



IHBC SOUTHWEST

BULLETIN SUMMER 2024

Contents:

- 1. Heritage News**
- 2. SPAB Window Training**
- 3. British homes are getting mouldy?**
- 4. Exhibition - Sin Centre**
- 5. Book Review - Manifesto**

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1. Heritage News

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA)

In April, the government published a fourth set of commencement regulations for the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA), which will bring into force several of its planning provisions.

Some of the provisions in this latest set of commencement regulations came into force on 25 April, and others will take effect in July. The regulations make several key changes to planning enforcement, in a bid to make good on the government's promise to close 'loopholes' preventing enforcement action.

1. The regulations empower LPAs to serve temporary stop notices pausing work on listed buildings.

The regulations introduced a new ability from 25 April for a local planning authority (LPA) which suspects that unauthorised works were carried out on a listed building to issue a temporary stop notice lasting up to 56 days, to allow investigation of the suspected breach.

The regulations also bring into force as of 25 April a section of the act that creates an offence for contravention of such a notice. A person guilty of an offence under that section is liable to pay a fine, the act states, although it doesn't specify how big the fine will be.

2. LPAs will be required to consult before issuing a building preservation notice.

A building preservation notice (BPN) is a form of temporary listing served by an LPA under section three of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

As of 25 July, an LPA will be required to consult with the public body Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England before serving a building preservation notice.

3. The regulations remove the right of property owners to claim compensation for building preservation notices in England

The right of property owners in England to claim compensation for costs incurred as a result of a project being delayed due to a BPN being issued on their property will also be removed as of 25 July, according to the commencement regulations.

However, this will not apply to BPNs that will come into effect before 25 July.

2. Through The Looking Glass: A Future for Historic Windows.

Through the Looking Glass: A Future for Historic Windows
Supported by SPAB, STBA and The Green Register

Date: Thursday 27th and Friday 28th June, 2024

Venue: The Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester

Price: Two day conference, non residential: £295 or residential: £349

Note: Limited bursary places will be available.

The push to insulate our homes due to rising cost of energy, but also the challenge of climate change, is rightly pointing a spotlight on draughty sashes

and casements. This two-day conference, supported by SPAB, brings together experts in the history, repair and retrofit of historic windows, and the design and manufacture of new joinery. It will be of interest to anyone who would like to join the debate and understand more. We will be covering:-

Understanding the history and significance of windows

Clues for dating windows based on physical evidence

Historic glass and modern glazing systems

Specifying repair, and paint finishes

The science of heat loss and retrofitting existing windows

Justifying the case for replacement, and looking at the options.

As well as 25 specialist presenters, there will be demonstrators and trade stands. We are also including a guided evening walk around the beautiful old town of Cirencester to study historic windows in-situ and apply the knowledge that we have gained during the first day.

Two day conference, non residential including supper and town walk: £295

Full residential rate including two day conference, all meals, town walk, accommodation*: £349

Delegates are recommended to join the conference for both days. If any seats are remaining, we may offer one day only packages in due course.

3. British Homes are getting Mouldy

A recent article by reporter Aris Roussinos on UnHerd.com an online web site that examines current affairs and news to 'challenge herd mentality' is topical for those of us involved in the on going process of changing views on repair and maintenance of traditional buildings. Under the heading 'Why modern British homes are getting mouldy?', the article explores the case for retrofit of insulation in Britain Homes and that rather than rush headlong into insulation of traditional built houses counterintuitively this approach is likely to worsen living conditions in our damp climate.

Something that many in the building conservation practice have been saying for some time, although often limited to the narrower listed buildings in the country. It is important that this issue has wider discussion to move it forward - it could save significant money both home owners and grants wasted in inappropriate retrofitting works.

Aris article describes a recent BBC investigation alleges that poorly fitted cavity wall insulation is causing health damaging mould. However it outlined the symptoms, Aris considers they have been misdiagnosing the cause and the problem is not the insulation fails to work but that it works too well.

Around 25% of Britain's housing stock was built before 1919. These houses were built according to traditional methods to manage the ambient moisture of Britain's maritime influenced climate through airflow. The very draughts we now spend money attempting to eradicate were conscious decisions built in and supported by the air-permeable lime mortar between brick and masonry and lime plaster on the walls allowed moisture from within the home to evaporate outside, much like a high-tech wicking fabric.

Draughty single-pane glazing allowed air to circulate, preventing the build-up of mould: the problem of heating draughty houses was efficiently solved by the simple, if now unfashionable expedient of burning vast amounts of wood, and later coal in open fires.

After the 1st World War a shortage of skilled tradesmen required house builders to adopt the new gypsum-based plasters and cement mortar, as cheaper and quicker to work with. Because both are impermeable to moisture, houses began to be constructed with air cavities and external vents or airbricks for circulation.

Over time, the old skills were lost, and houses built before 1919 were renovated with impermeable gypsum plaster, and overlaid with non-breathable plastic-based paint.

Draughty windows were replaced with sealed double-glazing and chimneys were bricked up in favour of central heating, reducing airflow further. The result was an explosion of damp in British homes, and a new industry for retrofitting of damp-proof courses and chemical injections aiming to resolve the newly introduced problem.

Rising energy costs and aspirations to minimise climate change are now driving a new campaign for retrofitting insulation to homes that were explicitly designed to be breathable.

Believing that they were upgrading their homes, householders took up government grants for spray foam insulation in lofts, which by blocking air flow, caused moisture to build up, rotting roof joists and making the homes unfit in the process.

The same issues are now growingly apparent with foam cavity wall and other retrofitted insulation: effectively, taxpayers' money has been wasted on making British homes increasingly unliveable.

While the intentions were good, the insulation lobby pressure may well have disastrous and misguided results. Aris sees 'A potential scandal in the making.'

Low energy solutions that may work well in continental Europe's largely dry climate cause major problems when applied to Britain's climate that their advocates still struggle to understand.

Aris asks 'What's the solution?' To answer he suggests grants would be better spent on retraining tradesmen in traditional breathable techniques, currently limited to heritage projects/buildings that he calls a highly paid boutique industry.

Equally, supporting breathable insulation like sheep's wool instead of impermeable foam and foil would be a much-needed lifeline for British farmers.

He thinks there maybe a need for *'introducing dry, circulating heat from solid fuel-burning stoves would make draughty British homes warm and liveable without plaguing them with damp and mould. As is so often the case, the simplest, timeworn traditions are often the best- and the well-meaning innovations unintentionally disastrous.'*

4. Sin Centre Exhibition

There is current an Exhibition at Hannah Barry Gallery 4 Holly Grove, Peckham, London SE15 5DF based on a unrealised project by English architect and founder of Archigram Group Michael Webb about which little has been written.

Webb's Sin Centre was planned for Leicester Square his thesis project at Regent Street Polytechnic (where he took 17 years to complete a five-year course). It was to be a place of transcendence, of release from material things. Webb's drawings, writing and thinking are a continuous source of red hot inspiration for our SIN CENTRE.'

The first thing you will notice about the Sin Centre, or Entertainments Centre as it was initially called, is that it lacks entertainments. You will find no drawing lines suggesting the presence of a bowling alley, restaurant or theatre.

It is the pursuit of the notion of a design exclusively derived from the ecstasy of driving a car at high speed around and up through a building; or, if a pedestrian, of negotiating escalators built like amusement park rides that used a mechanically dubious design whereby a given caterpillar track can convey its riders in both directions. The design was the result of the structural and spatial demands of these two circulatory systems.

He felt it important that the car ramps flowed seamlessly into the decks upon which these phantom accommodations were supposed to happen. This meant that the decks needed themselves to be ramped using compound curves. The building did not move; neither did it change its shape. It could be likened unto a jet airliner without a fuselage sitting on the runway.

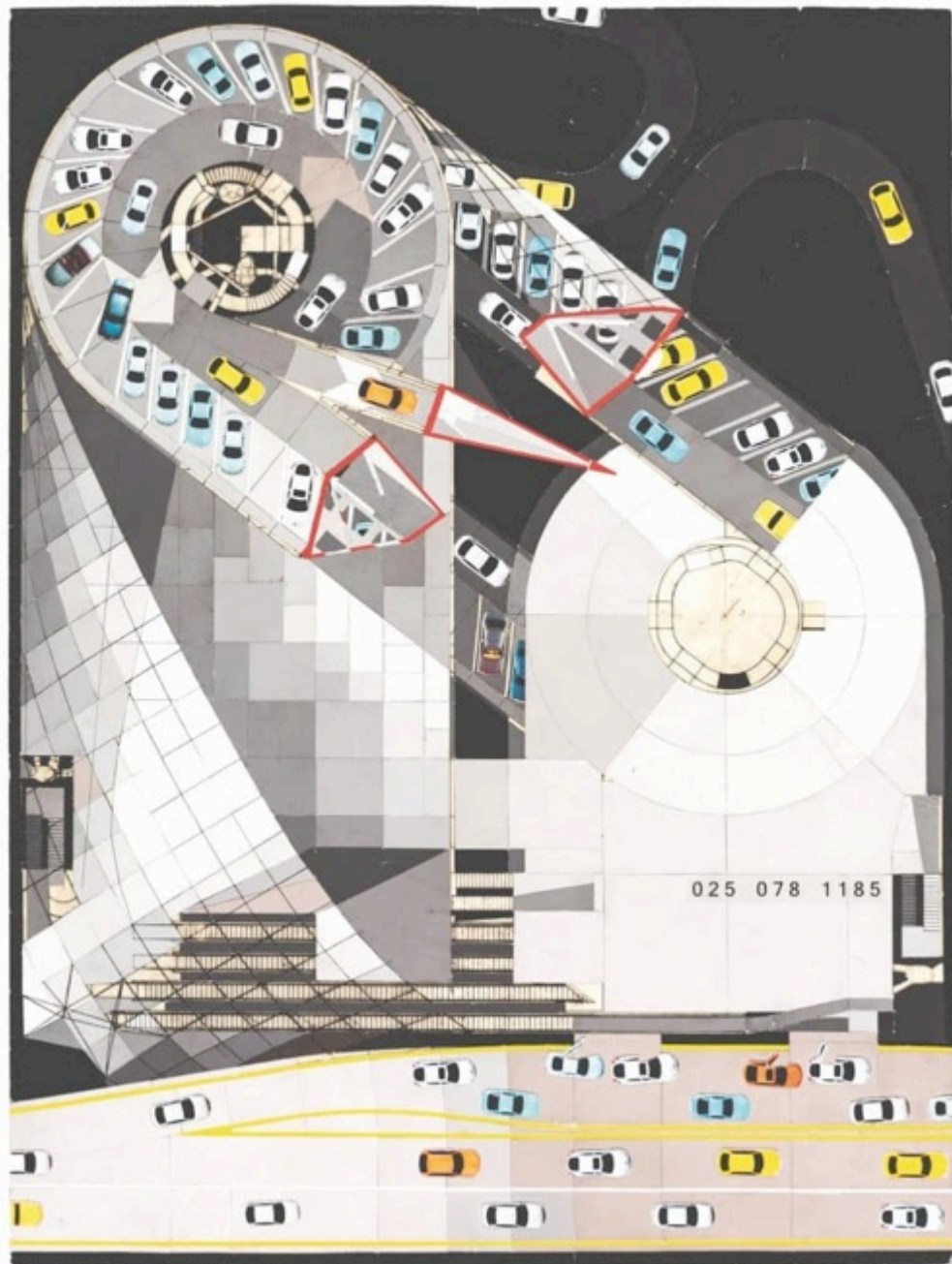
In fact, the inspiration, for the shiny aluminium decks came directly from critical wing design; from sitting just behind the wing and watching that glorious moment of touchdown when the flaps were fully down and the spoilers up.

Once you had driven into one of the parking bays, or had reached the end of the escalator alive, there was not much left for you to do. The Sin Centre was a grand entrance inspired by the Futurist Manifesto. There are no entertainments to follow as a main course after one's arrival because negotiating the ramp system of the escalators would have been entertainment enough ... more than enough!

The Sin Palace was a signature object ... it was a fixed, permanent structure (although it quivered) meant to last. In its kit-of-parts assemblages of aluminium components, it can be inserted into a lineage beginning with Paxton's Greenhouses and ending with the hi-tech boys.

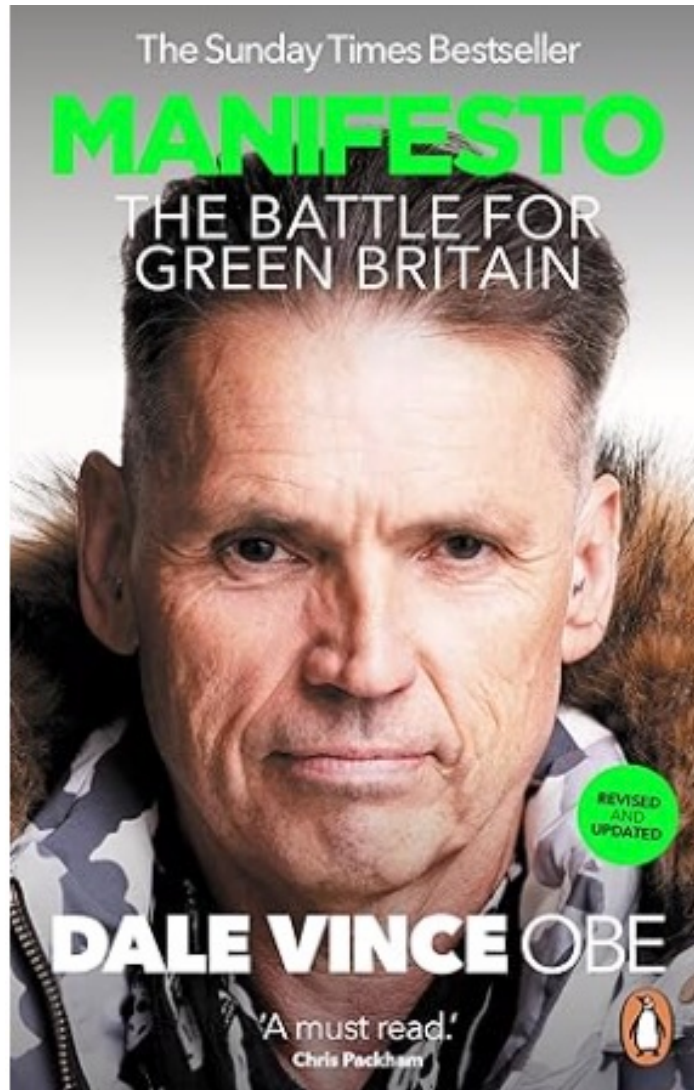
The exhibition includes a model based on one of Michael Webb's illustrious drawings of the Sin Centre project for Leicester Square (London 1961)





A drawing for Michael Webb's Sin Centre

5. Books - Manifesto - The Battle For Green Britain



The quote on the back of this book is 'Mad max meets Laurie Lee' - I certainly admire his ambition and drive to challenge conventional wisdom and thinking to bring forward practical, positive, green changes. He has focused his efforts on practical areas of Renewable Energy, Green Transport and Food production to make contributions to tackling climate change while in the process exposing the practical difficulties of dealing with large corporations and vested interests in his efforts to achieve positive actions while also and having time to develop the first vegan football club. We need more of his kind.

Bulletin Editors Comment

This is the quarterly Bulletin for the IHBC SW Branch. It looks to highlight relevant news and best practice in the South West and things of interest from elsewhere.

I would welcome contributions from members in the South West as the best way to make this Bulletin relevant and worthwhile. I look forward to receive contributions on any topic, be it buildings, people or anything else members feel might be relevant and of interest. Please attach relevant photographs with contribution as these help make the Bulletin of visual interest and saves a lot of words!

Please note that Bulletin is made up from a variety of Contributor's and the Editor holds no responsibility for the viewpoints expressed or information provided.

