

# Housing targets and affordable homes



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This would presumably include affordable housing, elderly persons' special needs, single persons' housing, potential local economic growth/decrease and young people's aspirations to buy a property in their own area.

The difference between this forecast and the government's could give an indication of the extent of national factors versus regional decisions (eg Gatwick Airport expansion) and the expected impact of new families moving to the district.

After all, 13,000 houses represents an increased population of over 26,000 – 50 per cent of the present population of the built-up area of Horsham.

Satisfying the need for affordable housing in Horsham district calls for a review of its financing. It cannot be left to the whim of the developer.

As things stand, the council has to approve four homes for sale in order to pay for one affordable home and even that ratio is open to negotiation with the developer.

This puts the council under pressure to permit larger scale developments than it would normally consider right for the area in order to satisfy the need for affordable housing. It is time to look at better ways of financing affordable housing.

Councils and housing associations have been the responsible bodies for providing affordable housing for many years and have worked together successfully in meeting local needs.

Councils took a step back from house building in the 1990s when the loans that they needed to finance the capital costs of building were included in the government's

total public borrowing and had to be reduced to satisfy agreed EU limits on borrowing.

Until then, council loans to build houses were taken up and repaid in the same way as a mortgage over a set period, at no cost to the local taxpayer.

Restoring the council's ability to build could help in putting the future of Horsham a little more into its own hands.

At the local level, Horsham would not have to approve unwarrantedly high levels of development to gain ever smaller numbers of affordable homes.

It could rely on the housing associations backed up by the council to provide new homes.

It could also use its existing planning powers to ensure that new developments provide affordable housing and that the developments are of a size and

type that are right for the urban and rural areas within the Horsham district.

Mr Maude proposes that the government's 'diktat' on housing development should explain how the infrastructure would be provided. This is a very welcome idea.

*We urge our council to press for more flexible forms of finance for affordable housing and take cautious steps on existing housing development proposals pending clarification of the policies of the next government, whatever its political complexion.*

*Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who is concerned about the past, present and future of the town.*

*Visit the website [www.horshamsociety.org](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or phone 01403 261905 if you are interested in good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces.*

MP FRANCIS Maude referred to the most recent order by central government that Horsham accommodate 13,000 new houses by 2026 (Francis' Footnote, County Times Horsham edition July 31).

The basis of this revised target is unlikely ever to be fully explained by those who made it to those who have to implement it.

However, it would be useful to know Horsham District Council's own forecast of housing need for the same period.