

TOWN SQUARE : WE WANT A WELL-DESIGNED CENTRE NOT A CONCRETE CLONE



Town Square - anonymous concrete clone

A HEART TRANSPLANT FOR THE TOWN CENTRE

Other towns and cities have done it - why can't we? Gordon Reid, Oxford's city centre manager, will open the new programme by telling us what Oxford is doing to promote a prosperous town centre and the important role played by town centre markets. He will also look at what other towns are doing to avoid having a town centre full of empty shops. Please make sure you have the date in your diaries - **Monday 19th September at 6.15pm at the Falcon Hotel.**



Oxford's covered market

The Society's Historic Spine Group is so alarmed at the proposals for Town Square that it has appealed to the leader of Stratford District Council to delay a final decision until the publication of the Core Strategy.

The Society's chairman Dr Kevin Bond, who is also chairman of the Historic Spine Group, has written an open letter to Councillor Chris Saint, asking the Council to take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a well-planned town centre appropriate to its historic surroundings.

The letter has also been signed by Professor Ronnie Mulryne, Chairman of Governors of King Edward VI school and Martyn Luscombe of Stratford Voice.

They call upon Stratford District Council to consider that the structural mass of a multi-screen cinema proposed by the developer, London & Regional, will damage the character of an important part of the town.

'The present plans show little imagination, no sympathy for the location and no regard for the needs of the town,' says Kevin Bond. 'They also appear to be in breach of the Urban Design Framework which the Council adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2007.'

Commenting on a meeting with the developer called by the mayor, when Mr Geoff Springer, L&R's UK development director, refused to consider any alternatives, Dr Bond said:

'SDC's planners have a responsibility to the town which requires foresight and not a slavish response to the short term aims of a developer who has threatened that if his plans are refused the area will remain derelict.'

'This is the same developer who has failed the town before - promising a thriving centre with attractive public spaces but delivering a badly designed concrete shell with no soul.'

Brian Wright, the Society's Strategy Group chairman, points out that as supermarket and internet shopping rapidly expand, the only retail sector that shows signs of growth is that of the small independent retailer offering specialist goods and services not available elsewhere. Such retailers need attractive premises (as in Oxford's covered market, below) and



he suggests that Town Square could be developed into a congenial mix of shops, cafés, housing and small offices, with facilities for a high quality market.

Kevin Bond emphasises that the Society is not against the idea of a larger cinema in the town, but is concerned that the problems of siting

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it in Town Square outweigh the advantages.

Martyn Luscombe also points out that the proposals for a cinema imply a change of use to entertainment, which could result in late night use with undesirable consequences, particularly for Ely Street neighbours. Nor has any consideration been given to the parking problems associated with a 910-seat cinema in the centre of town.

'At least SDC, as landowners, should give the town the opportunity to consider alternatives,' says Kevin Bond. 'Town Square should be designed to complement the nationally important buildings on the Historic Spine. The Spine is unusual in attracting support from residents and businesses alike. We need to make sure this consensus is not dealt a death blow.'

Heritage Open Days

This year's Heritage Open Days will take place at the Town Hall from September 9 to 11. The Society's theme will be Shopfronts, highlighting good and not so good examples in the town.

The exhibition, overseen by Paul Burley, will also include examples of the shop front designs done by Shottery and Bridgetown primary school pupils during the visits of Dick and Anne Prior with Jean Clymer earlier this year.

Five-Year Plan

In answer to a call from historian Michael Wood and the former mayor, Cllr Shelagh Sandle, the Historic Spine Group is developing a five-year plan to achieve improvements to the route from Shakespeare's Birthplace in Henley Street to Holy Trinity.

The plan involves improving shop fronts - already under way - removing unnecessary signage from the route and creating the best possible environment for residents and the many visitors expected in 2016 - the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death.

A working group has been formed to carry this programme forward. The members are Ian Prosser (chair), Kevin Bond, Ian Heggie, Chris Gregory (Project Director, Stratford), County and District Councillor Ron Cockings with Beryl Downing as secretary.

FORMER ENGLISH HERITAGE COMMISSIONER TO ADVISE SOCIETY'S PROGRAMME

The Society is delighted to announce that Joyce Bridges CBE has agreed to advise the General Committee on future programme speakers.

Mrs Bridges, who lives in Ilmington and takes a keen interest in Stratford's development, was an English Heritage Commissioner from 2003 to August 2011 and is deputy chair of CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment).

She is also a member of the Mayor of London's Design Advisory Panel and has wide government experience in urban policy, planning, housing and regeneration. She has advised successive Secretaries of State on planning in London.

Having advised Yorkshire Forward's urban renaissance panel and many other planning bodies, Mrs Bridges is keen to encourage an appreciation of the best conservation and design in Stratford.



Jean Clymer will be starting to plan the 2012/13 programme shortly with Joyce Bridges and they need some help! If anyone is able to give a little time to working with Jean in organising the visits please telephone her on 01789 269183 or email jeanclymer@hotmail.co.uk and she will tell you what is involved.

TWO DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

In addition to the lecture programme, the new season starts on **September 29 at 2.30pm** with a guided tour of St Mary's church, Warwick. The Beauchamp chapel is one of the finest in the country. There is no charge for the tour, but a £2 donation is recommended. An optional cream tea, including free parking during our visit to St Mary's, will be £4 at the Lord Leycester Hotel.

The private view of rare archive items at the Shakespeare Centre will take place on **October 10 at 2.30pm** and not, as in the programme card, on 12th October, which will be a Mop day. Items not normally available to public view will include the document relating to Shakespeare's purchase of New Place, items from the Bram Stoker Collection and the first poster from the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre

Tickets are £8 each, with tea and cake (optional) £5. If you long to see a particular item please ask when booking.

Chairman joins Town Council's Localism Group

The Society's chairman, Kevin Bond, has been invited by the Town Council's Neighbourhood Planning Consultative Committee to chair one of its working groups. A number of working groups involving representatives of several local organisations will develop a neighbourhood plan in preparation for the forthcoming Localism Bill.

Dr Bond's group will consider the capacity of the town's infrastructure in the light of the demands on water and sewerage resulting from further developments.

Important reminder

If you use the Falcon's car park when you come to meetings, please remember to give your car registration number to reception.

**If you have difficulty getting to meetings and would like transport to be arranged, please contact Jean Clymer :
01789 269183 or email
jeanclymer@hotmail.co.uk**