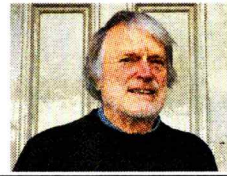


# Horsham Society

with David Holmes



## Action needed to stop loss of local jobs

**M**any of us have thought it worthwhile to travel several hours to that job that we really wanted. Others have no choice; they have to travel to where the work is.

Long hours commuting mean less time with friends, family, less time to do things in the evenings; who knows, maybe even to be active within The Horsham Society with its 1,000-plus members.

Horsham District Council's consultation document on local employment confirms that Horsham is losing jobs. The district ranks 288th out of 353 in terms of economic growth; "Without further employment growth a 'dormitory district' will be created with people .... only returning in the evenings or at weekends".

Action is required on an ambitious scale; it is insufficient to plan to meet expected need; the trend to outward migration to jobs must be reversed.

Horsham needs sites that will provide more local jobs within 5 years; maybe requiring 14 to 17 ha now; not the "possible" 47ha suggested over 20 years. The employment objective should be phrased



An historic view of part of the Novartis site.

in terms of a reduction in the number of people travelling elsewhere to work; not in hectares to be covered with concrete.

The consultation document does not suggest any good new sites. It raises the possibility of a site to the south of Hillier's Garden Centre on currently undeveloped

countryside, adjacent to the source of the River Arun that runs through Chesworth Farm. This is not a good location; outside Horsham's built-up area boundary and beyond the natural boundary of the Horn Brook. The A281 is badly connected to the north, west and south of Horsham requiring traffic to go through the town centre or thread its way through narrow residential roads.

Also proposed is Graylands on the Langhurstwood Road, an expansion to three times its existing size; a site that currently houses small start-up businesses and provides an invaluable buffer between the countryside and the North Horsham Strategic site.

We need large high-quality business parks, and some employment sites within walking distance of Horsham Town Centre that maintain the vitality of the town centre. Too many offices have been lost and converted to residential. However, there is no consideration of Hurst Road, where buildings are expected to close, or the Sainsbury site, although its redevelopment of is regularly mentioned.

Why isn't the Business Park planned as part of the North Horsham development

built? This is the only land close to Horsham Town that is indicated as deliverable within 1 to 5 years and is just 4.6ha!

The Novartis site was planned to be a business park but appears to be lost. The site, owned by WSCC, is now described by HDC as expected to be used for housing! We do need more affordable homes; but we also need local employment.

The Council must treat the creation of more and appropriate local employment as an urgent priority. Despite ignoring previous urging, they must now vigorously promote the town with its "highly skilled workforce, desirable location and good schools".

*This article comments on HDC's current consultation on Employment, Tourism and Rural Development.*

*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.*