

DIARY

'Humongous' enters the high court's lexicon

A barrister for Leeds council has apologised for the "humongous mess" that could see thousands of planning decisions rendered invalid.

A high court judge is set to rule on claims next month that a host of applications were dealt with by planners between 2004 and 2008 under delegated powers that did not exist.

The council's barrister, Andrew Arden QC, warned a preliminary hearing in June: "This is not likely to be the last error in local government that we encounter. It does not excuse it, but it does explain it. Sometimes things go badly wrong."

Diary wonders whether "humongous" has now become acceptable court-speak? The etymology of the word is apparently a 1960s American conflation of "huge" and "monstrous". But the description is apt. Having to reassess four years' worth of planning consents and refusals is a massive – if not ginormous – undertaking.

Golden delicious tenant goes unnamed

A US technology firm, which sounds like something you'd find in a fruit bowl, is fitting out a store in Chapelfield shopping centre in Norwich.

It's great news for the four-year-old centre, which has taken some time to bed down, and it should be the apple of its eye. But talk to owner, Capital Shopping Centres, and it flatly denies all knowledge of the juicy letting.

Take a walk along the shopping centre's upper mall, however, and you'll see the retailer's signs proudly proclaiming its debut in the city.

CSC, which must find the whole thing rather frustrating, says client confidentiality forbids it

from saying anything. In fact, it can't even talk about the opening date for "security reasons".

Is this red tape gone mad?

I've had more investors in the back of my cab

As every reporter knows, if you want to know what's really going on in a city, ask a taxi driver.

So what does it say about a city's investment potential when taxi drivers want to return to work on building sites?

Well, in Cardiff, it doesn't signify the start of the next boom. According to Diary's driver, investment into the Welsh capital is dead. As he raced round the city's ring road, he bemoaned the fact that business people had stopped pouring off trains from Paddington.

Between starting on the rank at 7am and lunchtime, he had picked up two suits and charged £15. That was the sum total of his fares that day.

He reckoned that, in the good ol' days, he'd have been doing that amount every hour.

Andy men go to the top at Jones Lang

To get anywhere at Jones Lang LaSalle, it seems that it helps to be called Andrew. The firm announced this week that Andrew Hynard has been appointed chairman of its English business (News, p30), following John Stephen's retirement at the end of October.

In June, Andrew Gould was appointed chief executive for England, succeeding Andy

Mottram, who is now responsible for JLL's offices across central and eastern Europe. Andrew Renshaw, JLL's head of valuation, succeeded Gould as head of JLL's professional and advisory group.

This could get confusing...

CLG's 'emphasis on the mission' cost £25,000

A couple of years ago, *EG* reported that the then Department of Communities and Local Government had rebranded itself as plain old Communities and Local Government as a motivational trick to inspire staff (15 December 2007, p35). Following a request made under the Freedom of Information Act, the cost of the name-changing exercise – made, CLG said, to "emphasise the mission of the department" – can now be revealed. The going rate for omitting a D is apparently £24,765.

Johnson goes ashen over Shedgate shambles

Members of the Greater London Assembly have returned from their holidays and wasted no time in holding the mayor to account.

Boris Johnson now faces no fewer than three questions designed to embarrass him over "Shedgate", the erection and then speedy dismantling of a wooden shed Johnson had built on the balcony of his Grade-II listed Georgian home in Islington.

Pick of the crop comes from Labour's Navin Shah, who asks London's planning chief: "Are you aware of regulations surrounding listed buildings, or any planning law at all?"

But maybe fellow politicians should go easy on Johnson, as he is clearly hurting over his "deceased shed". Speaking on the radio, he blurted: "You wouldn't ask someone to say what they had done with the ashes of a deceased relative!"

GONG FOR GUY WHO TOOK ON GORILLAS?



Could an MBE for being a civic hero be in the offing for Guy Price, ASDA's London surveyor, and former Cushman & Wakefield equity partner?

Last week, during a visit to ASDA's brownfield site in New Barnet, north London, Price saw a group of people fly-tipping.

Outraged that they could do this to ASDA's property, Price barricaded them in with his car and called the police. But,

while waiting for the boys in blue to arrive, Price was set upon by the angry group and beaten up.

When the police finally did arrive, they had to wade in and break up the fracas.

ASDA is now launching a campaign to get Price nominated for one of the Queen's awards. Surely an ASDA ASBO against the fly-tippers would be more appropriate!