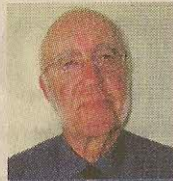


Bold step is needed to cope with housing demands

BY THE time this article is printed, the Horsham District Planning Framework document will have been published for consultation. Not too surprisingly, Horsham District Council has decided to focus on the number of new homes that we are likely to need over the next 20 years, which is a fairly sensible starting point.

Historically, Horsham District has seen a declining rate of new homes' constructed over the last ten years. It averaged 530 homes/annum for the five year period from 2001 and then fell to 260 homes/annum for the five year period from 2006.

Four levels of new housing options are suggested, ranging from building 590/annum to 730/annum. This would mean that Horsham District could expect to see between 11,800 and 14,600 more houses added to its current housing stock. This is a huge number in real terms and more than enough to destroy the character of the existing settlements forever without the correct



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planning.

The other problem with this type of long term planning is that land is set aside for development and, if the annual targets are not achieved, opens up the possibility of higher value homes being built in select developments and the houses that we really need, the affordable and social housing, never being constructed.

It also makes delivery of the required infrastructure very difficult to achieve because there's never enough volume in one place to justify the investment required.

What hasn't helped the council's approach to this issue is the speculative suggestion

that perhaps 4,500 homes could be built on land north of Horsham, an approach designed to concrete over a large swathe of our countryside and create an orphan development, neither part of Horsham nor a practical new settlement.

It's why even at this early stage that we need to be proactive. Let's put to one side the concept of spreading any development throughout the district and focusing it on the main settlements. Certainly, the existing settlements should be able to take some additional homes but it has to be done in such a way that it is achieved without their destruction, especially the green areas within and around towns and villages.

Let's take the bold step and start to prepare for a new market town, where we can plan for the construction of 10,000 new homes over a 20 year period and which, if planned properly, would mean that all the infrastructure requirements were in place from the beginning.

This would certainly be in line with the Government's proposal back in November 2011, which invited councils and communities to identify opportunities for 'locally planned large scale development...'. Within this vision was the development of new market towns with up to 10,000 new homes.

Why don't we grab this opportunity now and make it the key focus of the next step in the consultation process? If people can see a way to achieve the required number of new homes without damaging the existing settlements, it will be far easier for the council to achieve its desired end objective.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone, who shares these concerns. For more information, visit our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 261640.