

David Moore: new town concept is the sensible way forward



Wall remember dates, which are important to us. For example, we'll usually remember our children's birthdays and, hopefully, our wedding anniversary. We'll never forget the disastrous holiday that we booked for our family all those years ago. So what will we remember about changes that will or may occur in Horsham during 2014 and will those

memories be happy or unhappy ones?

This year is already very busy with lots of changes on the cards now or in the immediate future.

Firstly, we know with deep regret that Novartis will leave the town after more than seventy years, a very sad occasion with its associated effects on people's jobs.

Just over a week ago, Horsham District Council approved a planning application for the redevelopment of the combined Lifestyle Ford and Horsham Bowling Club sites.

Work is planned to start about the middle of the year to build two new stores, Waitrose and John Lewis, off Albion Way.

The aim is to open the

stores in 2015 and it is hoped that this development will be of benefit to the existing town centre.

The second phase of the enhancement of West Street will be completed during 2014. In many ways, one of the important aspects of this phase will be to see if the businesses take advantage of the façade improvement scheme to complement the money spent on the street itself.

Recently, we've heard that a meeting will be held in public to discuss Horsham District Council's Preferred Strategy for new homes.

It's a pity that this meeting isn't a public meeting as it would be more constructive to face the objections to the proposed

strategy head-on. As the meeting is being held in Horsham, it's to be hoped that the meeting will not be restricted just to proposed developments in and around Horsham.

The reason for this comment is fairly obvious. The one thing that's missing from the current proposals is the development of a new town in the south of the district in order to take some of the ongoing pressure off the north of the district.

The new town concept needs to be considered in great detail as it's the simplest way to deliver large numbers of homes over a twenty year period with the required infrastructure built in at the planning stage.

There is already sufficient

evidence at both local and national levels to show that this must be the sensible way forward. All that's required is the will to make it happen.

We also need to ensure that we retain strategic gaps between the various settlements so as to ensure that they don't merge, so losing their individuality and character.

The bolt-on approach of new homes makes this difficult to achieve. In addition, the possibility of a second runway at Gatwick Airport cannot be ignored.

The other downside to the planned meeting is the limitation on the number of questions that can be asked.

Ten doesn't seem to be many on what is such an important subject and

there doesn't seem to be the opportunity to ask supplementary questions arising from the answers given.

The future for Horsham town is shrouded in mist. Let's hope that when the mist clears, we remember 2014 with affection and not with horror.

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.