

# David Moore: council has duty of care to plan for health needs



**T**wo things struck me about the ongoing debate on primary healthcare in last week's County Times.

The first thing was how so many people, understandably, are still horrified at the Clinical Commissioning Group's suggestion that a new state of the art medical centre could be created in the west of Horsham development by

merging three of the current GP surgeries in the town.

The second thing was how Horsham District Council seemed to be saying that it was really the doctors' responsibility to provide the appropriate level of healthcare and all the council could do was to offer assistance.

This has to be nonsense. The council has a duty of care to ensure that, when it prepares its local plan for the development of new homes, it takes into account any resultant changes or improvements that will be required to the infrastructure.

Primary healthcare is an essential part of that infrastructure and the needs of the population have to be taken into account when deciding where, when and how

many houses are to be built over a period of time.

One gets the impression that this is seen as a minor consideration.

Housing numbers come first and somewhere well down the list comes the provision of primary medical care.

For example, the draft Horsham District Infrastructure Delivery Plan was published on the 30th April 2104 with the declared aim of ensuring that it sets out the infrastructure needed to support growth throughout the district.

It completely fails in its objective as far as primary healthcare is concerned.

It's as if the NHS and the local doctors can be expected to sort this out when the system cracks under the

pressure.

This is totally unacceptable and the problem needs to be resolved.

First we have the question of the possible merging of surgeries and the creation of a far larger unit.

What are the benefits of this to the patients? Are there any downsides?

Then we have the suggestion that we should move some of our existing primary medical healthcare to the edge of the town.

We would look in horror at the suggestion that we should move our town centre retail units to the edge of the town so why should our basic healthcare provision be any different?

We have to expect the council to play its part as far

as the provision of primary medical healthcare in Horsham is concerned.

Can a site be found within the town if it's necessary to create a large state of the art surgery? How would it be financed?

The council needs to review the current position with the CCG as a matter of some urgency and sort out the town's healthcare problem that's been created by and become entangled with the west of Horsham development.

Separately, there's a need to produce a final Infrastructure Delivery Plan later this year, which addresses the problem of the supply of primary healthcare within Horsham, if it's the intention to continue to bolt on large extensions, such as the proposed north of

Horsham development, to the town.

Let's grasp the nettle now and ensure that we get the planning right for the future before we create a nightmare scenario from what is an avoidable problem.

There are no easy answers, just a lot of hard work.

*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.*

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