

David Moore: grasp the opportunity to ensure a sensible plan



Most people, who attended the meeting in public on the Preferred Strategy towards the middle of February, were disappointed at what actually happened. It seemed that no account was taken of any of the negative comments received during the consultation period and the two alternative strategies put forward for consideration were dismissed out of hand.

So it was like a breath of fresh air when the Spring

Edition of Horsham District Council's Horsham District News publication came through my door towards the end of February and I saw Cllr Vicker's assurance that 'the council is carefully considering all the comments that were received during the consultation period, whilst at the same time undertaking further technical work to prepare the Proposed Submission Strategy document'.

This is excellent news but, unfortunately, it leaves behind too many unanswered questions.

For example, it doesn't explain why the plan from 2007 to build most of the new homes in Southwater and Billingshurst that was still in place towards the end of 2012

was abandoned in August 2013. It doesn't tell us why the creation of a new town in the south of the district was removed from consideration at the same time.

It certainly doesn't explain why north of Horsham suddenly became a prime site for a large business park, an out of town retail store and 2,500 homes.

These questions have to be properly answered first if we are to have a sensible Proposed Submission Strategy.

It's not in anyone's interests to have a Strategy, which people can suggest might have the facts retrofitted around the conclusions.

Have we really considered why we need this additional business space, particularly where it should be located?

We've seen population growth through the whole of the district so isn't there some sense to considering spreading new job opportunities throughout the district to reduce commuting?

Let's also take the time to consider why we need all these new homes within Horsham district.

Do we believe that these new homes are intended for people who are going to work in Horsham?

The honest answer has to be no and part of the reason for this is linked to the duty to co-operate requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework document?

So let's identify how many of the new homes that we need to build are for people, who wish to live in or near Horsham but

commute to London, Crawley and Gatwick. Let's then ask one simple question based on these facts, 'Are there better places to build these new homes?'

We also need to remember that the duty to co-operate requirement is a two-edged sword.

Local authorities, whose boundaries adjoin those of Horsham District, should be expected to ask a similar question about how many new homes should be built in their areas for people, who wish to work in Horsham District?

We should expect to see some allowance for these answers in Horsham District Council's plans.

It's the omission of this, which has meant that no progress has been made on the creation of a new market town

in the south of our area.

Our council has the opportunity to get its plan right now.

Let's grasp the opportunity and ensure that we have a sensible plan in place for the future, which doesn't damage what we've currently got and benefits everyone.

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.