

E-Newsletter

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BuildingFutures

A Hertfordshire guide to promoting sustainability in development

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The Farrell Review

In the first of our guest contributions, Barry Shaw OBE gives his thoughts on Sir Terry Farrell's review into architecture and the built environment, and what Hertfordshire could take from it...

THE FARRELL REVIEW

*of Architecture
+ the Built
Environment*

It is 20 years since John Gummer's path-finding initiative *Quality in Town and Country* was launched, and 14 years since Richard Rogers produced *Towards an Urban Renaissance*. The Farrell Review, published in April, has focused thinking once again on how we design and plan our built environment. What have we achieved after 20 years of such thinking? Is any of it relevant to those at the coal face of planning, community and environmental decision making? And how should Hertfordshire respond?

As Farrell's report itself acknowledges, the review is a snapshot in time. Most of its ideas and proposals are not new and implementing them is not necessarily seen as a job for central government. Five cross-cutting themes run through the Farrell Review:

1. A new understanding of place-based planning and design.
2. A new level of connectedness between government departments, institutions, agencies, professions and the public.
3. A new level of public engagement through education and outreach in every village, town and city, and volunteering enabled by information and communications technology.
4. A commitment to making the ordinary better and to improving the everyday

built environment.

5. A sustainable and low-carbon future.

“Place” is seen as the unifying factor for the review’s 34 conclusions and 60 recommendations. He uses the acronym PLACE to cover what he calls the key public activities of planning: Politics, Life, Advocacy, Community and the Environment. PLACE is also used as an acronym to highlight the core skill sets required to shape the environment, Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Conservation and Engineering. As others have pointed out urban design and surveying should be there as well but did not fit the acronym.

Planning, the review says, needs to become more proactive and one way of achieving this is to expand the role of design review. Design review panels should change their focus to that of ‘place review’, looking at the context into which schemes are considered with broader multi-disciplinary panels. He also suggested that Place Review should be supported by ‘urban rooms’ that bring together the information on the locality where the past, present and future of that place can be inspected. (Frederick Gibberd proposed something very similar for Harlow.) “Every public body should have access to an independent PLACE Review Panel, with their results published online, and they should operate at a more strategic level.

Training is also a concern. Local planning authorities should formalise the role of architecture and built environment centres and PLACE Review Panels in skilling-up decision makers, including planning committee members and traffic engineers. This would follow the successful model of Urban Design London in skilling-up planning committee members from London Councils. PLACE institutions could publish an end-of-year report on publicly funded built environment projects, highlighting successes and failures. “Places will only become great if there is civic leadership”.

Hertfordshire has many of the recommendations already in place. The Building Futures initiative supports a multidisciplinary design review panel. The awards last year were attended by civic leaders from across the county. The web site is becoming a focus for training. Do a little more and Hertfordshire can take the lead in championing design decision making. We have achieved a lot in the last 20 years but many feel the quality of much of what we build still falls short of what we should be achieving. The Farrell Review alone cannot make things happen, but its careful thinking can be of considerable value in supporting planners and planning in Hertfordshire.

Give us your thoughts on the Farrell Review and what it means for Hertfordshire via our [LinkedIn group](#), and on [Twitter](#) using [#FarrellReviewHerts](#)

To read the Farrell Review visit www.farrellreview.co.uk



Barry Shaw is director of Barry Shaw Associates, a specialist consultancy providing regeneration, urban design and enabling services.

New energy and health projects in Herts

Building Futures is proud to be working with the Town and Country Planning Association and others on two sector-leading projects exploring how planning can support the delivery of healthy-weight environments and sustainable energy solutions at the local level in Hertfordshire.

'Putting planning back on the menu. Healthy-weight environments by planning and design' is a project that will look at ways in which planning and development of the built environment can contribute to encouraging healthier populations, in particular when bringing forward different development types through the planning process.



Recent evidence of good planning and design practice will be collated, reviewed and explored through a series of workshops around the country with local practitioners. One of these workshops will be held in Hertfordshire, supported by the County Council's Public Health team and the Building Futures initiative, where local stakeholders will discuss the challenges and opportunities for creating healthy-weight environments in Hertfordshire. A series of guidance notes and reports are set to be published to help provide practitioners with practical advice. For more information on the project please click [here](#).

Building Futures is also participating in a European-funded project: *Spatial Planning and Energy for Communities in All Landscapes* (SPECIAL) which is being led in the UK by the TCPA.



SPECIAL aims to bridge the gap between climate change/energy action planning and spatial and urban planning through the exchange of best practice and experience, promoting integrated renewable energy strategies, and building the capacity of leaders and practitioners in the planning and delivery of renewable energy solutions. Building Futures will support local engagement in Hertfordshire on the development and piloting of capacity building, facilitation and training programmes. For more information on the SPECIAL project click [here](#).

New imagery for the Sustainable Design Toolkit

The Sustainable Design Toolkit now has a full complement of 3D visual guidance.

Further 3D visual guidance has been added to Commercial & Industrial and Large & Mixed Use interactive 3D models.

Click [here](#) to access the Toolkit's interactive models and PDFs.

