



## Unresolved concerns over N Horsham

**I**t's a familiar story on many a TV home improvement programme - the extension that went wrong. Bad connectivity to the original building, botched infrastructure, the way the new space is used not thought through. It can happen to towns, too. And it may be about to happen to Horsham.

The vast new development north of Horsham will add 2,750 new homes to the town - and getting the details right is critical. The Horsham Society has a list of concerns, ranging from the threat to irreplaceable ancient woodland to the access routes for the proposed incinerator, but the biggest worries are around the quota for affordable housing and the connection with the town centre.

The Government is in the process of moving the goalposts on affordable housing, its new White Paper, or consultation document, on housing suggests a lower, ten per cent quota. That ten per cent however should be more affordable than before. As local house prices continue to rise, ensuring that home ownership remains an option for as many local people as possible should be a red line. Our councillors need to revisit



Green fields north of Horsham where major development is planned.

their decision not to require a Community Infrastructure Levy, if the development fails to deliver on affordable housing.

On access to the town, the society believes good pedestrian and cycle routes should be a major priority. There need to be a number of safe crossing points on the A264, and while the simplest and cheapest option might be traffic lights, that could seriously reduce speeds on what is supposed to be a through road.

WSCC Highways should reconsider its position in managing the network to ensure that smooth traffic flow continues, road safety improves and pedestrians can

safely cross. We believe properly designed underpasses are needed and our planners should make sure any bridges are not eyesores.

Then there is the fate of two sections of irreplaceable ancient woodland. Their loss or degradation is in contravention of national planning and local planning guidance. The impact on, for example, foraging routes for bats and damage to other wildlife is not acceptable. This woodland must be protected.

With any development of this scale, there are always plenty of concerns - ensuring decent design standards, providing enough

off-street parking, and protecting long-standing rights of way.

But at the moment the proposals are not detailed enough to assess how they deal with any of these issues. The development will be broken up into a number of bite-sized chunks, 50 at least, with different builders and designers. That is why a key concern is the need to set up an effective structure to monitor the designs as they are revealed by the various developers, so that the bigger picture is not neglected.

A major planning committee hearing on the scheme is due on Friday April 28. It is important that a decision is not made on the planning application before these issues are resolved. With county council elections under way, local politicians may soon be turning up on our doorsteps. We should raise our concerns about this development, and consider the responses given.

*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](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or phone 01403 259038.*