's consultation

The following is a summary of the response submitted to the County Council's consultation. The full response can be found on the Society's website at

https://www.hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk/media/other/38458/HCS_Resp_A414CS.pdf

1. We support the County Council's approach of drawing up a transport strategy for the A414 corridor as a whole. But this approach inevitably means that the proposals set out for individual towns such as Hertford do not fully address the transport problems of the town; instead they concentrate on issues affecting movement between towns.
2. It is undeniable that the bypass proposed for Hertford would provide a quicker, easier route for traffic between towns east of Hertford and those to the west, and the town would benefit from the transfer to the bypass of a proportion of the traffic which currently uses Gascoyne Way (although we doubt whether the reduction in traffic on Gascoyne Way would be as significant as forecast). We acknowledge that, as the approved plans for large-scale development at Welwyn Garden City, Ware, Gilston, Harlow and elsewhere are built out, the scale of those benefits would increase. The least damaging option for any eventual bypass route might be further south.
3. But there is a growing public consensus that traffic congestion cannot be solved by building more roads. The costs of road building, not only financial, but also

in terms of issues such as encouraging more traffic, air pollution, climate change, and loss of countryside and valued habitats, have been well-rehearsed. In the case of Hertford, we are particularly concerned:

- that a bypass might encourage the infilling of land between the new road and the edge of the town,
 - that a bypass might even be seen as a way of enabling the town to grow by more than current approved plans envisage. The future size of the town should not be pre-determined by transport considerations. (The least damaging option for any eventual bypass route might be further south.)
4. In policy terms, major new road building runs counter to the thrust of the Transport Plan, except as a last resort. The Mass Rapid Transport System proposed in the strategy is a far better fit with the thinking behind the Transport Plan, and should be given the chance to demonstrate its effectiveness before any decision to go ahead with a bypass is taken.
 5. The strategy mentions measures which could be taken to make it easier for people to get about Hertford, but these are not worked up in detail, and action on them is deferred until after a bypass is built. This is a fundamentally wrong approach. Action on some of the measures, and many more not mentioned, could and should be taken now. They would produce benefits whether or not a bypass is built, and could even help to reduce the need to build one.
 6. The kinds of things we believe should be investigated are listed in our full response. We believe that large employers, including the County Council, could help by more actively promoting car sharing, staff park and ride, and working from home one or two days a week.

Working party, chaired by Malcolm Ramsay

HERTFORD CIVIC SOCIETY
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2018

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
<u>Income</u>		
Subscriptions and Donations	1,694	1,788
Surplus or (Deficit) on Social Activities		
Coach Visit	18	192
Garden Party	143	(15)
	-----	-----
Sales of Publications		10
Interest on Deposit Account	402	206
Recovery of Gift Aid Tax	363	309
	-----	-----
	2,620	2,470
<u>Less Society Expenses</u>		
Newsletters	391	539
General Meetings and Lectures	82	124
Public Liability Insurance	342	336
Maintenance of Society Equipment	---	--
Depreciation of Society Equipment	133	173
Other Expenses	197	193
Subscriptions and Donations	520	535
Civic Activities		
Salisbury Square Fountain	1,022	894
Donation to St Leonard's Church	500	
Heritage Trail Expenses Reimbursed		(108)
	-----	-----
	3,187	2,686
	-----	-----
Surplus (Deficit) for the Year	(567)	(216)
	=====	=====

HERTFORD CIVIC SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2018

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
SOCIETY EQUIPMENT,		
At cost	1,397	1,397
Less Depreciation	1,098	965
	-----	-----
	299	432
 CURRENT ASSETS		
Sundry Debtors and Prepayments	134	342
Cash at Bank, in Charities Deposit Fund and in Hand	89,442	89,710
	-----	-----
	89,576	90,052
 Less CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Sundry Creditors	272	314
	-----	-----
	89,304	89,738
 NET ASSETS	-----	-----
	89,603	90,170
	=====	=====
 ACCUMULATED FUND		
Balance as at 1 st January 2018	90,170	90,386
Less Surplus (Deficit) for the Year	(567)	(216)
	-----	-----
MEMBERS' FUNDS, as above	89,603	90,170
	=====	=====

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

I have examined the books and vouchers of HERTFORD CIVIC SOCIETY and, with the information and explanations received, report that the Balance Sheet and annexed Income and Expenditure Account accord therewith.

T.A.Busby

ORIGINS OF HERTFORD CIVIC SOCIETY

- an interview with David Kirby

Hertford Civic Society came into being in 1969 as a result of Hertford Borough Council's plans for a massive redevelopment of the town centre. Following slum clearance of part of the area in the 1930s, redevelopment of some kind was clearly necessary, but when the extent of the plans created by developer Oddenino was revealed, it provoked great controversy. The scheme would have meant the demolition of every building from Bull Plain to the present Bircherley Court.

"It became obvious that the scheme was a monster with deliveries at roof level and overhead parking," says local architect David Kirby. "Everyone was writing angry letters, so I thought I should do something. I wrote to the Civic Trust, a quasi-government body and asked about creating a civic society. They described how and I did it. I wrote a letter and said a meeting would be held in the *Mercury* meeting room. In those days the paper was in Parliament Square and they had a small room for public meetings."

From that meeting a committee was formed including Catherine Henderson, Tom Busby as Treasurer and Len Harding, the principal of Chapmore End industrial training school. Alan Melville (a later chair) joined shortly afterwards.

As the scale of the planned redevelopment became clear, opposition grew. Although such redevelopments had been carried out in many towns in the 1960s, they were now coming in for criticism as lacking character and human scale - international brutalist-style concrete structures were going out of fashion. There was also a growing trend to protect old buildings that preserved a unique sense of place and respect for historic evidence, though sometimes associated with a Romantic idea of 'Old England'.

Nor was the Borough Council united. Councillor John Sartin spoke up for the small shopkeepers who would lose their premises. Although they had been offered space in the new development, the rents would be higher than they thought reasonable. And as trustees for the museum, some councillors thought the museum was being offered a raw deal for the enforced sale of its car park to the developer.

Prior to local government reform legislation in 1972, Hertford Borough Council had greater planning powers than the current Town Council, but still required the agreement of the County Council for major projects and, at first, this seemed to be forthcoming. But as opposition grew still further, the County Council also withdrew its support.

Then central government got involved. More of the buildings on the site were being Listed by the Secretary of State for the Environment as worthy of preservation, including 1, 3, 7, and 9 Salisbury Square and 11 and 23-25 Railway Street. The crunch came when the Borough Council applied for Listed Building consent to demolish the Bluecoat Boy public house (now the Jungle Bar) for a major new road intersection with Fore Street. The Environment Secretary refused and a Public Enquiry was opened in September 1973.

The Society had two lines of attack on the Council plans: firstly, that a shopping centre on such a scale would not be commercially viable in Hertford and, secondly, that it was destructive to the townscape. By this time David Kirby had designed an alternative re-development scheme on a much smaller scale that also provided for some flats, offices and a bus station and did not require demolition of Listed Buildings. The Civic Society also raised £4,000 to employ Michael Mann QC to act for it at the Inquiry.

Giving evidence on behalf of the Society, David Kirby (as reported in the *Mercury*) condemned the Council's scheme. "With unerring precision, the architects have touched each detail to make it obtrusive and past all hope of merging with the town scene," he said. "They have added a tower, covered the rear in anodised aluminium and provided enormous windows of strange shape to Salisbury Square. They have left no cliché unturned in their effort to provide variety which, perhaps they feel, is the key to the Hertford townscape." And with opposition coming from many other organisations, such as the Victorian Society and the Hertfordshire Buildings Preservation Trust, the Council's plans were defeated.

With thanks to Sheila Pettman for the loan of her news-cuttings collection.

Ian Nash and Sue Jones