



## St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society

From the President  
Emeritus Professor Michael Cooper  
BSc PhD CEng FICE FRICS

### A VISION OF A NEW 'MUSEUM OF ST ALBANS' An open letter circulated to:

Anne Main MP

Hertfordshire Association of Architects (St Albans Branch) Colin Smart, Chairman

Hertfordshire County Council: Museums Development Officer

St Albans Arts Richard Brown, Chairman

St Albans City and District Council: Daniel Goodwin, Chief Executive; John Young, Interim Head of Planning and Building Control; Charles Baker, Tourism and Regeneration Manager; Chris Green, Museums & Heritage Officer; Richard Shwe, Head of Culture and Community Development; Councillors Anthony Rowlands, Chris Brazier, Melvyn Teare, Robert Donald

St Albans Civic Society: Peter Trevelyan, Chairman; Geraint John, President

University of Hertfordshire: Tim Wilson, Vice Chancellor; Chris McIntyre, Dean

Urban Practitioners Ltd: Louise Mansfield

George Atkinson, Denis Owen, Adam Singer, Jill Singer, John Humphreys, Donald Buttress, Madeleine Sansom, David & Jane Kelsall and others

### WHY HAVE A NEW MUSEUM OF ST ALBANS ?

Any citizen who is aware of the history of St Albans is likely to be interested in the city and care for it. People who know something about the lives of others who walked the same streets as they do, whether they were rich or poor, youthful or elderly, newcomers or long-established, are likely to have a broader understanding of life here and now than people who have little knowledge of the past. The Society's vision is a museum that brings to citizens of all ages, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic classes an active interest in what we all share - life today in a city with a long recorded history; but the present museum building in Hatfield Road is generally accepted as inadequate.

Urban Practitioners Ltd has been commissioned by St Albans City and District Council to produce a report for the Council's 20-year development strategy. We welcome this initiative, particularly at a time of economic recession when it is essential to have a clear vision of how St Albans should be developed. The Society's participation in the polls, surveys and workshops organized by Urban Practitioners has convinced us that a new museum should be a core element of the development strategy. The purpose and function of a new museum should be settled before deciding where it should be built. If the process is reversed, the outcome could be another inadequate building. The Society's vision of a new Museum of St Albans is set out below. contd.....

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## THE VISION

1. A landmark building in an attractive setting; designed by architectural competition to resonate with the history of St Albans; built using high quality materials; and worth visiting for its architectural importance.
2. The building houses a museum and other cultural resources which all sections of the population as well as tourists want to visit for entertainment, leisure and learning.
3. The building is equipped throughout with IT for performing, teaching and learning, with high-speed data transfer internally and externally.
4. It has a raked lecture theatre and flexible spaces inside and outside for an art gallery, exhibitions, workshops, performances, and meetings of local clubs and societies.
5. It has a public library of paper and digital records, access to the Society's collection, and facilities for secure storage of archives and artefacts.
6. A shop and café are open to the public whenever the building is in use, including evenings.
7. The building is promoted and widely accepted as a welcoming place to visit and stay for a while, as well as a centre for entertainment, meetings, learning, teaching and developing new skills.
8. The Society is a major stakeholder in the Museum. It co-operates with other organisations (such as Hertfordshire County Council, St Albans City and District Council, The University of Hertfordshire, local schools, societies and citizens' groups) to publicize the museum, contribute to events, mount exhibitions and make it an agreeable place for residents and tourists.
9. The Society continues its association with the Museum of St Albans which began when the first Museum of St Albans was conceived and built more than a hundred years ago.

*Michael Cooper*

13 March 2009