

## **William Mitchell Exterior Panels Non-Designated Heritage Assets Proposed by the Swanley Neighbourhood Plan October 2023**

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The Centre of Swanley is mainly modern in design, reflecting its comprehensive redevelopment in the 1960's and 1970's.

As part of work on the Neighbourhood Plan the Character Assessment of the Town highlighted the notable features of the area and Swanley Town Council as the qualifying body submitted an application to Historic England for its listing.

The descriptions below come from their report:

“The Swanley Centre was developed by Taylor Woodrow Properties between 1968 and 1971, providing shops with a pedestrian piazza, storage space, a clinic, car parking and service facilities on six acres of land to the south of the High Street in the centre of Swanley.

William Mitchell (1925-2020) was a leading public artist in the post-war period. Throughout his career he used various materials but is best known for his work in concrete; for which he employed innovative and unusual techniques to produce distinctive tactile sculptures. The abstract style of the Swanley murals embody Mitchell's interest in integrating patterns and designs from a wide range of cultures; this is reflected in much of Mitchell's work from the mid-1960s and is sometimes referred to as his 'Aztec' style.



William Mitchell's contribution to the scheme was a pair of cast concrete staircases to the residences above the shops. The staircase panels feature spiralling shapes and combinations of rhythmic interplays of impressed motifs, reminiscent of the

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designs for the Three Tuns Public House in Coventry (listed Grade II; List entry 1393443), albeit in a simplified form. For the commission, Mitchell's team created a range of bespoke moulds that could be fitted into the formwork, enabling bold cast friezes of rich relief on the part of the two staircases that face each other from across the square. The sides of the staircases feature further abstract imagery, with the lower walls forming a T-shaped support beneath the landing return. The pattern inserted onto the inner wall follows the angle of the handrails (one in a straight line, the other staircase with a staggered drop), below which the wall treatment changes to a flat rough-cast concrete surface."

The murals, along with a separately commissioned totem clock tower that was originally positioned in the centre of the piazza, provided a striking contrast with the modular architecture of the centre".

Part of this totem is now in the Hextable Heritage Centre.

The Historic England Report concluded that the murals were did not meet the criteria for listing but did "possess claims to architectural and historic interest in the local context".

On this basis it was decided to include the Murals as proposed Non designated heritage assets in the Neighbourhood Plan.