

Horsham's 'vision' must be subject to full consultation



Nevertheless we welcome the intention to take a holistic view rather than tackle issues on an ad hoc basis, and we agree broadly with the priorities the council has identified: North of Horsham (Liberty Trust) development, the creation of a new 'vision' for the town centre, rationalisation of 'public estate' in Hurst Road, and redevelopment of the Novartis site.

However, as always the devil will be in the detail and it is very worrying that there seems to be no intention to consult properly with our neighbourhood councils, the Blueprint Neighbourhood Plan team, and local interest groups.

This has to be remedied if the final plan is to be owned and accepted by the town as a whole.

We have had 'visions' for the town centre before. Some improvements made to the town centre have been less than successful and it is worrying that the Plan does



Work on Bishops Weald House in Horsham

not mention that much of the town centre is a conservation area.

This has helped to maintain the character of the town which is so attractive to residents, businesses and visitors.

The Plan recognises the opportunity for some redevelopment of Piries Place

and if this goes ahead it must be in sympathy with the old development patterns, protecting twittens and avoiding anything that could loom over Carfax.

The Place Plan reiterates what has been said before about the North of Horsham development. It emphasises the need to prioritise the

connectivity of the new housing developments to Horsham town centre.

However the presently planned at-grade crossings and cycle bridge proposed for the A264 are unlikely to meet the actual needs of the development and a more radical approach to infrastructure improvements is needed if the new residents and businesses are to feel part of Horsham.

Many past plans for Horsham have mentioned a desire to redevelop the south side of Hurst Road.

When this happens it must be done without encroachment onto Horsham Park, physically or visually.

It is, perhaps, significant that the Place Plan does not mention Horsham Hospital.

If the fire and ambulance station sites are to be redeveloped the first priority should be to use the land to enhance the hospital to serve the planned enlarged (and ageing) future population.

Recent publicity about

the future use of the Novartis site has mentioned the involvement of the county council and the Place Plan helps to explain that this is part of the county's Growth Plan. We welcome WSCC's intention to retain the locally listed CIBA building but hope also it will protect the two gate houses.

The Horsham Place Plan is an interesting document. If only there was more involvement by the elected councillors for the town and other interested parties there would be more hope for the future of Horsham.

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.

Last week's HDC Cabinet meeting considered a report on the so-called Horsham Place Plan. The title, at least, is new. It is Horsham's contribution to the West Sussex County Council's Growth Plan which can be used to prioritise investment and as a lobbying tool to secure additional funding.

Although it purports to cover the whole of the district, apart from digital connectivity in the rural area, all the identified priorities refer exclusively to Horsham town.