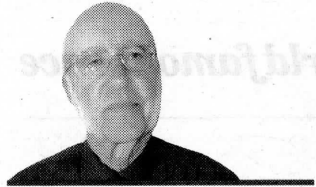


# David Moore: is strategy a consultation or a fait accompli?



**I**s it a consultation or a fait accompli? This Friday will see the launch of Horsham District Council's Preferred Strategy document, which will set out the number of new homes to be built over the next 20 years and their proposed locations within Horsham District. As you already know, this document will focus on building the proposed new homes north of Horsham as well as in Southwater and Billingshurst. As always, the

recommendations will be contentious and they're bound to lead to a lot of infighting. 'Don't build in my patch' will become the clarion call and it's likely that any discussion will be devoted to stopping construction on the selected sites rather than looking at the bigger picture.

There is little doubt that new homes will be required in the South East over the next 20 years and the simple question to answer is how best this will be achieved.

The Horsham Society has for many years stressed the need to maintain the integrity of the existing settlements, wherever possible.

This doesn't mean that new homes cannot be built within those settlements; it's simply a matter of deciding

where.

For example, there is land available within Horsham, which would be ideally suited for house building, provided the necessary infrastructure is put in place.

However, the real solution to what is a difficult problem remains what it's been for a long time, namely to build a new market town somewhere within the area covered by the council.

The answer is not to construct an extension to Horsham on the other side of the A264, especially as the original carrot of a new hospital to support such a development has disappeared and been replaced by a possible new parkway railway station and a business park.

Unfortunately, we know

that the idea of a new market town will once again be missing from the council's housing plans for the next 20 years.

This doesn't really make a great deal of sense.

It's for this reason that the second document, which will be produced in tandem with the Preferred Strategy, will be of extreme importance and warrant careful consideration.

This document will have the rather long-winded title, the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Environmental Report of the Preferred Strategy.

It will show the various sites that were considered and the reason for the selection of north Horsham, Southwater and Billingshurst as the

locations for new homes.

In reality, careful consideration of this document is in many ways more important as this is where the logic behind the selection process will be found.

The omission of sites which should have been considered will also be evident, raising numerous questions that will need to be answered.

You may well feel that there's a need to ask one obvious question, 'Is there any point in wading through the consultation documents in order to comment on the proposals?'

The answer has to be a resounding 'yes'.

We can't afford our town to be damaged by unsound proposals.

North of Horsham is not a sensible place to build new homes as there are all sorts of logistical problems that would be difficult, if not impossible, to resolve if the development really was to become part of Horsham Town.

Let's have a proper plan.

*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](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or telephone 01403 261640.*