

Horsham Society

with Nigel Friswell



N Horsham must be planned properly

Like it or loathe it, the huge new North Horsham development proposed by Liberty Property Trust is now taking shape but the outline planning application to Horsham District Council raises a whole series of serious issues.

Top of the list is the proportion of affordable housing. The local plan requires 35 per cent of the proposed 2,750 homes on this site; Liberty has shaved this down to 30 per cent. This ought to be a deal-breaker for our councillors and the numbers need to be nailed down in a binding agreement.

Space needs to be provided for the schools and health facilities the new community will require - and again there need to be guarantees that these will actually materialise. Horsham can't afford another new community where the promised infrastructure mysteriously evaporates.

There are plenty of problems with Liberty's preliminary layout for the new community. An access road would slice through irreplaceable ancient woodland at Bush Copse, and needs to be re-routed. The proposals would touch on other ancient



Land north of Horsham where development is proposed

woodland as well, and these areas need to be protected with proper buffer zones. Lorries carrying material to the recycling plant on Langhurst Wood Road would have to pass through a residential area, and a more sensible route is clearly needed.

Then there's the projected new Parkway Station. This is not in Liberty's gift; they can set space aside in their plans, but a new station can only happen with the agreement of Network Rail. And for operational reasons, it would probably mean the closure of either Littlehaven or Fygate stations. A decision to build it could

be years away.

There will clearly need to be some shopping facilities to serve North Horsham, and the planning application includes 6,800 square metres of retail space, including a 4,900 square metre unit which would be enough for a major supermarket. With Horsham town centre just ten minutes away, there has to be a concern about the impact this would have, and it would seem to be counter to the council's town centre first planning policy.

The new development provides a golden opportunity to boost cycling - particularly

to the town centre. But an underpass to allow easy crossing of the A264 is crucial, and at the moment it is not in the plan.

And then, of course there are the knock-on effects on the town itself; which roads will see extra traffic, to the town centre, to the new schools? Will extra parking be needed, to ensure Horsham traders benefit from the thousands of potential new customers?

These key issues must be addressed now at the outline stage because it won't be possible to fix them later. To make this development work, in human, environmental and transport terms, our councillors and their officials will need to use all the leverage they can muster, and they should insist on being consulted on the detailed design of the scheme, at every stage.

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 261905.