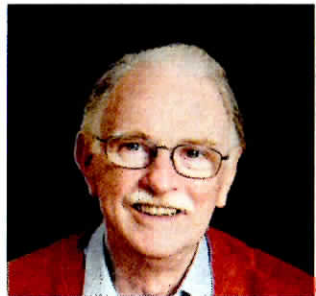


Oliver Farley: What is good architectural design?



interesting and attractive buildings and places through contemporary design.

As Chichester DC says, there is no formula for the achievement of high quality design but it should be founded on a thorough analysis and understanding of context, addressing the built, natural and historic environment as well as issues of environmental sustainability and the needs of the community.

The Horsham Society and the three Neighbourhood Councils collaborated on the 2008 Horsham Town Design Statement which was adopted by Horsham District Council and can be found on its website.

I warmly recommend it to everyone interested in Horsham and its future.

The Statement deserves much greater prominence than it is currently getting. Developers seem unaware of it at all and too often take the minimalist approach in the belief that bland is safe.

Good architectural design is something we all recognise when we see it but can't define satisfactorily in words. So, let me duck the issue and say instead what good design ought to do: be suitable for the building's purpose, be aesthetically satisfying and invite curiosity.

Chichester District Council and others have adopted design protocols which seek to secure high quality development which conserves and enhances the natural and built environment, creating



Parkside - an example of good design

The recent discussions over the proposed redevelopment of Prewett's Mill seems to be a case in point. The developer submitted a simple, core plan expecting it to be negotiated upwards to some improved version of the initial proposal.

But good design cannot be

bargained into a building by a committee. If it doesn't start off right, it'll end up wrong.

What might help prospective developers, and HDC itself, would be to draw more attention to those examples of good design which Horsham already has such as Parkside, a new building, and the Town Hall,

a successful adaption of an old building for modern use.

Parkside dates from 1994 but clearly relates to the early 1980s when post-modernist-toyland-jokey buildings sprang up to the world's astonishment.

The AT&T building in New York (1982) sported a broken pediment as a final flourish and caused untold comment.

Horsham's derived version has twin engaged pillars of toy-brick proportions, leading upwards to the ultimately gabled entrance, all adding a decorative enhancement to the glass exterior. Blue and beige are colours much in favour in this building, with the circular window surrounds in blue tiles. It may be beginning to date now, but it's still a statement of openness to new design.

Bill's conversion of the Town Hall was controversial in its day and for good reason.

In the event, Bill's did a very good job of the conversion and its arched

exterior and floored interior complement the use of Market Square for bright tables and seated diners.

The old interior had little to recommend it and the restaurant has wisely used the space as two floors, open to each other and binding the whole into a single dining area. It takes imagination to make the best use of these often constricted spaces but it can be done.

Describing good design may be difficult but there are local examples which can be used to promote and encourage innovation.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns. For more information, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 272814.