

QUALITY of PLACE AWARDS 2019

If you asked a dozen people in Beccles what they liked about their town you would probably get a dozen answers, although it's fairly certain that some would mention the buildings or street layout. If so, they would be recognising the importance of what planners call 'built heritage'. Much of what we experience in towns and villages throughout Suffolk has been shaped by circumstance, history and considerable luck. Today tremendous pressure bears down upon that heritage driven by commerce, housing needs and traffic. Change is constant but each new proposition affecting or altering that which already exists needs to be examined carefully if we are not to destroy or damage the very fabric we have come to admire. This is where quality design comes into play, granted not always easy to define or indeed recognise, but examples exist all around us. Who can fail to appreciate the Georgian architecture exemplified by the city of Bath? Those buildings represent a particular era's design but stand out as timeless. Considering the sheer volume of new building proposed throughout our county and the new government's intent "to make a bonfire of planning regulations" the need for good design has never been stronger.

Suffolk Coastal District Council back in 2010 recognised this and introduced their Quality of Place Awards competition aimed specifically at both recognising and encouraging interest in the quality of the built and natural environment within the district. The stated object being the promotion of awareness for high standards in all forms of design and at the same time encouragement of community involvement. The Beccles Society annual Dr. Nicholson award introduced by over 25 years ago has similar aims.

This year Suffolk Coastal and Waveney finally amalgamated, forming East Suffolk Council. East Suffolk made the far sighted decision to extend the Quality of Place competition throughout the new council area. The decision is justified by this years applications which saw a large number right across the East Suffolk area.

A second change this year is for the judging panel to include a representative from one civic society. The Beccles Society is honoured to be the first society invited onto the panel. We welcomed the opportunity to represent our society at what has become a prestigious event attracting very high quality entrants.

The four regular judges, each of whom bring a speciality to the judging table were East Suffolk Councillor (Planning/Coastal Management Cabinet Member) David Ritchie; Suffolk Preservation Society Director Fiona Cairns; Local Architect John Lamont and Landscape/Garden Designer Patricia Shepherd. Bob Aris represented the Beccles Society who before retiring spent twenty five years in the offshore design and construction industry.

The contest offers four separate categories for entrants to choose from, this year saw a total of nineteen entrants reduced in the first round of judging to ten. Each of the ten were then visited by the judges with a final result of five winners distributed over the categories plus a further two highly commended entrants. Winners received a bronze plaque and certificate while those commended received a certificate. The awards were presented by East Suffolk Chairman, Councillor Colin Hedgley at East Suffolk House, Melton on Wednesday 20th November.

The permanent judges noted how the variation in entries this year was much wider, both in type and size than previously seen which is to be applauded in that good design is no longer the sole preserve of larger 'flagship' projects. The area previously administered as Waveney won two awards plus a commended design.

If you wish to find out further detail you can log into www.eastsuffolkcouncil.gov.uk and go to 2019 Quality of Place awards.

This competition is an excellent way for design appreciation to be fostered in our county and the Beccles Society is pleased to have been given the opportunity to take part and contribute.

Photographs of Waveney Area winners and commendation.



Kirkley Place, Lowestoft – Design Joint Winner



The Listening Station & watch Room, Reydon – Design Joint Winner



Lords & Sole Bay Terrace – Design Highly Commended



2019 Quality of Place Award Winners



2019 Quality of Place Award Judges