

architecture
urbanism
environmental
issues • in the
Cambridge
city region



Faculty of English

SIDGWICK SITE RETHINK

The masterplan for the Humanities on the Sidgwick site by architects Sir Hugh Casson and Neville Conder, following the Second World War, carried over the court form of development used for the Sciences on the Downing site and continued the tradition of collegiate building. The more regular programmatic nature of faculty accommodation does not lend itself to the more diverse, articulated structure and spatiality of the colleges, but a distinctive note was struck by elevating the buildings on piloti in accordance with modernist dogma. The subsequent development by other hands subverted the concept of linked buildings; the first of these, the History Faculty, was a freestanding object building and thereafter the Music School, the Law Faculty and new Divinity School were implemented in disregard of the originating conception in these formal respects. Recent installations for Criminology and English designed by Allies and Morrison add coherence to the overall site by infilling the matrix of plots thus formed, and by reworking the site landscaping which effects both a softening and a visual linkage between buildings on the western side of the campus and to the original Casson Conder development.



Sidgwick Site: The Matrix Reloaded



Site plan



Top: Criminology
Centre: English, Library Interior
Bottom: English
Photos: J. Lander

A favourite analogy of architect Graham Morrison's is that buildings are like high divers. A difficult dive has a high 'tariff' but may score no more points than a simple, low tariff dive executed perfectly. In a similar way a building that attempts all kinds of tricky, breathtaking manoeuvres may end up pleasing less than a building that does something quite simple but with a "minimum of splash".

The architectural diving pool that is Cambridge University's Sidgwick Site has seen buildings of varying tariffs since Casson Condor first masterplanned the site in 1952. Casson's own Raised Faculty Building entered the water with such elegance that the water barely rippled. Then up stepped Big Jim Stirling with his History Faculty, took a couple of shuddering jumps on the spring-board and launched a 'bomb' so spectacular that the waves are only just beginning to subside.

Norman Foster's Law Faculty later attempted what could be described as a 'medium tariff' dive with the barrel-glazed roof providing something like a 'somersault with twist'. Nevertheless critics, and clients, were left under-impressed and technical problems cost Foster the commission for further buildings on the site. Instead Graham Morrison and partner Bob Allies were brought in to renew Casson's masterplan and add a few buildings of their own. Two of these, the Faculty of English and Institute of Criminology, have just slipped off their towelling robes and dived in.

A rethink of the masterplan was certainly overdue. The Raised Faculty Building, supremely handsome though it is, is not a great success in terms of urban planning, awkward level changes subvert the formality of the podium and the piloti allow space to leak away from the central court leaving it rather lifeless. Casson's intended grid of interlocking courtyards was then knocked completely off kilter by the 45 degree shift of Stirling's History Faculty, made worse in the 1990s by Foster not being able to resist an architectural pas de deux with his old mentor. Finally

land deals that were supposed to allow more teaching blocks to the east did not come to fruition and the whole site was left in need of a good sort out.

Allies and Morrison are perfect candidates for this task. Indeed the commission reflects the incredible rise of their practice, named Architectural Practice of the year by *Builder* in 2004 and now about 200-strong. Nearby is their first building in Cambridge, the Rosalind Franklin Building for Newnham College (see *CAG Summer 1996*) completed when the practice was still quite small. A poetic response to Champneys' masterpiece, it helped set out their stall for their philosophy of stylistic restraint and urban contextualism. But there is none of the whimsicality of the Newnham building in English and Criminology. These are bold, serious statements; thoroughly 'grown-up' buildings produced by a practice that has become a major player on the international architectural scene.

English was the first to be completed, ready for the new academic year last September. It is built on the site of their old accommodation in West Road and brings together the disparate elements of the Faculty into one building for the first time. These include the Departments of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic and the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics. It also houses the Faculty library and a basement drama studio. The four-storey building consists of an L-shaped teaching block linked by an entrance hall to the library block on the south side, indented to accommodate a large holm oak tree. A screen wall to the west forms a courtyard that, though part of the public realm, feels private and secluded. Busy routes across the Sidgwick site pass by on both sides and when Land Economy (also to be by Allies and Morrison) is built to the east these routes will be more clearly defined with the space between the buildings finally given the attention it deserves.

The Institute of Criminology, just completed, is situated in a quieter part of the Sidgwick site, between the Law Faculty and Casson's 1959 lecture block. In contrast to the English Faculty the emphasis here is on research rather than teaching and a large part of the building is devoted to the Radzinowicz library, one of the world's largest collections relating to crime. The building consists of a simple four-storey block running north south with a protruding wing forming a glazed entrance foyer with meeting rooms above. The space between it and the Raised Faculty is turned into a sandy 'boules court' scattered with silver birches; and beneath the court the large basement is lit through roof lights set in a garden of blue-grey grass and shale.

Both buildings have meticulously detailed facades (manufactured by cladding specialist Schneider with ingenious window panels incorporating aluminium louvres for natural ventilation). Both demonstrate Allies and Morrison's consummate skill in composing beautifully proportioned rectangles. No curves or chamfers here; the orthogonal matrix that lays out the site and the ground plan rises up and orders the entire piece. But in spite of all they have in common each building possesses a completely different physiognomy. Criminology has a horizontal, layered look, its floors expressed in sleek white pre-cast concrete between alternating bands of glass and blue-black aluminium. English on the other hand has punched-in silver grey anodised windows, is much more homogeneous, and is clad entirely, and somewhat startlingly, in pink clip-on terracotta panels.

For architects trying to bring order and serenity to this part of Cambridge the decision to make each building so different could be seen as slightly curious. Budget may have had a hand in this (English cost £10m, the smaller Criminology building cost £12.8m) but while they may not relate much to each other there is little doubt that they do relate to their immediate neighbours, a key tenet of the Allies and Morrison philosophy. Criminology harmonises perfectly with the colour palette of the Casson building, brilliantly reconciling it with the Law Faculty, while English pulls off the even more difficult task of integrating with the brash red and silver machine-made aesthetic of the History Faculty, without pandering to it. However; the relationship between English and the other buildings on West Road is less successful and one cannot help wondering whether a more 'bricky' building, like the one Allies and Morrison have



Criminology

just completed for Fitzwilliam College, would have worked better here.

Allies and Morrison have cultivated a reputation for espousing the commonplace and the straightforward, rejecting 'iconic' buildings that seek attention and end up being called 'the whale' or 'the banana'. This opens them up to accusations that their architecture is 'ordinary', Piers Gough joking once that "nobody would cross the street to look at an Allies and Morrison building". Well, a building clad entirely in salmon pink terracotta, with the attendant risk of attracting all sorts of facetious epithets, can hardly be called ordinary. Will it upset the architects to find that at least one of their new buildings on the Sidgwick site has entered the water with a bit of a splash? Perhaps even the urbane Allies and Morrison could not resist making a few waves.

Jeremy Lander

Architect: Allies and Morrison
 Contractor: Wates Construction
 Structural Engineer: Whitbybird
 Services Consultant: Burro Happold
 Quantity Surveyor: Faithful and Gould

Cambridgeshire Horizons focussing on delivery

Cambridgeshire Horizons is a not-for-profit company that was set up in October 2004 by the local authorities to drive forward the implementation of the growth strategy for the Cambridge sub-region adopted in the 2003 Structure Plan. It is owned by the six local authorities together with English Partnerships and the East of England Development Agency (EEDA), and its Board also comprises representatives of key sectors and government agencies who have a role in delivering the strategy such as health, housing transport, education and economic development. Sir David Trippier, a former regeneration Minister, has been appointed as an independent Chairman of the Board.

Unlike an Urban Development Corporation, Cambridgeshire Horizons has no powers of its own, and acts through the powers of its members. Its main objectives are: to co-ordinate development and infrastructure implementation; overcome barriers to development projects; secure funding commitments for infrastructure; ensure that developments are sustainable and built to high quality standards.; and to communicate the benefits of the planned development to the wider community.

These objectives are to be achieved through four programmes:

1. Major developments – drawing up comprehensive delivery plans for each of the major development areas to assist and inform the planning process, focussing initially on Northstowe new town.
2. Strategic infrastructure – driving forward the key road, rail and utilities projects that are required to support development, as well as leading on the relocation of Cambridge Airport and Cambridge Sewage Treatment works to facilitate higher density mixed use developments close to Cambridge.
3. Funding – championing the Cambridge sub-region's case for funding in Whitehall, as well as co-ordinating a sub-regional approach to Section 106 negotiations. Where there are gaps, alternative funding sources will be explored.
4. Quality of Life – working with the local authorities and relevant agencies to develop strategies for 'green infrastructure', arts and cultural facilities and new sports provision to meet the needs of the growing population. A Cambridgeshire Design Quality Network is being established between the local authorities with support from shape Cambridge, EEDA and CABA, to improve urban design skills and promote good practice.

It's an exciting programme, but if it is not to be just another government quango in an already crowded and confused sub-regional scene, we will have to work openly and flexibly with our partners and the local community, and specifically target those areas where we can really make a difference. The adopted growth strategy for the Cambridge sub-region is probably the most ambitious of any part of southern England.

Peter Studdert

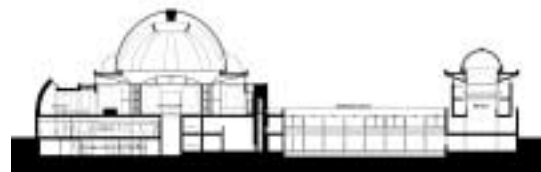
Director for Sustainable Communities at Cambridgeshire Horizons.

For further information see

www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk



Dining Hall & Fountains Court



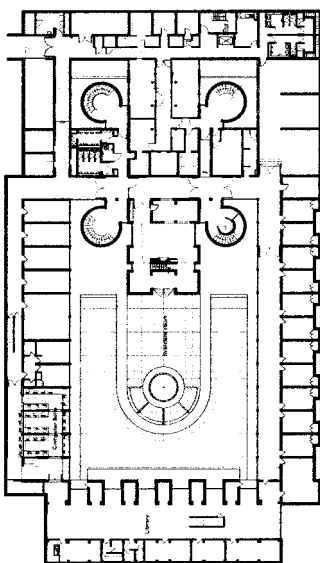
30m long servery to be built outside the dining hall at first floor level. New lifts were cut through the building to link the refurbished kitchens to the dining hall. The dome has been restored and the room made comfortable without radically altering the appearance of the architecture. Acoustics, lighting, heating, ventilation and fire precautions have all been completely overhauled. New furniture, designed in the 1960's has been installed and the College's major collection of women artists' work is displayed within the hall.

The whole project was completed in six phases including the installation of a backbone of new services and service routes around the College to allow a gradual upgrading of other areas over future years. The main toilets and fellow facilities have been refurbished as part of an overall programme to renovate the entrance concourse and corridors. This programme of work will eventually continue throughout the College.

In 2003 the central courtyard was restored and returned to the original landscape concept for the space. The water gardens have been re-tanked, new paving, fountains and lights added.

During the refurbishment the pre-stressing tendons supporting the library roof failed suddenly. The vaulted structure which spans 30m broke its back in the middle. The library required immediate attention and adding a £900,000 refurbishment to the overall project. After emergency propping had been installed, a scheme was developed to jack the roof back into position and strengthen the structure using a carbon fibre lattice and new external stainless steel post tensioning. The repairs were concealed within a new insulated render skin. Refurbishment of the library including structural repairs, re-roofing, downpipes, new acoustic linings, lighting and fire alarms was completed over a 12 month period during which the library was closed to students for 2 weeks.

NEW HALL REFURBISHMENT



Basement level plan

The original buildings of New Hall designed by Chamberlin Powell and Bon in the late 1950's were completed in 1965. The buildings received grade II* listing in 1993 and shortly after major additions were undertaken in partnership with Kaetsu to include improved conference facilities and a new entrance at the City end see *CAG issues 28, 32 and 37*. RH Partnership and their design team were then appointed in 1998 to undertake a programme of refurbishment and upgrading of the existing accommodation which has extended over a six year period. The R H Partnership project Director describes the recent work on the College buildings:

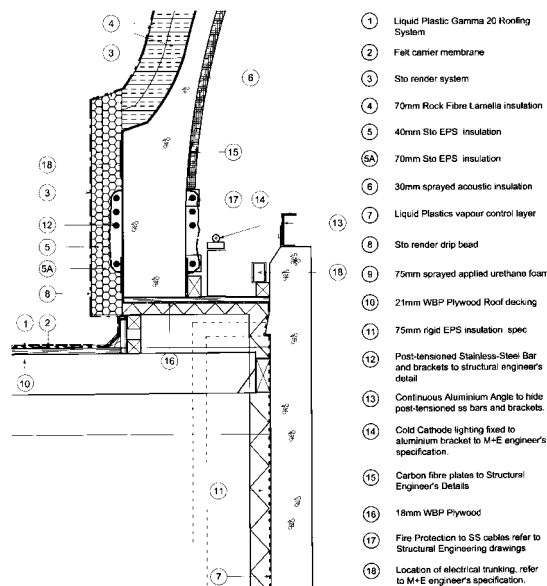
The College was constructed from a limited range of materials with fair-faced concrete and white calcium silicate brickwork expressed in both the interiors and external facades. The dining hall is a structural tour de force using thin shells of ferro-cement to create a light dome spanning 15m over the hall. A rising servery punches up through the floor to deliver food from the kitchens below. Our brief was challenging. To retain the architectural quality of the buildings, but at the same time to resolve a wide range of technical and functional problems inherited from the original design. In 1998 the concrete roofs to the dining hall were in a dangerous condition requiring emergency repairs. Water continued to leak through the structures and torn sections of roofing meant that the dining hall was uncontrollably ventilated, cold and poorly lit. The cast-in electric heating and other services were failing. The kitchens located underneath the hall had been untouched since the building opened in the early 1960's, with no connection from the kitchens to the dining room above except via the rising servery. Standards and expectations for thermal comfort, lighting, acoustics and the quality of catering to be delivered within the College have significantly altered over the last 40 years and the College brief was to think ahead to a brighter warmer future.

Initial phases of work sealed the worst water leaks and carried out major repairs to the concrete structures. In October 2001 a temporary scaffolding roof was erected over the whole dome and adjacent areas to allow the concrete above the old kitchens to be cut away and a new

Servery as rooftop extension



Tim Soar



Library Barrel Vault Edge Repair & Refurbishment Detail

The Dome of the Dining Hall was constructed in pre-cast ferro-cement sections 2 tonne in weight spanning approx 15m but only 25mm thick. The Petals were treated with an acoustic render on the inside and fibreglass on the outside. These have been insulated with 140mm of Rockwool Lamella on the outside with a new skin of Sto Render. A sprayed acoustic render has returned the 'whiteness' to the interior

Before the refurbishment people sitting across from each other found it difficult to hear. The acoustic treatment of the dome together with wall panels on which the College art collection is mounted provide additional acoustic absorption locally within the seating bays of the hall. These dramatically reduce the reverberation time

The dining hall was originally illuminated with table mounted lights and a single Austin A40 car headlamp mounted at the top of the dome. The headlamp failed in the late 1960's and was impossible to replace. New lighting has been provided to offer a range of 'scenes' in which to dine or entertain with intimacy or drama

The existing 'servery' was designed on a platform lift in the centre of the dining hall to link to the kitchen below. The lift has been refurbished as a more 'flexible' platform that allows the College to continue to deliver its food in theatrical style whilst also allowing the College to bring the grand piano into the space for the first time

An unreliable lift has been replaced with a new circular stainless steel shaft within a more accessible stair tower directly off the main circulation. This improved disabled access to the dining hall to meet DDA requirements

David Emond



New Graduate Building

R.H. Partnership are currently on site with a 40 bed graduate building and new Middle Common Room for New Hall. It is in an area adjacent to the Storey's Way Entrance and to the south of the Austin-Smith Lord scheme with Kaetsu completed in 1996, and continues its linear form.



Refurbishment Architect - R H Partnership Architects
 Quantity Surveyor - Davis Langdon (Cambridge)
 Structural Engineer - Babtie Group (Cambridge)
 M&E Engineer - Roger Parker Associates
 Catering Designer - MAS Environmental
 Acoustics Engineer - Cambridge Architectural Research
 Lift Specialist - Dunbar & Boardman
 Main Contractor - Bluestone plc



LISTENING MIRRORS

R H Partnership are also collaborating with Cameron Taylor Bedford in some conservation work of an unusual nature on the south east coast. Concrete mirrors were constructed by the Royal Engineers in 1928 to mid '30s as early forms of listening devices providing early warning of enemy aircraft, only to be superseded by the invention of Radar before the commencement of hostilities.

Set in RMC gravel quarries on the Denge peninsular the 20ft to 200ft structures have been undermined by continued quarrying. The mirrors are now in an area of Special Scientific Interest, with a population amongst other creatures of an endangered species of medicinal leeches [it's not only the building industry that hangs on to traditions].

A strategy for preservation of the mirrors has been developed in coordination with RSPB and English Nature, following an English Heritage commissioned feasibility study. A combination of gravel replacement around the mirrors supported by gabions, to resist wave action from the lake, is to be undertaken in conjunction with repairs to the cracked fabric of the concrete shells. One mirror will be left in its tilted position after protecting it from further movement as an eloquent illustration of the drama of the site.

MAS Environmental

MAS Environmental, environmental health consultants, are pleased to be associated with the New Hall Refurbishment.

Our services include:

- Commercial Kitchen Refurbishment and Specialist Design. Computer Aided Design (CAD) sketches, plans & 3D images provided.
- Ventilation and Kitchen Environment Planning.
- Pioneering Safe Kitchen Designs which minimise food hazards.
- Advice on all areas of Environmental Health.
- Food Safety and Health & Safety training at all levels.

14 SOUTH ROAD, IMPINGTON, CAMBS CB4 9PB

Tel/Ans: 01223 510430 Fax: 01223 501843 Mob: 07867 977222

email: MAS@masenv.co.uk www.masenv.co.uk

pure construction



Bluestone plc is the construction services division of Morgan Sindall plc, one of the UK's top 10 construction companies. Bluestone operates from 6 regions throughout the UK with market expertise in the public and private sectors including Education, Health, Commercial, Industrial and Residential where we undertake new build, refurbishment and maintenance projects through a variety of procurement routes.

Our Customer approach is consultative and considerate. We work as an extension of your team and we aim to be responsive, flexible and sensitive to your working practices.

Bluestone are proud to be associated with the Dining Hall, Library and Kitchen projects for New Hall and currently the new Graduate Centre due for completion at the end of 2005.



Pace + Performance + Empowerment + Agility + Work-Life Balance

Bluestone Plc, Babraham Road, Sawston, Cambridge, CB2 4LJ

Tel: 01223 836611, Fax: 01223 830099, Email: Cambridge@bluestone.plc.uk

www.bluestone.plc.uk



UNIVERSITY ARCHITECTURE DEPARTMENT crisis and resurrection at Scroope Terrace

Massive support from both without and within the University has convincingly countered the claims of those that held that the Department of Architecture was in decline. Leading architects, artists, engineers and others from all over the world wrote to the Vice-Chancellor protesting at the closure proposal. They included Rafael Moneo, Alvaro Siza, Jørn Utzon and all the architect knights and Royal Academicians as well as many alumni and employers. Within the University there was significant support from among the Colleges and from other faculties and departments.

The letters of support indicated that, despite its small size, the Department has had a great impact on the teaching of architecture world-wide; is highly respected for its influence on the evolution of architectural research and the way it is conducted; produces both very well-rounded architects and exceptional specialists; and has one of the most talented and hard-working student bodies in the University (which played a highly significant part in the campaign). Presented with a powerfully argued response from the Council of the School of Arts and Humanities, the General Board voted unanimously for continuation rather than closure.

The context for this saga needs to be understood. Architecture is expensive to teach and, for many years, the University has funded the Department most generously – at the expense of other disciplines. However, following the last, highly contentious HEFCE Research Assessment Exercise, the Department suffered a drop in research funding of £350,000 p.a. Set in the context of the University's current annual deficit of around £9 million, it was clear that a programme of retrenchment was required.

The crisis also brought to the surface the long-simmering issue of the professional nature of the architecture course. The University is not in the business of supporting 'apprenticeship' – and it does not do so for engineers, lawyers or doctors. In each of these cases, it is the profession that covers the costs of the post-degree professional training. (In the case of doctors, who work largely for the state, the cost is carried by the NHS.) Change is inevitable and, in a research oriented university like Cambridge the emphasis in architecture will in future be more on advancing knowledge and less to do with practice – but always with design as the focus.

Studio teaching is hugely expensive. Architecture schools in the Russell Group of research-strong universities try to maximize their income through their

research performance. Other schools maximize their numbers. Cambridge is in the first group and, in any case, the College admissions system would prevent any substantial increase in undergraduates. But the additional research income will not be enough to revert to individual studio tuition and one of our biggest challenges is how, with fewer resources, to teach architecture effectively.

The funding crisis also affects Part 2 courses – currently in abeyance at Cambridge. The forthcoming university top-up fees will raise the level of student debt to an unacceptable level and numbers everywhere are expected to fall. A four year full-time course, linked to two periods of fully supervised practical experience in approved practices could well become the norm. In the case of a university like Cambridge, the final year would be research rather than professionally oriented – but with design as the central focus. Completion of such a course would result in the award of an M.Arch. degree similar to the M.Eng now awarded for the four year Engineering course. Professional qualification may well – as in the USA – be through a single exam combining elements of the present Parts 1, 2 and 3.

The proposal for closure had assumed that Departmental research would be moved to cognate disciplines. For example, architectural history might have moved to History of Art, environmental design to Earth Sciences and transportation and land use to Engineering. In contesting this the Department made the point that it is the utilization of this knowledge in design – into the production of better buildings and places – that gives it significance and value as architectural research. This is, however, not fully appreciated by the wider academic community. It is therefore now essential to establish a consensus on the nature of architectural research and this is to be the subject of an international symposium organised by the Department with support from the RIBA: this will take place in either Cambridge or London this July in conjunction with an exhibition of the Department's work.

Retrenchment has been a painful process. The emphasis has been on making economies and increasing research income. The former has involved rationalising accommodation: this will include bringing the Martin Centre back to Scroope Terrace and selling 6 Chaucer Road. The latter has resulted in a programme of early retirements and the appointment of new, research-strong staff: full-time staff are no longer teaching in the studios. But there will be many benefits. Bringing a research presence back into Scroope Terrace will end the damaging geographic separation of research and teaching – and selling 6 Chaucer Road may provide the funds for extending Scroope Terrace. And having all studios taught by practising architects surely cannot be a bad thing! The challenge is going to be making effective links between full and part-timers.

Funding – particularly of studio teaching – is, however, likely to remain a long term concern. To this end, the Department is engaged with the University Development Office in setting up a fund-raising programme. An essential part of this will be the establishment of formal links with supporting practices – seeking not only their financial support but also their participation in reviewing the work of the Department and advising on future direction. So, although there will be a vastly increased emphasis on research, there should also be far greater collaboration with practice.

Nearly fifty years ago, following the 1958 Oxford Conference, Cambridge was at the forefront of developments in architectural education, research – and practice. Circumstances have now forced it into a similar potentially pioneering role. What is happening to the five year course here will undoubtedly happen elsewhere. And the forthcoming symposium may well have the same impact on architectural education and research as did the Oxford Conference.

Marcial Echenique

Marcial Echenique is an architect and holds the chair of Land Use and Transport Studies. He assumed the headship of the Department (of which he has been a member since 1970) in November last year.

Griff Rhys Jones with journalist



BEST NEW HOUSE 2004



Ray Main

Professional Development Continuing...

After seventeen years the Continuing Professional Development joint venture between the University of Cambridge Department of Architecture and RIBA Eastern Region has come to a close, ending a partnership unique in regional CPD. It may have had its critics but over this long period the CPD Centre has consistently delivered high quality training at an affordable price to architects and many other building professionals.

The CPD office was set up in 1988 following the so-called Newnham Conference when the RIBA and the University of Cambridge met to consider how architects in the region could, through education, meet the demands of a rapidly changing profession, anticipating the obligatory CPD which came into effect in 1993.

Local architect and department lecturer Nick Ray was the link between the two organizations. He helped to secure £39,000 in pump-priming through a scheme called 'Pick Up' enabling the centre to be set up in offices provided free of charge by the University in Chaucer Rd. Tim Brading, another Cambridge architect, was employed to run it and he was joined in 1990 by assistant Pat Blackman. Many of us know Tim and Pat from attending some of the hundreds of lectures and seminars they have organised over the years, usually held at New Hall in Cambridge.

The centre struggled financially in the early days but the 1994 CDM regulations, and other baffling pieces of legislation, helped boost numbers putting the centre on a firm footing and allowing rates for lectures to be kept at a reasonable level. Last year the Architecture Department, suffering its own financial difficulties, faced closure and although now safe it has had to take the reluctant decision to drop a number of peripheral activities, including CPD, in order to focus on its core areas of academic teaching and research.

Fortunately RIBA East will be picking up where the CPD Office leaves off and although precise details have yet to be announced Regional Director Louise Todd assures members and associated professionals that the programme will be run along similar lines. Not surprisingly though, the possibility of holding events in other parts of the region is being explored. Previous attempts to make regional CPD less Cambridge-centred have met with varying degrees of success. Hopefully this time it can be done without reducing the quality or popularity of the events.

Whatever the outcome Louise Todd would like Tim and Pat to know how their dedicated work over the years has been appreciated by everyone and asks us to join her in offering them both our heartfelt thanks. Amen to that.

JL

Details of CPD events can be found on the RIBA East website www.riba-east.com. If you would like to receive regular updates on forthcoming seminars please email jayne.ransom@inst.riba.org

When Cambridge Association of Architects secretary Meredith Bowles won the Manser Medal for best new house at the 2004 Stirling Prize Awards in October his small practice was catapulted overnight into the national architectural spotlight. His family home and studio the 'Black House' in Prickwillow completed in 2002 was perhaps an unlikely winner, and Meredith has been staggered by the response since his dramatic win, but his philosophy of combining environmentally responsible design with a fresh take on the vernacular form has clearly struck a deep chord with many people.

Meredith began his practice Mole Architects in 1996. He shared workspace for a time in Old Street with Simon Conder, whose equally black Dungeness Beach House shares the same stripped-down resonating aesthetic as the Prickwillow house, but Meredith and his novelist wife Jill Dawson wanted to escape London and bought a plot in the open countryside north of Ely. The idea of building a new house "in the middle of nowhere" appealed to them, stark houses standing in a bleak landscape being the perfect antithesis to the 'chocolate-box' aesthetic of the typical English village.

Responding to the local built context is a fundamental part of the Mole philosophy but with fenland housing being a somewhat uninspiring vernacular lineage to follow Meredith chose instead the fibre cement-clad, tar painted barn as his precedent. This would also satisfy his yen for 'doing a barn conversion' where the challenge was to avoid the obvious clichés of hanging baskets and exposed beams.

Meredith and Jill wanted a tall house which would stand out against the sky and give exceptionally long views over the flat landscape from the upper floors. (It is interesting to compare this with Jonathan Ellis Miller's approach for his pair of low, Miesian-style - and white - houses nearby). The resultant three stories of the design, raised still further by high floor to ceiling heights and a ground floor platform several feet off the ground, led to inevitable planning permission problems but these were overcome with a model and some gentle persuasion from the architect.

While this house does not loudly proclaim its ecological credentials there are two basic principles at work: the saving of energy and the use of natural or recycled materials wherever possible. Recycled newspaper insulation fills the I-beam timber stud walls and roof structure giving extremely good thermal performance and the internal environment is controlled with an electric heat pump producing warm fresh air, as well as hot water. Each room has air extracted through a heat exchanger which transfers energy to the incoming fresh air while exceptional air tightness keeps out the strong winds and dust that infiltrate many fenland homes. In fact the system is so efficient the biggest problem is solar gain, reduced by solar control film on the glazing and louvred canopies over the west facing ground-floor windows.

Building costs came to around £170,000 although a hidden expense was the fact that Meredith took a year off work to do much of the construction work himself. There is no

doubt that this investment will pay enormous dividends both in terms of his family's quality of life and the development of his practice. The view across the open fen from his first floor office window may be just what Meredith dreamed of when he moved from Old Street, but how long will it be before Mole outgrows its present home? With the telephone ringing almost constantly since the award this may happen sooner rather than later.

Jeremy Lander



Gable entrance

Interior view



Ray Main



STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT

Following a series of commissioned feasibility studies, the City Council's Development Framework for the Station Area including a Conservation Area Appraisal carried out by QuBE, was approved in its final form by the Environment Scrutiny Committee in November 2004. The Framework promotes a coordinated vision for the Station Area. A key strategic opportunity for implementation of redevelopment of this forlorn sector of the City now presents itself with the Ashwell Group's comprehensive acquisition and assembling of 21 sites, including, crucially, the Rank Hovis building, formerly the Spiller's Mill. Planning applications have been submitted and permission has been granted for two of the sites - housing on the "Triangle" between Hills Road and Station Road, and office redevelopment of the Red House on Station Road. Ashwell's vision for the area was first presented in consultation with the City Council in March last year (their Masterplan is exhibited on www.ashwellproperty.com). At the time of writing, formal proposals by Ashwell for both a Masterplan and individual sites have been lodged with the City Council but not accepted as planning applications. It is understood that negotiations are continuing with the Council over issues of density; location of a multi-storey car park; traffic circulation; and car parking.

The proposals in the Masterplan covering 24 acres of land include 1,600 residential units (with 30% affordable and key worker housing); 494,628 sq ft of state of the art additional office space (10% speculative) and refurbishment of some existing commercial properties; 43,305 sq ft of retail and catering floorspace related to the specificity of the station area location; and 410,000 sq ft for leisure, hotel, and health clinic, and including a County Archive facility located in the refurbished Mill building. The proposals assume demolishing and relocating the Sleepers hotel; provision of a multi storey car park; taxi rank; a cycle park for 2,000 bikes (capacity specified by Council and questioned by the developer).

The importance of the station area as a transport interchange is recognised through the proposal for an organised system of transport links. Their articulation at the point of interface with the station forecourt through dedicated paths, separating out the different and new modes of traffic, is the device adopted for clarifying and easing flows of people and vehicles in what will become an even greater concentration of movements. Concomitant is the reconfiguring of the Station Road/Hills Road junction at the War Memorial, and a new access point to the combined sites direct from Hills Road, opposite Brooklands Avenue.

The Masterplan embodies significant areas of landscaped public and dedicated open space, including a public square formed out of the station forecourt. The station building itself is not anticipated to undergo radical transformation. The specifics of Railtrack's (a key player and stakeholder in the area) complementary participation to the Ashwell scheme are as yet unclear. The scale of development is truly extensive and consideration is being given to take advantage of its location through shipping-out its excavated material by rail, to ameliorate disturbance. A massive £276M investment in the development reflects the challenge of the operation, which has an end date by the developer of 2012.

The current redevelopment proposals for the Station Road area represent a comprehensive make-over of a sector of the City whose significance belatedly (and reluctantly) lies in acknowledgement of the railway station as a transport hub and symbolic centre of communications in Cambridge. The area is too important to the City to be reductively conceptualised as a soft property market opportunity. Twelve years ago there was an eruption of grass roots civic enterprise which drew attention literally and graphically to the potentiality of the area and to its present environmental unworthiness as a portal to a World Heritage City. Cities grow or atrophy and the organic solution to renewed vitality results in the emergence of satellite centres rather than scholastic accumulation around a historic core. Unlike the Grafton Centre(a minute's silence for the Kite)..... the Station area has sufficient distance from the congested historic heart of Cambridge to be categorised as a genuine modern counterpart centre. The 1993 Gateway to Cambridge public workshop event (CAg 25) gave recognition to this opportunity to extoll the continued vibrancy of the city as a local, regional, national and international phenomenon - both the modern and historic architecture of academia testify to this greatness - and that the motor for redevelopment of the Railway Station area could be the creation of civic space.

The scope of the proposed station area redevelopment, now enabled by singular ownership and control of properties, marks its out as something special, comprehensive in intention, but not a tabula rasa; more a parataxical exercise of new, mixed developments side-by-side with selective retention of existing buildings and building groups. The Developer intends a range of uses, conforming with the City's questionable emphasis on residential in its 2004 Development Framework, and among other uses, leisure/retail geared to the transient trade of 5.5m travellers pa; and a base for the County Archive - why not a showcase base for Cambridge's architecture centre to help raise informed public opinion in support of change? The density of development is an issue with the planning authority, the developers citing governmental policy for higher densities, and the mill/silo structures are seen by Ashwells as a paradigm for the height limit of new development, which is to range from 3 - 8 stories.

The rationalisation and improvement of access to the area is overdue, but what a visual feast the reconfiguration of the road access to the station conjures up - signs and signals, railings, humps and road paint, and the whole kit of phantasmagoric paraphernalia, the radical deconstruction of the urban environment that ensues from the hubris of omnipotent, risk averse and over-endowed traffic engineering in the city. The single developer hegemony will be ameliorated, we are informed, by the commissioning of at least four separate design teams for different sections of the masterplan, to guarantee visual diversity; one firm of which will have a reputation for delivering "iconic wow-making" architecture (bring on the clowns). All of which raises the question of the character and quality of a renaissance Station Road area. Recent experience on the other side of the tracks gives more than adequate cause for profound public concern.

Historic hindsight will gaze with awestruck amazement at this period in the urbanism of Cambridge. Never before has there been such a cumulative reshaping of the City on the scale that is currently taking place in the environs of the railway station. The separate redevelopment of the adjacent Cattlemarket sites, and the Homerton Road sites - in varying stages of implementation - and the proposals for the station area, collectively constitute a major simultaneous reconstruction of this important part of the City. You do not need to be prescient to know the questions that will puzzle and astonish our descendants. How could such a challenging opportunity for remodelling such a significant sector of modern Cambridge have been undertaken with such poverty of civic ambition and vision, such derogation of cultural value, such seeming insouciance towards the public sphere, such delegation of responsibility for reshaping the city to expedient, piecemeal commercial interest and procedure? The total capitulation of the political will to the market economy has deformed and so unbalanced the system that its procedures are dysfunctional and ineffectual in imagining and representing the broader interests of the community.

Cultural issues are structural, not emblematic percentages; iconic placebos. Development Control is an important instrument of administration, but it is sorely abused when it substitutes for the enabling powers of creative, pro-active strategic planning. It is most unlikely that anything of real urban design worth can emerge from development under the aegis of the operational limitations of the current planning regimes; the Cattlemarket site redevelopment is too painfully a case in point. Lord Rogers' recent comment, in reference to the creative abyss towards which the Thames Gateway project is rushing headlong, was that "beautiful cities do not just happen; they are made"(Guardian 29.1.05).

It is ironic that just as the climate is changing towards the formation of agencies and networks to raise the environmental game, that so little of its influence registers locally. Even so, as these agencies take root in the Eastern Region they too become infected by the hegemony of economic development with the cultural issues of the built environment marginalised and trivialised as subaltern concerns - "we need quality places to work and live because of the importance to the regional economy" (EEDA spokesperson) - not, you notice "we need regional economic development because of its importance to the well-being of how we live." All these new agencies and CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) in particular have a role in raising the stakes in Cambridge.

In the general public interest there ought to be a moratorium on the Station area development until some effectual and adequately representational review body is in place with skills and a methodology that can inject a creative input to the outcomes of what, courtesy of Ashwell, is approaching a satisfactory resolution of sites and routes, but which is critically short on the resolution of the character of development and civic value.

Herman Ewticks

CIVIC PRESENCE bring it on - but get me to the train on time



DESIGN CHAMPIONS

The idea of Council Champions is a new initiative by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and English Heritage, about 50 Design Champions and 120 Historic Environment Champions Councils have been nominated across England so far. The Design and Historic Environment Champions remit are:

Design Champion

To ensure that design quality is high on the local authority agenda; to champion high quality design in development projects which the local authority undertakes or commissions itself; to champion high quality design through the planning process, including forward planning (planning policies, design briefs and standards) and the development control process

Historic Environment Champion

To help unlock the untapped potential of the local historic environment; to provide leadership for heritage issues within the authority; to join up policy between departments across the local authority and ensure the historic environment is taken into account in the development of all the authority's policies and forward strategies; to develop a close working relationship with the Design Champion, ensuring that the Authority has a seamless and coherent approach to the built and historic environment; to identify opportunities for the Authority to use the historic environment in the pursuit of its wider corporate objectives.

Continued overleaf >



The Design and Historic Environment Champions will work to ensure that design and historic environment considerations play central roles in the development of the strategies and policies for future growth and change in the built environment. They will act as visible points of contact for design and the historic environment and will provide leadership amongst Council members to advocate a high quality of design in new development proposals, a strong profile for urban design in the new urban extensions, and the delivery of a high quality of design and conservation in the context of the historic environment.

Cambridge City Council has appointed Councillors Sian Reid as the Council's Design Champion, and John Hipkin as Champion for the Historic Environment. Cllrs. Reid and Hipkin task is to take the lead in promoting a high quality of design and protection and enhancement of the historic environment in the City. Cllr. Reid has stated that Cambridge ".....will experience major growth in the decade to come. It is critical that it becomes a shining example of high quality urban design. It is also important that any development is compatible with and respectful to the existing community."

Both Councillors acknowledge the Station area as a key gateway to Cambridge ".....its redevelopment will involve new design in a historic environment. There are a number of challenges to deal with in this location, including planning and executing a renewed public transport hub and ensuring appropriate density of development and providing sufficient affordable housing, but the Station Area presents a great opportunity to create a vibrant new quarter in the City. We will work together to promote the highest possible aspirations for the proposed redevelopment."

Cllr Hipkin wants to see the people of Cambridge proud of, and taking informed decisions about, their historic environment "..... now that the County and City Councils have improved the streetscape of Kings Parade, and Kings College have refurbished their buildings, I'm keen to see the job finished by replacing the temporary street lights. In small things as in large, let's have something of which Cambridge can be proud!"

Contacts:
Cllr Sian Reid - Design Champion 01223 356100
Cllr John Hipkin - Historic Environment Champion 01223 562146
Cllr Jenny Bailey - Executive Cllr. for Environment & Transport 01223 457237
Cllr John Durrant - Labour Environment spokesman 01223 563387
Glen Richardson- Urban Design Manager 01223 457131
John Preston - Historic Environment Manager 01223 457160



JUNK PLACES

An official response to concerns expressed publicly recently about the quality of environment emerging in the Cattlemarket area redevelopment, was wait and see - "we should suspend judgement in the development until the landscaping has been completed and allowed to mature." How long do we have to look at a dead plane tree masquerading as a landscape before our imagination takes wings and anticipates what that maturity might bring? Notwithstanding the difficulties the Council is experiencing with developers Turnstone plc, a certain impatient apprehension, based on the material evidence, tells us that the intentions, not to say the whole endeavour in regard to the issues surrounding the remaking of the city and the creation of attractive and purposeful public open space, are insufficient.

Historically public spaces are built over the course of time. Even set pieces like the Campidoglio in Rome, in which the oval space designed by Michelangelo was a determining subject in the design of surrounding buildings, was built by several hands over a period. The power of the idea endured. And it was certainly Michelangelo's day off when it came to the Cherry Hinton/Hills Road area where ideas were in short supply along with a critical shortfall in the range of decision-making protagonists.

The creation of successful modern urban environments and public space is problematic. But it is the notion of an idea of space communicating itself, rather than monuments/iconic buildings, that is relevant. Given the impending planning changes in the surrounding areas it was unvisionary not to conceive of a communicating pedestrian

link between the spaces of the new Cattlemarket and the Station forecourt (the Corbusier viaduct in Eurolille comes to mind). Permeability of this sort would have given some meaning and life to the promenades generated in the plaza of the former; hopefully time will allow revision, but there has to be the idea and the will.

The High Noon ambience of the Cattlemarket plaza, generated by the absence of syntax of its enclosing buildings, the desultory floorscape of the open space and its lack of figure, is destined to be a permanent feature, unless a drastic retro urban design appraisal can be affected. Pointless to wait and hope for some marginal planting to soften and cure its present alienating presence. It is a desperate case for remedial surgical treatment.

Gazing at the 'architecture' of the new multi-use development one experiences an instant rush of sympathy for unsustainability - happily this kind of complex is destined to rapid obsolescence and a short lifecycle, which would grant the opportunity for an architectonic face-lift. Architecture today is undergoing a difficult transience from post modernism to new modernism, alongside the ever-present and all pervasive opiate of heritage, in its desperate attempts at faking it. Forget the Prince of Wales, what we need is Jamie Oliver to ween us of junk environments and back to real architecture. Get the unqualified cooks and preprepared meals out of the kitchen, it only constipates our aesthetic sensibilities.

The new economy class Travelodge hotel and the extensions to the Junction building mark the introduction to Cambridge of new wave high architectural style. It is always



Tiananmen Square, Cambridge - the ideal environment for police surveillance



An ineffably inanimate landscape where lamposts beat their wings and seats boogie languidly in unison to the command of frozen music



Not quite your Champs Elysée - but nothing a small forest couldn't ameliorate



The stockade

questionable whether the performance of buildings or spaces is separable from their appearance and cultural meanings. In the absence of feedback from the former, the extrinsic value of these two buildings, where an effort has been made to affect something of quality, it has to be said, is something of a disappointment. One can admire the inventive materiality of the Travelodge building, with its gabion walls and chameleon envelope, even if the architectural consequences are dire. But the woebegone forecourt in the residual area between the hotel and bridge embankment is unforgivable. What a miserable introduction for its guests if they find the entrance.

The additions to the Junction likewise affect the other contemporary fashion cladding option of untreated timber boarding. Sadly here though the effect is more that of recycled timber pallets (perhaps 7.5m was not enough) which in combination with the uncommonly boxiness of the building form cuts a less than iconic figure. Perhaps it is well it is tucked around the corner. Again, unfamiliar with the internal rearrangement, the green steel armature that appears as an element of symbolic conjunction of the old Junction and the new, only thinly serves this purpose. The failure to obtain a convincing synthesis of the original Junction building and the new extension is an urban design weakness that affects perceptions of this end of the new plaza.

The paradigmatic significance of the Cattlemarket redevelopment rests in its indication of how not to go about development of this kind. Hopefully some of the changes reported in this issue of the gazette will go some way to redress the processes. The way forward promulgated by CABE is to prepare integrated public space strategies and that seed funding be made available for design advice. While the jury is still out on CABE's own interventions, certainly new approaches are essential and new openings for building civic capacity, so that there can be better and more informed inputs.

Colen Lumley

City Council Changes

Simon Payne took post as Director of Environment and Planning in January, following Peter Studdert's move to Cambridgeshire Horizons. The posts of Conservation and Design Manager, and Environmental Projects Manager have been re-designated following the departure of Jon Burgess and Andy Thompson to private practice with QuBE. John Preston has been promoted as Historic Environment Manager, in charge of the Conservation and Tree Teams. Dr Nerida Campbell has been appointed to John's old post. Nerida comes from New Zealand, where she worked for Auckland City Council, by way of post-doctoral research at the University of Leiden. She has joined Jonathan Hurst and Jenni Neilson in the Conservation Team. Within the Tree Team, Diana Oviatt-Ham has taken over as Principal Arboricultural Officer following John Wetherell's retirement.

Urban design team

The City Council have created an Urban Design Team with a broad remit including planning and design for the major urban extension of the City; environmental projects and improvements; management of Local Nature Reserves; public consultation; and engineering. The new team is an expanded amalgamation of the former Environmental Projects Team led by Andy Thompson.

Glen Richardson joining the team from Ontario, Canada, as Urban Design Team Manager, brings experience in urban design, city centre strategic planning, policy and development planning, and project management. Other members of the team, Catrin Davies, Senior Urban Designer and Sarah Brailey, Urban Design Officer, will employ their design expertise in planning for the major urban extensions and to further Council's initiatives in public art and other initiatives.



*Glen Richardson
Urban Design Team Manager*



Proven experience in maximising value and reducing risk in the Academies and Building Schools for the Future Programmes



For further information, please contact Laurence Brett at our Cambridge office
Tel: +44 (0)1908 304 700 Fax: +44 (0)1908 660 059 E-mail: laurence.brett@davislangdon.com

Project Management | Cost Management | Management Consulting | Legal Support | Specification Consulting | Engineering Services | Property Tax & Finance



Complete Office Solutions

New & Used Office Furniture

Supply & Installation

Wide Range Supplied from Budget to Bespoke

Office Clearances

Space Planning



Fen Road, Chesterton, Cambridge CB4 1UN.

Phone: 01223 425168 Fax: 01223 424826 email: sales@csilverman.co.uk

website: www.csilverman.co.uk



SUPPLYING AND SPECIFYING ALL TYPES OF IRONMONGERY

- Hills Road Showroom
- Family Business
- Personal Service to Architects
- Free Door Packing Service

56 Hills Road, Cambridge. Tel: 01223 363060

Armada

PRACTICE EXHIBITION ENTRIES

The Cambridge Association of Architects are planning to stage an exhibition of members work, accompanied by a talk and a booklet, at the Michaelhouse Centre on 12th - 26th June. RIBA East/shape Cambridge will host a website for the exhibition.

contact Meredith Bowles
for details - tel: 01353 688287;
email: studio@molearchitects.co.uk

CFCI EVENTS

e-mail: Secretary@cfci.org.uk
website: www.cfc.org.uk

7th April

Great Hall, King's College 7.00 for 7.30pm. The Annual Dinner

25th April

Fitzwilliam Theatre, Fitzwilliam College, Storey's Way

'Cambridgeshire Horizons' 6.30pm

16th May

Fitzwilliam Theatre, Fitzwilliam College, Storey's Way 'Mark Whitby' 6.30pm

6th June

Fitzwilliam Theatre, Fitzwilliam College, Storey's Way 'the Partnership for Schools' 6.30pm

CA gazette list of current sponsors

Cowper Griffith Associates
Barber Casanovas Ruffles Ltd
Peter Dann Consultants Ltd
Lyster Grillet & Harding
R.H. Partnership Architects Ltd
Christopher Maguire Architects
Twitchelt Architects
Michael Walton Architects
Bland Brown & Cole
Wrenbridge Land Ltd
Kenneth Mark Practice
Saunders Boston
Archangel Ltd
Granta Architects
Patrick Ward Architects
Feilden & Mawson LLP
Neale Associates
Rosalind Bird Architects
Miller Associates

A review produced by the Cambridge Association of Architects. The views in this gazette are those of the individual contributors and not of the Association. Copy deadline for CAG 52 is 30th June 2005. Editors welcome reader's contributions but reserve the right to edit according to space available

ISSN 1361-3375

Editorial Board:

David Raven co-editor
Colen Lumley co-editor
Jeremy Lander co-editor
Katie Thornburrow
John Preston
Peter Carolin

Cambridge Architecture gazette
c/o 25a Hills Road
Cambridge CB2 1NW
Tel 01223 366555
Fax 01223 312882
Email jl@frarchitects.co.uk or
mail@dra-architects.demon.co.uk