

The Society's Casework in 2005: Review of Selected Cases

by

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Local planning authorities in England and Wales have been obliged to consult the Ancient Monuments Society (and the other National Amenity Societies) on all applications for listed building consent involving demolition, either total or partial, since 1972. In recent years the number of part demolition cases has settled to about 5,000 a year and those for complete demolition to around 120. The exact number of listed buildings threatened by application for total demolition in 2004 (the last full year at the time of writing) was 120 (fourteen of them in Wales). This compared with 128 in 2003. A full list of these cases can be obtained from the Society's office and website. The cases discussed here include some of the most interesting, although in choosing them we are limited by the availability of illustrations. The drawings have been kindly supplied by the architects of the various schemes and have been reproduced with their permission.

How to extend an ancient church remains one of the most taxing of all the challenges facing architects in practice today, whether they consider themselves Modernist, middle-of-the-road, or a conservation architect. The following three cases show differing approaches, two of them sharing a common audacity, and the other using geometrical forms with Neoclassical references. The AMS expressed considerable misgivings over the first two (Great Hormead and Keyworth) but we were able to welcome the third (Worcester).

ST NICHOLAS, GREAT HORMEAD, HERTFORDSHIRE

Hormead with Wyddial parish contains 800 souls and in recent years the village has been invigorated by an influx of new families, of mostly high income. This has put considerable pressure on the parish church, a dignified medieval structure listed Grade II*, restored in 1874 by A. W. Blomfield but still with much original fabric. It sits in its own very attractive graveyard well away from the centre of the village.

The parish has been discussing for some time how to provide new facilities as near as possible to the nave and the chancel. After considerable discussion the site most favoured, or that which was felt to offer the least challenge, was to the west, immediately beyond the tower. The architects, Atelier MLM of Aldbury in Hertfordshire (Peter and Stephen Melvin and Inge de Beer) rationalised their approach as follows: 'The precedent for the

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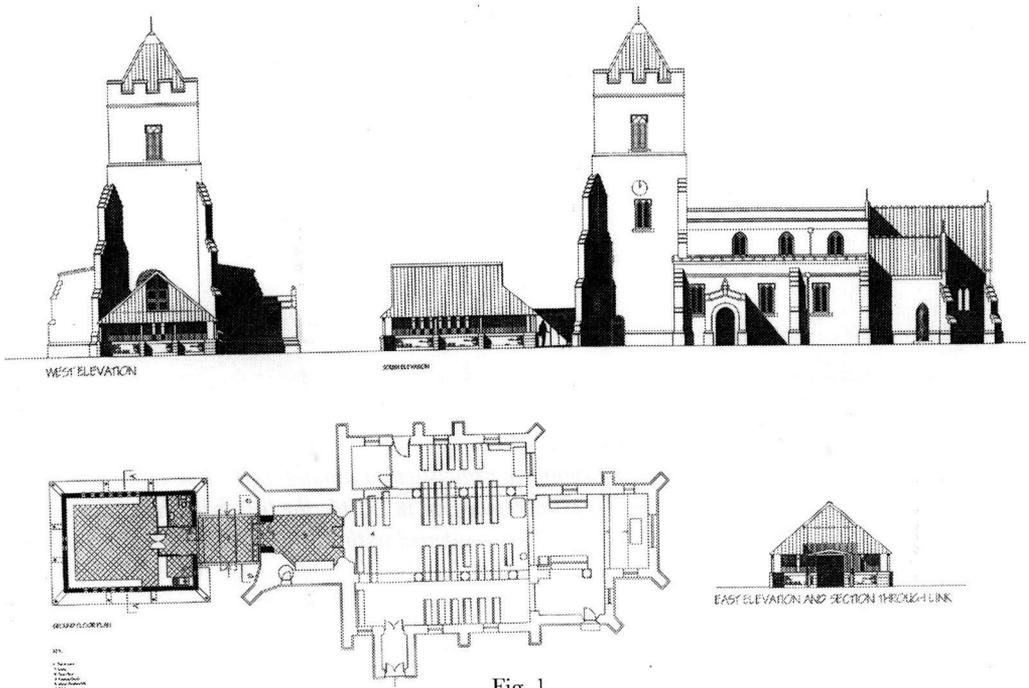


Fig. 1

St Nicholas, Great Hormead, Hertfordshire. Section and plan of western extension.

Atelier MLM



Fig. 2

St Nicholas, Great Hormead, Hertfordshire. Watercolour of western extension.

Atelier MLM

design is that of a simple agricultural building using traditional materials. It is placed axially to underline the evolution of the existing building and that of the Christian religion, both of which have always been east-west. The plinth walls are of stone and flint and the roof is clad with plain clay tiles, all of which are used on the existing church. The upper part of the walls is clad with vertical oak boarding underlining the simple rural nature of the design. The double pitch roof is partially hipped at the east end in deference to the tower and particularly to provide good views of the west window from both the north and south. A generous overhang creates the impression that the roof is hovering over the stone and flint plinth that in itself is a visual extension of the existing church. The buttresses supporting the circular posts provide a further echo of the rhythm of the elevational language of the existing building... The new build is intended to provide a new parish room connected to the tower by a glazed link, and brings the added benefit of more intensive use of the lofty and currently underlit tower room. The scheme is shown in elevational drawings supplied by the architect and in an attractive watercolour (Figs 1 and 2).

The AMS's difficulty with the scheme lay in its location and in its language. We felt strongly that the build-up from chancel to nave and then to the higher 'full stop' of the western tower would be compromised by a new build beyond it. There is a measured balance to the current composition which this would unbalance.

Second, we were uncomfortable with the language of an agricultural building or a barn being used so close to that of a church. They are very different creatures and would hardly ever have been seen in such close juxtaposition.

Our misgivings were shared by English Heritage and the Council for the Care of Churches and, although planning permission has been granted by East Hertfordshire Council, the matter remains undecided with the Chancellor of the Diocese at the time of writing.

ST MARY MAGDALENE, KEYWORTH, NOTTINGHAM

The scheme for Keyworth was even bolder in form and juxtaposition. Here also the perceived need was for contiguous accommodation, there being an adjacent but out-of-date church hall. The new build designed by Mark Stewart (of ms architects of West Bridgford) appeared almost organic in form. The Diocesan Advisory Committee described it well: 'The intention is to provide additional accommodation to serve the mission of the church by erecting a building in the churchyard on the north side of the church, the plan of it to be on a slight double curve weaving between the trees following the staggered line of the existing north wall. The new build is to be linked to the church with two glazed pavilions at each of the existing north doors with no works to the medieval fabric. Their height is to be significantly lower than the existing eaves height in the north aisle, with the layout of the new build to follow the slope on the site to give wheelchair access to the existing nave and chancel. The roof is to be of a slightly pitched faceted form with a copper sheet covering, and supported on slender steel columns set outside the external wall line and located between grave markers and monuments. The external walls are to be composed of sections with oak planks, unframed glazing and a mixture of oak and glass 'planking'. The use of glass would allow the trees to be seen through the

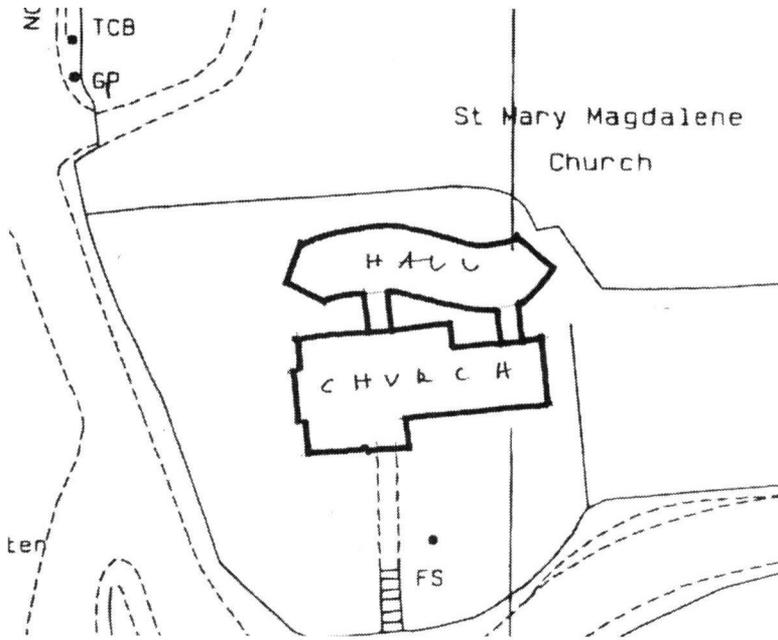


Fig. 3
St Mary Magdalene, Keyworth, Nottingham

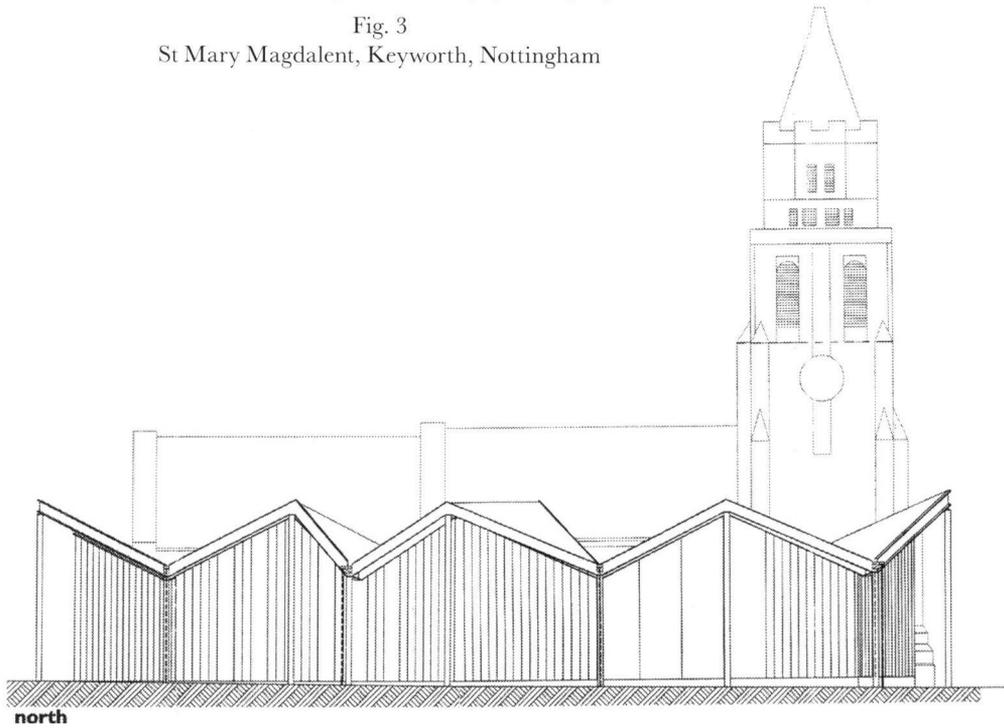


Fig. 4
St Mary Magdalene, Keyworth, Nottingham; an extension audacious in both footprint and elevation

walls from the outside and the north elevation of the church itself to be viewed from inside the new accommodation. The foundations would be on mini piles to avoid disturbance to archaeology, graves and tree roots'. The drawing (Fig. 3) shows the relationship in footprint between the new and the old. The second shows the uncompromising quality of the new build as seen from the north (Fig. 4), the elevation most prominent from Nottingham Road which leads into the village square. The undulations of the ridge and furrow roof form are in marked contrast to the gentle straight lines of the nave and chancel, a particularly modern touch being given by the use of chains where the gables meet to serve instead of pipes for the disposal of rainwater.

Much like other schemes discussed in earlier *Newsletters*, for example that for Buckden, near Peterborough, the AMS view was that the new build was too restless, too competitive with the existing, whatever the quality of its architectural imagination.

The officers of Rushcliffe Council came out in favour of the proposed scheme but Councillors over-ruled them and planning permission was refused. At the time of writing an appeal was programmed.

ST GEORGE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, SANSOME STREET, WORCESTER

St George's was built in 1829 to the designs of Henry Rowe although its present façade is a quasi-Roman flourish of 1887 by S. J. Nicholl. The building was upgraded from Grade II to II* in 1996. For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the church developed ancillary accommodation of no great architectural value and the parish felt the need to enter the new millennium with a church hall which added to the architectural strength of its position at a critical road junction in the city centre (where Sansome Street meets St Nicholas Street and City Walls Road).

The architects, Panton Sargent of Worcester (job architect, Louis Fortis), intended 'to draw upon the ancient practice of placing a chapter house or baptistry as the ancillary building', taking as direct inspiration the great Baptistry at

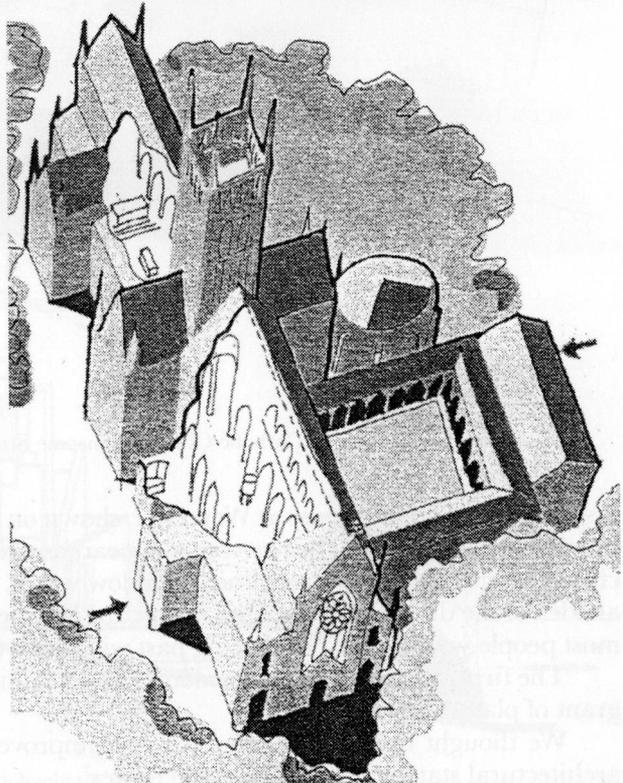


Fig. 5

The Cathedral, Worcester, showing the chapter house, the inspiration for St George's Roman Catholic Church, Sansome Street, Worcester

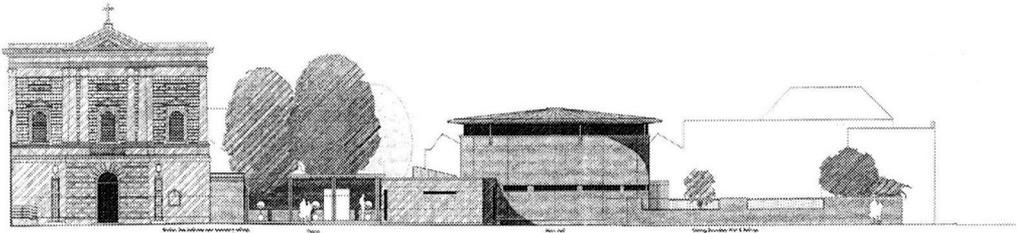


Fig. 6
St George's Roman Catholic Church, Sansome Street, Worcester, elevation

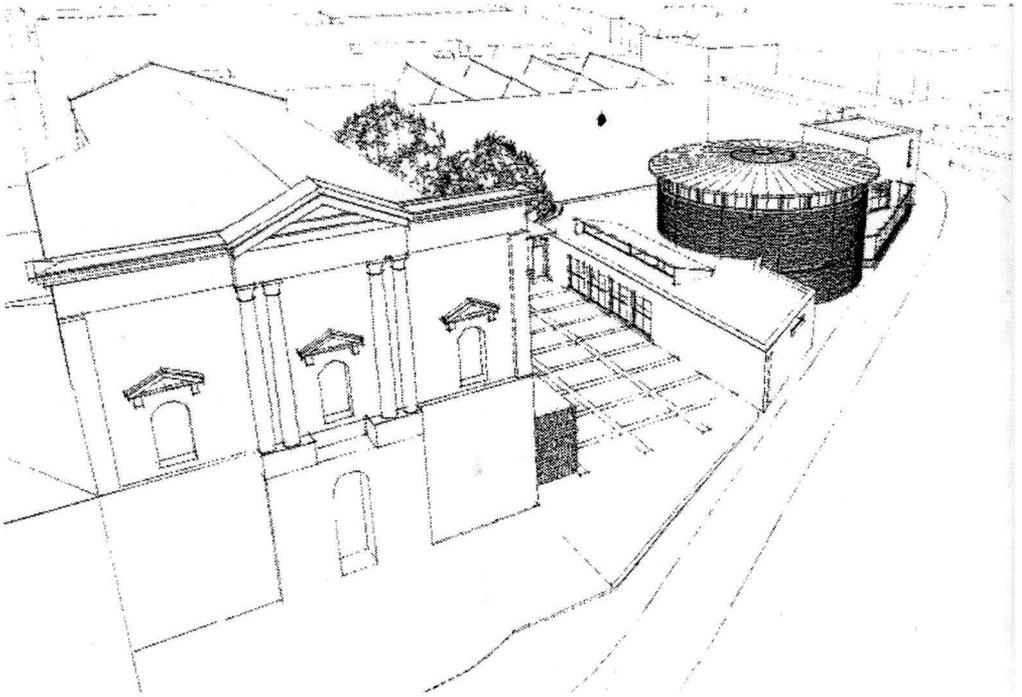


Fig. 7
St George's Roman Catholic Church, Sansome Street, Worcester, isometric view

Pisa and the Chapter House at Worcester, shown on the previous page in an aerial view drawn by them (Fig. 5). The newcomer appears as a classical rotunda under a conical cap clasped at its base by two rectilinear and low wings. The elevational view (Fig. 6) gives an idea of the direct impact on the townscape but the isometric view (Fig. 7) shows what most people walking past or driving past will see as the full drum comes into view.

The first phase of the scheme alone cost £1.3 million. It is now on site following the grant of planning permission.

We thought the scheme offered a real improvement with the prospect of 'a new architectural statement of dignity and power'.

'STRELITZIA', MICHAELGATE, LINCOLN

We are occasionally consulted over schemes where there is not actually a statutory requirement to do so. This is a case in point. Anything on the hilltop rising towards the Cathedral in Lincoln is potentially sensitive but the immediate site for this extraordinary structure is an abandoned brown-field location surprisingly invisible from long views. The architect, lkr architects ltd, and the client, David Lewis, have conceived a layered and splayed composition based on the flower known as a *Strelitzia Reginae* 'which has clean sharp forms radiating from a layered base' (Figs. 9 and 10). There is a long tradition of architecture following the stimulus of nature, brought out dramatically in a recent book on the topic by Alan Powers. The architects refer to the fact that the site 'presents an opportunity to provide a stunning modern house which will reinforce the transformation of Lincoln into a forward thinking city in the process started by the University and the new Museum'. The latter opened in the Autumn of 2005.

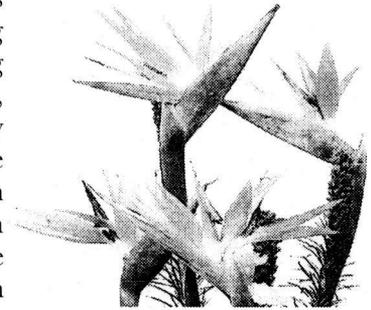


Fig. 9

Strelitzia Reginae

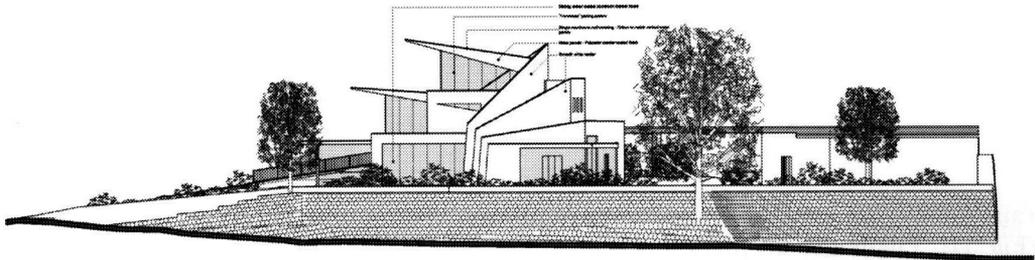


Fig. 10

Strelitzia, Michaelgate, Lincoln, south elevation

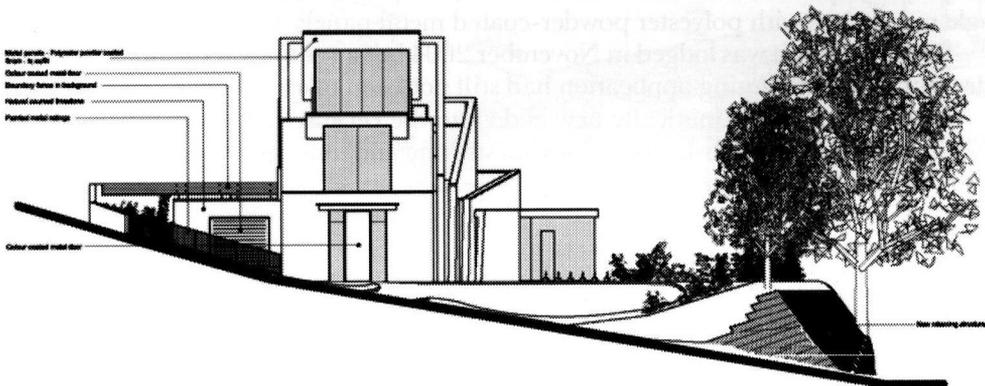


Fig. 11

Strelitzia, Michaelgate, Lincoln, west elevation

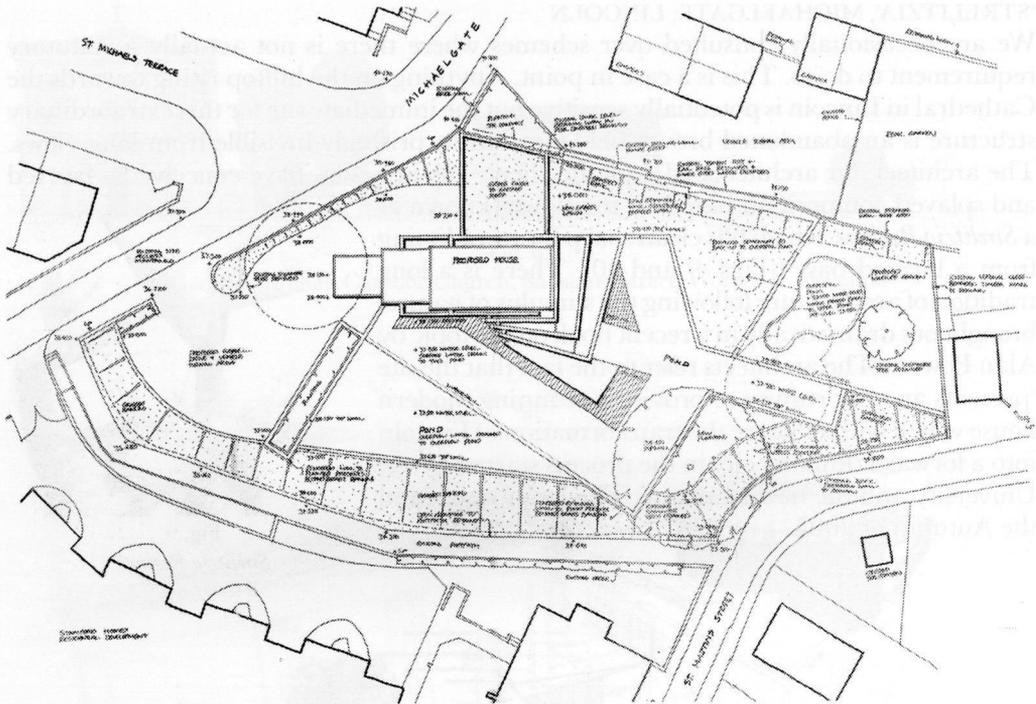


Fig. 8

Strelitzia, Michaelgate, Lincoln. Plan

To minimise any disruption to the archaeology, the ground floor of the house is raised above the existing ground levels, with minimal excavation below the new garage (Fig. 11). The house sits predominantly on the level area of the site with the new water features, shown on the block plan (Fig. 8), taking advantage of the lie of the land to achieve their dramatic purpose. The walls are to be finished in smooth white render with polyester powder coated aluminium trim, the projecting roofs being covered in a single membrane with polyester powder-coated metal panels to the sides and the soffit.

The application was lodged in November 2004 but a year on, at the time of writing, a decision on the planning application had still not been taken.

Where does the dramatically new elide into the eccentric? Our view was that the scheme, although outlandish, does provide a striking and innovative addition to the city's corpus of fine buildings and we raised no objection.

LOWER DAFALUKE, GLEWSTONE, HEREFORDSHIRE

We reproduce this as a delightfully seamless way to extend an existing historic building. What the firm of Border Oak, based at Kingsland near Leominster, has done is provide a two-storey weatherboarded cross-wing in much the same way that the builders of the eighteenth or nineteenth century would have done if faced with the same brief. The work was designed by Ewart Hutton and the draughtsman responsible for the depiction is Darren Ray (Fig. 12).

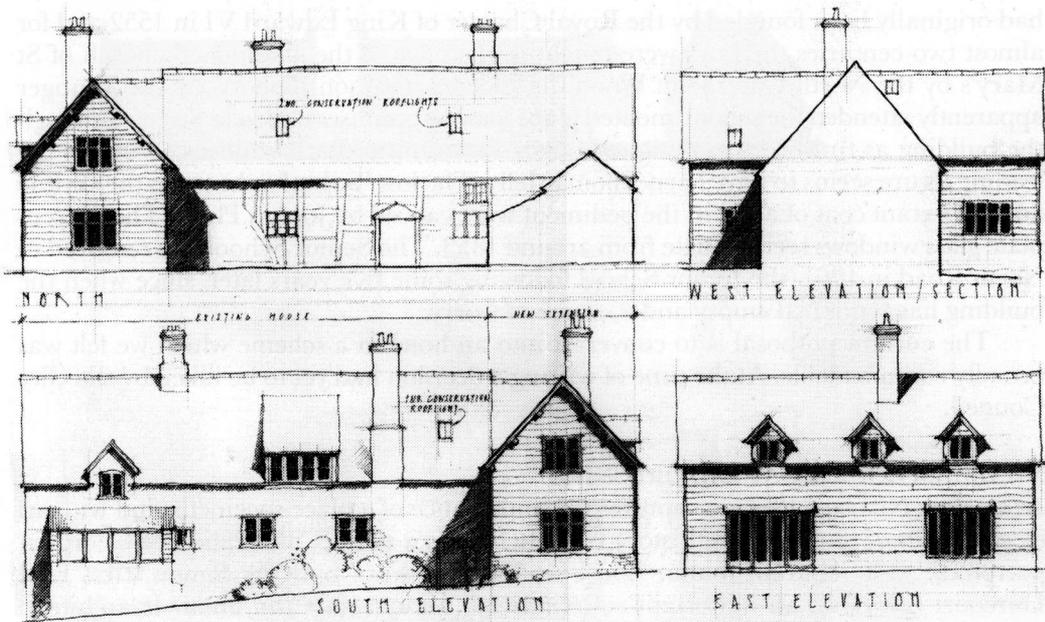


Fig. 12

Lower Dafaluke, Glewstone, Herefordshire. The new elevation is shown bottom right.

THE FORMER KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL, BROAD STREET, BATH

This delightful drawing by Jarrod Hill (of JH Consulting, which works closely with Feilden Clegg and Bradley) shows a particularly unusual creature, a purpose-built eighteenth-century urban school (Fig. 13). This, King Edward's School, built in 1752-74,



Fig. 13

The former King Edward's School, Broad Street, Bath

had originally been founded by the Royal Charter of King Edward VI in 1552 and for almost two centuries the boys were taught in the nave of the abandoned church of St Mary's by the North Gate. John Wood the Elder, whose son John Wood the Younger apparently attended the school, mooted plans for new premises in Broad Street, although the building as finished was designed by a consortium of Bath builders, of whom the leading figure seems to have been Thomas Jelly. The lost 'bustos' or busts on the skyline and the extant coat of arms in the pediment were carved by Joseph Plura. The current plate glass windows seem to date from around 1853. The Senior School was removed to North Road in 1961, the Junior School following some five years later, since when the building has remained empty and a source of worry.

The current proposal is to convert it into an hotel in a scheme which we felt was broadly commendable. At the time of writing a decision had yet to be taken by the City Council.

NUNEHAM COURTENAY, OXFORDSHIRE

As so often Nikolaus Pevsner captures the importance of a place succinctly and with an elegant turn of phrase: 'The history of Nuneham is a perfect illustration of Georgian patronage. The church, manor house and village were built by Simon, first Earl Harcourt (1714-77), an important court official, antiquarian and amateur architect. The improvements were continued by his son, George Simon Harcourt (1736-1809), artist and etcher and patron of contemporary painters and writers, including William Mason, William Whitehead, Paul Sandby, Reynolds and W. S. Gilpin. In the 1760s the old village and church were demolished to make way for a Classical landscape. The tenants' cottages were rebuilt out of sight of the house and a church erected as an ornamental temple in the park. The new village, including a forge (now a garage), inn, curate's house and semi-detached cottages are of uniform design in chequer brick. They are neatly arranged on either side of the Oxford road, a Georgian version of ribbon development. Fashionable ideas of Picturesque planning were not at this stage applied to cottages. It has been suggested (by Mavis Batey) that Nuneham was 'Sweet Auburn', one of Goldsmith's 'Deserted Villages' of 1770'.

We were consulted in July 2005 on a proposal to banish the garage (Auto Saver) from the blacksmith's forge and restore the building to its original condition and to provide on an adjacent site a set of four new cottages inspired by the late Georgian aesthetic of their equivalents on the Oxford road. The drawing shows the ground plan and the elevations (Fig. 14). The former forge and latter-day garage is the building on the right. The architects are the Anderson Orr Partnership based at Wheatley in Oxfordshire.

NEW SHOPPING CENTRE, SOUTHEND ROAD, PENRITH, CUMBRIA

Very few schemes referred to us take the breath away, but this one did. Lowther Minelli Properties Ltd, run by Jim Lowther, third son of Lord Lonsdale and based at the Estate Office at Lowther, submitted proposals in October 2005 for a mixed-use scheme extending over 5.43 acres just off the centre of Penrith. 234 houses and flats were envisaged together with a new retail development grouped around four new squares. What was amazing was the architectural language – a refined Classicism inspired by Schinkel for

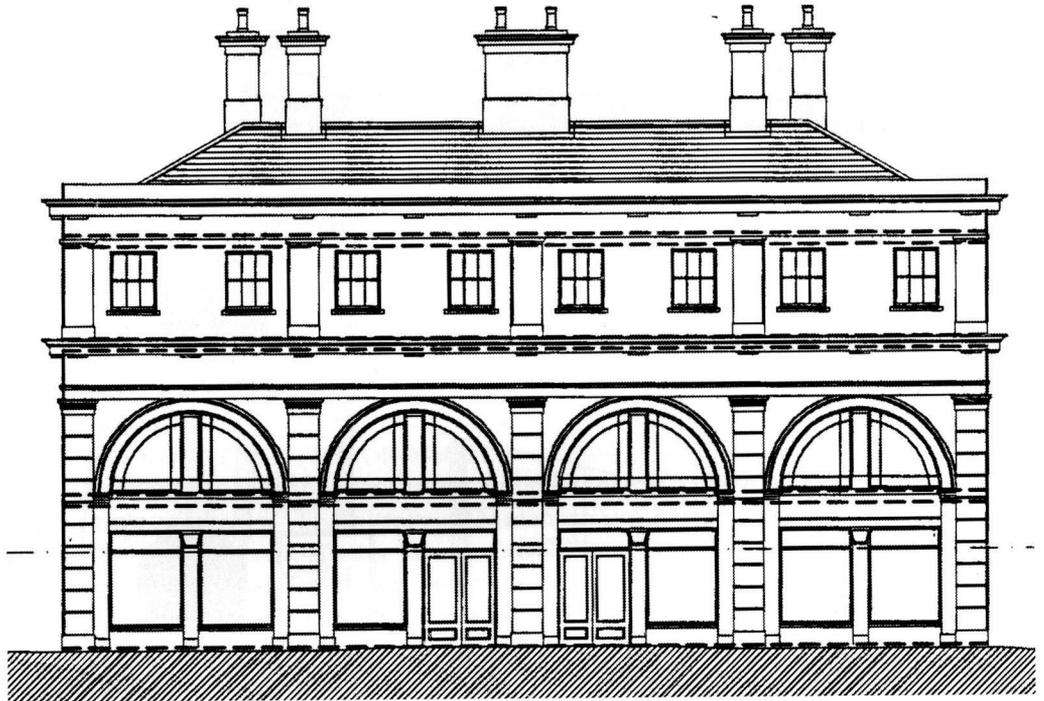


Fig. 15

New Shopping Centre, Southend Road, Penrith, Cumbria.
North-east facing elevation to Two Lions Square

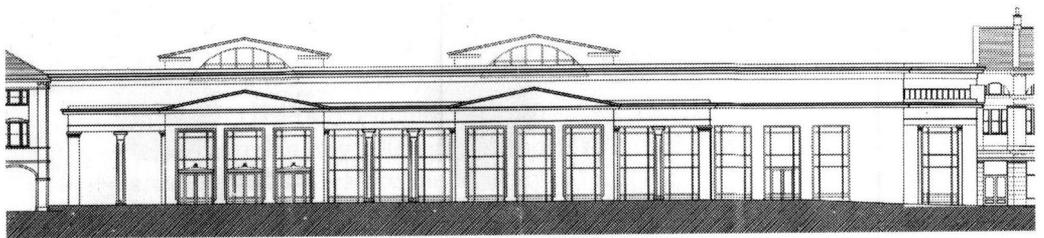


Fig. 16

New Shopping Centre, Southend Road, Penrith, Cumbria.
Elevation to Common Garden Square

the polite squares and a take on the Cumbrian urban vernacular for the 'mood music' of the secondary streets. The hierarchy will be explicit too in the materials; ashlar in the local stone for the set pieces with reconstituted equivalents elsewhere. Figure 15 shows one side to the new Two Lions Square and Figure 16, the food supermarket in Common Garden Square which has something of the sobriety of a Roman Bath.

The architects are Manning Elliott based at Gilwilly in Cumbria, advised by Craig

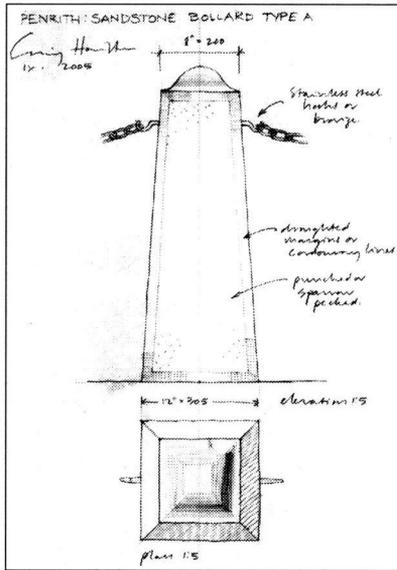


Fig. 17
New Shopping Centre, Southend Road, Penrith, Cumbria. Possible stone bollard

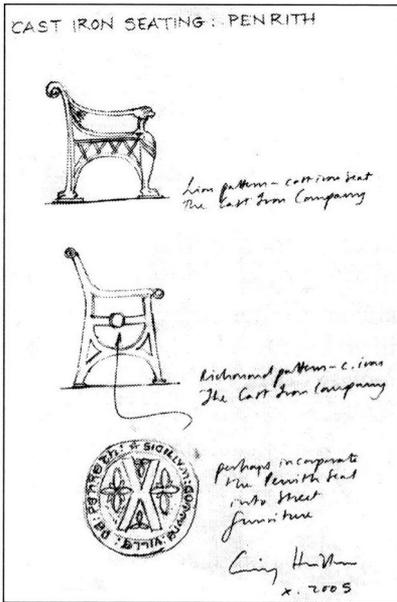


Fig. 18
New Shopping Centre, Southend Road, Penrith, Cumbria. Suggested cast iron seating

Hamilton who first came to Mr Lowther's attention through a private commission. It is Hamilton's passionate belief in Classicism and the virtue of artistic endeavour which lends the scheme much of its spark both in the grand vision and the attention to detailing. Figures 17 and 18 show how even in the bollards and the public seating something special is intended. Even a statue of Richard III (Fig. 19) is planned in the Princes Square facing another of 'Vindication' astride a column. Hamilton is not only an architect but also, like Sir Robert Taylor, a sculptor although it is intended that the statues will be the work of the gifted Alexander (Sandy) Stoddart.

The scheme came to us because some unlisted buildings in the conservation area would have to come down. Although we carry no torch for Classicism we felt that the modest buildings concerned were expendable in the context of a scheme that promised so much in terms of enhanced civic presence.

At the time of writing a decision by the planning authority had not been taken.

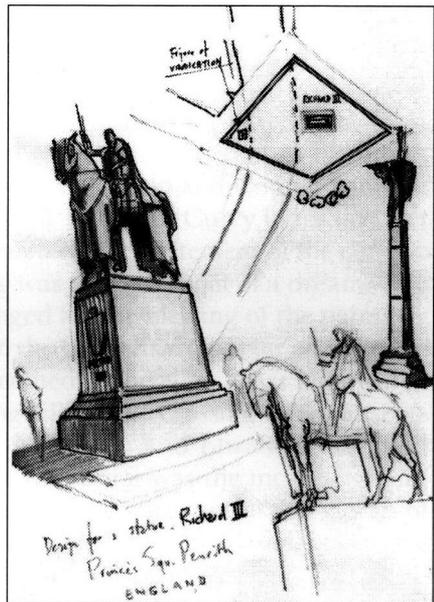


Fig. 19
New Shopping Centre, Southend Road, Penrith, Cumbria. Planned new monument to Richard III

