



A Design Statement for Horsham

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 changed the way in which local plans are prepared by councils. Horsham Council is well on the way to producing the various elements of what is now called the Local Development Framework.

The Core Strategy, setting out the overarching policies, has recently been approved by independent Inspectors and is expected to be formally adopted by the Council shortly.

The main reference document against which individual planning applications will be judged is called General Development Control Policies. Following consultation, it has been submitted to the Secretary of State for approval and a public examination is expected in Summer 2007. The policies cover a broad spectrum of planning issues including design and are intended to ensure that all new developments are of high quality and take account of the character of the locality.

“Development will be permitted if does not adversely affect the character of the settlement, including its overall setting, townscape features, views and green corridors, and open spaces ...”

“Planning permission will be granted for developments which

..... ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout and where relevant relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views; and

.....are locally distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area and, where available, incorporate the recommendations/policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments. “

A design statement gives a detailed guide to the character of a town or village, explaining the nature of the buildings and landscape which makes it distinctive, and explaining how new developments can complement and

enhance what exists already. So, the existence of a design statement will significantly strengthen and particularise the general requirements in the General Development Control Policies; but in order to become a part of the overall Local Development Framework it has to be adopted formally by the Council.

A number of villages have already prepared design statements and in order to ensure future development in Horsham town respects its existing character we need one too.

A steering committee has been established with representatives from Denne, Forest and Trafalgar Neighbourhood Councils, North Horsham Parish Council, and the Horsham Society, with support from Horsham District Council.

We hope to consult widely with residents, and those who work in or visit the town. We need to know what they think is special about the built environment, streets scenes, and open spaces; features that need to be protected or enhanced, and perhaps what they do not like. The consultation will probably start with an exhibition in the town centre and we are looking for organisations and individuals who would like to get involved, perhaps with experience or an interest in particular aspects.

Horsham includes many different types of building style and street scene, often reflecting the era in which areas were developed. This makes the production of a design statement more complex and challenging. We are fortunate that in 2005 the three Horsham Neighbourhood Councils prepared Neighbourhood Appraisals covering the unparished area of the town which will provide an invaluable starting point. However, the design statement will include not only the unparished area but also that part of North Horsham Parish – Holbrook and Roffey – that lies within the built up boundary of the town.

Once we have completed the initial consultation, the steering committee plan publish a draft design statement this summer for further consultation.

If you are interested in learning more about our plans, or would like to help, please telephone John Steele on 01403 272814.