

THE ROLE OF THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY IN INFLUENCING URBAN DESIGN

An informal meeting of architects and members of allied professions who live in Harpenden was held on 30th January, 1968. The Harpenden Society's draft statement on "The Development of Harpenden" was discussed.

Keen interest was expressed in the Society's anxiety to improve the urban scene. The group felt that the Society might pursue this policy more effectively with professional support.

As a result of the discussion and some written contributions, four members drafted the following list of points for submission to a further meeting of the group to be held in March.

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1. It is recognised that the Society seeks to voice the broad interests of Harpenden residents in matters of planning and amenity.
2. We believe the aims of the Society would be more effectively served by formulating a coherent policy on urban design.
3. We think the Society's representations would be strengthened by forming a consultative group of its architect, surveyor, engineer and planner members.
4. Subjects on which this group might be helpful to the Society could include:-
 - a) Harpenden Town Map
 - b) Central Area Plan
 - c) A6 Relief Road, internal traffic and parking
 - d) District re-development schemes (e.g. Southdown)
 - e) Individual guidance plans for smaller re-development areas, to include suggestions on building volumes, materials, layout and other matters affecting residential amenity
 - f) Trees, planting, street furniture, signs, and other features of urban landscape
 - g) The relationship of these matters to the wider regional and national planning policies.

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5. We suggest the most effective way of furthering a Society policy is to form a sub-committee, to include members of the group, which would meet members of the local planning authority and its officers engaged on town planning to discuss these and allied subjects at regular intervals.

In this way the Council would be able, if it wished, to discuss future development proposals with the Harpenden Society and the Society, through its consultative group, might be able to put forward useful suggestions and comment on matters of urban design.

6. The Society already exerts an educational influence in Harpenden by means of talks, films, visits and exhibitions: the group hopes this side of its work will be intensified.
7. We also believe the Society could benefit from active liaison with similar neighbouring societies having allied interests.
8. The present time seems particularly appropriate for a step forward by the Society in the light of the Civic Amenities Act and current Town Planning legislation.

The Minister of Housing and Local Government said in the House of Commons on 1st February:

"Planning is for people and about their activities, not just about areas. Bringing people into planning means a great deal more than the right to inspect plans and object to them I want to make sure that people will have a chance of getting to know about plans before they begin to harden."

14th January, 1968.