

DORSET ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE WEEK 2022



To help celebrate the annual Heritage Week in September, our Committee members prepared material for a display of projects which have won the Society's Annual Award blue plaques. We are proud that the Awards scheme has been in existence for over 43 years, ever since 1979.

A selection of winners from different periods, illustrating various types of

project, was chosen for the display at the Nothe Fort. Board members then finalised the photos and texts ready for display in one of the Fort's casemates. It was pleasing to see our photos enlarged to A3 size, bringing out the essential qualities of the award winning projects. Material in this exhibition can now be used and expanded as a basis for future events and displays.



PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Tumbledown Farm

We have written in support of Weymouth Town Council's works to continue creating this community facility in Radipole Village in partnership with Weymouth Area Development Trust. This is now the subject of a planning application for the re-use and redevelopment of the old derelict farm buildings for local groups to grow and process food sustainably while protecting the natural environment. We applaud their commendable enterprise and the positive work being carried out with the community.

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Riviera Hotel, Bowleaze Cove



The Society has been approached regarding the condition of the Riviera Hotel. The large size and physical situation of this iconic Grade II listed 'Art Deco' building are likely to have contributed to the maintenance problems highlighted in some poor reviews by guests, who cited its general run-down character.

There were regrets that the outside pool was closed, while the latest serious incident was storm

damage to the Ballroom's flat roof, now the subject of a listed building consent application for 'rectification works'. We have contacted Dorset Council's Conservation staff about the situation, in case there is any action they can take, although that is likely to be limited. The best hope is that the owners will be able to carry out further work to improve its condition themselves.

Signs at Junction of Dorchester Road and Mercery Road, Radipole



We have written to the site owners of the 'Weymouth Gateway' development on Mercery Road in Radipole about the group of large signs at the Dorchester Road entrance to it. The original tall Sainsbury's 'totem' sign was initially approved before the development of the later businesses on the site. Consent was then granted for a second tall totem – an Estate sign, for several of the later

businesses. However, in addition to these, a third large advertisement board has been in place for some time, to the best of our knowledge without any consent.

With a growing number of businesses, there is clearly a need for some sort of rationalisation of advertising material. This area of ground was a pleasant grassy space backed by trees and shrubs, but these three large signs plus other pieces of street furniture have totally changed its character. Such a clutter of signage is unworthy of this important entrance to the Weymouth Gateway site, and we hope now that the owners will take action to improve the situation.

PLANNING OUTCOMES – A GENERAL OVERVIEW

Over many years of looking at and commenting upon planning applications, we have seen both successful and poorer proposals. In our work it has been a case of 'win some, lose some', but we like to think that our contributions have had some effect to the good. There is a constant demand for new housing, particularly genuinely affordable accommodation to satisfy the needs of local people, which is not being effectively met. Central Government has had an increasing influence on this situation, imposing local quotas derived from national statistics to be incorporated into local plans, to be fulfilled by encouraging higher densities to make 'efficient' use of land.



Locally there is very little of what could be called surplus 'brownfield' land to build upon to fulfil the government led quotas. In recent years this has led to the increased use of greenfield land, such as can be seen locally around Chickerell and to the west of Dorchester Road (e.g. Nottingham Lane), as well as the demolition of single family houses on large garden plots and their replacement with blocks of flats.

A major factor in the decision-making of local Councils is that they do not have full autonomy,

but are bound by national legislation and planning policy. If they refuse permission for a development which they consider unsuitable for the local neighbourhood without bearing that fully in mind, their decision may be reversed by a Planning Inspector, adhering more strictly to these over-riding requirements.

The general trend for increasingly dense development of residential sites, whether large or small, can be seen in new estates, where there are instances of tightly packed houses with small gardens, though many of these are not truly 'affordable'. In existing housing areas, the numerous rear extensions which are built contribute over-all to greater density of buildings over land. We also see some planning applications for new houses in side or back gardens, which can result in awkward and cramped layouts. These trends are likely to increase, with the government's aim to further loosen up planning controls.



On the plus side, there are instances where great improvements are made, including the commendable restoration of older, run-down buildings, with new uses providing them a fresh lease of life (e.g. Compass Point). Some of these achievements are given recognition in the Society's Annual Awards.

In general in our own area, new buildings, while not cutting-edge in design, tend to fit in reasonably well with the existing street scene (e.g. Lorton Park). All this is where good planning can come in, with the local planners encouraging, or maybe insisting on design improvements.



PLANNING COMMITTEE NEWS

We record with great regret the recent resignation of our Chairman Pauline Crump. Pauline has been an active and most dedicated Chairman of the Planning Committee, as well as a thoughtful carer for our group of members. She has brought to the post her commitment, hard work and enthusiasm for the good of the town and our local area, and her resignation is a huge loss to the Committee. We sincerely thank Pauline for all her work for the Committee and wish her and her husband Jim all the very best.



Gerald Mabb

We wrote in our last issue that Gerald Mabb had retired from the Committee owing to ill health. It is with great sadness that we report that Gerald passed away on 30th September. Gerald served the Society and the Planning Committee with diligence and grace for many years. He will be sorely missed. We offer our deepest sympathy to his family.