

KIRSTEN ELLIOTT: WHAT LIES IN STORE FOR 2008

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Architecturally, 2007 has not been a good year for Bath. Everyone is fed up.

The "It must be Georgian" brigade has only SouthGate with which to console itself.

The "If it's modern it must be good" brigade had a minor success with the Holburne, but the second design, which got permission, was worse than the one that did not, and may face a legal challenge.

Finally, those of us who want to see good modern architecture in Bath are left in despair, although the proposed new arts complex at Bath University looks encouraging. Perhaps 2008 will be better. Here are some of my predictions.

January The Secretary of State refuses to grant the listed building consent required for the Holburne extension. She says it is her duty to protect listed buildings, and that she believes that this application ignores PPG15, the guidance note relating to listed buildings. The Holburne now has planning permission, but no listed building consent. The trustees are in despair.

February Multi finally grasps the meaning of the sentence "Lifts must not be used in the event of a fire" and reluctantly agrees to keep the ramp at Bath Spa Station, in the interests of public safety.

March Sir James Dyson acquires the Newark Works site. After he signs the lease, there is torrential rain and Lower Bristol Road is flooded to a depth of about 4m. The Environment Agency says, smugly: "We told you it was a flood risk."

April Multi realises that, now the ramp is staying, a revision of the transport interchange is needed. Wilkinson Eyre, disgusted with Bath, refuses to have any more

to do with it but Chapman Taylor promises to design something which will be in keeping with the new SouthGate.

May The Secretary of State relents and allows the listed building consent for the Holburne. The trustees are jubilant.



June The Government brings in strict rules about eco-friendly buildings with much tighter regulations on materials. Those with a high carbon footprint in their production, such as ceramic, are banned. Planned buildings where these are specified have their planning permission withdrawn by law. The Holburne now has listed consent, but no planning permission. The trustees are in despair again.

July Chapman Taylor produces drawings for the new transport exchange. They are rushed to planning, and although it is a Georgian pastiche, one councillor excitedly says: "At least it's not like Churchill House - a '30s pastiche of a Victorian pastiche of a Georgian pastiche of a ????" Here he collapses back into his chair, still muttering "of a pastiche of a pastiche of a pastiche." The committee applauds him, and grants permission. Work starts immediately.

August Someone at the Holburne has the bright idea of buying a herd of Gitte

Dawson's pigs. These are decorated by famous artists, and are arranged on the front lawn to simulate Poussin's "Et in arcadia ego." Addicts of the Da Vinci Code come from far and wide, in the mistaken belief that this is part of the code. Visitor numbers go through the roof. The museum is saved, without the necessity of an extension. The trustees are jubilant.

September Sir James Dyson decides that turning the Newark Works into a city arts centre would be a good idea, thus getting round the Environment Agency's objections to a college. Since Wilkinson Eyre is still refusing to work in Bath, Dyson calls in the architect David Chipperfield, who points out that industrial buildings have their own integrity. You can enhance them by adding something simple, striking and beautiful. This, he says, does not mean a very silly logo of a hand. Chipperfield submits designs, to general acclaim, becoming the bookies' favourite to win the Stirling Prize again.

October. Good news for the spa - the footbaths are working again. Bad news for Bath Rugby - the Charity Commission is still considering the legal status of The Rec.

November Crest Nicholson makes a revised application for buildings at Western Riverside. The development control committee is advised by B &NES officers that this time it will absolutely, definitely, not be called in by the Government Office of the South West. They pass it. It is promptly called in, to wait in the queue behind the earlier ones. Meanwhile, Widcombe Social Club is listed, as a unique surviving example of 1970s architecture.

December The new facade of the transport interchange is unveiled. It looks exactly like Churchill House.