

Horsham Society

with David Holmes



The Novartis site: all eyes on WSCC

The original idea that the former Novartis site should be used by Brighton University for post graduate research and education was a good one. Given Horsham's ageing population it would have brought some youthful vitality to the town. Sadly, the funding was not available and another use had to be found.

An acute hospital has been suggested. Although highly desirable, the creation of an acute hospital in Horsham has been previously considered and found to be impossible to deliver. One suggestion was that one should be located within the development north of the bypass.

Apart from the cost, the NHS view is that acute hospitals have to offer a range of well-staffed specialities and in order to do this the number located in each part of the country has to be limited. If there are too many, the facilities and number of specialists at each will be diminished reducing the quality of care available.

At election time the possibility of Horsham having such a hospital is usually raised. The hopes of local people should not be raised if it is known that one could not be delivered.



An historic view of the Art Deco building.

West Sussex County Council invited Horsham Society to a briefing on their plans. Although at an early stage, being consulted was welcome and we were pleased hear their ideas and to have the chance to give our views. The purchase of the Novartis site by WSCC should be a good thing as our elected representatives have the opportunity to decide what is best for the town and its people. This should be better than the site going to the highest bidder and being used for whatever development produces the biggest profit.

Horsham Society particularly welcome

the plan to provide 1,200 jobs and it is important that WSCC remain committed to achieving this. The need for more local jobs was made clear by Horsham District Council in their recent consultation document on employment in the District which stated that employment continues to be lost and that Horsham 'risks becoming a dormitory town'.

The suggestion that the site could provide high-tech computer-based employment, building on existing local strengths, seems sensible and appropriate.

If financial considerations dictate that a third of the site, including most of the

Art Deco main building, need to provide residential accommodation, then the Society applauds the proposal to provide 35 per cent affordable housing. This proportion is rarely, if ever, achieved by other developers in the Horsham area.

In addition to delivering the 1,200 jobs, the Horsham Society wishes to see the main building, together with the two lodges either side of the entrance and the avenue of Blue Firs, kept, and all parking required by those who work or live on the site accommodated within the site and not spilling over into neighbouring streets.

We also wish to see buildings and homes that are well designed and sit well alongside the classic Art Deco main building.

WSCC has an opportunity to ensure that this site provides what the people of Horsham want. Horsham Society hope that the county council delivers.

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 259038.