

# We must protect our strategic gaps



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THE RECENT controversy over a planning application for a large retirement complex at Faygate provides a stark reminder of the importance to the town of the strategic gaps between Horsham and Crawley, and Horsham and Southwater.

It is only the strong policy of presumption against development in the gaps that has and will continue to

prevent coalescence of communities. The council was right to turn down the application at Faygate because it flew in the face of current planning policies. But next year there will be a review of what is called the Core Strategy and developers and others will be pressing to overturn the policy on strategic gaps.

It is essential that councillors stand firm because otherwise the long feared Crawsham will become a reality.

Once the planned new development west of Crawley has been completed there will only be a gap of a little over two miles between the two towns.

Residents on the north-east

of the town will be as close to the boundary with Crawley as they are to Carfax.

Why should we worry about coalescence? Apart from the dreadful prospect of a seamless urban sprawl from Broadbridge Heath to the M23, what is at stake is the loss of community identity and community spirit.

Neither should we be complacent about the Horsham/Southwater strategic gap just because currently the greatest threat seems to be the ever-growing Crawley. It is no less important.

Developers have their eyes on this narrow stretch of countryside too and must not be allowed to destroy the identity of Southwater by annexing it to Horsham.

It is well known that there is an optimum size for towns when they are large enough to sustain a wide range of services and amenities but still small enough that residents can relate to them, and to each other.

Arguably, Horsham is already too large. When you ask townspeople where they live they often do not reply 'Horsham', but instead answer with the name of their locality such as Holbrook or Roffey. This is evidence that Horsham is becoming too large for people to identify with and risks outgrowing its community.

The Horsham Society believes that the time has come to prevent the further growth of Horsham beyond that

already planned and to concentrate on strengthening the economy by enhancing the quality of what we already have.

If at some stage in the future there is further pressure for development serious consideration must be given to a new town. Meanwhile, it is vital that we all continue to resist any development in the strategic gaps

The Horsham Society is concerned about the town's past, present and future and seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces.

*For more information visit  
the website*

[www.horshamsociety.org](http://www.horshamsociety.org)