

Monstrous Carbuncles and All That: The Extension and Adaptation of Historic Buildings, 1988-9

by

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In 1900, Adolf Loos, the Viennese architect and apologist of the Modern Movement, composed a telling homily entitled 'The Story of a Poor Rich Man'. This unfortunate man was the client of an architect of the purist persuasion. He was provided with a house to which the designer insisted nothing could be added and nothing taken away. He was even directed to refuse the presents his children brought home from the kindergarten for these would clash with the carefully composed internal spaces. Loos's parable was meant to be sardonic and it confirmed, if such confirmation were really necessary, that every house, however revered, however over-designed, must be a dynamic rather than a static element in a society and not petrified for the future.

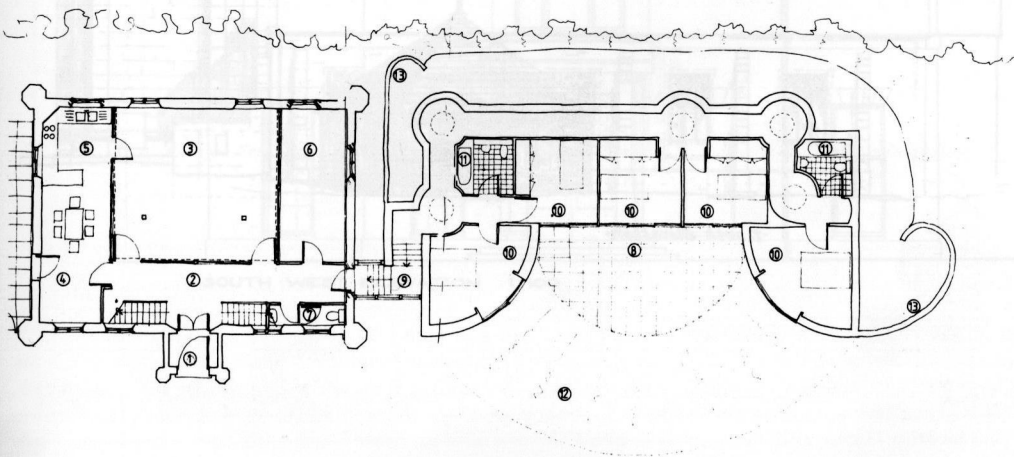
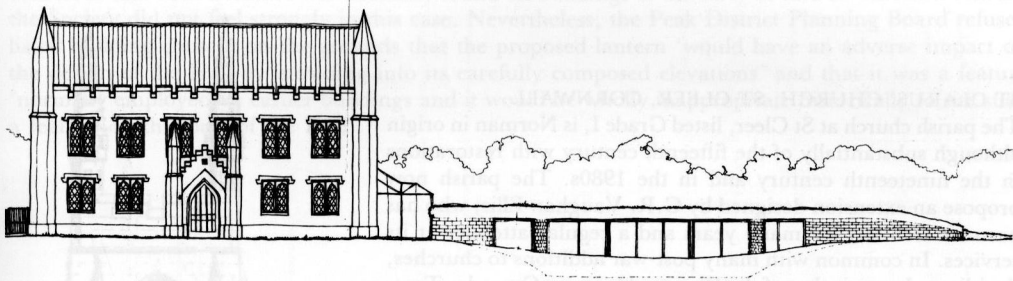
Difficulties and challenges arise in accommodating the inevitable pressures for change in the most sensitive manner. The Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient buildings, written in 1877 by men outraged at the hamfisted and arrogant repair of churches, urged that 'if it (the historic building) has become inconvenient for present use, raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one' and 'treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying'. Ruskin preferred collapse to adulteration. But absolute attitudes were soon modified. In a refinement to the Manifesto issued in April 1924 it was laid down by the S.P.A.B. (in the words of W.R. Lethaby) that if additions have to be made they 'should be as unobtrusive as possible and frankly modern'.

To the S.P.A.B., extensions should be in the style of their own day, the original being silhouetted by contrast with the new. A completely opposite school of thought encourages the deliberate disguising, or at least the self-effacement, of the newcomer by choosing the same style as the original. Most great cathedrals and country houses show examples of both these approaches. As the Ancient Monuments Society has

to be consulted on every application involving any degree of demolition to a listed building in England or Wales, cases showing both principles in practice have come across the author's desk fairly regularly during 1988-9. It thus seems an appropriate moment to illustrate some of these. It must be made clear, however, that inclusion does not necessarily imply favour or disfavour. The Society has no set criteria in this matter, our primary concern being that the most recent arrival on an historic site should be worthy of juxtaposition with a listed building by displaying the best standards of design and execution. If it is to be 'frankly modern' the extension should be well done in its own right and respectful of its neighbour. All drawings are here reproduced by kind permission of the respective architects.

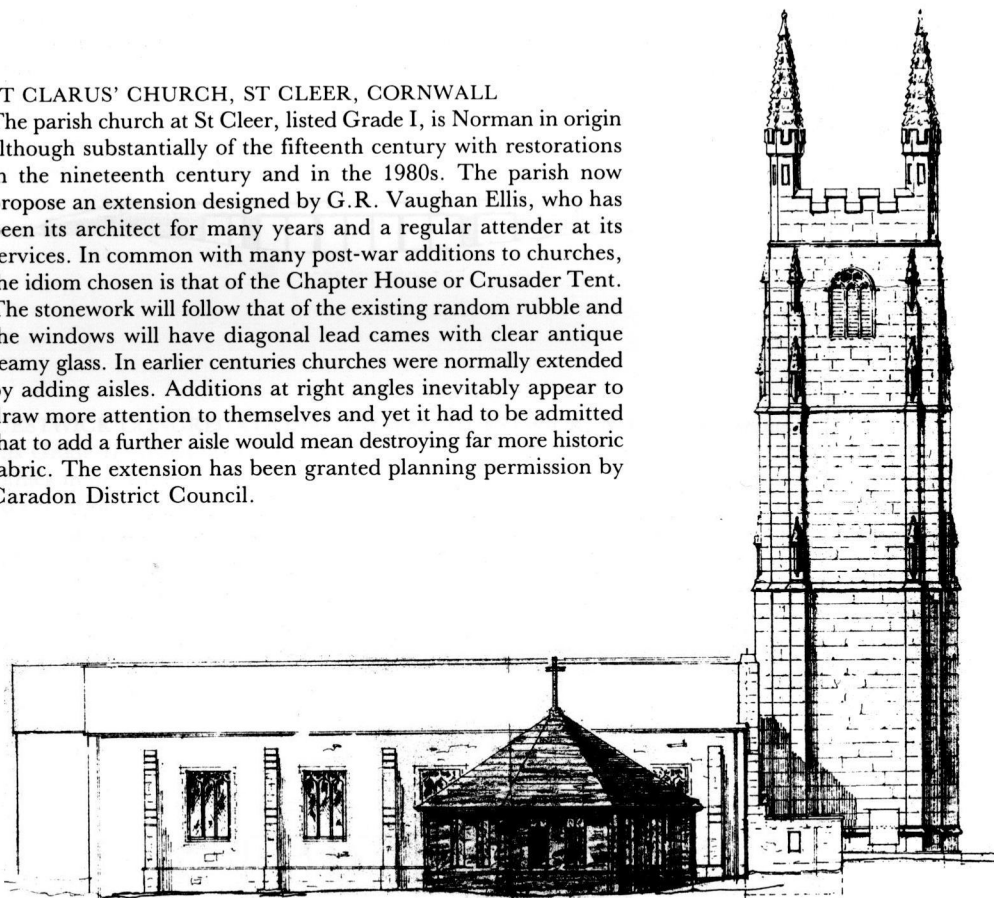
GUESTWICK CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, GUESTWICK, NORFOLK *Opposite*

This Grade II* listed chapel was founded in 1652 and extensively remodelled in a joyfully illiterate Gothick in the 1840s. It has been derelict for a number of years and thus the scheme for its conversion and extension as a house, published in April 1989, was most welcome in principle. The owners, the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, through their architects, John Sennitt and Associates, applied to Broadland District Council for permission to construct a bunker-like extension, that would be very largely underground, in order to take the majority of the intended residential accommodation. Most of the chapel interior would remain intact, including the box pews in the first-floor galleries. Room number 2 is the lobby, number 3 the main living room, number 4 the dining room, number 5 the kitchen and number 6 the snug. Sinking the new spaces avoids the need to decide on any style for them. This is the safest, although certainly not the cheapest, solution.



ST CLARUS' CHURCH, ST CLEER, CORNWALL

The parish church at St Cleer, listed Grade I, is Norman in origin although substantially of the fifteenth century with restorations in the nineteenth century and in the 1980s. The parish now propose an extension designed by G.R. Vaughan Ellis, who has been its architect for many years and a regular attender at its services. In common with many post-war additions to churches, the idiom chosen is that of the Chapter House or Crusader Tent. The stonework will follow that of the existing random rubble and the windows will have diagonal lead comes with clear antique reamy glass. In earlier centuries churches were normally extended by adding aisles. Additions at right angles inevitably appear to draw more attention to themselves and yet it had to be admitted that to add a further aisle would mean destroying far more historic fabric. The extension has been granted planning permission by Caradon District Council.

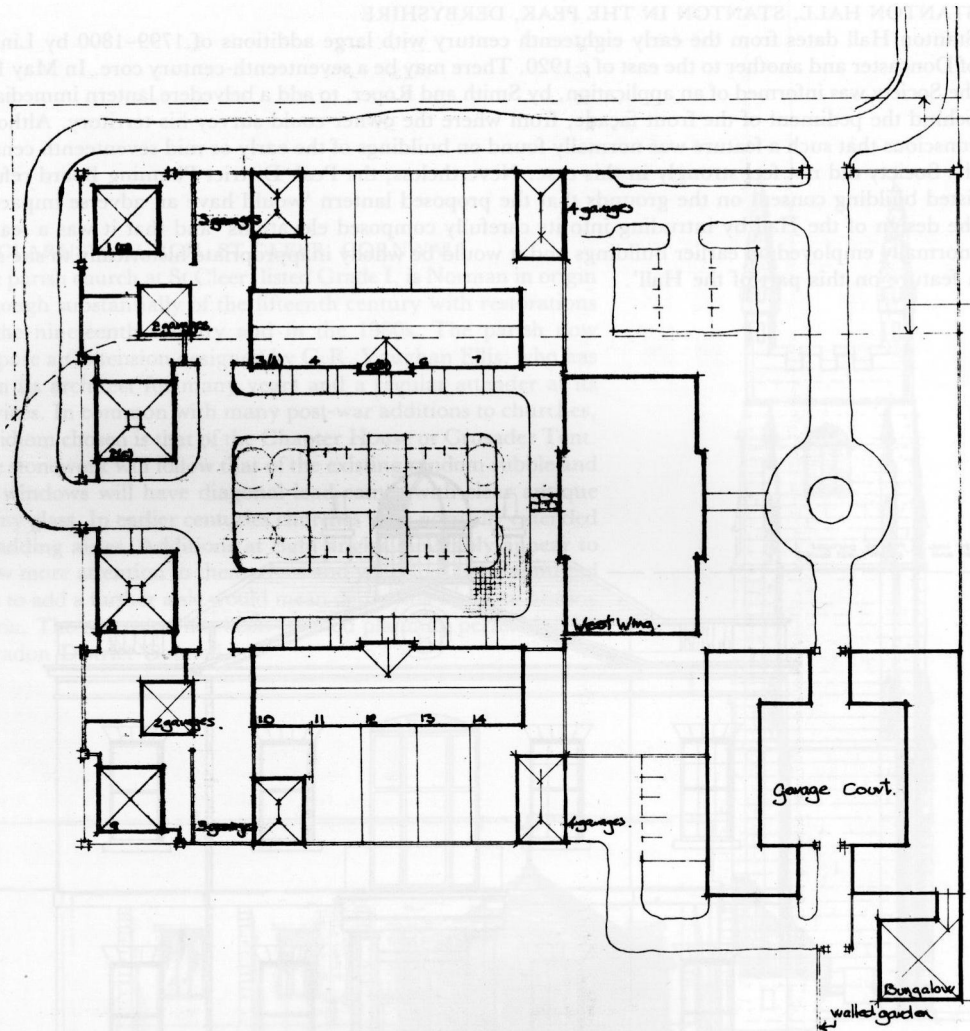


North Elevation

STANTON HALL, STANTON IN THE PEAK, DERBYSHIRE

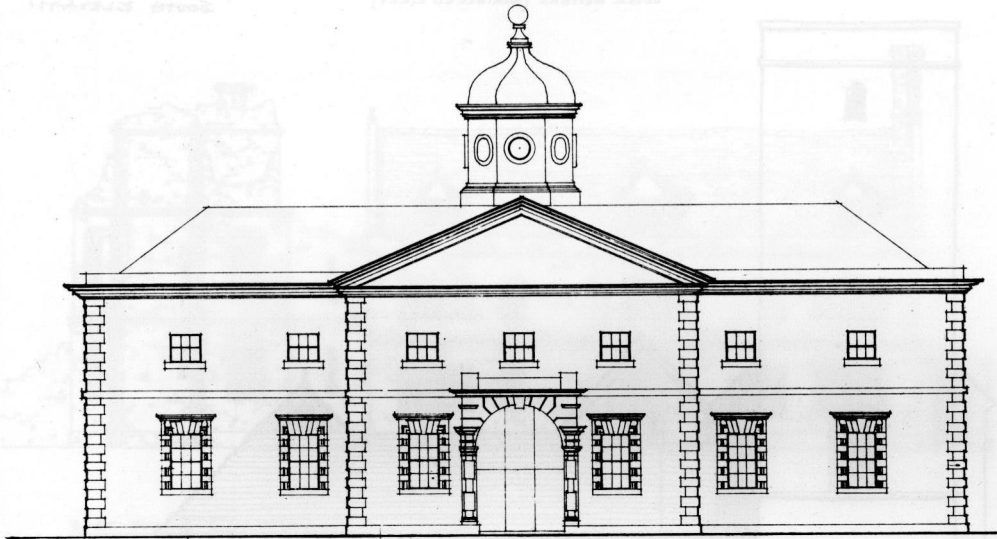
Stanton Hall dates from the early eighteenth century with large additions of 1799-1800 by Lindley of Doncaster and another to the east of c. 1920. There may be a seventeenth-century core. In May 1989 the Society was informed of an application, by Smith and Roper, to add a belvedere lantern immediately behind the pediment of the front façade, from where the owner could survey his territory. Although conscious that such a feature was normally found on buildings of the early or mid seventeenth century the Society did not feel strongly in this case. Nevertheless, the Peak District Planning Board refused listed building consent on the grounds that the proposed lantern 'would have an adverse impact on the design of the Hall by intruding into its carefully composed elevations' and that it was a feature 'normally employed on earlier buildings and it would be wholly inappropriate historically to site such a feature on this part of the Hall'.





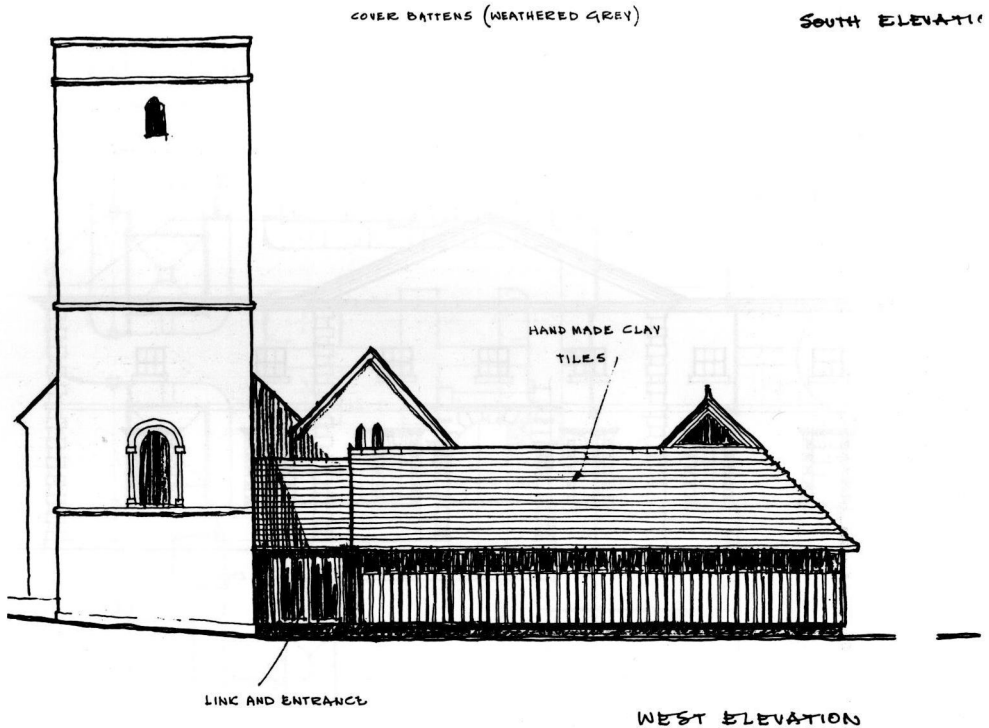
LATHAM HOUSE, LANCASHIRE

Latham House, designed c.1725-30 by Giacomo Leoni, was demolished earlier this century leaving only two substantial service wings, one of which also succumbed, apparently in the nineteen fifties. This left just one wing languishing in sad dereliction. In January 1989 the Society was consulted on a proposal by Hayes and Partners to convert this remaining block—the west wing—into eight residential apartments, and to provide it with a formalized Classical setting by adding two exactly complementary terraces, four pavilion blocks and matching garages to serve as extra housing. The new complex is not a re-creation of what has been lost but it does show a modern interpretation of the Classical canons of good design.



Front Elevation





ST MARY'S CHURCH, HAMBLE, HAMPSHIRE

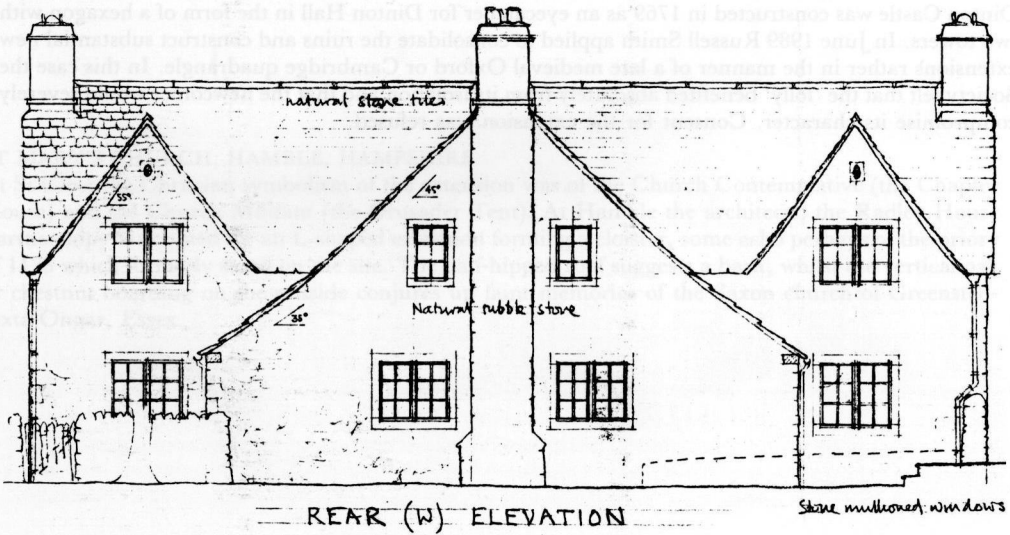
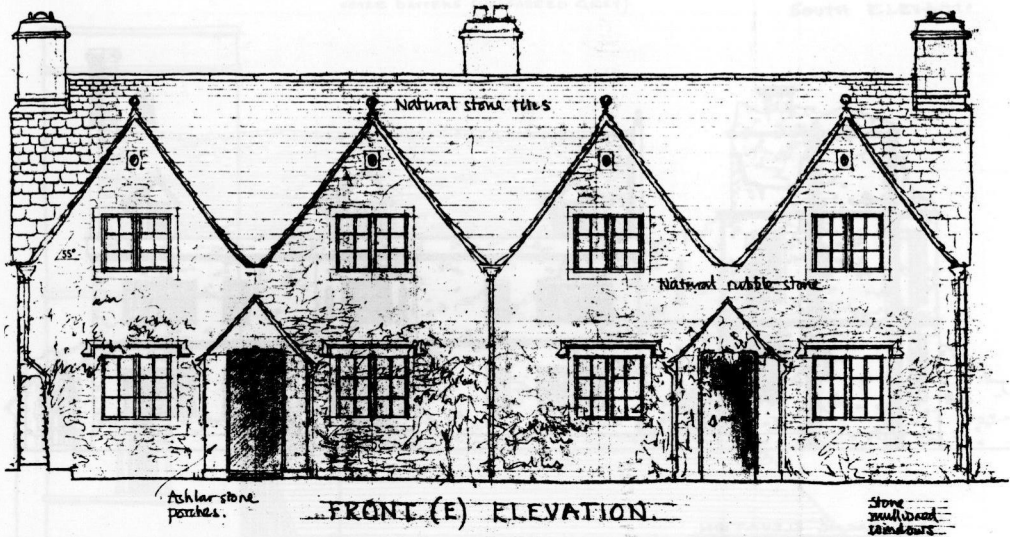
At St Cleer the Christian symbolism of the extension was of the Church Contemplative (the Chapter House) and the Church Militant (the Crusader Tent). At Hamble the architects, the Radley House Partnership, have opted for an L-shaped extension forming a cloister, some echo perhaps of the priory of 1128 which formerly stood on the site. The half-hipped roof suggests a barn, whilst the vertical oak or chestnut boarding on the outside conjures up faint memories of the Saxon church of Greensted-juxta-Ongar, Essex.



EAST FACING ELEVATION.

DINTON CASTLE, DINTON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Dinton Castle was constructed in 1769 as an eyecatcher for Dinton Hall in the form of a hexagon with two towers. In June 1989 Russell Smith applied to consolidate the ruins and construct substantial new extensions rather in the manner of a late medieval Oxford or Cambridge quadrangle. In this case the Society felt that the 'folly' benefited absolutely from its isolation and that the newcomer would severely compromise its character. Consent for the extension was refused.

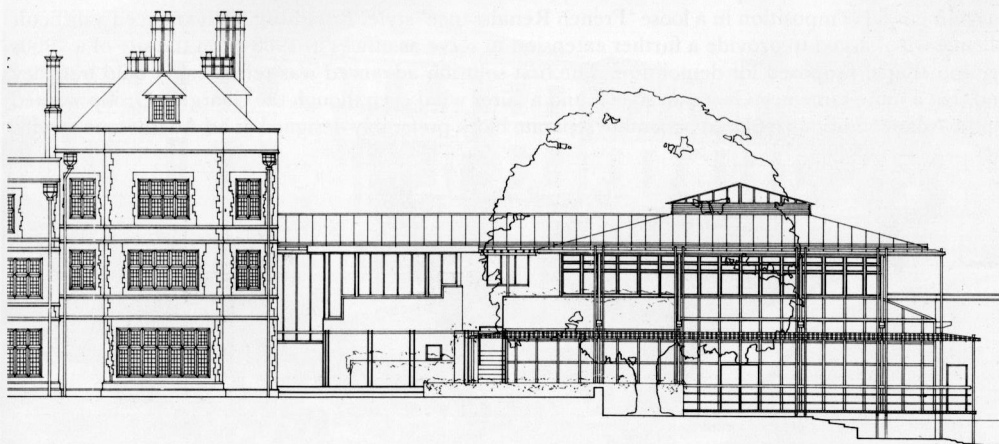


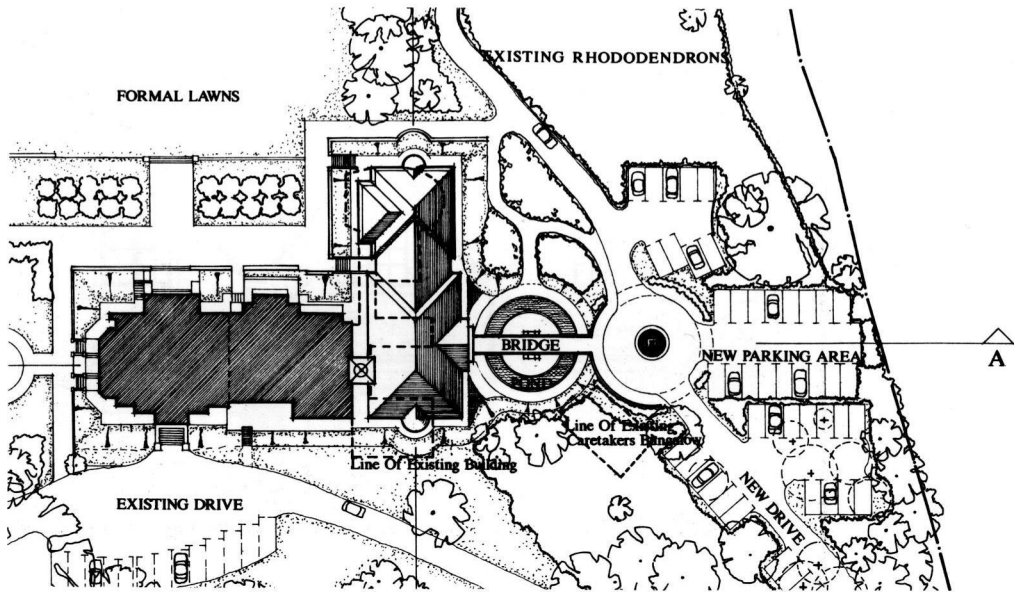
LUCKINGTON MANOR, LUCKINGTON, WILTSHIRE *Opposite*

When designing a development adjacent to a listed building one safe approach is to adopt the local vernacular. When asked to provide two cottages on the site of the modest and unlisted stables at the seventeenth-century Luckington Manor, William Bertram and Fell produced a design, referred to us in November 1988, which fits seamlessly into that long tradition of simple unpretentious design which is critical for the character of the villages of the county. Can there be a vernacular architecture designed by an architect?

FANHAM'S HALL, WARE, HERTFORDSHIRE

Fanham's Hall is now a substantial neo-Tudor composition by W. Wood Bethell of 1900-1. It was acquired in 1986 by J. Sainsbury plc for use as offices and in July 1989 the firm's architects, Nicholas Ray Associates, applied to extend it in an uncompromising High Tech idiom. An excellent example of modern design in its own right, we felt confident that the two styles would compliment rather than challenge each other.

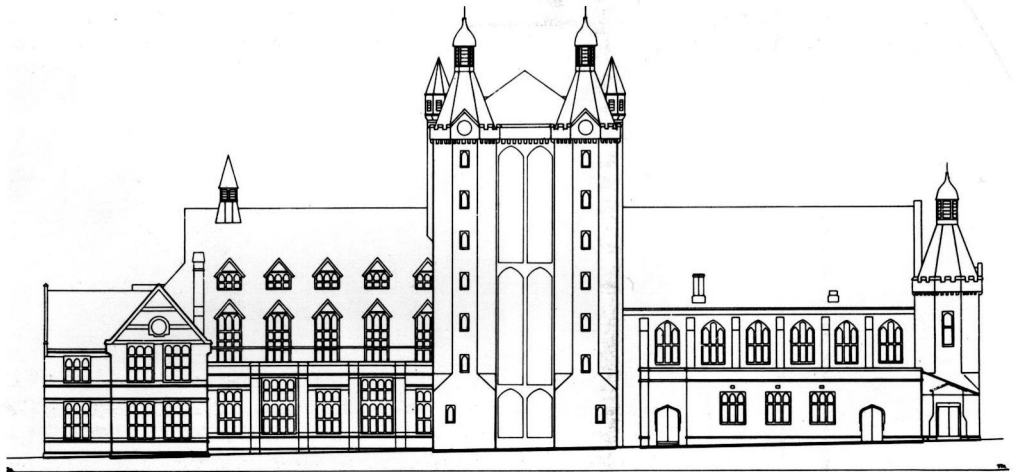




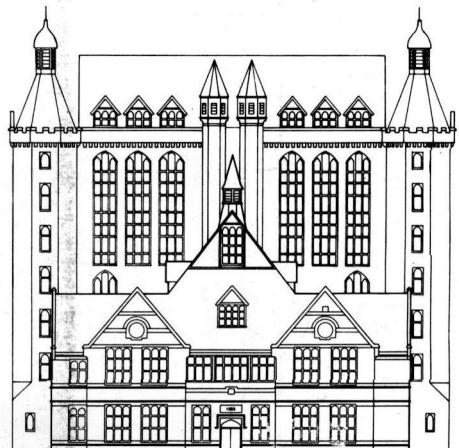
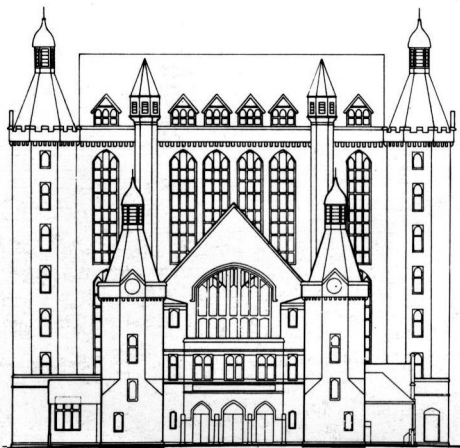
BRASTED PLACE, BRASTED, KENT

Brasted Place, listed Grade I, is the offspring of an unlikely architectural match, Robert Adam working in 1784 for John Turton, physician to George III, and Alfred Waterhouse who made modifications and additions in 1871. Adam provided a five-bay Palladian villa of two storeys and basement; Waterhouse an asymmetrical composition in a loose 'French Renaissance' style. Broadway Malyan faced a difficult challenge when asked to provide a further extension to serve as offices in 1988-9 on the site of a 1960s wing and chapel proposed for demolition. The first solution advanced was refreshingly bold but they found that a more tame neo-Georgian style found a fairer wind even though the Georgian Group wanted 'all post-Adam additions replaced by a quite separate block preferably designed as an Adamesque service wing'.





EAST ELEVATION



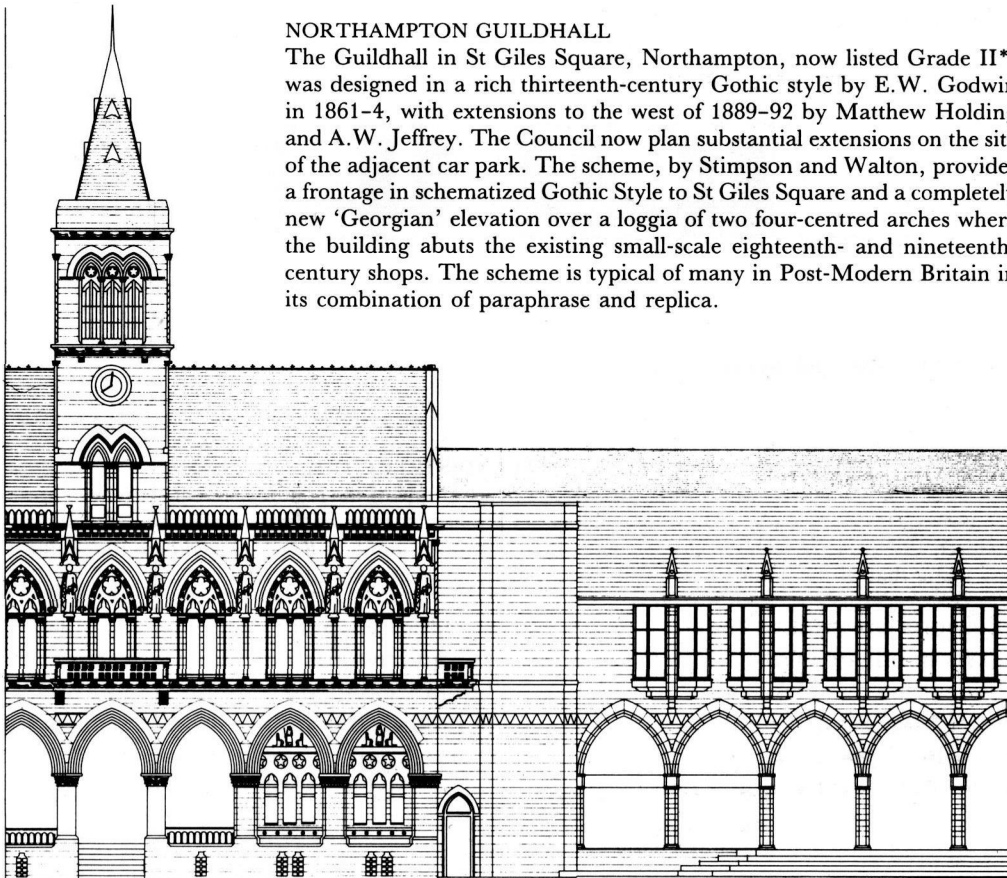
SOUTH ELEVATION

MECHANICS INSTITUTE, EMLYN SQUARE, SWINDON, WILTSHIRE *Opposite*

This must be one of the most extraordinary schemes to be sent to us for a long time. The Mechanics Institute of 1853-5 by Edward Roberts of London, was built as part of the new railway town in Swindon. In October 1988 the Society was first consulted on a proposal to convert the building (Grade II listed) to an hotel, involving the demolition of the central twentieth-century service tower and its replacement by a vast keep-like structure which took Roberts detailing—particularly his towers—and distended them to the point of caricature. The architects were the Halpern Partnership. The whole of the central tower, as shown, is new. At the time of writing the application has been refused and the applicants have gone to appeal.

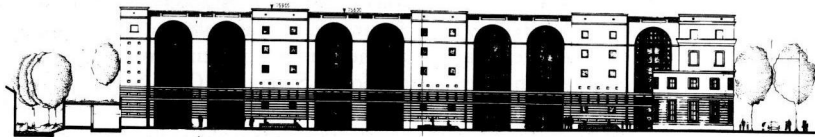
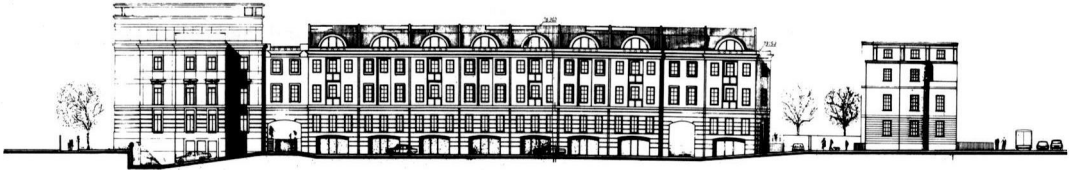
NORTHAMPTON GUILDHALL

The Guildhall in St Giles Square, Northampton, now listed Grade II*, was designed in a rich thirteenth-century Gothic style by E.W. Godwin in 1861-4, with extensions to the west of 1889-92 by Matthew Holding and A.W. Jeffrey. The Council now plan substantial extensions on the site of the adjacent car park. The scheme, by Stimpson and Walton, provides a frontage in schematized Gothic Style to St Giles Square and a completely new 'Georgian' elevation over a loggia of two four-centred arches where the building abuts the existing small-scale eighteenth- and nineteenth-century shops. The scheme is typical of many in Post-Modern Britain in its combination of paraphrase and replica.



EXISTING GUILDHALL

ELEVATION TO ST GILES SQUARE



COACH STATION AND CAR PARK SITE, PORTLAND STREET, CHELTENHAM

How does one redevelop a site within the historic heart of one of the country's great Regency cities? The answer of Nick Bridges, of the Sir Basil Spence Partnership, in an application referred to the Society in March 1989, was to echo the Classical Georgian terraces around, but not to copy them, the faintest copy being that of the Multi-Storey Car Park. All the façades shown are new.