

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

*When drawn up
in 1968 - subsequently
absorbed into Society policy.*

(Does 3(b))

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. (no record available as at Oct. 2010 - John Davis, compiler of the Commentary 1961-89)

.....

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.

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.

HARPENDEN URBAN DESIGN GROUP

April 1968

*Presumably
Maurice Johnstone
the then Harpenden Soc. Sec
Dear Maurice,*

You will have seen from the local press that the Harpenden Council has welcomed the setting up of a joint committee on Urban Design consisting of representatives of this Group and the Harpenden Society.

The next Group meeting on 2nd MAY at THE PLUMBER'S LOFT at 8 p.m. will be important in that we shall discuss how to implement our offer to the Harpenden Society to act as its professional arm in matters of Urban Design, and also how to achieve a constructive relationship with the Local Planning Authority.

We shall also discuss how our members can help the Society in its work of stimulating public interest in matters of urban design through talks, visits, links with schools, exhibitions, etc.

We must also draw up a minimal framework to cover the Group's expenses, and appoint its representatives to meet with the Council.

We hope that you will be able to come.

Yours sincerely,

JACK BONNINGTON)	
GORDON TAYLOR)	Acting
DAVID OAKLEY)	Representatives
PAT WILSON)	

MEMORANDUM OF A MEETING OF THE HARPENDEN URBAN DESIGN GROUP ON 2nd MAY 1968

At the opening of the meeting, the Chairman welcomed Miss Wood and Mr. Bennett, representatives from the Hertfordshire Chapter of Architects and His Honour, Judge R. G. Dow, President of the Harpenden Society.

- 1 Apologies for absence were received from: A. R. Hassel
M. St. J. Hopper
A. R. Lineham
J. M. Slater
P. Hansen

2 Present Position

Harpenden Society have agreed to set up a joint committee on Urban Design with H.U.D.G., to meet members of the Council's Housing and Town Planning Committee, its Officers and those of the County Council. The proposal has been favourably received by Harpenden Urban District Council.

- 3 The meeting confirmed the appointment of the existing acting representatives as follows:-

Chairman:

Mr. J. S. Bonnington

Committee Members:

Mr. G. Taylor

Mr. D. Oakley

Mr. P. Wilson

The meeting also appointed:

Mr. D.P. Challis as Secretary

Mr. J. Rendle as Treasurer

Mr. M. Smith as a Committee Member

Mr. P. Ahm is also to be approached and invited to join the Committee.

(Secretary's Note: There are now five members of the Committee in lieu of the four suggested on the Agenda for the meeting).

4 Joint Committee on Urban Design

It was agreed that the joint Committee should consist of four Urban Design Group representatives (Chairman, plus three), and three Harpenden Society representatives, (Chairman, plus two), to meet the Harpenden Society and Harpenden Urban District Council representatives and Officers as and when required.

5 Registration of Members and Subscriptions

It was agreed that a registration card should be despatched with the next notice of the group meeting inviting members to confirm their interest and give their background, qualifications and specific interests. To provide the working expenses of the group, it was proposed by Mr. Edelston and

seconded by Mr. Smith that an annual subscription of 2 guineas should be charged to full members, and that the Committee should give consideration to student membership at a subscription rate of 10s. 6d. per year.

6 Honorary Members

It was agreed that Mr. Pettingale be invited to become an honorary member of the group and that members of his staff be invited to attend as circumstances dictated. Mr. Pettingale accepted the invitation.

7 Liaison with Harpenden Council and proposed method of working

As an introduction Mr. Taylor stressed the importance of making the Council aware that the group were interested in planning and design matters in depth, rather than discussions on the colour of rain water pipes.

Mr. Edelston circulated a copy of the Tenderton Report. The general opinion on this impressive document was that it was unlikely that the Group could quickly undertake such a task but that a general appraisal of specific areas of Harpenden and an architectural brief might be developed. A report on the lines of the Tenderton report might possibly be produced over a period of time.

Reference was made to photo montage techniques and Mr. Edelston is to investigate with a firm at Huntingdon. It was agreed that an aerial survey and plans of Harpenden should be obtained by the group.

It was stressed that if the group was to be useful it was important to know of schemes for development and redevelopment at the earliest possible stage and it was agreed that the group should write to the Clerk of the Council requesting the Council to agree to make planning applications available to the group, where requested, prior to approval by the Council, in anticipation of the new Town and Country Planning Act.

A long discussion took place on the impending redevelopment in the High Street by a multiple grocer. *Town Council surveyor* Mr. Pettingale outlined the present position and conditions of the outline planning application. The group is to write to Harpenden Council urging them to seek discussions with this Developer as soon as possible, and requesting the group's representation at these meetings.

It was agreed to investigate whether the Central area in Harpenden could be designated under the Civic Amenities Act.

8 Matters already referred to the Design Group by the Society

(a) Public Notice Board

The Harpenden Society have been invited to put forward proposals for a new public notice board. Mr. B. Beardsmore and Mr. M. J. Farrara accepted the invitation to investigate and produce sketches.

(b) The Harpenden Society are organising a visit to Sion Park on either 8th or 15th June and suggestions for visits to other buildings or sites of interest en route were requested. Mr. K. R. Lack said he thought he would be able to make some proposals.

(c) Heath Road Phase II

*Heath Rd probly the route to Heath Farm (?)
between Southdams + Queens Roads - disappeared in
controversy late 1960s development*

The Clerk of the Council has enquired of the Harpenden Society if they would like to view the plans for this development. The approach from the Council was welcomed by the Society, but it was not thought practical to make any realistic comment as the proposals were at an advanced stage and ready for formal approval by the Council.

- 9 It was agreed that the invitation from the Principal at the Harpenden Further Education Centre to arrange a course of six lectures on Urban Design in the early part of 1969 be accepted.

10 (a) Further Activities

In the absence of Mr. Oakley who had originated the Agenda of items under this heading, detailed discussion was deferred until a later meeting. The Committee however is to give consideration to appointments of Public Relations Representatives, Co-ordination of Public Relations through the Harpenden Chapter of Architects.

HARPENDEN URBAN DESIGN GROUP

B

Brief Summary of Events since the Meeting on 2nd May 1968

(Undated but were
further meetings
15/5 and 31/5/68)
points included
in Common

- 1 Representatives of the joint committee have met the Clerk of the Council, the Chairmen of the Housing and Town Planning Committee, the Plans Committee and the Surveyor to the Council at an informal meeting. The Group's policies and aims were outlined and a willingness of the Council to co-operate was evident. The Council representatives suggested that all members of the Urban Design Group might have a joint meeting with the appropriate Council Committees at which the Group might illustrate and explain its proposals. It was also suggested that there should be regular bi-monthly or quarterly meetings between the Council and the joint committee. A list of priority areas for assessment and study was thought to be urgently required as a first step and a Pilot Scheme illustrating how the Group could assist and give guidance lines to the Council would be valuable. Carlton Road redevelopment was an area the Council considered should have high priority.

The group committee have co-opted "task" members and undertaken:-

- (a) The preparation of a formal Policy Statement and a draft list and illustrations of priority areas (Jack Bonnington and Pat Wilson).
- (b) An appraisal of the Carlton Road area with guide lines for redevelopment (Gordon Taylor and Richard Howard).
- (c) A preliminary appraisal of the good, bad and indifferent areas and features of the Southdown Area of Harpenden (Maurice Smith and John McMorro.

These proposals will be discussed at the Group meeting on 3rd October, and if the priority list is subsequently agreed with the Council, the Group as a whole can get its teeth into some work.

2 Cross Lane

An objection has been lodged with the Minister of Housing and Local Government to the proposed rezoning of land to the south of Cross Lane from green belt to residential use. This rezoning is proposed in the current revision to the Harpenden Town Map and our objection is in support of the Harpenden Urban District Council's own objection.

- 3 A course of six lectures is being arranged by David Oakley on "Urban Design" covering such subjects as Homes, Town re-habilitation, Transportation and Engineering, Landscape and Architecture at Home and Abroad. The lectures are being arranged as part of Harpenden's Further Education Activities. Suggestions for lecturers, volunteers or advice would be welcomed by David Oakley at 70 Luton Road, Harpenden 5810.

(Docs 3(c))

HARPENDEN URBAN DESIGN GROUP

Notice of Meeting to be held at 8.15 p.m. at The Plumbers Loft, Thursday, 3rd October 1968.

Agenda

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.
- 2 Treasurer's Report on membership, notifications received.
- 3 To confirm the Committee's agreement that persons not in employment, undergoing training and who can contribute to the work of the group may be admitted at the Committee's discretion on payment of a "student" subscription of 10s. 6d. per annum.
- 4 To review the group's proposals for Carlton Road Development prior to submission to Harpenden Urban District Council.
- 5 To review the group's proposals prior to submission to the Council on (a) the basic policy and function of the group, (b) the list of areas in order of priority to be studied by the group.
- 6 To review the preliminary appraisal of the good, bad and indifferent features of Southdown.
- 7 Designation of Areas - Civic Amenities Act introduced by Mr. K. R. Lack.
- 8 Discussion on "Public Participation in Planning" and report to the Skeffington Committee introduced by Mr. W. E. Edleston.
- 9 Any other business.

Annexed to this notice are:-

- A A memorandum note of the group meeting on 2nd May. (in Docs 3(b))
- B A note of events occurring since 2nd May. (" ")
- C An application form for membership. —

This notice is being sent to all persons on the list of residents originally compiled by Pat Wilson. The Committee must limit its expenditure and compile a membership list of those persons who are prepared to contribute to the work of the group. Future information and notifications can only be sent to persons completing the enclosed form and paying the appropriate subscription.

D. P. Challis, Hon. Secretary,
14 Moreton End Lane,
Harpenden.

HARPENDEN URBAN DESIGN GROUP

The activity of the members of the Harpenden Society in the summer of last year resulted in a series of informal meetings of local architects, planners, surveyors and engineers who share the Society's concern for the successful future development of the town. Since then, this body has adopted the title of the Harpenden Urban Design Group for identity and the intention is to join with the Harpenden Society in producing positive advice affecting the range of planning matters which in turn it is hoped can be received by this Committee of the Urban District Council. In broad terms, this action is intended to represent an element of local participation in the planning of Harpenden, taking advantage of the professional advice of this number of residents who have certain expertise to offer in their various related fields.

We are confident that this action could only be to the ultimate benefit of the town and we are willing to devote time and energy in the attempt, but it can of course only be successful if the Council is willing to participate by adequate consultation and co-operation and if contacts between the parties are made sufficiently frequently for a continuing period.

It would of course be best if the Design Group had the authority and facilities to assume the position of a properly appointed planning consultant and finally deliver to the Council a fully documented Plan.

Since this is not possible, the Group must limit its activities to produce sound advice based on data produced by the Urban District Council or the County Council authorities when need be, for the local authority to consider and, according to circumstances, embody and implement through the control procedures.

It appears to us that there is a great danger of Harpenden losing its visual attractiveness through lack of a thoroughly considered and three dimensional appreciation of the changes which are currently taking place and will continue to take place during the foreseeable future.

There are of course immediate as well as long term problems and if advice is to be offered, then these considerations must be tackled in parallel for

an immediate solution is worthless unless it can be accommodated in the long term plan, and similarly, the long term plan can be frustrated by ad hoc measures being taken in the short term. We should also differentiate between the small problems as well as large ones and again we feel that these must be approached with equal application, since the detail of a design is critical to the whole and again the opposite is also true.

The Group proposes then to look at the urban design of Harpenden in terms of the immediate and long term objectives, in the detail of certain proposals as well as overall large scale solution. This will mean the concurrent working of all our members operating in several groups on these planes with the ultimate aim of producing the framework with which the adaptations and additions to the town can be accommodated.

Although our prime concern is the visual scene, this must inevitably be based on studies incorporating as many of the related fields of planning as possible, for otherwise advice simply concerned with appearance would be of a superficial order. It is accepted that what might be thought of as the recognisable Harpenden character, however indefinable, is of considerable value and whilst we have no intention of adopting a purely preservational attitude, this underlying quality can, we feel, be more consciously developed or retrieved in areas of new growth or in places of redevelopment, and it can be safeguarded in existing situations.

In the first instance, we require to examine the structure of Harpenden in terms of its visual construction and the experience it provides to the people who live and move about in it. Physically, the structure will show in terms of road patterns, densities of buildings and particular landscape formations, such as the groups of trees or open spaces. The experiences of these physical conditions can be evaluated and superimposed on the physical plan to add the element of quality to the factual record. By this means, certain drawings of the town map may well then be produced showing the broad distinctions of the urban, suburban and semi-rural areas. There are areas which one will also find destitute of character and provide no experience of any magnitude. At least these parts of the town should be delineated, even if their eventual rehabilitation represents a very long term approach.

Having established these patterns of identity, any action of development may be more currently assessed in terms of whether it assists the existing structure or detracts from it, or as a further alternative, amends the structure to produce a different situation. Whatever the case, it is important to have a yardstick of this order so that the action of any form of development can be predetermined.

Secondly, in terms of greater detail, we consider that there are various areas where development should take place in relation to more carefully prepared three dimensional studies which include consideration of such image making material as the structural materials of buildings, the colour, the landscape and street furniture. It is often the street picture which is of more significance than the individual appearance of an isolated building and to illustrate this point, whilst the separate buildings of Milton Road may be adequately designed, there is no comprehensive or cohesive quality whatsoever to the redeveloped road.

Thirdly, the Central Area requires a special examination and this will involve the major problems of the A.6 road, car parking, and pedestrian areas. We are anxious to know when the County Council plan for this area will be available and in what depth the subject has been considered and finally, what policy it provides to enable the Urban District Council to evaluate future developments.

These proposals constitute the bulk of the long term efforts and over a period of time, this work should result in a town plan of considerably greater benefit as a working tool than the present land use zoning techniques.

In the short term however there are continuing developments to account for and consider within the context of our present ideas rather than a detailed framework. Some of our most immediate cases, such as the proposed redevelopment of the market by Sainsburys, the alterations to the Post Office and the applications which have been received in Carlton Terrace, are not only important issues now, but the results of these new developments could have a most decisive effect in their respective areas for a very long time in the future.

In conclusion, having stated our main objectives, it should be apparent that our interest does not lie in the sifting of planning applications, nor the examination over garage additions or individual houses on the larger estates. On the other hand, whilst centred on the larger scale, it is equally obvious that we would rely on the Council's early advice on such projects which could have a measurable effect on our studies. As we see it, joint meetings with representatives of the relevant Council Committees and officers would be the best means of exchanging information and enabling the work to proceed with confidence.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas with the Council members and officers on 17th October.

JSB/RAK

3.10.68.

HARPENDEN URBAN DESIGN GROUP

(Doc. 36) contd

Memo of meeting at Mary Ellen's Restaurant on Thursday 15th January 1970.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from David Oakley, Paul Ahm, Kenneth Lack and John McMorrow.

2. COMMON PARKING

P. Holland reported briefly on the progress of his Study Group. The results of the County Survey of parking on the Common had still not been received. A plan prepared by Harpenden Council, showing the areas used for parking at present, was studied. The defined areas south of the cricket pitch were generally thought to be satisfactory. Parking on the triangle at the northern end was firmly rejected. Parking around the filled in Silver Cup Pond was thought generally to be undesirable, but difficult to control as it was likely still to be used as an overflow to the Public House, creating a distinct traffic hazard. The density of parking in this area might well diminish now that the pond has been filled.

The Group will bring forward firm proposals for the next meeting, including landscape proposals for controlling car access.

Under 'Any Other Business' it was agreed that the Group would exhibit its proposals in conjunction with the Harpenden Society who are taking a stand at the Leisure Exhibition on the 22nd April.

3. TOWN CENTRE APPRAISAL

Mr Cuneen reported that they had partially completed a photographic survey and analysis of the Central area. They had talked about shopping habits and future trends, but had come to no firm conclusions. In the absence of the results of the traffic survey undertaken by the County, they have not been able to consider traffic problems, but the Group were of the opinion that urgent action would be needed in the near future at the High Street/Station Road junction. There appeared to be three possible short term solutions at this point, all of which undesirable from the amenity point of view. It was agreed that the Group would show off their partial survey and discuss traffic in more detail at the next meeting even though the discussion would in all probability not revolve around a factual assessment.

Reference was made to the provision of the Bus Shelter on the east side of the High Street. Mr Cuneen will ascertain more detail from the Surveyor and further discussion will take place at the next meeting.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Lea Valley rumour has it that the Group will be invited to submit proposals to the Council for the development of the Lea Valley as a leisure area. In anticipating this request, it was agreed that Mr Sinclair and ~~Morris~~ Smith should form a Study Group under the Chairmanship of Pat Wilson.

(b) Luton Airport Expansion: It was agreed that the Secretary should write to the L.A.D.A.C.A.N. offering some support, as we can give, at the forthcoming Public Enquiry on expansion.

A short p. 2, badly stained & mainly admin., discarded