

14/3/08

# Town must gear up for cycle increase



by **John Steele**  
chairman of  
the Horsham  
Society

MENTION cycling or the behaviour of cyclists to local residents and you can be sure that it will arouse strong and sharply polarised feelings.

Opinion is divided between those that cycle, or have children that do, and others who are inconvenienced by the anti-social behaviour of a

minority of cyclists.

Cycling seems to be becoming more popular with all ages. It appeals to current concerns about fitness, sustainability and our carbon footprint.

Properly managed it can be environmentally friendly, reduce the number of short car journeys and atmospheric pollution, and lessen the need for expensive car parks.

But without effective planning, investment and controls, cycling in town centres can be a menace. Put bluntly, cycles do not coexist well with other vehicles or pedestrians.

Horsham, with its high level of pedestrianisation and lack of vision, provides a case study in how to achieve the worst of all worlds.

The council claims to favour sustainable alternatives to the car, yet we have a rag bag of cycle lanes which start and finish abruptly, often ending at just the point where safety demands cycle and vehicle segregation.

There is inadequate provision for cross town cycle movements and the roads without cycle lanes are too dangerous.

With the pedestrianisation of East Street the cycle lane will

no longer be available. Would you choose to cycle along Albion Way or from east to west down Blackhorse Way?

Cyclists are forced to dismount and walk through the pedestrianised areas or, all too frequently, they choose to disobey the law and cycle on regardless. The same problem occurs on pavements and footpaths throughout the town centre.

Despite the dangers to pedestrians, no serious attempt is made to enforce 'no cycling' signs, possibly because the authorities are sympathetic to the cyclists' plight.

The council's solution seems

to be to encourage cyclists to use Horsham Park to cross the town.

This is not the answer. It will spoil the ambience of the park, endanger pedestrians and, in time, lead to widening of paths and further suburbanisation.

As long ago as 1999, Horsham and West Sussex councils published an urban transport plan, including a network of possible cycle routes. It is time to dust the plan down and breathe new life into a cycle strategy.

Interestingly, the 1999 plan saw no need for cycling in the park.