

John Steele: challenges old and new for the year ahead



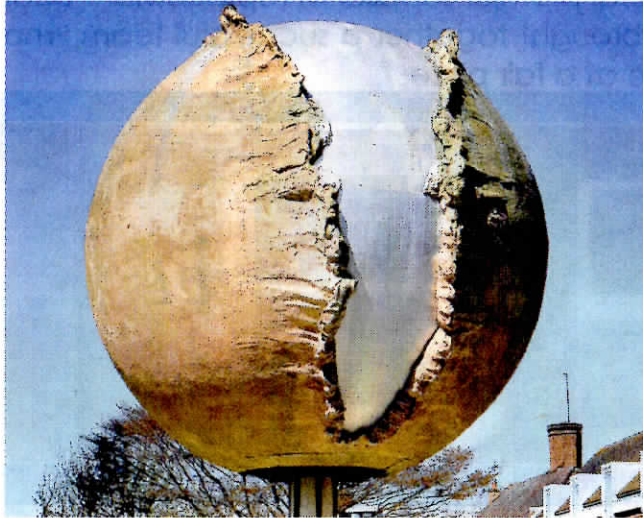
paucity of information, let alone acceptable solutions to key issues that still need to be resolved.

Foremost among these is whether the development can be connected effectively to the rest of the town and how the inevitable pressure from the increased traffic on the A24 and A264 will be mitigated, including provision of safe and acceptable crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

There is also the tricky question of how the daily movements of heavy refuse vehicles to and from Biffa's MBT plant in Langhurstwood Road will be routed through the development.

Then there is the Shelley fountain. This surely must be the year in which HDC finally removes the sad spectacle of the Rising Universe which stands empty of water, no longer rises, and has lost its satellite globes.

Once the proud face of Horsham on the opening credits of the TV evening



The Rising Universe in Horsham

news, it is now a stark symbol of municipal neglect.

Lynd Cross badly needs a makeover with new paving, a suitable feature to replace the fountain and the reinstatement of the trees in the Worthing Road and Springfield Road arms. The rest of that end of Bishopric looks fine, and all the better

for the recent careful thinning of the vegetation.

The move of Waitrose to Albion Way has left a big void in Piries Place and if, as seems likely, there are no retailers interested in taking the empty unit careful thought will need to be given to the future of Piries Place as a whole. Some redevelopment

may be needed to ensure the long term viability of this important town centre area.

The pace of change in the retail sector shows no sign of abating.

Instant price comparison, internet shopping, and delivery of almost anything one can want within 24 hours is changing the face of our high streets.

2016 should see rapid progress in the development of Horsham Blueprint's Neighbourhood Plan and a key challenge will be to demonstrate how active planning can help to alleviate current problems whilst future-proofing our town ahead of as yet unknown changes to come.

Finally, there is the perennial problem of Blackhorse Way. This is the main vehicular entry to the town centre and it looks hideous.

The backs of the shops in West Street are less than attractive but matters are made much worse by the

overflowing waste bins, haphazard parking and general sense of dereliction.

There is no easy answer but what is needed is an improvement plan which can be implemented gradually.

And we need the West Street traders to take responsibility for tidying up their mess and improving their backs and landlords to ensure their properties are well maintained.

The expression of civic pride by the businesses would make a huge difference.

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 the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 272814.

As we start a new year it is traditional to look forward but first perhaps we should address our attention to unfinished business.

With the arguments over the Horsham District Planning Framework behind us, many will think that Liberty's plans for its North Horsham development are a done deal.

Not so: last year's meetings of Horsham District Council's North Horsham reference group served only to highlight the