Officers and Committee - Trust Annual Report 1973

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The Way Things are Going - Trust Annual Report 1973

The development of Winchester has taken place over many centuries. The road plan is based on the Saxon streets which in turn derived from a Roman plan. Even the drastic changes wrought by the recent traffic plan are not far from the line of the walled city. Chance has played a large part in this development, giving it an attraction which no planner could achieve. Large and expensive houses jostled others of a more modest character. The larger houses had gardens, and the smaller faced the streets. There were suitable dwellings for every pocket. The main shopping centre was always the High Street, with the shopkeepers living over the business. Thus shopping, housing and workshops combined easily into one harmonious totality. The early houses were timber framed, later giving way to brick, with many of the old walls incorporated in later styles. Great flexibility allowed houses to change gradually absorbing every kind of urban activity. The streets acquired an intimacy over the centuries, still existing today in the old parts of the city, but lacking in so many of the recent developments.

Lately the elements making for change have grown too big for the city structure. The first of the cuckoos was the County Council followed quickly by private enterprise with a sharp eye for the quick profit in property development. So replacing the small scale street architecture, having a front door every twenty feet or so, the trend is to confront us with large chunks of mass produced building components which hardly merit the term "architecture".

In the past one could always peer happily into the ground floor rooms, vicariously enjoying the life within. In turn one provided a passing spectacle for the inhabitants who sat in the windows. All this is gone. The entrances have become an occasional hole for office workers, vehicles or garbage. A walk is without incident, flanked by blank walls or strident shop windows with their dazzling display of cut rate promotions. At the other extreme, the upper floors which once were homes, have

become store rooms, and the multiple shops, which are the same in every town, extend over an ever increasing floor area, measured in the return of pounds per square foot, and a stock consisting only of fast moving items. The goods formerly made by local craftsmen, are replaced by plastics from central factories, contributing to the economics of expendability and waste. The street is mainly for transportation, especially those leading to the car parks, and true pedestrian joys are confined to the shopping precincts. Thus is our environment coarsened and pauperised. Once again tidiness and simple mindedness have taken over. Social mobility has been confined to moving away, rather than adapting the dwellings. Classes are segregated into council or privately developed estates. The old people are isolated into accommodation specially provided, which if it is away from the centre, is hit by declining public transport services. Society tends to be broken up into areas classified by age and occupation. In the residential areas, developed about a hundred years ago, family houses set in large gardens are being sought for redevelopment, either with a group of small houses or in blocks of flats. A certain amount of this is inevitable and necessary, but it must stop before the whole area becomes down graded. The tree covered slopes surrounding Winchester are now threatened as sites for enormous blocks of flats. Such developments would destroy the character of Winchester as a town in the country. The scale, and methods of new building, seldom blend happily with existing houses. In this way, individual character is squeezed out of an historic town. The reorganisation of local government would seem likely to stimulate the growth of more large office blocks, both for the County and the District. The Hospital poses a special problem. Scheduled to be rebuilt over a period of twenty years, its form will De, naturally enough, dictated by the rapid changes in medical science which will be taking place during the same period.

The theme of this article has been forcefully illustrated this year in the exhibitions mounted in the Guildhall Picture Gallery "The Prospect of Winchester" and in the Public Library, "The Changing Face of Winchester", both of which have underlined the necessity of the Preservation Trust.

The Re-Organisation of Local Government and the Future of Winchester - Trust Annual Report 1973

With the foregoing in mind, we would like to take this opportunity of drawing the attention of everyone to the functions of new District Councils, as listed by the Department of the Environment. They are as follows.

Housing	Provision
	Management
	Slum Clearance
	House and area improvement
Town Development Planning	Local plans
	Development control
	Advertising control
	Derelict land
	Country parks

	Conservation areas
	Building preservation notices
	Listed building control
	Tree preservation
	Acquisition and disposal of land for planning purposes, development or redevelopment
Footpaths and Bridleways	Creation, diversion and extinguishment orders
	Protection
Transportation	Off-street parking
Parks and open spaces	

From this list it can be seen that the role of the new District Council involves a great deal more than processing planning applications, so there is the responsibility to see that a department is set up, responsive to the real needs of the area, to achieve a significant improvement in the environment. It is the quality of what we see around us which counts, and understanding what the right priorities are. For example, are the roads to be the servants of the people or the masters?

Architects will be ready to respond to our needs, but they can only do so if the District Council demands a quality of building which will enhance the area—because today's buildings are tomorrow's heritage. A very senior and experienced environmental officer will be required, who will tackle the multitude of problems imaginatively while caring deeply for the area.

The Preservation Trust considers that the following points are of vital importance and will always be ready to co-operate with the new District Council to achieve these aims.

1. To understand the needs and aspirations of the people of the district.
2. To maintain the balance of priorities always in favour of the quality of the environment.
3. The preparation of a local Development Plan involving the co-ordination of all building, road, landscape and recreational development, and transportation.
4. The preparation of detailed Action Area and Policy Plans.
5. General development guidance and encouragement (rather than control) by interpreting the community's desire for development, whether by the authority itself or private developers.
6. Identification, assessment and looking after the well being of buildings of architectural and historic importance.
7. Conservation area survey, designation and surveillance.
8. The conservation and continual enhancement of the total landscape quality of the area.
9. To establish the aims and objectives of environmental management and services.
10. To maintain high design standards and to give general design guidance to the authority on all environmental matters.

11. To interpret the environmental needs of the district to the County Council and vice versa.

The Department of the Environment has issued a circular stating the Government's policy. Planning says the Minister should "take account of the growth of public opinion in favour of conserving the familiar scene".

As the environmental correspondent of the Times has pointed out, local government has suffered from the kind of compartmentalisation which in a given neighbourhood, handles drains through one department, housing through another, street cleaning through yet another, and planning applications through a fourth. Therefore an exercise such as an improvement area project, may make for needless complication. Committees looking at planning applications should view the whole planning needs of the area.

The final paragraph of the departmental circular quoted earlier, has something to say about local amenity societies. It sees them increasingly consulted and playing a positive role in influencing council policies rather than one merely of opposition. Certainly, as the Civic Trust recently pointed out, now is our big chance. With local government in ferment the element of continuity, represented by local societies, is something new councillors may well be glad to lean on.

M3 - Trust Annual Report 1973

After almost two years the Minister for Transport Industries the Rt. Hon. John Peyton, M.P. accepted the preferred route of the M3 which had been the subject of the Public Inquiry in the spring of 1971. It was accompanied by this statement in a press release. "It is necessary somehow to extract the traffic from Winchester itself and the overloaded by-pass. The present route offers not only the best means of doing this but the only way which would not involve braking into unspoilt country". No evidence was produced at the Inquiry to show how the first objective could succeed. It is quite extraordinary that the chief reason given in support of the scheme, turns out to be the one aspect of the affair which was not touched upon at the inquiry, except by the Preservation Trust. If there has been any further investigation of the effect of connecting Winchester's local traffic with a motorway, the findings have not been published.

The national motorway policy is the affair of the Department of the Environment, and the local traffic is the affair of the City Council, and what happens when the two are connected is nobody's business. There is just the delightful assumption that if enough car space is provided everything will turn out for the best.

The Minister's argument depends on the idea that future traffic volumes are largely independent of the road system which is provided; hence better roads will simply drain away traffic from existing roads. Experience all over the world indicates that this is not the case. No cities, including those that have built extensive motorways, have found that they bring long term relief to the other streets. All that happens is

that the whole of the expanded network rapidly fills up. The importance of the well known phenomenon, that traffic volumes increase as a result of providing increased road capacity is overlooked (vide "Transport Strategy in London, Chapter 3).

To take but one example, the provision of a motorway so near to Winchester will increase the volume of traffic having Winchester as a destination. This traffic will have to traverse the area formerly bounded by the walls of the historic city because there is no possibility of another route without the destruction of many more houses.

It is claimed that there will be an advantage in re-routing traffic from St. Cross to the motorway via North Walls. The distance will be greater than at present, but the route also leads traffic to the centre, to join other traffic from all directions seeking entry to the M3,—the reverse of the present arrangement whereby traffic is encouraged to find the by-pass at a number of access points on the perimeter. Indeed there would be nothing at all to prevent the traffic volumes building up in St. Cross to present levels or beyond. It is quite impossible for the City Council or anyone else "after long and careful consideration" to predict that the traffic flows within the city will be in any way reduced.

Central Winchester should not be used as an area to collect traffic for an 18 mile stretch of motorway. We must get used to the idea that if car ownership increases to the predicted levels there is nothing which we can do to make Winchester and other historic towns (including London) available to any private motorist who chooses to go wherever he will and as fast as he can without impediment. They will have to go about their daily business by Public Transport, which in the case of Winchester is a relatively small area. New roads are not the answer. The road problem is exclusively a problem of traffic management.

The spontaneous reaction of the Winchester citizens was immediate. They were shocked by the announcement, and the depth of feeling revealed, took the authorities by surprise. The Chairman of the Preservation Trust was invited to join a new combined protest movement, to be known as the Winchester M3 Joint Action Group and was elected Chairman, after it had become abundently clear that support was widespread and that this was an occasion when public opinion was instinctively right.

The events since then will still be fresh in the minds of the Trust's members. The public meeting in New Hall, the very successful petition, corresspondence in The Times and the Hampshire Chronicle, the raising of the matter again in the City Council, when it became clear that acceptance was reluctant. The authorities can no longer derive much comfort from the support of the Winchester City Council in this clear demonstration that they do not, and indeed never did, represent the views of the citizens on this issue.

Many of us who are car owners, seldom stop to think what cars do to the environment. Near at home we might consider the unlovely sight of Winchester's car parks. Compare these central open spaces, with the Abbey Gardens, the Cathedral Close and Oram's Arbor. Then consider how the City might look if all open spaces were occupied by cars. A few square yards of grass and some trees give minimal improvement, but car parks constitute sterile ground.

Then think what happens with an urban motorway, for this indeed is what the M3 really is, as it proceeds for almost three miles within the City boundary. Like railway lines in towns, nobody with a choice, wants to live nearby. So instead of a mixed community, only the lowest income groups, who have no choice, will remain, and the whole area deteriorates.

This is what will happen if the M3 is allowed to proceed on the preferred route, instead of a longer and therefore more expensive route. What is the right priority? What is the true economy ? Why do we forget the lessons provided by the railways in the nineteenth century? All this needs no proof to anyone who has seen what happens to streets of houses and blocks of flats when a motorway is built close by.

The Traffic Plan - Trust Annual Report 1973

A series of schemes has been produced by the City since 1964 when the Government encouraged local authorities to put forward plans to qualify for financial assistance for urban motor routes. Complicated road adjustments in various stages were proposed, involving considerable destruction of notable residential property. The concern of the citizens was put to the Council by the Preservation Trust and various resident's associations in different parts of the City. There was considerable correspondence in the columns of the *Hampshire Chronicle*, that valuable barometer of local opinion. Well over 600 people attended a public meeting in the Guildhall called by the City Council, and there were vigorous portests about certain unpopular proposals. The demand that a vote should be taken, was rejected by the chair, after consultation with the Town Clerk, on the grounds that it would not be representative of the whole Winchester community. It did not seem to occur to anyone that the Council's proposals reflected even less of the community view than those expressed at the meeting by the public, neither has the City Council since taken any steps to obtain a consensus of public opinion.

Since then the plan has undergone continuous revision. Another public meeting was held in 1966, but again no vote was taken, though perhaps through pressure of public opinion, there was some shelving of the most controversial parts of the plan.

Now in 1973, the City's traffic management scheme has been introduced. The chief result of this seems to be the dangerous speeding up of traffic in the city centre when unloading vans permit; while the narrow streets to the south of the High Steet, seem to be almost entirely devoted to this activity. Elsewhere the business of crossing roads, against a double stream of fast moving traffic, can be a hazardous and alarming experience, especially for the elderly. It might be noted that there is not much to help them as they approach the medical centres.

The traffic management scheme has been given the appearance of working, due to the phasing of the traffic lights at Southgate Street and City Road, to admit only as much traffic as the one-way system can handle. The old rush hour queues at these lights have been replaced with day long lines of waiting vehicles, which when released, rush impatiently through the one-way streets. Can the cost of delays in

entering the City, (much of it laid waste in car parks,) the noise and pollution of waiting vehicles, be justified to the inhabitants, most of whom are on foot ? Add to this the cost to motorists of longer journeys round the City, the additional cost of deliveries, and the loss of trade suffered by some shops, and the benefits appear to be dubious indeed, except for the High Street as pedestrian precinct.

So far it has taken nine years to go only a little way with the plan. Much property has been bought and demolished in readiness for the next phase, but meanwhile the thinking of many authorities about traffic in towns, has undergone a radical change with the realisation at last, that you cannot alter towns fast enough to keep up with the growth of traffic. So in some other towns, central car parks are not being increased and charges are allowed to rise to a deterrent level. Planning committees no longer insist on the provision of lavish parking spaces as part of new developments. Grandiose schemes of urban motorways are abandoned, and easier public transport is seen as the only way of moving people about.

The anxiety of the City Council to be forward looking and too ready to accept the doles of central Government, seems likely to end up with an obsolete road plan. If only the City Council had been prepared to listen more attentively to public opinion the result might have been less destructive. Moreover it must not be forgotten that all these plans were drawn up without any knowledge of the M3 proposal, and this at the last moment has thrown in a new factor, and led to the two interchanges at Easton Lane and Bar End being far too close together, only one and a half miles apart or 77 seconds at 70 m.p.h. This has resulted in the City Council revising the Eastgate Street/Chesil Street section of their road plan after the motorway route had been published. The massive roundabouts and obtrusive bridges, out of scale in the City, but needed for this revised section, are all within the conservation area. Part of the cost of the new six lanes of motorway, through Magdalen Down, has been saved by building on the by-pass, another reason for the massive increase in the City link roads. This bait of road improvements, was enough to make the Council hasten to accept the plan before they had heard any views, other than those of the people putting the scheme forward.

Attention has already been drawn to the predictable result of pouring traffic from a motorway, directly into an historic town, and one can only reflect, how difficult it is to adopt a truly progressive view. Long before plans can be completed, the whole concept can be outdated. It does seem a matter of urgency however, to reconsider the whole traffic situation now, before proceeding further with the plan.

And what has happened to those pre-1970 promises to forbid heavy goods vehicles from entering the City? It does not escape our notice that the attempts to keep the size of continental juggernauts down to English standards are failing, and that even bigger ones with trailers are being planned. Some of these will have no alternative but to reach their destination via North Walls. And for what reason is Winchester made available to private cars from a distance at the expense of the local residents? Both these undesirable results will surely come about if the motorway is allowed to proceed to the construction stage, with eventual completion in shall we say, about 1980?

European Architectural Heritage Year - Trust Annual Report 1973

"The world is squandering its resources at an unprecedented rate. Some of these assets are natural, like the minerals below ground. Some are man-made, like the great works of art we have inherited from the past. All are irreplaceable. Once lost they can never be recovered, never be repeated.

Paintings, sculpture, the craftsmen's objects—these we put into museums. But what of the historical monuments, the buildings, the towns and villages? All over Europe the supreme heritage of western man is being eroded and destroyed, through neglect, demolition and redevelopment. This precious legacy of culture and beauty was built up slowly, lovingly, over many centuries. We have a duty ro preserve what is left of it for the benefit of future generations and its obliteration must not be accepted as the inevitable price of progress. But time is running out. Only a concerted effort by the European peoples as a whole can bring about the change of heart, the re-ordering of priorities, that will ensure the action necessary to preserve this precious legacy. That is what the Council of Europe had in mind when they designated 1975 as European Architectural Heritage Year."

Thus begins a circular addressed to all Amenity Societies registered with the Civic Trust. Central and local government, Professions and business interests, will also be playing a major part in the programme.

Local Authorities have been sent a questionaire to find out what conservation work they already have in hand. A splendid opportunity is presented, not merely to undertake some kind of project, but to do so in with the co-operation of the local authority. Coinciding with the re-organisation of local government this could also be a means of establishing a fruitful new relationship with the new District Councils. It is hoped to bring into being a considerable number of local Historic Buildings Trusts. Which will be able, by use of the "revolving fund" technique, to acquire buildings, restore them so that the proceeds may be ploughed back into future restoration. It is further hoped to set up a national revolving fund upon which local Trusts can draw. New thought will be given to the many technical, legislative and financial problems involved in conservation, with a view to formulating specific proposals and programmes, and this will tie in with an important series of European seminars to be held over the next three years. The County Planning Officer has invited members of amenity societies in Hampshire to attend a meeting when proposals of how we might be able to make the fullest use of a revolving fund will be discussed.

Extract from *Hansard*. 11th April, 1973. House of Lord's. Historic Towns and Villages.
Lord KENNET. "... I have been speculating about what we shall call Lord Rippon when he comes to the end of an honourable term of service in the House of Commons and joins us here. It will be a personal pleasure to us to welcome Lord Rippon of Bassenthwaite, Lord Rippon of Winchester or Lord Rippon of the London Green Belt ..."

Lord CHORLEY. "One cannot help wondering how much real help the Government are giving to the 1975 Architectural Heritage Year. I appreciated very much the jibe—it was a very proper jibe—as to what the title of the Secretary of State for the Environment would be when he came to your Lordship's House. But in between his present position and his coming here I would recommend him to read a famous old English book in which there is a character called Mr. Facing-Both-Ways. He might consider a little the character of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, and then wonder how he can reconcile how he can take a prominent position in connection with the European 1975 Architectural Year and what he has been doing in Winchester, as Lord Kennet suggested ..."

Events in 1973 - Trust Annual Report 1973

Tours of Winchester conducted by Mrs. Carpenter-Turner :
12th July. Visit of Southampton Civic Society to Winchester.
13th July. West Gate.
20th July. Old Guildhall.
27th July. The Square.
15th September. St. Giles Fair, at which the Trust had a stand.
Three illustrated talks and discussion entitled "Design for Living" arranged by Frank Chippindale, F.R.I.B.A.
October. Planning by J. B. Thompson, A.A.Dip., A.R.I.B.A.
24th October. Housing by Mrs. Sheila Tribe, A.R.I.B.Y.
31st October. Street Architecture by Sir Hugh Casson, A.R.A., M.A., F.R.I.B.A.

Finance - Trust Annual Report 1973

Our fight against the M3 at the public inquiry in 1971 reduced our finances to a very unacceptable level, barely enough for our running expenses. After the Annual General Meeting in 1972, Miss Charlotte Oldfield, a life member, promised a magnificent gift of £250, if this were matched by contributions from other members. This was very soon accomplished and once more our finances were restored to a sound level, with a satisfactory working balance.

The committee is greatly heartened by this ready response and desire of our members to support their convictions by such generous gifts.

The formation of the M3 Joint Action Group early this year, has removed the direct financial burden from the Preservation Trust, and the fight is being financed on a much wider basis. Consequently the funds of the Trust can be used for other purposes. The committee did, however, feel justified in making a donation of £50 to help in getting the Action Group launched. While the fund against the M3 is rising steadily, it will have to reach levels far beyond anything the Trust could have achieved alone.

Design control in Conservation Areas - Trust Annual Report 1973

By Melville Dunbar

After the Civic Amenities Act became law in July 1967, Local Planning Authorities were required to identify and formally designate conservation areas. To implement this work some began to recruit teams of Architect/Planners. Such teams have had their greatest impact in the counties, where for the first time architectural and urban design expertise has been established in sufficient strength to significantly affect the character and quality of design policy, plan and control making. The Act has also enabled some counties to modify their existing "delegation" agreements—granted as expedients to the district councils during the fifties—so that Listed Buildings and planning applications in conservation areas could be referred to their specialist teams for design control advice. This revised procedure has had, contrary to expectations, the effect of strengthening rather than weakening the necessary bond of partnership between district and county authorities. The main reason for this is that the district councils are being given a design control service which they themselves know they could not hope to provide on their own. As a result new development in their historic towns and villages is of a higher architectural quality. This, almost without exception, has always been the aim of district officers and councillors, but the difficulties of obtaining it on their own have been insuperable.

This though is what the new Local Government (Reform) Bill, at present before Parliament, now proposes they should do ! Along with other ill-conceived planning actions, the Bill proposes to hand back all development control responsibilities in conservation areas to newly formed "district" planning authorities. In very many cases these will still be small bodies having a population of about forty to ninety thousand people and consisting usually of two or three existing rural and urban district councils joined together. Their capacity for employing the necessary specialist staff to cope with their design control responsibilities will be equally small. At best some district councils will continue to refer applications in conservation areas voluntarily to the counties or else engage consultant advice of their own—but in many other cases this will not happen and a return to the day of the "green tile roof men" operating design control will occur. The long term effects of the latter are all too easy to imagine and none will promote the cause of good architecture or urban design.

A popular piece of planning legislation—namely the Civic Amenities Act—is in effect being dismembered, and this just as many counties were really beginning to make it work. The character and identity of historic places will be eroded by the cumulative damage of mediocre design control decisions, unless the need for obtaining specialist advice—not just for historic buildings but for historic areas—is made mandatory by the new Bill.

1 Development Plan and Written Statement

At present the above documents combine with planning law to give the statutory framework within which (most) development takes place. The need for written statements to have statutory approval has to a large degree dictated their legalistic style and content. Sufficient to say that they generally confirm when, where and how development can take place but give little or no guidance on architectural or urban design matters. This is not to say that the need for good design is not repeatedly stressed, but such platitudes do no more than affirm general policy. As all embracing statements, they do not assist the designer by either giving detailed guidance or, more importantly, by helping to create the necessary social and aesthetic climate for informed architect/client relationships to develop.

This lack of detailed urban design policy has often resulted in authorities adopting a defensive and negative approach whereby "rule of thumb" planning and highway standards are elevated to the status of layout and design determinants. Such controls in practice have fostered stereo type solutions—"wide open estates" and the distorted "permissible envelopes" of commercial building—the spaces and shapes of which are invariably visually alien to the townscape character of historic settlements.

Development plans and town maps tend to be equally negative, planning being seen as a finite process with all land being given a "planned use". In historic centres, blanket commercial zonings made for almost automatic "changes of use"—from residential to shopping—and the resultant "shot away" ground floor look we see today. Declining arcadian town housing areas were often allocated for offices—as this was obviously preferable to shopping or light industry—but such zoning usually concentrates pressures which in turn tend to force out any remaining residential users. Gardens become office car parks, trees go, new buildings ignore the spatial and architectural discipline; with the result that many existing approaches to historic centres are now rendered visually meaningless.

2 Planning and Conservation Studies

A new type of planning approach was clearly called for, and the progressive counties have been endeavouring to provide this with "informal" town centre and village plans. Ministry Planning Bulletins lay down guidance for such studies and a more flexible three-dimensional approach is encouraged. Townscape surveys, which analyse spatial and architectural character, are now considered as essential components of such plans for historic settlements. Apart from helping to determine what sort of planning and highway proposals could be visually acceptable, they also assist the architect to more readily study the character and identity of a place before designing his replacement building.

Unsympathetic shopfronts, ugly signs, over zealous restoration of old buildings street furniture clutter are some of the detailed problems a townscape survey can highlight, but technical advice is need to show owners and authorities how such things can be put right. The counties can provide this by making freely available subject design policy brochures for conservation areas.

3 Subject Design Policies

The Conservation in Essex series will probably consist of at least eight such publications, six being concerned with technical problems—the brochures being in effect the county's design policy on such matters:

Conservation in Essex:

1. No. 1 General Policy Statement
2. No. 2 Action by Local Amenity Societies

Technical Series:

1. No. 3 Street furniture
2. No. 4 Historic buildings
3. No. 5 Shopfronts, signs and advertisements
4. No. 6 Space between buildings
5. No. 7 Commercial buildings
6. No. 8 Village infill development

Without a detailed elaboration of the theory and practice of design, such things tend to be written off as matters of opinion. In their absence "functional" planning controls, "rule of thumb" standards, codes of practice, and design censorship by "taste" tend to become the control determinants of local authorities. Equally planning applications continue to be made showing buildings not only badly designed in themselves but which totally ignore the architectural scale and character established by their street setting.

In historic areas, the main challenge is the creative marriage of old and new—this applies as much to street lighting schemes as to new building. The need for high aesthetic and technical skills is clearly paramount, yet the majority of planning applications (approximately 3 out of 4) continue to be made by non-architects. Subject policy brochures should help applicants to better understand the complex nature of conservation area work and as a result be prepared to engage specialist advice. Those who are not so professional in their design standards—and regrettably many architects fall into this category—will find that they at least get clear (and helpful) design refusal reasons, cross referenced to the appropriate brochures. However, these design policies will still be general in nature in that they tackle problems which occur throughout conservation areas. Specific "key" sites may still need to have tailor-made "design briefs" to serve as a guide for imminent development proposals.

4 Design Briefs

These "briefs" fit inside the planning framework of conservation area studies, informal town centre and village plans. They should firstly describe those existing site features which need to be retained—some good walling, a hedge, trees, a public footpath, a "listed" building, etc., Secondly, with the use of "spatial notation", they should outline possible building groupings, spatial sequences, vehicle and pedestrian access points, focal views, etc. "Infill sites" are necessarily treated in more detail, either with diagrams and notes indicating such things as scale, materials, height and frontage lines or else by annotated sketch proposals.

The main point of these "briefs" is that they establish a minimum design standard for development. They are advisory only. An architect can either choose to adapt and refine the broad concepts of the brief (to his client's requirements) or else opt to try and produce something better. In laying down design performance criteria, the brief should make for a better understanding by councillors, district officers, amenity societies and applicants of the problems involved. Equally, but not providing a ready made solution—as in sheer desperation some planning authorities still do—the design complexity of the problem should emerge along with the need for obtaining the services of a creative architect.

5 Design Control

In preparing a scheme, an architect should now be able to choose from the relevant planning policies and his client's brief accordingly. In this way a design can be influenced during its conceptual stages, that is, before firm lines are on paper, time and money have been expended and attitudes hardened.

The "preliminary enquiry" has this benefit too; the architect can discuss with other creatively experienced professionals—who in addition are specialists in such problems—alternative approaches and ideas. Instead of an "us and them" situation, a partnership of private and public expertise can result. This, of course, is open to abuse, principally by those who have no real design skill but who still wish to avoid the professional stigma or inconvenience of a planning refusal.

When a formal Listed Building or planning application has been made, then this has to be determined—in other words, approved or refused. Where modifications can make a proposal acceptable, then negotiations are usually in everyone's interest—time is saved and a better scheme results. Where significant changes are necessary to make an application acceptable, then a refusal on design grounds makes the planning authority's position clear and affords the applicant his right to appeal (or to try again). The objection by most architects is not to the principle of design control itself, but to the competence of people encharged with applying it and subsequent inconsistencies of approach which are fostered by a lack of detailed design policies.

Summary

Given the implications of the Bill (if approved in its present form), the question must be, how can the necessary architectural quality be consistently achieved in the "districts" who, in the main, will be without specialist advice?

One possibility is to substitute quality control for design control, by the introduction of a regionally based register of specialist conservation architects. A new statute would be necessary to ensure the obligatory use of such firms for conservation area work. The register could be compiled by a standing committee chaired by the Department of the Environment and consisting of the RIBA, Civic Trust, County Planning Officers' Society and any other bodies though appropriate. Those architects selected for the conservation register could be freed of design control (though still subject to normal planning control, plot ratio, etc.). Democratic safeguards would enable the districts to refer to a county conservation panel any scheme that caused local controversy.

Registered architects would have the benefit of a regular flow of work, enabling them to hold and recruit other specialist staff. Competition would exist within the register, but on a professional basis, namely the quality of service offered. In national terms the amount of development in conservation areas is very small (in other words, those architects not on the register would only be marginally affected) while the community need for specialist design skills to enhance historic centres is still great.