

Focus on the legacy of developments



by **John Steele**
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Society

READERS will know that the Horsham Society is very worried about the demolition of existing buildings to make way for the tide of new blocks of flats that seems to be overtaking our town, many of which are of indifferent design and will add nothing to our architectural heritage.

One reason why flats are so popular with developers is that by knocking down one

property it is possible to squeeze perhaps 20 homes on to the site, with little or no recreational space and a minimum of car parking.

The economics are obvious, the profit for property owners and developers high, and it helps the pressure on the council to meet its quota of new houses. But after the developers move on the loss is permanent and we are left with their legacy.

Currently when planning applications are received which require the demolition of an existing property very little if any attention is given to the value of what is there now, and too little to the design of the proposed replacement.

We know councillors share

our concern about preserving the best of our heritage and improving the quality of new buildings so last week the society put two proposals to the council. The first is the introduction of a new two-part test for planning consent involving demolition.

Demolition should only be allowed if it can be shown that the existing building is not capable of reasonably beneficial use and that the cost of conversion exceeds the likely value and its existing amenity value.

Secondly, consent for the replacement building should depend upon the proposed use, the quality of design and whether or not it enhances the quality of the environment.

Greater consideration should be given to opportunities to retain the important parts of older buildings, normally their façade to a depth of one room, while allowing rebuilding behind.

Our second proposal is the creation of an independent design panel of experts to which the council could refer planning applications. Design panels are being set up in many areas and are contributing to improved standards of design.

The local panel would supplement the advice already available from the council's own staff. Local democracy would be retained with councillors free to accept or reject advice as now.

The adoption of these ideas

would help the council to ensure that when change is necessary it is for the better.

The Horsham Society, one of the largest amenity societies in the country, is principally concerned with watching over the heritage of the town.

It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces of Horsham and speaks up for residents when it considers decision making to be detrimental to the well-being of the towns character.

For more information, or to become a member at very modest cost, please visit the website www.horshamsociety.org, phone 01403 272814, or write to 2, Old Denne Gardens, Horsham, RH12 1JA.

Post office lines are too much

I HAD the 'pleasure' of joining the queue at the Carfax post office on Tuesday April 1.

It stretched all the way to the rear then began to double back on itself causing a blockage and short tempers,

It reminded me of a queue to get on a ride at Chessington.

The time was 12.30 and there was only four cashier points open.

Three customers in front of me was an elderly disabled lady walking on two walking sticks

It took us over 20 minutes to reach the front of the queue, by this time the lady in question looked in a state of collapse.

A chair was finally brought to her, only when she reached her turn, also a glass of water was given to her.

She was obviously in a distressed state and had to be