

# David Moore: Strategic Gaps – do they really still exist?



**I**t's not too surprising that housing continues to dominate the news these days and the residents of Horsham continue to express concern at the ongoing demand for the construction of new homes in the area.

It wouldn't be quite so bad if these were built for our young people, who currently cannot afford to purchase a property locally at such inflated prices. Unfortunately, the construction of the so

called affordable houses lags way behind what anyone might expect to see and the building programme seems to be designed to encourage established people to move into the area.

The council is currently engaged in producing a plan to provide 2,000 more homes than originally envisaged in its Horsham District Planning Framework document (HDPF), which was the subject of an inquiry in November, and the Planning Inspector intends to resume the inquiry in about June of this year. So it was not unexpected when HDC announced in the last fortnight the timetable that it intends to follow in order to meet the Planning Inspector's requirement to find sites for

the additional 2,000 new homes. The intention is to publish the revised proposed HDPF towards the end of March 2015 for a six week consultation period so that the hearing can be resumed during the summer period.

Last week also saw continued publicity concerning the benefits of creating a new town, when the Mayfield proposal was mentioned on South Today and also on Inside Out. The opposition of certain protest groups to these proposals was evident in both news items. This is a fairly predictable response and we can all remember the extensive opposition to the proposed North Horsham development before, during and after its

consideration at the inquiry.

Very often things happen, which appear to be wrong but, if the decision can't be changed, attention then has to be focused on how to get the best out of a bad deal. For example, this will usually involve attempts to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is put in place as a precursor to the development. This appeared to be the only route left open to objectors to the North Horsham development, when Cllr Vickers made it clear that the decision concerning North Horsham was a fait accompli. Then out of the blue, a spanner was thrown into the works when Cllr Vickers announced that strategic gaps still existed within Horsham District. The key document in

this respect was entitled the Horsham District Strategic Gap Document, which was prepared some time ago. It can be found on the council's website.

During the inquiry, it was understood that strategic gaps no longer existed in Horsham District, which presumably was one of the reasons why the Inspector accepted North Horsham as a strategic site. The Strategic Gap document, which doesn't seem to have been withdrawn or amended, wasn't included within the bundle that was made available to him. It's fairly obvious that this matter needs to be clarified and, if nothing else happens, the least that can be expected is that the Inspector's attention is

drawn to what appears to be an overlooked document, when the inquiry recommences.

It's essential to ensure that whatever final decision is reached by the Planning Inspector it makes sense when all the available information is taken into account. Perhaps then we can move on.

*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.*