



Why the obsession with grey?

When Henry Ford first introduced the model T Ford in 1908, it was available in any colour, provided the prospective purchaser chose black!

It would seem that a similar situation currently applies to designers of buildings – any colour as long as it is grey! Grey can be a very uninspiring colour unless it is complemented by another colour choice from the designer's pallet, but in most cases this seems to be sadly limited. Not only have designers of buildings become obsessed with the use of grey, but at present this extends to motor manufacturers, kitchen and floor covering suppliers, to name but a few.

Why do designers currently limit their colour choices to varying shades of grey, when a little vibrancy is needed to lift both the external and internal appearance of buildings? Is it presently 'in vogue' or do designers not appreciate the use of colour? Buildings should complement their surroundings, they should not be dull and dreary, but warm, welcoming and dynamic. The current obsession with grey is surely not the answer.



An artist's impression of the new Bohunt School planned near Horsham

You only have to look around Horsham to see the use of grey. The Highwood development off Hills Farm Lane has used grey composite boarding to clad the external elevations of several buildings. This grey vista is in no way welcoming and does little to lift the buildings, especially on a dull day. Another example is the Prewett's Mill Development where the designer has limited the external colour choices to muted shades within the spectrum of grey, producing a rather insipid looking building. The original mill building would

probably have had white window frames, but for some reason the designer has used a colour akin to etching primer that is used on metalwork, and this colour is echoed on other parts of the building. Prior to converting the original office building, good use was made of multi-coloured stock brickwork. The designer has chosen not to retain this feature, but to obliterate it with a grey paint, thus missing the opportunity to retain the brick which would have provided a contrasting colour to the elevations. There is extensive use of composite cladding on

the building, but the somewhat pallid colour does little to enhance the elevations.

A planning application has recently been submitted for the new Bohunt school, which will form part of the North of Horsham development. However, with the exception of the gym building to which the designer has introduced blue to the elevations, the remainder of the complex is dull and uninteresting.

By contrast the designers for Horsham Gates have used a combination of dark grey for the fenestration, contrasting it with white render and panels of natural wood, providing a far more pleasing appearance. Adjacent to the Horsham Gates development is the new Lidl store, which is rapidly taking shape. Again, the designers have chosen grey for the framing to the fenestration. However, they have relieved the monotony of this colour by introducing feature panels of brickwork.

Come on designers, bring some interest to your buildings! Extend your choice of colours beyond grey, or if you are compelled to use it, contrast it with other materials of differing textures and colour shades – dark magenta would be an interesting choice, to make the buildings alive.