

(DIGEST OF
(EXCERPTS FROM PRELIMINARY REPORT ON HARPENDEN STREET IMPROVEMENT

PROJECT dated 14.11.62 by STIRLING & MARGARET CRAIG, Architects & Planning Consultants, 30, London Road, Stevenage.

1. Terms of reference: To prepare a report on the possibilities offered by a street improvement scheme in Harpenden for the consideration of the U.D.C. and any other local bodies they might consider should be approached. No special area designated for consideration, as this was intended to form one of the recommendations of the report - likewise extent and scope of improvements.
2. Area Examined: Civic Trust recommends such an area should include minimum of 30 properties - maximum of 150. Thus Harpenden area should extend from Station Rd-Amenbury Lane on South to Sun Lane-Kirkdale Road at North.
3. Character of Central Area: High St (incl. Church Green) remarkable as e.g. of merit of topography of a street, rendering its architecture of secondary importance. No 'gems' in whole length: several examples of their particular kind yet no sequence, and majority built in past 100 years (presumably replacing older structures on same sites).
"The overall impression however is extremely agreeable, its only major weakness being the presence of the main road which cuts the area in half"
Trees predominate and one can scarcely see the buildings on East side for stretches during summer: "In our view these trees are a great natural asset."
4. Principal Defects:
 1. Separation of shopping on east and west sides.
 2. Congestion of car parking in High St.
 3. Small areas of grass and trees defined by posts and chains which should be better integrated with High St. pedestrian system.
 4. Bowers Parade and Hockadays block as examples of "low visual content"
 5. Random assortment of furniture and signs.
 6. Bus stops obstruct through traffic and call for lay-bys.
5. General Proposals:
 1. Wide subway or footbridge to unify street for pedestrians - either Church Green or at Woolworths.
 2. Prohibit car-parking in High St. or re-allocate area of parking, and call better attention to existing Car Parks (e.g. Amenbury Lane)
 3. Detailed survey and re-plan, in conjunction with landscape architect, required on items 1 & 2 (above) and 6 (below) to include particularly such areas as south of Har. Motors-including Public Conveniences, bus shelter, notice boards, etc.
 4. Owners of sub-standard areas (e.g. Bowers Parade)

to be encouraged to improve (a) appeal of building itself (subject of detailed proposals) and (b) Shop windows and fronts, lettering, display, window dressing, etc.

5. Survey functions of notices and signs and eliminate inessential: consolidate at critical points by liaison with authorities/owners involved.

6. Bus lay-bys

6. Paintwork and Lettering: Additional painting of parts at present unpainted not warranted on score of additional maintenance costs: concentrate on already painted areas, e.g. Harpenden Arms, rendered buildings e.g. Kingston House, Buntys, end wall of Hockadays, etc. Similarly fascia and other lettering of some shops to be improved to increase appeal to customers as well as contribute to street scene, e.g. Bowers Parade, White Lion, Hilaries, Robertson Bros., etc. The George Hotel is a lost opportunity being first Hotel on left entering Town from London - forbidding: Brewers might cooperate.

7. Conclusion. Harpenden lends itself to a street improvement scheme of considerable flexibility if it concentrated on open spaces and key buildings - but character should be modest and unpretentious.

"We well understand, of course, the subway may be an economic impossibility, but there is no doubt that if a by-pass is out of the question, a free flow of pedestrians from one side of the High Street to the other would very greatly enhance the town's amenities. No comment on cost until U.D.C. reactions are received.

Pleased to meet Council or any committee and show slides to illustrate points made in report. Could also prepare drawings to indicate how report could be implemented.