

David Moore: Where do we go next? Let's have some consistency



It's always interesting to see the news and wonder at what's happening in the real world. Why do things suddenly appear to change without any obvious rhyme or reason?

Last week's local news certainly fell into this category when West Sussex County Council decided to oppose a second runway at Gatwick Airport when it wasn't all that long ago that it supported the idea. It's as if all the predicted

benefits have mysteriously disappeared.

Making the (Horsham edition) front page was the rejection of the planning application for a new ground for Horsham FC for reasons such as safety of both pedestrians and cyclists as well as the urbanisation effect of such a development. It was fascinating to see the importance that was attached to things such as the loss of green space and a proposed development, where the community benefits did not outweigh going against policy.

Housing continued to dominate the news with the council's 'success' story about the production of Neighbourhood Plans and the benefits that accrue when

they are in place. There was even the mention of a possible Neighbourhood Plan for the unparished area of Horsham Town but no explanation as to why the project has stalled after more than a year's hard work despite all the best efforts of the various groups involved.

We also had the ongoing attempt to justify the proposed North Horsham development by suggesting that the Planning Inspector believed this to be the best option on the table. Nothing could be further from the truth as there was only ever one option on the table. Mind you, when the rejection of the planning application for a new football ground is set against the proposed North Horsham

development, it seems that different criteria have been applied.

It's worth just taking a look at what are the differences. It could be said, for example, that the suggestion of building a football ground at Hop Oast should be rejected as it could be seen as allowing a development within what was the strategic gap between Horsham and Southwater. Unfortunately the problem that this raises is that the proposed North Horsham development is within what was the strategic gap between Horsham and Crawley. It also destroys a far greater greenfield area and is urbanisation in the extreme.

Then you have the safety aspects associated with

pedestrians and cyclists, who have to cross a road. It's considered to be a major risk asking people to cross the Worthing Road to get to the proposed new football ground but not a significant problem for people to cross the very busy A264 with its high vehicular speeds to get to and from Horsham and the proposed North Horsham site. The only safe way to cross the busy trunk roads is to go under them, i.e. via a subway, or in the case of North Horsham subways. Bridges are sometimes suggested as a way to go over such busy roads but they're not a viable solution for people with pushchairs and young children or people with a disability buggy.

So it's all rather a shambles,

which needs to be sorted out before any planning application is submitted for the proposed North Horsham development. If the rejection of the football ground is used as the model, any planning application would have to be rejected for obvious reasons.

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.