

An Architect's View of Modern Architecture in an Historic City



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PRESIDENT
ST ALBANS CIVIC SOCIETY

The Traditional Character of Harpenden



Côte Bistro, Harpenden

*An example of a fine
traditional building finding
a re-use*



SOME WORDS FROM THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

“By establishing sound, clear and easy to follow design policies and processes for use by both developers and local communities, local planning authorities can make design a more transparent and accessible part of the planning process.”

WHERE DO WE STAND?

We are a Cathedral City and Harpenden is part of the same City council.

Compared with Cambridge, Canterbury, York, Salisbury, Chichester and other Cathedral Cities, our record is poor. Harpenden has its own special character which has to be carefully preserved.

The Civic Society's position is:

"To encourage high standards of Architecture and Town Planning in and around St Albans."

"Looking to the future with an eye to the past."

SO WHAT DO WE ASK OF BUILDINGS OF TODAY?

- ▶ They must work for the needs of this computer age.
- ▶ We do not need false imitations of buildings of the past, but respectful of the past heritage.
- ▶ They must be of the highest quality or design.
- ▶ In this age of Global Warming, we should meet the needs of sustainability and environmental friendliness.
- ▶ Buildings that embrace the advantages of technology, insulation and avoid materials that pollute.

So it's a tough agenda.

A SENSE OF PLACE

It is clear from our City History that there is no universal style of buildings in St Albans.

The architecture and its materials changed with the time that they were built.

SO WHAT IS GOOD ARCHITECTURE?

Let us look at some history

PROPORTION

Then we have something called Proportion.

**In Classical Design
proportion provided the
conjunction between good
and beautiful**



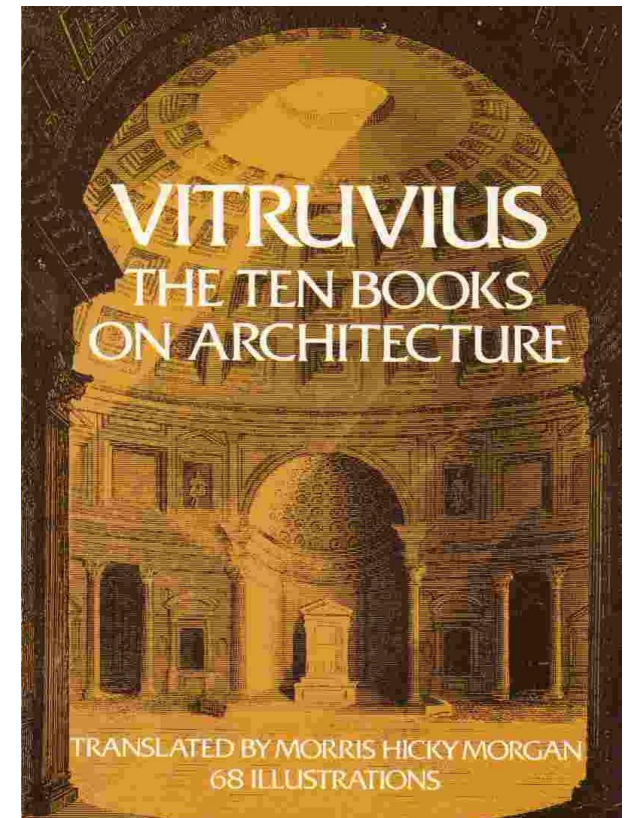
VITRUVIUS 25 BC

Vitruvius was a Roman writing in the time of Augustus.

He wrote The Ten Books of Architecture.

His words were that architecture should be:

Solid, Useful and Beautiful



FIBONACCI

Italian Mathematician born 1170.

He created the Fibonacci Sequence

1, 1, 2, 3, 5 etc.

It is also called Natures Code.

It is linked to the Golden Section or Ratio.

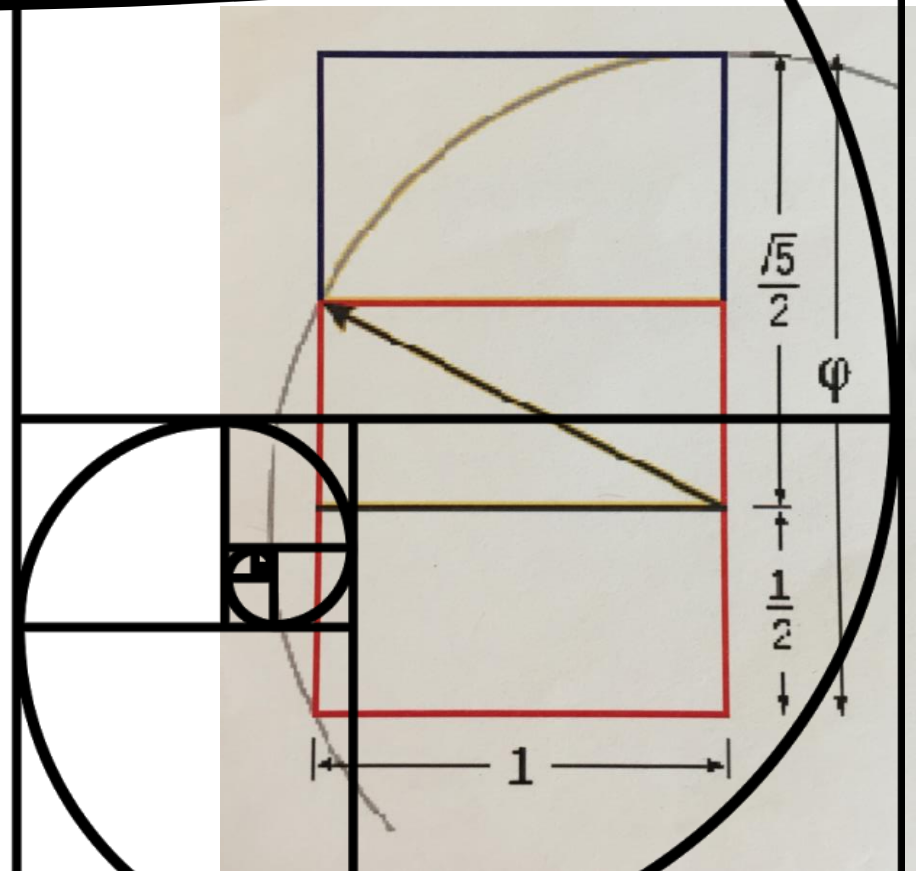


PROPORTION

The Golden Ratio

The ratio of a rectangle is 1 to 1.61
This proportion is acknowledged to be beautiful.

(There is a mathematical system by Fibonacci found in nature which comes to the same result.)



FIBONACCI SHELL

The Fibonacci Sequence is found
throughout nature



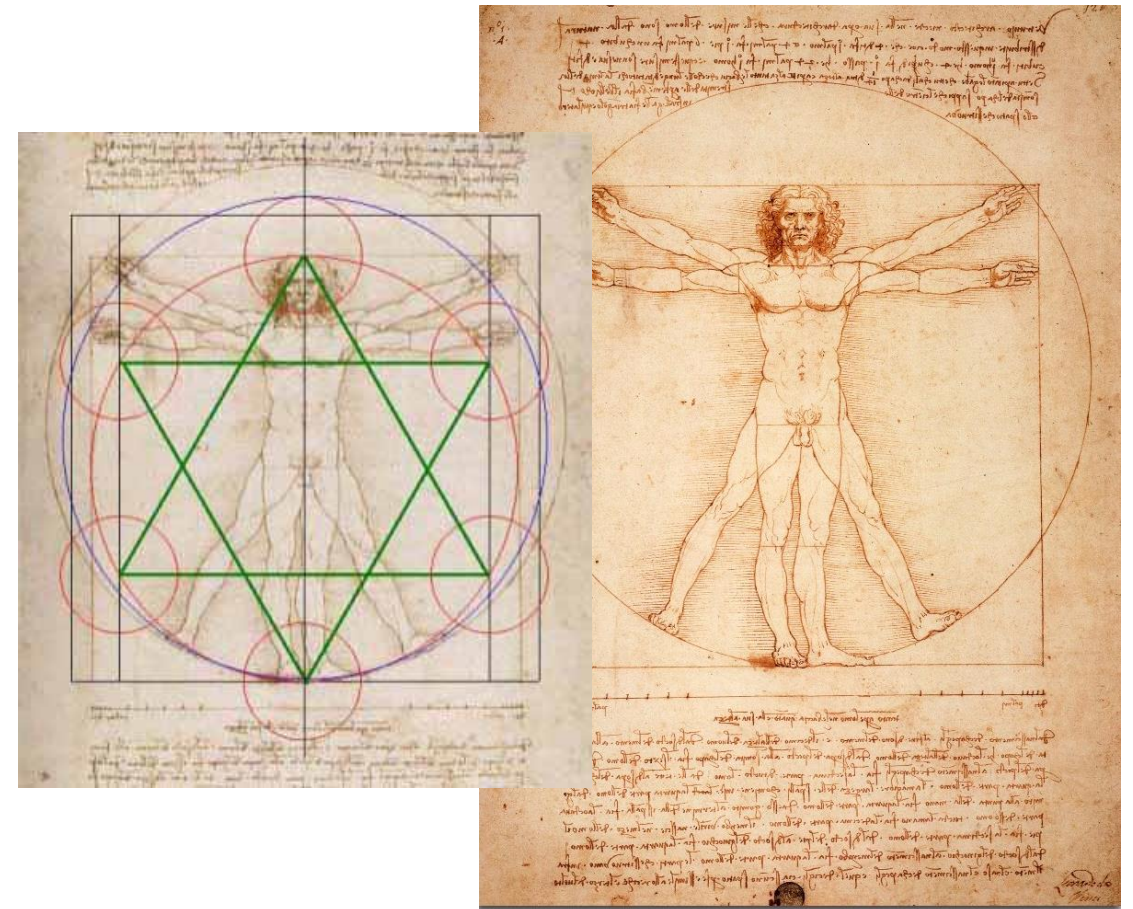
LEONARDO DA VINCI

Homo Vitruvianus

This famous drawing is called

The Vitruvian Man

Leonardo da Vinci favoured the Divine Proportion



SIR HENRY WOOTTON

SIR HENRY WOOTTON in 1624 wrote that architecture should possess :

“Commodity, Firmness and Delight”



LOUIS SULLIVAN

LOUIS SULLIVAN 1896

(Father of the modern skyscraper in Chicago)

Form Follows Function

In other words, the exterior should follow the function of the building. It should look what it is, not a pastiche or a pretence of something else. Good Architecture should display honesty and truth.



HOLYWELL HILL

Two buildings for the same client by
the same Architect, Percival Blow

The former office of Ryder is 1911,
the Showroom 1931



PHOTO OF DECORATION

Decoration was used extensively to add to the quality of buildings



CONTEXTUAL & CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

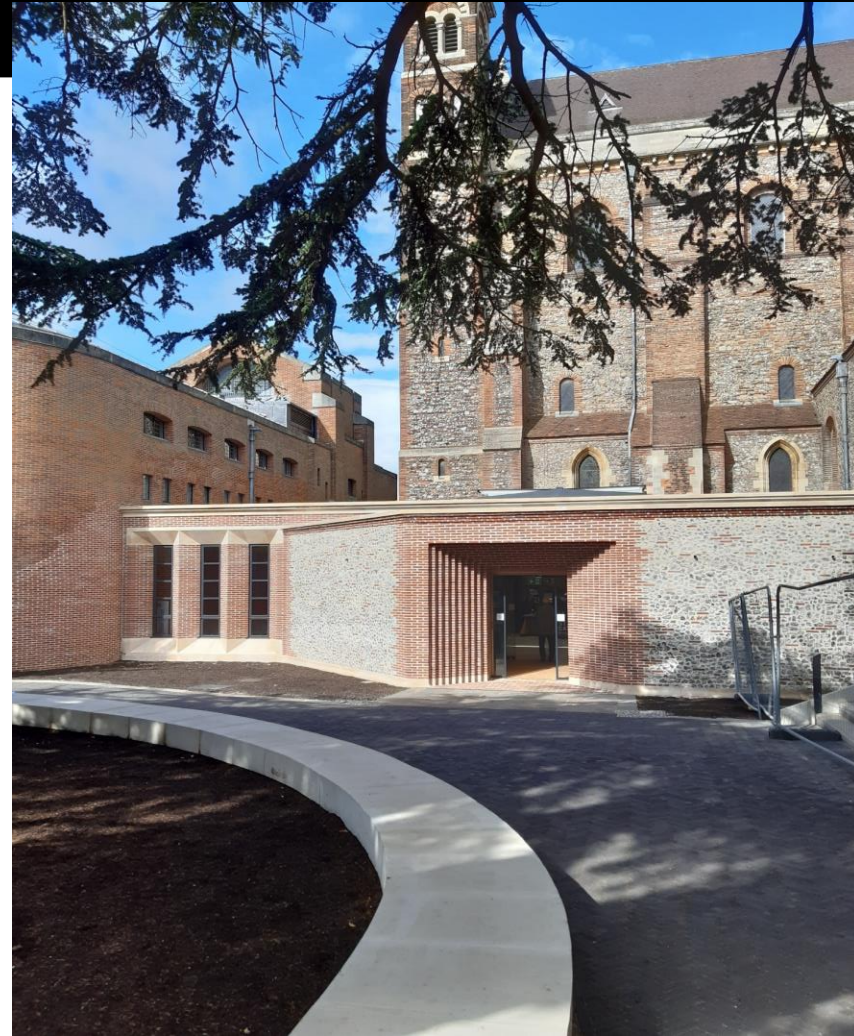
Norwich Cathedral
Visitor Centre addition

Architect: Michael Hopkins



New Entrance to St Albans Cathedral

New Entrance to St Albans
Cathedral



What are the elements that we should look for?

- ❖ Scale
- ❖ Context / Relationship / A Sense of Place
- ❖ Grain
- ❖ Character
- ❖ Proportion
- ❖ Materials

Urban “*Grain*” in architecture is the pattern of streets and paths. It is a diversity which is central to a sustainable city.

“*Scale*” means a relationship to the human form which is comfortable and understandable.

The Councillors Guide to Urban Spaces (CABE)

Councillors have a key role to play in the delivery of high quality, well designed spaces, both in the buildings they procure and by influencing the quality of new developments.

**The following are some examples
for discussion**

HOUSING - HADDENHAM

Fine modern housing



Welcombe Cottages, Harpenden

We can look at the
past for good
examples of
architecture



CONVERSION

A subtle upgrading of a Historic Building in
Fishpool Street



NEW HOUSING & GOOD LANDSCAPING



An Award Winning Sustainable House in Flamstead



The Golf Club, Harpenden

A prize-winning building in a
green landscape



TANKERFIELD PLACE, ST ALBANS

This housing development at Romeland won a Civic Trust Award for the way it fits a modern building into this important site

Architects: Melvin, Lansley & Mark



OLD GARDEN COURT

Well designed housing

Civic Trust Award winner

Architects: Melvin, Lansley & Mark



Park House, Harpenden

A successful, well designed new building

Harpenden Society's Certificate of Merit Award



House in Wimbledon

Architect: Richard Rogers



Povl Ahm House, Harpenden



Architect: Jørn Utzon

The Maltings, St Albans

The Maltings Shopping Centre

Good architecture



Waitrose, Harpenden

Waitrose Harpenden

Good architecture



GRAYSON PERRY HOUSE

A House by Grayson Perry in North Essex



NEW HOUSING - CAMBRIDGE



THE BISHOPS PALACE, SOUTHWELL

This is adjacent to the Cathedral. It is an example of three ages, blending together.

Tudor Architecture, Georgian Architecture
and a later Arts / Craft extension.



SAINSBURY WING OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN LONDON

The wing is post-modern style, but cleverly carries over the classical frontage and fades it into the extension



ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON

St Paul's Cathedral built after the Great Fire of London replaced a Gothic Cathedral.

Wren built it in the Renaissance style.

Architect: Sir Christopher Wren



ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL

An example of changing styles
of architecture reflecting the
different ages



St Nicholas Church, Harpenden

A traditional Gothic church of quality, right in the town centre

Grade II* Listed



ST ALBANS SCHOOL

Architect: Percival Blow



House in Harpenden

Architect: Percival Blow



KINGS PARADE, CAMBRIDGE

A clever modern insertion
into traditional buildings in
Kings Parade Cambridge

The scale, materials and
forms of the existing buildings
have been respected



CHRIST'S COLLEGE

Old historic courtyard
of Christ's College



STUDENT HOUSING, CAMBRIDGE

This ultra modern for Student housing is on the Christs College Campus .

It is student housing by the well known Architect Denys Lasdun.

It is in complete contrast to the traditional college architecture .

It was a successful and courageous decision by the College to commission a quality modern building.



SHOP FRONT - CAMBRIDGE

Even the shopfronts in Cambridge respect the fact that this is a historic City

Here is a restrained treatment by a McDonalds restaurant



NIMES : FRANCE

(NORMAN FOSTER)



The Carreé d'Art in Nîmes, France, is a museum of contemporary art. It faces the famous Maison Carrée, a perfectly preserved Roman Temple. The juxtaposition is a great success. There is no attempt to 'ape' the original. There is clever use of a colonnade in modern terms.



CARBUNCLE OF THE YEAR

Design jury is out on this
“Lego” extension

It was shortlisted in 2017 for
“Carbuncle of the Year”



THE HOLBURNE MUSEUM & GALLERY, BATH

Marrying a new extension to a
Listed Building

Architect: Eric Parry



ST ALBANS MUSEUM AND GALLERY



Architects John M^cCaslan

CONCLUSIONS

It goes without saying that we should cherish our historic important buildings and look after them.

If it's a new building, we should make the design relevant to today, and to the context of where it is to be built. Details of materials are important, together with colour, texture and proportion.

We should not resort to historical falsehood. Where a pastiche might be relevant, it should be clever, inventive and stylish.

We should add positively and honestly to our historic city. We owe it to future generations.

(Geraint John & Roy Darby)

THE CIVIC SOCIETY

The Civic Society has an annual Awards Scheme, where we commend the best facilities.

The purpose of this is to raise awareness of the need to create better buildings and a better urban environment.

You also have your Harpenden award.



CONCLUSIONS

The Brundtland Commission: Sustainability

“Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

There is a further dimension relating to architecture

“What we create today should enhance and not harm the architectural heritage for future generations.”

Sustainability affects the urban environment. The value of trees is immense. We are looking at the concept *“Greening the City”*.

This is not an easy subject.

It requires judgement. It cannot be a “*tick box*” process.

The challenges need good architects and a good design team.

The Civic Society is establishing a design group who can help in the proactive stages of a project.

The Civic Society is working with the Planners.