

THE FUTURE OF LINCOLN

Even to the casual observer it is clear that Lincoln is changing.

Sometimes the changes are large, sometimes small; but it is not always the largest or most expensive about which we feel most strongly. The disappearance of a beautiful shop front with its memories of childhood may be a greater loss to you than the wholesale clearance of acres of derelict property. A new church, a new factory or office may mean more than a new roadway costing hundreds of times as much.

Demolition, clearance, creation and building are all necessary but the loss will be easier to bear and the new more welcome if we can see clearly and understand the reasons for the changes. Most of all, if we can have in our minds a vision of the Lincoln of the future, a picture or a model of the kind of Lincoln we are working towards, then these various otherwise unrelated activities in the town will be given a sense of purpose and direction.

Everyone who lives in Lincoln has some idea of the sort of city he would like: the art of city planning is to turn the desirable into the possible, the dream into the reality.

Lincoln is changing

Old buildings which are unhealthy, inconvenient, badly equipped or dilapidated are being cleared; old roads, inadequate for modern traffic, are being replaced: new roads and bridges are being built, and new buildings constructed sometimes by private individuals, sometimes by public bodies, sometimes by the Local Authority. Hundreds of thousands of pounds are spent every year to change Lincoln. Are we getting value for money? Does it all add up to the kind of city we want - indeed, what kind of city does it add up to?

Before buildings go up or new roads are built, plans are made. These are discussed, considered, criticised and modified before building starts.

Before we buy new curtains, samples are studied, the family's opinion is sought, the advice of the furnisher is asked. When they are up and paid for what a difference they can make to the whole room.

In the same way the new road or new building can change a district. Several new roads and buildings can change a city.

What kind of Lincoln do we want?

Each small change is hardly noticed, but gradually Lincoln is turning from one kind of a city to another. What is happening, and what is going to happen? Do we want to see Lincoln turned into a little London, a little Coventry, another Scunthorpe or another Stevenage - or looking further afield - a Venice, a San Francisco or a Brasilia?

Should we let things drift and see what turns up, or should we plan, that is to say, think out what we want, see what is possible and work towards it with a will and a purpose?

Because this is a large and complicated problem involving many interests and aspects of life, it is essential that before making a decision the best advice should be taken. After we have decided what we want it is essential that the most skilful and understanding designers and administrators should carry the plan through.

A plan is necessary

That it is possible to plan a city is certain: it has been done. The planning of a city is the natural extension of the planning of a building or groups of buildings. It is a joint activity of those who will use, own or rent the buildings and many specialists who can advise - advise about design, about management and operation, and about money.

In a democracy, and of course in Lincoln, the elected representatives are the leaders in city planning. On behalf of the citizen they appoint the specialists and coordinators to prepare the plan and carry it through.

The Council is obliged by law to prepare certain plans, but the extent and the success do not depend solely on them but on the support they can obtain from the general public. Only a wide, knowledgeable and enthusiastic body of public opinion can carry through an inspired city plan.

For this reason, the architects in Lincoln are seeking by all means to encourage interest in city planning among all sections of the public, both individuals and organised groups, so that the Council can count upon informed public support in the leadership they can, and must give.

Comprehensive planning

Everything in Lincoln was once planned, and everything in the future will be planned, well or badly, sporadically or as a unified whole. The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to relate the many demands and interests which often conflict, and to express a solution in a sufficiently detailed manner for the full implications to be understood.

A comprehensive plan is more detailed than the zoning for land use and improving traffic routes. It is concerned with roads, buildings and open spaces and their relationship. Essentially it provides a framework to ensure that the right things are made in the right way and in the right place.

A comprehensive plan is not a straight-jacket for building owners, developers, architects and builders, nor is it once and for all, inflexible and dogmatic in detail. Its purpose is to establish principles and to illustrate these with precise solutions at any given time and place.

It is not the work of one man but it must be directed by one man who is an architect planner, that is to say someone trained and knowledgeable about the problems of both buildings and cities; someone with a concern for detail, but with a breadth of outlook that can look beyond bricks and mortar or tarmac.

How is a comprehensive plan made?

First there must be a director. He will be an architect planner, a man trained in building, both an artist and technician.

In conjunction with other specialists and with the general public he must set about an analysis, collecting facts. Some-

times information is readily available, sometimes it is necessary to carry our surveys; sometimes the information is up to date, such as the number of people on the Council's housing list; sometimes the information is virtually non-existent or unobtainable - such as the population of Lincoln in 1980.

Based on all the information which can reasonably be obtained, it is then necessary to make an evaluation and to interpret the facts in terms of space requirements, immediate needs and priority. In this evaluation the wishes and aspirations of the general public and the needs of industry and commerce must be respected.

In order that this mass of information can be understood and its implications appreciated it must be presented in the form of plans and models intelligible to everyone.

Publicity

The present uncertainty about future development can cause frustration; when policies concerning such matters as new roads or the rezoning of areas are changed without warning, it can cause financial loss.

If planning is to succeed much greater publicity must be undertaken to ensure that all interested citizens are aware of the Council's proposals. Only with a greater

knowledge, and an opportunity to comment, can the Council carry through proposals with public support. The public must have an opportunity to comment before decisions are made! Exhibitions and pamphlets can explain to the public at large the reasons for any proposals, what is being done, and how it is to be achieved.

As the Minister has recently said:
'Though the Local Authority may sometimes have to take unpopular decisions it is the more important that their reasons for their actions should be fully understood.'

Guidance and leadership

The city is owned, cared for, built and rebuilt by many different persons and bodies. The Council themselves own and are responsible for large sections, but the responsibility for city planning does not end at the boundaries of Council ownership.

To make a comprehensive plan it is necessary to bring together and resolve the interests of the Council, public or semi-public bodies, such as the railways and road transport, the GPO, the nationalised boards, private firms such as department stores or industrial concerns, and the wishes of individual householders.

Experience has shown that if guidance can be given to individual developers, showing how a particular site will be related in the future to new streets and buildings this can greatly improve the design of the particular building, and is welcomed by the developer. No one likes to be forced into one particular action or another, but an understanding of the wishes of one's neighbours can often lead to a better and more sociable solution. Commercial enterprises, often with their architects and advisers in other towns, welcome guidance when building in Lincoln, and it is the duty of the planning authority to give them the best possible advice in the interests of the citizens of Lincoln as a whole.

The architect planner

In order to achieve a better city through a comprehensive plan and the detailed day to day working out of the plan as opportunity arises, it is essential that the Council should have the benefit of the best technical advice and in particular the advice of an architect planner.

The architect planner is a person trained and qualified to deal with the many problems which arise both in the preparation of the design and in the coordination of the many parts of which the city is composed. This is in no way to underrate the importance of the other individuals or groups, whether they be official or private, without whose cooperation the plan could not work.

If we look forward to a new Lincoln, well built and fulfilling our needs, we must act now. Any delay means losing our opportunities.

The urgent problem

We have no time to lose.

Examples may show the importance of appointing an architect planner now, and of the preparation of a comprehensive plan without delay:

1. The inner ring road

Land is now being bought and buildings demolished as part of a plan to build an inner ring road, yet the only plan available from the Council shows no more than two lines on a map.

The implications of these two lines are enormous and will change the whole structure of the city centre, yet there has been no public discussion of the basis on which the plan is made, no analysis, no public evaluation, and worst of all, no study whatsoever of the effect on surrounding property, or proposals as to how this can be developed in relation to the proposed inner ring road. This is piecemeal development with all the wastage of opportunity which that implies.

Only a comprehensive plan, relating buildings, roads, paths, services, can hope to solve the problems of development and create an inspired city centre. The proposed ring road may be an excellent idea but no one has shown why or how.

The road must be related to car parking areas, off-loading and service areas for the delivery of goods to and from the buildings; pedestrians must be able to cross the road, preferably at a different level, and there should be only very limited access to the ring road, avoiding right-hand turns - the cause of 80% of road fatalities.

The road will divide Lincoln into precincts, and the buildings within each precinct should be related one to another. Proper facilities must be made for services - gas, electricity, telephones and other electrical services - without digging up the path every six months.

And in the end, or perhaps first and foremost, the city centre must be a place where one wants to be because, to use a rather out of date word, it is beautiful.

A comprehensive plan for the area within and adjoining the inner ring road is essential and urgent. It can only be done by an architect planner.

2. The hillside

The fame and beauty of the Cathedral is international. Visitors come thousands of miles to see the Cathedral, the Castle, the Jew's House and Jews Court. A stone's throw from these buildings are slums and dereliction. A comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of the hillside is urgent. Architecturally it forms a base on which the Cathedral sits. We must show future generations that we appreciated our inheritance.

3. Brayford

The natural amenity of a waterway through the heart of the city could be exploited with benefit to all. Instead of buildings turning their backs upon this attractive open space they could open up towards it, as has been done in towns such as Amsterdam.

The development of amenities for the Brayford itself could naturally be linked to the reconstruction which will be necessary in connection with the inner ring road.

4. New housing

Is there no alternative to the spec. builder's sprawl? Are we doomed to the disaster which has ruined the outskirts of so many cities, which is spreading round Lincoln like a cancer, particularly to the south?

Is the formless chaos inevitable?

A comprehensive plan for the various housing areas is the only alternative; a plan which ensures proper and adequate roads, shops, pubs, churches and houses which are architecturally related to each other and to the necessary open spaces. This could be done, and by spec. builders, if they are given adequate guidance and leadership. Legitimate private enterprise must be encouraged, for builders who build better homes and make more profit are an asset to the whole community.

5. Individual buildings

Lincoln contains many fine buildings and much has been done to preserve them. Many have, however, been thoughtlessly mauled or destroyed. An architect planner supported by an awakened public appreciation could do much to encourage the care and preservation of the finer existing houses.

Detail counts for much, and the training and appreciation of architectural problems is vital when planning permissions are being considered. The emphasis in architectural training on creation, on analysis and on planning ensures that lively leadership is given, and that new possibilities in building are encouraged.

Lincoln is a Roman, Medieval, Victorian but also a 20th Century city.

What can be done

If you believe that there is the basis here for something better, then please act now. Tell your councillor; write to him, talk to him, ask him what he can do to help. Your councillor is your representative, he can act for you; he has the power to act now if you will support him. Ask for an architect planner for Lincoln now.

What they have said:

Mr. Duncan Sandys, Conference of the Civic Trust, July 1960.

"In recent years the value of sites in central commercial areas has risen to a high level in relation to the value of the buildings they now carry, and these enhanced values can be fully realised only by redevelopment. In consequence, central areas have increasingly attracted the attention of the private developer, who buys up old-fashioned commercial buildings and replaces them with modern buildings, which he sells to investors or users. This mounting pressure for permission to redevelop discloses a division of interest, for whereas the developer's interest may sometimes be adequately served by piecemeal rebuilding the local planning authorities' interests in the wider needs of the community, such as the improvement of traffic conditions, amenities, architecture and civic design, can often be satisfied only by replanning the area as a whole. If piecemeal development of city centres is allowed to continue at the present rate, unique opportunities for their improvement will have been lost."

"A 2-dimensional plan is inadequate to control comprehensive redesign. A 3-dimensional development scheme for the whole area must be produced, particularly as the street layout in town centres is often completely out-of date,

and it may be desirable to separate pedestrians from road traffic by providing vehicle-free shopping areas, pedestrian bridges and high-level pavements. Also it may be necessary to make radical changes in the size and shape of sites, as well as in the character and use of the buildings to be erected. To make all this possible, planning authorities should be empowered to designate 'Areas of Special Importance', which require not only to be redeveloped comprehensively, but also to be redesigned architecturally as a whole. Such schemes, before adoption, would have to be publicly exhibited and approved by the Minister, a public inquiry being held where appropriate."

Mr. Henry Brooke, Town and Country Planning Association, October 1959.

He did not accept the TCPA's view that 'at no time since 1947 has the future of planning seemed so uncertain'. Hardly anybody, he insisted, believed today in complete laissez-faire, for we were resolved as a free nation not to allow individual exercise of freedom to destroy such amenities as green belts, good agricultural land, beauty spots and coast lines, or to jumble up houses and factories. One challenge to planning as he saw it was the challenge to bad, blurred, hasty, or 'crawl' planning. He wanted planners to be more precise, more accurate, and to reduce delays.

Another challenge which he put to the TCPA was what contribution it was going to make to restore vitality to those parts of the country which have suffered setbacks and unemployment, and which are the real source of the flow of population southwards and eastwards. Before long the government would make known its plans to encourage development in these areas, but these would have to be reinforced by enhancing their positive attraction, by making them places in which people wanted to live and work. So he asked the TCPA which had done as much as anyone to create the idea of new towns and bring it to reality, to carry that same crusading spirit over into the renewal of old towns.

"I regard urban renewal as the greatest and hardest and most urgent challenge to planning in this day and age. If you will crusade for old town planning as well as country planning and new town planning, the second 60 years of your Association may place on record even finer achievement than the first."

Dame Evelyn Sharp, Town and Country Planning Association, October 1959.

She admitted that she began to tread on delicate ground when she turned to the problems of the older industrial towns in

the North. It was not to be supposed that these towns could achieve urban renewal either quickly or easily. Their authorities would have to plan more boldly than they had done in the past and some of them might need to revise their ideas about the people they employed to make their plans.

Town Planning, stressing the word 'town', was generally the job for the architect planner. She knew some very fine plans had been produced by people not qualified as architects but she thought they were people who, whatever their qualification, had the architect's eye, the vision of what the city might some day be made to look like.

Looks were not everything, functional efficiency was essential, and town planning could not be the job of one man alone. But when they were talking about urban renewal they were thinking above all of a new look, a 'beauty treatment'. The first thing she would do if she was responsible for an old decayed town would be to hire the best town planner she could find.

"I would spare no money for this, it's a small investment for a very big prize".

She would ask engineers to work with him to produce a bold plan and programme, and if satisfied with what they proposed, she would

fight for it. But she felt that the authorities of some of the towns where slum clearance was pressing would miss some of their opportunities. They should make greater use of Comprehensive Development Area procedure, and she added that the Ministry was thinking very hard how to help the authorities, and hoped to be able to say something 'in the next few years'.

Colin Buchanan, B.Sc., AICE., ARIBA, AMTPI,
Symposium on Urban Survival
and Traffic, Durham, April 1961.

"In an urban area, if you disregard through traffic, the vehicular movements are wholly related to the buildings and it is ludicrous to try to keep the planning of the roads and the planning of the buildings in separate compartments.

"I submit that there is no essential difference between planning the accommodation of a building with all the circulation problems involved and planning the accommodation of an urban area with all the circulation problems of vehicles and pedestrians. In both cases there is a design problem of disposing occupiable space in relation to means of access.

"All I want to demonstrate is the absolute oneness of traffic planning and building planning and that in its essentials it is architectural design on a big scale - so big in fact that there is room and need for all the constructional professions to collaborate."

Mr. Henry Brooke, Council of Visual Education,
June 1961.

He believed that planning authorities often accepted architectural designs that were 'not really good enough' because they were afraid he would approve them if they were rejected and then brought to him in an appeal. This was not true; any authority looking for higher standards could rely on him for support.

He added that he hoped that the Press would let this be known. Regrettably, they didn't.

Ian Nairn, 'Canterbury: The Happy City'.
The Listener, August 25, 1960.

It is a cathedral city without sanctimoniousness, and a rebuilt city without inhumanity or architectural sterility.

The rebuilt St.George's Street in Canterbury is our one real attempt to match old and new honestly and sensitively. How has it happened?

The answer is simply hard work, hours of arguing and pleading and convincing by three people - the past and present city architects, L. Hugh Wilson and J.L.Berbiers, and the town clerk, J.Boyle. Between them they cannot point to a single building in the centre for which they can take the titular credit, yet in fact nothing could have been built without them. Good architecture in Britain today is as much a matter of administration as ability, and the lessons of Canterbury are clear. The city planning officer must be an architect (Canterbury, with only 30,000 people, is very intelligent to have had a city architect at all; many bigger towns do not), and he must have the backing of at least one of the important administrators. The result is not a dictatorship but democracy in action, a dialectic of education, compromise, and slow progress.

St.George's Street is not a collection of masterpieces; it is just a street where every building is decent, often in the teeth of the original plans, with one group that is something more - a little square round the tower of St.George's (the rest of the church was blitzed), with a sunk garden laid out by Peter Shephard in honestly urban terms, not as a transplanted rockery. Across the road, crisp, witty and elegant is David

Greig's shop, designed by Robert Paine, the Principal of the Canterbury School of Architecture. The cranked roof is frankly a jeu d'esprit yet it is an absolute necessity to the street and even to the city as a whole. Like Eros in Piccadilly Circus, it charges the whole place with gaiety and humanity. Thank goodness, one feels, the twentieth century has a sense of humour after all.

Further down the street the last big gap is being filled by the Longmarket. Here the city architect decided the size and shape, leaving the details to be carried out by the developers. He has planned a deliberate townscape effect - the massing of the blocks is designed as an asymmetrical frame for Bell Harry and the roof of the cathedral nave. Not many places in England have architects, who care enough to do this, or city administrators who would allow them to care.

The Guardian, 14th September 1961.

"If Richmond Town Planning Committee has its way the public will have a better chance of hearing of new planning applications before the committee can approve them. It has resolved that a list of applications should go

to the local press at the same time as it goes to members. The resolution comes before the council on Tuesday. If it is accepted the result in practice will be to enable one local paper to print news of applications one day before the planning committee meets to consider them.

"This decision can be interpreted in two ways. The Richmond Society, which suggested it, had it in mind that residents and property owners should know of proposed developments in their immediate neighbourhood. According to Mr. Brian Algar, the deputy town clerk, however the committee was concerned with informing the public at large. Either way the scheme - unusual and 'very much experimental,' says Mr. Algar - should please the Minister of Housing. He has urged planning authorities to take the public more into their confidence."