

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### JULY

**7th:** Chairman's Summer Event at the Shakespeare Centre, hosted by Dr. Diana Owen, the Director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Applications went out with the April *Update* and we are limited to 60 members £15. and non-members (one per member) £18. We meet at the main entrance at 6.30pm. The event includes a tour of the Trust's two new exhibitions, Life, Love and Legacy in the new Visitor Experience, and Shakespeare Found, the recently re-examined Crabbe portrait.

**16th:** Special meeting focusing on World Class Stratford's Walkable Core project which includes the Historic Spine being promoted by the Society. (See Page 4). Time and venue: 6pm, Falcon Hotel.

### SEPTEMBER

**21st:** The Rev Martin Gorick continues his historical review of Holy Trinity Church. Time and venue: 7.45pm, Falcon Hotel.

### OCTOBER

**19th:** John Rogers talks about the hard work required to win World Heritage status for Blaenavon in Wales, one of the 24 World Heritage Sites. Time and venue: 7.45pm, Falcon Hotel.

### NOVEMBER

**18th:** Carol Stanford of the Landmark Trust talks about how the Trust works to rescue and restore historic buildings at risk. Time and venue: 7.45pm, Falcon Hotel.

### DECEMBER

**4th:** John and Helen Hogg give us a light-hearted look at Stratford's darker side with tales of ghosts, witches, murder and mayhem with mulled wine and mince-pies to follow. Time and venue: 7.30pm, Falcon Hotel.

*All these and more will be in the programme card which will be with you in June. There is no meeting in January but in February there is a talk by Leonora Rozee of the Planning Inspectorate, in March the AGM and in April two members of the Architectural Heritage Fund talk about Heritage-led Regeneration.*

### SPECIAL EVENTS 2010

We are trying to organise a study tour to the Upton eco-town just outside Northampton. This will be a curtain-raiser to our 29th October workshop on Housing Design (see this page). In May a visit is planned to the extra-ordinary and exotic Sezincote House and Garden in Moreton-in Marsh. Details of all these will be on your programme cards and in the Autumn issue of *Talk of the Town*.

# Better housing by design for our town

THE Society has been concerned for some time about design and layout of new housing in the town. That designs should be varied and interesting is important for residents in new houses; it is also relevant to the ambience of the town as a whole. And tightening requirements to reduce domestic carbon emissions may have a significant impact on designs for the future.

At present few new houses are being built. The Council's moratorium on house building in the District remains in force and the recession is hitting house builders hard. But there is pent up demand for new housing. Public examination of the draft West Midlands Spatial Strategy is now under way. When the Strategy is approved—perhaps early next year—it is possible that the District will have to provide for some 10,000 more houses to be built over the next 20 years. In the far from certain event that the Eco-town is approved, much of that new development might take place at Long Marston. But that would still leave many houses to be built to fulfil the Strategy and it is Stratford where developers are most likely to look for sites. And a change of government next year would not relieve the pressure as the main parties largely agree on housing targets.

This year is therefore a good time to consider the design issue. So the Society is organising a one-day workshop on Housing Design on 29th October. There

By Peter Burgess

will be some 100 participants all told, including councillors and planning staff from the District, representatives from the building industry and professions and invitees from other civic societies. The plan is that the day should be divided into three, starting with talks on the significance of design, followed by introduction to some case studies of successful developments and ending with workshop discussions to consider lessons learnt.

Thanks to Ian Heggie, the morning's keynote speech will be given by Hank Dittmar, Chief Executive of the Prince's Foundation. There will be further talks by a representative of Midlands Architecture and the Designed Environment and a planning manager from the building industry. The case studies to be covered in the second session will include a presentation about the prize-winning Accordia development at Cambridge.

The workshop is about a significant aspect of the town's future. The message we want both the Council and others to take is that design matters. Permitting drab expansion around the town is in no one's interest. We cannot expect to match the fine old buildings of the town centre but we can at least try to ensure interest and variety in our new housing.

## Pressing for reinstatement of meetings with planners

BOTH the Chairman's Report and the recent *Update* have commented on the District Council's cancellation of our regular monthly Planning Group meetings with the District Council Planning Department.

Our Planning Group is trying to re-instate some form of consultation arrangement in the absence of regular meetings and availability of detailed plans connected with planning applications, to which we previously had access. Leon Tanner reported to the General Committee meeting of 30th March that he and Peter Burgess and Brian Wright had recently met a member of the District Council Planning Department about communications and in particular consultations over planning applications. It seems likely that we will have access to documentation in the case of 'major' planning applications, but for the moment will have to continue to rely on the internet for others, that is for most. Regular meetings are not at present being considered at all. After the many years during which we have had monthly meetings with planning officials and access to details of planning applications on request, it is very disappointing that the District Council feels it has to curtail this connection.



The Stratford-upon-Avon Society

# THE TALK of the TOWN

The newsletter of the Stratford-upon-Avon Society

For those who care. . .and who want to influence the future of our town

www.stratfordsociety.co.uk

Spring 2009

# TV historian backs historic spine plan

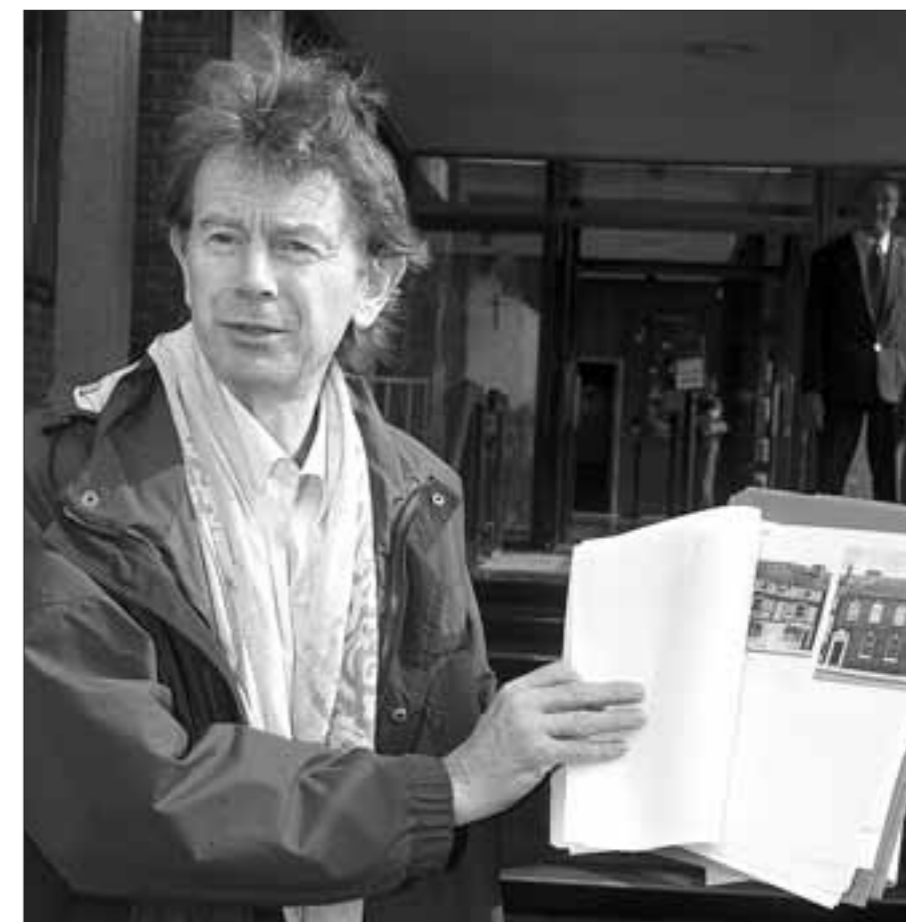
By Ian Prosser

A PROJECT started some 18 months ago by the Society received a remarkable boost and endorsement recently from the historian and TV presenter Michael Wood.

On the Friday morning of the Birthday Celebrations weekend (24th April), Michael Wood led a walk along the Historic Spine which contains many of the finest buildings in the town. He started at The Birthplace in Henley Street, and ended in Old Town at Holy Trinity Church. He was joined by some 50-60 Society members and visitors and a posse of photographers including Society Photographer, Dick Prior.

Michael Wood has been a regular visitor to Stratford since his university days at Manchester. Armed with his own personal copy of a street map of historic Stratford, and details of the Historic Spine from the Society's website, he described the many fine buildings along the way: The Market Hall, Harvard House, the Town Hall, the Shakespeare Hotel... all were covered. His knowledge was detailed and his enthusiasm immense. Michael advocated more pedestrianisation and

Continued on Page 2.



Michael Wood at the start of his walk along the Historic Spine.

Photo by Dick Prior www.dickpriorphoto.com

# Michael Wood backs Historic Spine concept

●Continued from Page 1.

other measures to enhance this route and the many significant building along it. He fully supported the Society's attempts to have the Spine recognised as a significant historic route. Appropriately, the walk ended in the churchyard of one of his favourite English churches, Holy Trinity

The concept of the Historic Spine was launched a little over 18 months ago by Dr Robert Bearman when he addressed over 100 Society members at the Falcon Hotel. The idea was adopted by the Society immediately and for many months now we have been seeking, and securing, support for the concept from residents and organisations in the town. The Historic Spine has now been included as a key feature of the proposals for the Walkable Core as part of World Class Stratford. We are hoping that these proposals will help to enhance these building on the Spine by removing unnecessary clutter, restricting the loading and unloading of vehicles, discouraging touring coaches, reducing the amount of street parking, widening some of the pavements and we have many more ideas which are under discussion with the County Council.

With the support and enthusiasm of Michael Wood still fresh in our mind the Society is determined to see these ideas through to enhance this significant historic route.

In the meantime our thanks to Michael Wood.... a memorable morning...a memorable walk.

(For details of the Historic Spine and photographs please see the Society's website at [www.stratfordsociety.co.uk](http://www.stratfordsociety.co.uk))



Photo by Dick Prior [www.dickpriorphoto.com](http://www.dickpriorphoto.com)

# New theatre 'more important than ever to local economy'

MEMBERS will already have received, either by post or by e-mail, the 2009 Annual General Meeting papers, including the Chairman's Report. Here are some highlights.

He began by saying that no-one could have imagined at last year's AGM that we would be facing such a severe recession as we face this year. But despite the difficulties work must go on. For example, the building of the new theatre progresses and is now even more important to our local and regional economy than when it started. In the best interest of the economy it has to succeed.

Mr. Prosser looked back over the year's activities, and mentioned the opening talk by Dr. Diana Owen, the new Director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust which attracted an audience of well over 100. A result of her talk is our coming visit to the Shakespeare Centre on 7th July (applications for which have already gone out with the April Update). Vikki Heywood of the RSC also had an excellent audience for her talk in February. Next season we shall be introducing a small admission charge for visitors to our talks, to help cover some of our expenses.

Our publications are now supported by a Communications Group, chaired by Ian Heggie. It has been strengthened by the addition of Richard Kemp, who works with the Birthplace. Robert Bearman's book, *Stratford-upon-Avon: A History of its Streets and Buildings*, has now sold out. The Society is indebted to the Town Trust for the grant of £1,000, which enabled us to sell the book at a reasonable price and ensure all the books were sold.

The Chairman also spoke of our shock that the District Council had discontinued our monthly planning meetings

which had been part of our consultation process on planning applications. We have had these monthly meetings for most of our 40 years and attached great value to them. The District Council as a planning service has not been meeting some of its government targets and they are introducing ways of sharpening up the process. (see Plans and Planning)

With the retirement of Jack Crimp and Neville Usher from the General Committee we must thank them for many years of service, to Jack Crimp as photographer and awards co-ordinator, and to Neville, Social Secretary and Oral History archivist. Joan Burgess is also standing down as programme secretary, having planned and organised successful programmes of quality. Beryl Downing is retiring as Hon. Secretary to the Society though she has offered to stay on for a short period until a new Secretary is found. He concluded with congratulations to Jenny Fradgley, our minute secretary, on her election as the next Mayor of Stratford.

Officers and Committee for 2009-10: President, Sir Brian Follett; Chairman, Ian Prosser; Vice-Chairman, Kevin Bond (Hon. Secretary, Beryl Downing (pro tem); Hon. Treasurer; Bertie Tuckey; Hon. Membership Secretary, Ian Fradgley; Minute Secretary, Jenny Fradgley. Committee members, (retiring in 2010) Ian Prosser, Joan Burgess, Peter Burgess; (retiring in 2011) Kevin Bond, Ian Heggie, Patricia McFarland, Paul Standing; (retiring in 2012) Paul Burley, Roger Pringle, Dick Prior, Leon Tanner, Brian Wright; affiliated member, Will Hawkes.

For an extra copy of the Chairman's Report in full, contact Patricia McFarland (01789 204127).

# Can the town centre be ready for the reopening of the RST?

A NUMBER of issues have arisen following the publication of the Society's reactions to the Stratford District Council's proposals for the future of the Stratford town centre (the details are on the Society's website). The Council, in their Draft proposals for the Core Development Strategy, had claimed that retailing would continue to grow in the town centre and would even expand at the edges of the town centre in areas such as the so-called Canal Quarter e.g. Western Road and the Bridgeway.

The Society has been saying for a number of years that, in common with other historic market towns, Stratford faced the prospect of a reduced retail

By Brian Wright

presence in the face of the ever-expanding out-of-town shopping centres such as the Maybird and the growth of retailing over the internet. The current recession is speeding up these forces and, in common with many other towns Stratford now faces a range of empty shops and the need to develop a long-term strategy to encourage both new shops and alternative means of filling any surplus space.

The Society was criticised for being so candid but it is our view that if Stratford continues 'putting its head in the sand' it will never introduce the necessary measures. Both the Stratford Society and Stratford Voice have put in proposals for reviving the design and planning of the town centre. The Stratford Society's Historic Spine, which is dealt with elsewhere, is a proposal for a holistic approach from the Birthplace to the Church, which is gaining increased support. Whilst we do not want to create some new form of Disneyland we believe that the Historic Spine can play a key part in reviving the centre of Stratford and to encourage visitors and residents alike to keep on visiting.

**Much of the planning for the Spine comes from the main conservation area and one encouraging aspect of the controversy aroused by the Society's comments was a statement by Councillor Stuart Beese, the**



●Work moves on apace at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, but is the rest of Stratford keeping up? Photo courtesy of the *Stratford Herald*

**Executive Member for Planning, that the SDC would look positively at introducing Article 4, which would enable the SDC to take a greater control of shops signs, the use of paint and many other design issues. Article 4 Directions came into effect on July 1990 and can be issued by a Council where specific control over development is required, primarily where the character of an area of acknowledged importance is under threat.**

They are most commonly applied to conservation areas and are in use by Warwick District Council both in the town centres of Warwick and Leamington Spa as well as the Cotswold District Council in Chipping Campden. They are in place in virtually every historic town in the country and in most of the major cities.

Another aspect that came up from the discussion of the town centre was how to use the empty shop fronts on a temporary basis. The town of Dursley in Gloucestershire has created a great deal of interest in its scheme to give local artists access to its empty shops, whilst other towns have turned large shops into a form of arcade to encourage local small businesses. The Government have become sufficiently interested to announce a £3m fund

to encourage such schemes ("Empty Shops revival plan to prevent high street decline"—April 14th, Department for Communities and Local Government)

There are a number of approaches of which temporary use by small shops or local clubs or societies is one, whilst another is to use them for static displays of notable local activities or events. Whilst Stratford needs to do everything it can to encourage small shops there is a danger that the result can often resemble the look of a jumble sale and there is also the problem of unfair competition- if a small shop gets free space but then sets up in competition with a long-standing provider of the same products it can be deemed unfair trading.

Stratford should be in a good position to use empty shopfronts for standing displays from bodies such as the RSC and the Birthplace Trust as well as information on current productions.

A long-term strategy to revive the town centre will take time but in the meantime we have the re-opening of the RST even as early as late 2010. This should be a powerful draw for visitors both from the UK and overseas and we won't want them presented with a dead town centre.

# Putting the heat on energy inefficiency

THE Society fulfilled its mission to share emerging good practice on the evening of 27th April when it rounded off its 2008-09 programme with a presentation from a leading UK expert about why we all need to understand and pay attention to the Government's new eco labelling system for buildings.

Dry stuff one might fear—but not in the hands of Dr Paul Davidson, the Director of the Sustainable Energy Group at the prestigious Building Research Establishment. He led the team which developed the calculation tool that underpins the new labelling system and is a skilled advocate of eco labelling. His talk sparked off a lively discussion in which local building professionals and laymen alike were keen to swap experiences and share ideas about ways to drive up the energy performance of buildings in Stratford and the obstacles to be overcome.

There is no longer any credible dispute about the damaging effect of carbon emissions on the environment. In the UK, energy used in buildings accounts for nearly 50 per cent of carbon emissions. Another ten per cent arises from the production of building materials. Last year Government introduced Energy Performance Certificates for all buildings as part of its strategy to reduce carbon emissions. The certificates are designed to indicate the level of energy efficiency against a common standard for all buildings so that the performance of one building can be readily compared with that of other similar properties.

By Joan Burgess

Over the last 20 years or so we've all become familiar with the eco-labelling of domestic appliances. As public concern for energy conservation has grown, manufacturers have been forced to raise the performance level of their products. So how can buildings be made more efficient? For new buildings, minimum performance standards are set by the Building Regulations. Dr Davidson argued, however, that developers should be looking to exceed that minimum standard—and that the intelligent customer should be pressing them to do so. Better energy performance is perfectly possible he says and need not add much to the cost. There can be a significant long term return on the initial outlay. Not only does the environment benefit from reduced carbon emissions, but also the lower running costs and improved environmental impact assessment can be expected to raise the market value of the property.

The costs need not be great. Skilful layout can reduce the demand for artificial heat, ventilation, cooling and light. Windows can be located to take advantage of the natural light, but away from the direct heat of midday sun. They can open to provide natural ventilation instead of relying on air conditioning. All workplace studies show that workers prefer natural light and ventilation and that productivity increases when those are available.

Properly insulated walls can maximise heat retention in cold weather and stop the building becoming overheated in Summer. Boilers and other equipment should be of an appropriate size for the building. Oversized plant does not operate efficiently.

The responsibilities do not only rest with businesses. Dr Davidson wants us all to take an interest in the energy performance of the public buildings which are sustained from our taxes. All public buildings with an area of 1,000 square metres or more are now required to put up an Display Energy Certificate showing how much energy is being used to operate the building. The operational rating must be based on actual readings and a dotted blue line on the certificate shows the benchmark which buildings of the same type are expected to achieve. The certificate should be displayed in a prominent place. Next time you are in your local school for example check the certificate and if it shows the energy performance indicator as coming below the dotted blue line, ask the headteacher or governors what measures are being taken to improve its performance. Look out for Display Energy Certificates in the library, local council offices and other public buildings. Make a point of challenging the poor performers.

The purpose of eco-labelling then is to show what level of energy efficiency a building is capable of achieving. It can't however determine what level of performance will actually be achieved. That depends on us—the energy users—and the care we take to avoid waste.

## 'Smart' growth in historic towns

THE Historic Towns' Forum held a useful event in Cambridge at the end of April which concentrated on the issues of achieving 'smarter growth' in our historic towns and cities, writes Paul Ogden.

It was particularly stressed that our historic towns offer a good quality of life, are frequently prosperous and are in varying degrees, models of sustainable development. Partly as a consequence of this they are facing the challenge of growth and need to deal with this as part of the long history of incremental change that characterise our historic towns. Growth needs to be seen as a positive opportunity to address issues such as lack of affordable housing and creating attractive neighbourhoods to support economic growth, but this needs positive planning that includes provision for the physical and social infrastructures that communities need.

Simon Payne, Director of Planning at Cambridge (previously of SDC) highlighted Cambridge's growth proposals, involving four major 'urban extensions' to accommodate around 20,000 new homes by 2020. Representatives from the Prince's Foundation and various design consultancies stressed the need for clear 'design codes' to ensure quality of design that

reflected the 'DNA' of the urban community space to ensure local distinctiveness but with appropriate diversity. It was recognised that if left to the 'free market' all too often the result is uniformity of design at least cost and this did not reflect the diversity of design, characteristic of our historic towns.

Dr. Nicholas Falk, of URBED stressed the need for 'smarter growth' pointing out that in general European towns and cities had been better at embracing development and creating sustainable close-knit neighbourhoods. The UK had much to learn from European good practice if the rate of development needed was to be achieved providing attractive, distinctive, sustainable neighbourhoods within the next ten to 15 years.

The positive and negative impacts of growth on the historic cores of our towns were discussed with particular emphasis on achieving sustainable outcomes and maximising the opportunities that growth brings. The need for an overall 'masterplan' similar to the already completed 'Urban Design Framework for Stratford-upon-Avon' was seen as a vital element from the outset, in order to provide the overall strategic basis within which specific development can be considered in more detail.

## ELY: A CASE STUDY REVISITED

# At the heart of successful development – a strong local authority willing to fight for good design

HISTORIC towns do not have to put up with badly designed development. Local Councils can set standards and insist that developers adhere to them—even when they threaten to sue.

This was the finding of a conference 'Managing Rapid Growth in Historic Towns' held by the English Historic Towns Forum in December 2004. It was

By Ian Heggie

held in Ely—a town which had met the problem of rapid growth, found a solution and applied it—with impressive results.

With a similar population to Stratford, Ely was facing a 25-30 per cent increase in population by the year 2011. As soon as their housing targets were announced the developers moved in and started buying up all the available brownfield and greenfield sites around the town. They also started preparing "catalogue" designs and submitting them for planning permission. The District Council quickly realised that, if this continued, the heritage value of the town would be



●Ely: Developers are made to conform to a Housing Design Guide. . .

destroyed and so would their visitor base. So what did they do?

First they hired a firm of consultants to carry out a study of the town and prepare a Housing Design Guide, which they adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. They then invited the developers to a meeting. They took

them around the town in a coach pointing out the materials, building forms, roof shapes, views of the Cathedral, etc. that made Ely special. They then sat them down in a room and told them that from now on all new planning applications would have to conform to the new housing design guidance. If not, they would not get planning permission. There were howls of outrage and the developers threatened to take the District Council to court. The Council told them to go ahead. To cut a long story short the developers accepted the guidance, tore up their existing schemes and re-designed their developments.

Participants at the conference were then driven around the new developments to see for themselves. The result was well-designed buildings, tree-lined avenues with hedges, open spaces between buildings opening up views of the Cathedral, etc. Not only had the developments not detracted from the quality of the town, in many respects they added to it. Even the developers were happy with the outcome, since their houses were selling like hot cakes.



●. . .and the result is houses that sell like hot cakes.

## Discussing the key issues affecting our town centre

HERE are more details of the meeting (featured in the April issue of *Update*) to be held at the Falcon Hotel, at 6pm on Thursday 16th July.

This is a special meeting to discuss some of the key issues affecting the town centre and in particular the most important issue, the Walkable Core. This project is being progressed by Warwickshire County Council and Arups and includes, as a core component, the Historic Spine. Since the success of the Spine depends on the support of town centre business, this will be a joint meeting organised by the Society and the Town Management Partnership.

The meeting will take the form of a panel discussion managed by an animator who will be Sir Brian Follett. World Class Stratford representative will be David Pywell who will be given ten minutes to introduce the Walkable Core project. Panel members will be allotted five minutes each. They are Gary Barnes (Town Management Partnership) to highlight the benefits to the town as a whole; Jane Jordan (Laura Ashley) to outline the potential benefits to retailers in the town; Richard Egginton (Town Trust) to talk about the likely impacts on property values and developer perceptions; and Diana Owen (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust) to outline benefits to the Birthplace and the visitor economy in general. The objective is to try and win support from town centre businesses for the key actions required to make the Walkable Core a reality. We hope to have a large audience of Society members, Town Management Partnership, local authority staff and elected members.

## Future of Heritage Open Days in doubt

THE sudden announcement by the Civic Trust that “having come under severe funding constraints being imposed on local authorities and our other current and potential funders” and having considered a number of options for the Trust’s future, including a potential merger with another organisation, the trustees have with great regret resolved to place the Trust into administration.

The Civic Trust was established 52 years ago and has more than 700 active civic societies. The Stratford Society was founded in 1966 and registered with the Civic Trust. It still is. This decision by the Trust throws plans for Heritage Open Days into doubt. The open days were a joint event of English Heritage and the Civic Trust. This year’s event is scheduled for 10th to 13th September and our Society would be calling for volunteers to help man our stand. English Heritage and the Civic Trust organised the Heritage Open Days together. If they are able to go ahead—if the Civic Trust is rescued in time—watch for future *Updates* for word of the fate of the local Heritage Open Days programme.



●Poundbury: A calm and walkable environment with traditional, if sometimes quirky architecture, and no traffic signs or yellow road markings.



I VISITED Poundbury on 11 February to participate in a seminar on Structuring Settlements. The seminar used Poundbury as the starting point from which to explore the essential ingredients needed to structure settlements which produce sustainable, mixed use communities appropriate to an era of rapid climate change and increasing urbanisation.

Poundbury started life in 1987 when West Dorset District Council selected land west of Dorchester and owned by the Duchy of Cornwall for future expansion of the town. Leon Krier was appointed as master planner to prepare an overall development concept for 400 acres of land within the Dorchester bypass. Of this, 250 were to be used for mixed-use buildings, while the remaining 150 were to be landscaped. The masterplan was showcased to the public at a planning weekend and their comments were reflected in the scheme before planning permission was sought. The masterplan divided the site into four distinct quarters to be developed in separate phases. The four quarters will eventually be linked together by a square—the Queen Mother Square—to form a district centre for Poundbury. The overall plan provides for 2,200 new homes (i.e., about 5,000 new residents) and is expected to grow to this number by 2020. Overall 20 per cent of the housing is being built by housing associations as affordable housing. Currently there are about 1,700 people

# Poundbury: has the experiment worked?

By Ian Heggie

is that parking spaces occupied for a mere 40 hours per week are a waste of space. Industrial and commercial entities should share parking spaces with residents and others who use the same spaces “out of hours.”

An important innovation was the creation of management companies to take responsibility for unadopted courtyards, trees and other common vegetation, employment of handymen, satellite TV maintenance, etc. Each household owns shares in the company and annual charges are levied to cover the cost of their services (currently £110 per household p.a.). Shareholders (i.e., local residents) appoint directors to oversee the work of the company and they also deal with day-to-day operations, together with any issues related to the statutory services delivered by the local authorities (e.g., street lighting, road

living in Poundbury with 1,000 employed in local businesses on site. The businesses include a wide variety of firms such as a chocolate manufacturer, cereal factory, ICT systems supply and maintenance business, veterinary services, etc.

The underlying philosophy of the development is to create a high-density urban quarter which achieves an attractive, modern and pleasing place in which residents can live, work, shop and play. One of the over-riding objectives is to ensure that people can access most of their daily needs within a ten-minute walk. The architecture is traditional, using Dorset materials like stone, slate and render. Emphasis is placed on the quality of design and materials, landscaping and attention to details—for example, no yellow road markings, no road signs and very few white lines. Apart from the main access roads, all access routes are shared-space. Parking is generally provided in landscaped courtyards at the rear of the properties and dedicated private parking, e.g. for factories, is discouraged. The view

cleaning, etc.). The settlement also has a residents’ association that issues a newsletter, runs gardening competitions, oversees events in the Market Hall, etc.

How was the Duchy able to deliver the Poundbury Experiment? The simple answer is by owning the land. The Duchy prepared the overall concept, developed the layout and specified both the building design standards and materials. They then invited bids for each phase, specifying clearly the kind of housing development—together with the amount of industrial/commercial space—they expected to see. After selecting the winning bidder, these specifications were attached to the contract document, which also required the developer to seek Duchy approval for the final designs before they were submitted for planning permission. Finally, the Duchy monitored compliance to ensure that the agreed standards were implemented.

Has Poundbury achieved its objectives? My answer is yes. The on-site walkabout which formed part of the seminar

revealed an attractive, calm and walkable environment that I would be happy to live in. You can genuinely walk in the middle of the road with ease and all the basics of everyday life are within a ten-minute walk. Some of the architecture is a bit quirky, but nevertheless still pleasing. The social housing—pepper-potted throughout the site—seems to be working and has not led (as far as we could tell) to bands of roaming feral youths. Parked cars were noticeable (there are about two per dwelling), but not unduly intrusive. At 20 dwellings per acre, density seemed high but this was more than offset by the quality of the buildings.

An excellent experiment, but my main concern was whether it could be repeated elsewhere. The typical context in which the average English district operates is one where the sites are owned by a variety of different developers, not a single land-owner as was the case in both Poundbury and Upton. In this connection, Ely may be a better example. There the local authority prepared its own design guidelines and insisted that the developers followed them. However, this only worked because there was strong leadership and widespread commitment within the local authority. Developers were told that, if they did not follow the design guidelines, planning permission would be refused. And if they appealed, the local authority would see them in court where they were confident they would win.