

# Architecture and Heritage

We were delighted to welcome local architect Robert Blower, Keith Holland, Head of Planning at RBC and Louise Piper, Planning Policy and Conservation Manager at RBC, to tell us about a topic that was clearly of great interest to members, judging by the packed room that greeted them.

Robert began by showing us a selection of projects on which he has worked and talking about the design process, from the initial commission, through consideration of site and purpose, design details and materials, to working with artisans and planning/conservation officials.

For Hall Grove School, in Bagshot, for example, Robert has completed a number of projects over a period of 20 years, most recently a homestead style suite of classrooms that nestles within the grounds as though it's been there for centuries. It was important that the building would be sympathetic to the nearby walled garden, and complement the listed 18th century main school building. Another factor in its design was flexibility, and the timber-framed roof can potentially provide additional space. Architecture and Heritage



A particularly challenging commission was to provide a dining room extension to a Grade I listed moated manor house, and Robert's innovative solution, an ultra-modern glass box, produced a serendipitous bonus: the divisions between the glass panels create shadows that echo the timber framing of the house. The effect is very satisfying.

At Emmanuel Church in Farnham, Robert's challenge is to marry the church hall extension to the park in which it is located, a project that is yet to be completed. He is again opting for a glass structure, to bring the outdoors in and visually soften its impact on its surroundings. His original design incorporated low beige stone walls to reference the nearby war memorial, but planning officials have persuaded him to use red brick instead, to match the church and other local buildings. Robert readily acknowledges that sometimes heritage and planning officers put forward ideas that actually improve his concepts. Architecture and Heritage



Another of Robert's projects was to fill in a loggia at a listed 1920s house designed by Harold Faulkener. Using traditional materials and great attention to detail, the result is a structure that looks entirely of a piece with the rest of the building, which itself looks as though it was built long ago.

South Hay House is another Grade I listed building that required an innovative solution. Here, Robert proposed a cross-wing to join together the two components of the house. He expected opposition from the heritage and planning officers, but to his surprise they approved his design. Again using traditional methods and paying great attention to detail, Robert has created a structure so authentic in its appearance that it is virtually indistinguishable from the older parts of the house. Owners, architect and local authority are all extremely happy with the outcome.



Architecture and Heritage For Combe Court, in Chiddingfold, built c 1850 in Tudor Gothic style, Roberts brief was to create a tower, and the tower that he created is stunning. So painstaking was his attention to detail that he actually drew each brick. Although built around a steel frame, Robert was determined that the brick and stone would also lend strength to the structure, giving it solidity. In fact, the only stones with real mass are those used for the castellation.

But not all of Roberts work is on heritage buildings. One recent commission was to demolish a rather nondescript house in Farnham and build something that would better utilise the site. Initially, the idea was to build flats, but eventually it was decided that a pair of traditional style semi-detached houses would be more appropriate. The site had a steep gradient and was located on a busy street, so Robert decided to position the houses further back than had been the original house, for off-road parking, and to dig into the hill to create underground garages. Matching bay windows and elegant stairs up to the adjacent front doors give the impression of a rather grand entrance, in spite of the relatively small scale of the development.

Robert also told us about the history of Stedman Blower, and the valuable archive they maintain through the Blower Foundation, which was recently on display in Farnham. Now in the hands of the fourth generation of the same family, it is a rich source of local social history.

To see more of the work of Stedman Blower, visit their website: <http://www.stedmanblower.co.uk> Architecture and Heritage



Keith took over to tell us about Rushmoor Borough Council's role with regard to conservation and heritage. He told us that Rushmoor has eight conservation areas, defined as areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve: Aldershot Military Town, Basingstoke Canal, Farnborough Hill, St Michael's Abbey, Aldershot West, Cargate Avenue, Manor Park and South Farnborough.

In addition, Rushmoor has nearly 100 Listed Buildings; these are nationally listed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, advised by English Heritage. There are four Grade I Listed Buildings, all located in Farnborough: Farnborough Hill School, St Michael's Abbey, Building Q121 (24 wind tunnel) and Building R133 (Transonic wind tunnel).

Architecture and Heritage Rushmoor has a statutory obligation to maintain a Buildings of Local Importance Supplementary Planning Document (Local List), which identifies a wide range of buildings and structures of local architectural or historical interest which contribute to the special character and distinctiveness of their area. The Local List provides a closer level of scrutiny and protection against undesirable alterations and/or loss.



Louise then gave us an overview of the National Planning Policy Framework as it pertains to design and heritage. She told us that the core planning principles were always to secure high quality design and to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, with a view to the quality of the built environment for future generations. These principles are laid out in the National Planning Practice Guidance March 2014.

Architecture and Heritage Rushmoors Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and forms part of the Rushmoor Local Plan. Policy CP1: Sustainable Development Principles and Policy CP2: Design and Heritage provide the main basis for determining planning applications in Rushmoor in respect of design and heritage considerations.

Louise handed back to Keith for a detailed exploration of the Grade II listed Cambridge Military Hospital, which dates from 1872 and will be a key feature in the Wellesley development. The AUE Supplementary Planning Document aims to ensure the sensitive conversion of the Hospital for a sustainable, viable long-term use, and a proposal has been put forward for mixed use including residential apartments. It is hoped that some kind of community use will be found for the central area beneath the clock tower. Remedial work and demolition of unimportant additions have begun, and the renovated building will eventually provide an imposing focal point for the whole development.



Another Grade II listed building currently undergoing renovation is the Union Building on Hospital Hill, the oldest part of which dates from 1838. Formerly a workhouse, the building has been vacant for some time and is in poor condition. But the proposed refurbishment will provide 17 apartments and secure the buildings long term future.

Architecture and Heritage With profuse apologies for yet another example from Aldershot rather than Farnborough, Keith talked about the recent renovation of the Grade II listed Queen Hotel, dating from the late 19th century and now a thriving J D Wetherspoon pub/restaurant. The renovation entailed part-demolition, refurbishment and building extensions, while retaining the buildings original features and character.



Our exploration of architecture and heritage proved very interesting and thought-provoking. It graphically illustrated how important it is for The Farnborough Society to monitor our Conser