

New settlement could be best answer



by **Nigel Friswell**
vice-president
and acting
chairman of
the Horsham
Society

THE COMMITTEE of The Horsham Society has been thinking hard about the new housing problem for a very long time.

Although government and local authority plans talk about so many houses being needed by 2016 or 2026, it will actually continue for ever.

It is rather like the blackmailer who gives his victim the impression that he only wants a one-off payment but, in fact, comes back again and again. Nor is it likely to

change with a change of government.

The politicians will be advised by the same civil servants based on the same demographic studies. Even if the studies are flawed, it is unlikely they will be re-examined anytime soon.

Faced with ongoing demand for houses and the pressures for many of them to be built within what the planners call the Gatwick Diamond, we considered what would happen to the town if it kept getting added to infinitum.

We are thinking that Horsham town has really become as large as it ought. Adding further to it will need massive increases in infrastructure and services, not just in the new developments but also in adjacent areas and in the town itself.

Developers are showing

themselves reluctant to fund such work and, for years to come, the authorities will not be able to afford it.

We think that concentrating new build in a new settlement will also concentrate the collective mind.

It will send a message to developers that piecemeal additions to our existing town and villages are not seen as a long-term solution.

It will enable the utilities and local authorities to focus on one area and provide the necessary services.

It would also enable the new settlement to be located where there are good transport-links.

It will not be easy but, without a new settlement, we expect that Crawley and Horsham will become one big built-up area. For years we have been fighting against such local development.

We tried to encourage (without success) Horsham District Council to fight more, too.

They were frightened that a purely negative attitude would only result in central government taking over and the district losing what little control they have.

By proposing a new settlement sooner rather than later, we think that HDC could take a proactive approach and show the government that we are prepared to accept new houses but on our, local, terms.

The houses will come, whatever the local people really want. Let us decide where.

Although we are concerned about Horsham town, other towns and villages in the district are equally fearful of continued expansion.

Too frequently this results in a simple NIMBY reaction which, whilst understandable, does little to move the debate forward in a rational way.

Adjacent local authorities, particularly Mid Sussex, are facing just the same challenges.

Although not specifically mentioned in HDC's Core Strategy Review document, we hear that consideration is being given to a new settlement on the HDC/Mid Sussex borders along the A23 and Brighton railway line corridor.

This might be a sustainable way forward for long-term development.

The Horsham Society has over 1,200 members. If you would like to join or wish to comment, please visit www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 261905.