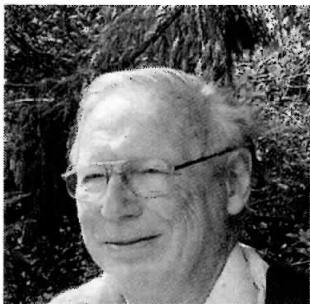


Nigel Friswell: think 'Garden City' in the designs for North Horsham



congestion and safety.

Although the Planning Inspector criticised some aspects of the District plan, he agreed to development North of Horsham.

It now seems that this development is inevitable, so we have to accept it and make sure that the results are the best for Horsham and for the people that will live and work in the new development.

Liberty, who are the masterplan developers, claim 'green' credentials for their developments. They are an American company and their developments in the United States and in England are mostly commercial estates except for the mixed residential and commercial estate at Kings Hill, near Welling, in Kent.

As the Horsham Society has long advocated a new Garden City development to deal with West Sussex's housing problem, one would think that, in many respects, the Society and Liberty might be able to find common ground. Although large, the North of Horsham site is not large enough for a Garden City as such but there is no reason why many of the Garden City principles should not be applied to the development but we have to overcome the idea that 'green' is expensive.

Liberty have said that they want to keep green corridors and make the development a pleasant place to live. They do not build houses themselves but engage other house-builders to work for them. These house-builders

will have their own portfolio of standard designs which should enable them to build well-built houses at reasonable cost. However, this may not mean 'affordable' in the sense of lower-priced housing. Nevertheless, Liberty are also in discussions with housing associations who could take on some of the residential development.

The Society welcomes Liberty's apparent intention to have early discussions with various interested parties before submitting formal planning applications. So often 'consultation' takes place after detailed plans have been drawn up. Having incurred the time and the money, it is no surprise that suggestions made then are turned down. Liberty took a shop in

Bishopric in mid-April and gave out consultation forms for visitors to complete. Having gone to this trouble, it is hoped that they are able to use the suggestions they received. Some of the proposals for the development (such as a new railway station) are unrealistic and will be a bonus if they ever happen at all. Others are achievable if addressed soon enough.

The Horsham Society and, we hope, Horsham District Council will try to work with Liberty to get the best possible development for North of Horsham. With care, it could be a very pleasant area. It needs careful planning to overcome the (expensive) hurdles of difficult transport links but we could still land up with a pleasant area

that works for its residents. Considerable thought also needs to be given to the ongoing management of the estate as it develops and, in the future, matures. Whether the Liberty development can really become an integral part of Horsham is still another question.

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.

Ever since the development North of Horsham (that is, north of the A264 Northern Bypass) was proposed a couple of years ago, the Horsham Society has felt that it was in the wrong place, with poor communications with the rest of Horsham and serious implications for traffic