



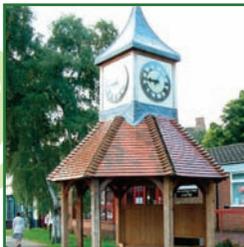
South Staffordshire Council

Conservation and Design Awards 2008



Pendrell Hall College, Codsall Wood

Monday 20th October 2008



Introduction

In my role as Deputy Leader of Strategic Services I am very conscious of the relationship between the special character of the villages in South Staffordshire and the need for good design to enhance these qualities. Residents have asked for new developments to 'fit into the local street scene' and visitors to the area will want to see the quality of the environment maintained if they are to be encouraged to return.

It is in this context that I have been keen to see the Council's own Conservation & Design Awards reintroduced after a 'gap' of ten years. During this period the property market has changed dramatically. Conversion of grand country houses to corporate headquarters (a feature of previous awards) has declined, whilst the number of apartments has increased and the need for affordable housing has become more pressing. Meanwhile, the popularity of the district for commercial premises, particularly offices in village centres, continues.

The desire to protect and enhance the distinctive environment of South Staffordshire is one of the Council's main corporate aims, but the commercial requirements for new development also impose considerable pressures. Reconciling these two conflicting demands can be a difficult balancing act, but I believe that recognising the importance of good design and encouraging higher standards is an important role for the Council and the projects highlighted in these awards all represent fine examples of this in their own right.

Judging for the awards was most enjoyable and I must record my thanks to the two external judges who gave their time and expertise for a day.

Stephen Gleave is Managing Director of Taylor Young, the Architects & Urban Designers commissioned by the Council to produce our forthcoming Village Design Guide, which will be an important tool for all key stakeholders engaged in planning and development in South Staffordshire. Stephen's experience in planning and design proved invaluable. Gerald Kells is Regional Policy Officer with the Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE). Given the CPRE's focus on the importance of maintaining local character, Gerald gave voice to many environmental issues in his views on the projects that we saw.

Finally, thanks to the many planning officers who contributed their expertise to all of the schemes from the early stages of negotiation through to the completion, and especially to Andrew Johnson the Director of Planning & Strategic Services whose vision for improved standards of design has provided the impetus for the awards.

Councillor David Billson – Deputy Leader Strategic Services

Comments from the external judges

As Councillor David Billson noted above, we were especially fortunate when judging this year's Conservation & Design Awards in being able to call upon the expertise of our two external judges.

Stephen Gleave, Managing Director of Taylor Young, the Architects & Urban Designers, commented: -

"I was very impressed with the standard of this year's schemes for the South Staffordshire Conservation & Design Awards. Without exception they demonstrated a commitment from their clients and designers to achieve real build quality for the district. Each winner has brought out the best in the site opportunity and clearly benefited from close negotiation with the Council's planning team.

A benchmark has been set for future projects and I look forward to a continuing high standard of new and refurbishment projects next time. The design awards are an excellent opportunity to 'showcase' the very best of what can be done. They highlight how the process and implementation of good design is the responsibility of partners and decision makers in both the public and private sector. Well done to all of you."

Gerald Kells, Regional Policy Officer with the Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE), commented: -

"It was a great privilege to judge the Conservation & Design Awards in South Staffordshire. The high standard of entries is a tribute to the developers and designers who worked on them and to the Council's commitment to high design standards in this beautiful part of the region's countryside.

If there was one thing that impressed me more than anything it was the attention to detail in the designs, which made all the difference, not just in traditional listed buildings, but in modern functional locations. The biggest challenge to my mind is to see this level of commitment to design in all new developments and CPRE will continue to champion good design wherever it can."

Foreword

Co-ordinating and compiling these Conservation & Design Awards has been a rewarding challenge. Although at fifteen the total number of entries was lower than had been anticipated from an initial list of almost forty, the standard of entries was extremely high. This made short-listing the projects to be judged formally a difficult task – especially in the knowledge that they had to be ‘whittled down’ to eight, being the number that, realistically, could be seen in a day.

It would be wrong to single out individual entries, but I can state quite categorically that, without exception, every one of the schemes entered had very considerable merits, and I hope that all of the entrants will appreciate the contribution that their project has made to its own village. Some categories in the awards had limited entries, while others were well subscribed, which left quite a task when it came to choosing the winning schemes.

To use two racing analogies, I am well aware that some extremely good competitors in both the conservation and design fields were very unfortunate to ‘fall at the first hurdle’, whilst others, which could have won on another day, were ‘pipped at the post’ in the final. I certainly believe that the eight projects we saw in the formal judging were worthy finalists, as I hope you will appreciate from the brief insights that can be given in this commemorative booklet.

Finally I would like to congratulate all of the owners, developers, architects and contractors whose combined efforts have contributed so much to preserving and enhancing the distinctive and very special character of South Staffordshire.

David Burton-Pye

**Principal Conservation & Design Officer
South Staffordshire Council**

HISTORIC BUILDING CONVERSION – COMMERCIAL

GREENSFORGE MILL & BARN GREENSFORGE, KINVER

Judges' comments

Both the barn conversion and the mill represent sensitive conversions in their respective categories. The apartments in the mill make good use of the internal spaces and the top floor is a wonderful space with the exposed trusses and large windows creating an open airy living room. The contemporary windows and treatment of the former loading bays is a successful combination of new materials in a traditional building and the repairs that were needed – particularly to the top courses of brickwork - have been well executed, and will weather down very quickly.

The fabric of the barn is also well expressed and maintained. For instance, in the entrance lobby the staircase and landing are 'hung' from a steel frame, causing minimal disturbance to the original structure.

Staff clearly enjoy the attractive, rural outlook and appreciate the character of the building in which they work. The glass 'advertising' signs incorporating the company name and logo are very unobtrusive and commercial use of buildings like this is far less intrusive than residential conversions – which can never express the interior spaces of a barn as successfully as the open nature of an office.

Unfortunately, the overall success of these two projects is let down by detail. Some of the interior fittings in the Mill – particularly the handrails – are a little mean and the general appearance of the whole site seems to be that of a car park with very little provision for storage or, crucially, amenity space for residents. Given the location of the site, next to the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, this seems to be a missed opportunity.



HISTORIC BUILDING CONVERSION – COMMERCIAL

THE ARMOURY 17 HIGH STREET, KINVER

WINNER IN CATEGORY

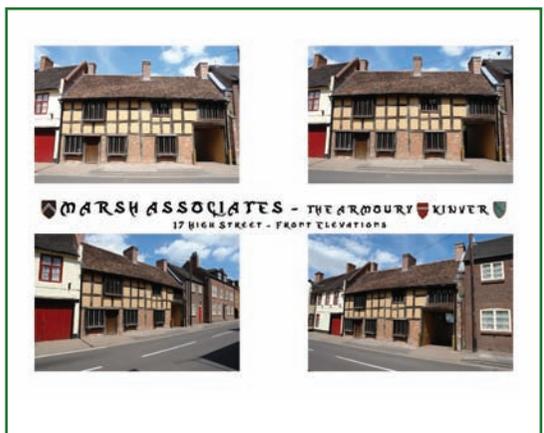
Judges' comments

This conversion represents a clever use of space that results in a building with a 'split personality.' It could either be fun to work in – or very claustrophobic (and possibly a little impractical given the needs of a modern architectural practice).

Historic fabric has been well retained and expressed and this gives a building with enormous character – possibly at the expense of 'peace and quiet' when needed. Natural light is at a premium here so imaginative glazing has been used to give extensive borrowed light to many areas.

The original 1970s conversion of this important historic timber framed house had introduced some extremely 'quirky' details, some of which carried contemporary styling to excess and distracted from the original fabric. Removal of these has enabled the original construction to be understood and appreciated better and whilst cost has clearly influenced some of the recent introductions, such as staircases and screens/balusters rails, they are honest modern insertions that do not detract from the originals.

The plastic rainwater goods at the rear are inappropriate and do compromise the overall quality, but the external landscaping has been carried out well to provide some on site parking and the general impression is of a scheme that has worked with the site and building rather than working against it and this is a major contributor to its success. its success.



HISTORIC BUILDING CONVERSION – RESIDENTIAL

THE MALT HOUSE FOUR ASHES HALL, BRIDGNORTH ROAD, FOUR ASHES

HIGHLY COMMENDED IN CATEGORY

Judges' comments

This is a beautifully executed scheme where attention to detail and retention of original historic fabric has resulted in a unique holiday home. The use of space is highly imaginative, with different levels throughout the building and surprises at every twist and turn. The murals that tell the story of each room are highly imaginative and the quality of workmanship is extremely impressive.

There were mixed views about some of the features that have been retained and whether this would compromise the comfortable use of the property but this is far outweighed by its overall merits. This category was characterised by the extremely high quality of all of the entries and the judges were unanimous in awarding a highly commended certificate to the project.



HISTORIC BUILDING CONVERSION – RESIDENTIAL

THE OLD COACH HOUSE CHURCH HILL, KINVER

WINNER IN CATEGORY

Judges' comments

This is a worthy winner in a category where all candidates were of a high standard. The whole project has been extremely well conceived and executed, with superb attention to detail and a commendably high level of craftsmanship. The scheme retains and makes extremely good use of a great deal of historic fabric to provide an adaptable, comfortable and unique house.

This comes through in the stable dividers utilised in the kitchen, the careful and clever adaptation of the roof trusses and purlins, and the retention and stabilisation of walls without loss of some historic 'spreading' away from true verticals. The use of space is very clever, with the apparently modest external dimensions exhibiting 'Tardis'-like qualities on the interior.



NEW BUILD

'COSY NOOK' DEAN STREET, BREWOOD

Judges' comments

This large house is a very sensitive response to the variety in scale and height of buildings that characterise Dean Street. It 'bookends' a key view along The Pavement and its bulk and mass is successfully broken down by its roofscape of narrow spans and traditional pitches.

The render is a pleasant contrast to the predominant red brick and reflects traditional materials used on many period buildings throughout the conservation area. The timber windows are well detailed and clearly show the superiority of this material, and the house makes a positive contribution to the street scene and to the conservation area.

Its qualities are compromised by the inclusion of a large palette of historical details, some of which are at odds with its general style and the undoubted merits of the completed house are let down to some extent by the unfinished gardens, particularly the frontage where a more formal landscaped garden would make a better contribution to the street scene than the existing parking provision.



NEW BUILD

NITRATE TREATMENT PLANT BRATCH PUMPING STATION, BRATCH LANE, WOMBOURNE

WINNER IN CATEGORY

Judges' comments

This distinctive building represents a clever and thoughtful approach to solving a number of technical constraints and issues. The contemporary architectural style neither cramps nor competes with the exuberant Victorian splendour of the listed water pumping station adjoining.

It sits well into the landscape without attempting to hide itself (although having said this the landscaping treatment will be essential and needs to reflect the careful choice of specimen trees that has characterised the planting on this site for many years).

The building has been well thought out – especially in the way that the 'business end' of the site, namely the chemical storage, supply vessels and tanks, are generally hidden from public view behind the main structure. Its size and shape also provides a useful visual foil to take the eye from the rather unattractive and purely functional late 20th century building that lies immediately adjacent. The end result is clearly not simply a shed in a field, which could easily have been the alternative result.



In giving the award the judges are particularly conscious that this building demonstrates that good design is not restricted solely to residential developments in village settings. This is a sensitive site where care and thought have been applied in large measures and the message that this can send is to be applauded.

NEW HOUSING LESS THAN TEN DWELLINGS

ENVILLE SCHOOL & COURTYARD BRIDGNORTH ROAD, ENVILLE

WINNER IN CATEGORY

Judges' comments

The conversion of this unlisted, highly decorative Victorian School has retained a very important building at the heart of the village conservation area, and given it a new lease of life. The conversion and repair work has been done to a very high standard and fully expresses the elaborate detailing, the large internal spaces and the unusual construction of the original structure.

The new cottages provide a contrast between the new and old elements of the site whilst the steeply pitched roofs and dormer windows provide a strong visual link between them.

From some viewpoints, the new build dominates the old school, the rendered panels are a little stark and some windows have proportions that sit unhappily with the strong vertical emphasis of the school windows. The garages seem to be superfluous and little used, possibly indicating that this space could have been used more productively, but the scheme is clearly an enhancement over the old school buildings.

The positive elements clearly outweigh any negative details and the overall scheme makes a very positive contribution both to the village and the conservation area.



NEW HOUSING OVER TEN DWELLINGS

HAVERGAL PLACE CHURCH ROAD, SHARESHILL

WINNER IN CATEGORY & OVERALL WINNER

Judges' comments

This is a first-class scheme in all respects. In a village where much of the new housing built in recent years has been characterised by standard house types that hide themselves away from the street scene, this development sets a benchmark. The buildings are imaginatively designed, well articulated and create a real sense of place.

Attention to detail and standard of work is highly noticeable; extending from the flow of the curved brick walls and gateways, to the doors and windows with mouldings picked out in contrasting colours, through to the shape of the gates and the brick details and bonding. Garages, parking and bin stores are discretely hidden away and levels within the site have been used to create an important focal point.

The gardens are small – very small in some cases – and the harshness of the site frontage could have been improved with some greenery, but these minor criticisms do not detract from the overall impressiveness of the project. It is a very attractive new housing development – a model of its kind.

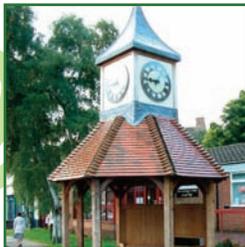
In choosing this scheme as the overall winner, the judges were particularly impressed with the contribution that Havergal Place makes to the village of Sharesill itself and also its role as an example of the difference that good new design makes to the housing stock.

The message that Havergal Place can project is highly significant and it fully deserves its place as the overall winner in the Council's 2008 Conservation and Design Awards.



HAVERGAL PLACE, CHURCH ROAD, SHARESHILL
WINNER IN CATEGORY & OVERALL WINNER







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