

Architecture should be celebrated

New buildings should be launched with ceremony just like ships says Tchaik Chassay

When new buildings appear from behind hoardings, different emotions can arise; delight, horror, depression. The memory of what was there before is often quickly deleted.

The place has a new shape, the space around it, altered for ever. A very significant event has taken place and while people may feel many things, too often nobody is talking about it!

Are we so concerned about Brexit, Russian assassinations or how to manage till the end of the week not to notice changes in our midst?

Only a very few buildings are launched. Ships are launched – a big fanfare, champagne popped, speeches, dignitaries, celebrities, the construction team, all there to celebrate a momentous event.

Why not for buildings too? The completion of a building is the culmination of a process lasting years, similar to film making in terms of time and budget. Yet a new movie is promoted and premiered and reviewed, discussed and given ratings. This only happens to a handful of buildings, usually public

ones.

When a movie is finished there is always a screening for all the people involved in the making. Their names are on the credits.

What of all the people involved in making a building?

No credits, no moment of fulfilment. Perhaps most importantly, no pause for reflection before the next project is embarked upon.

True, many awards are given for good buildings of all types. But this rewards only a tiny proportion of the buildings that arrive on our streets. An even smaller number get the carbuncle award.

I propose that every new building should require a completion certificate presented at a completion ceremony. This event should be attended by The local Mayor, the councillors from the planning committee, planning officers, design team, the press and even celebrities (the only way to get public attention these days).

All involved will then look at the results of their



Tchaik Chassay runs Chassay Studio architects

endeavours. The building should be appraised, whether positively or negatively, so that the new shape in our community is processed, and lessons taken on board.

Much happens in the lengthy process between inception and completion of a project. Good and bad things. Planning is the critical point where the public intervenes.

Councillors that recommend planning permissions should see the outcome of their decisions; it is nearly always different from what they saw in the committee room. Focusing on the end product and reviewing its strengths and weaknesses will better inform the decisions made.

It would also help the public to take more interest in their changing surrounds. Architecture matters. Designs will be improved if we can make the process better.

We debated at the ACA (Association of Consultant Architects) how to maintain design quality through the planning process and I showed examples where finished buildings showed little resemblance to the design that received planning permission. Having given up their time those councillors on the planning committee were deceived, conned even.

Have they ever looked? Do they know that they approved a blue/grey brick and got a liverish red instead? Focusing on the completed work will help better decisions to be made, and then stood by.

Taking a moment out of our busy lives to celebrate, appraise and enjoy a building on its completion is a chance to bring together all involved in its making, including the stakeholders, the public and its potential users. It is an opportunity to create more pride in the process and more investment in the outcome, as well as connecting the community with a new part of its landscape.

Let architecture make a splash not a ripple. ■



Tchaik Chassay's Wembley building as permitted ABOVE LEFT but as built RIGHT
His Blackbird Hill, Neasden building as permitted BELOW LEFT but as built RIGHT

