

Horsham Society

with Philip Ayer



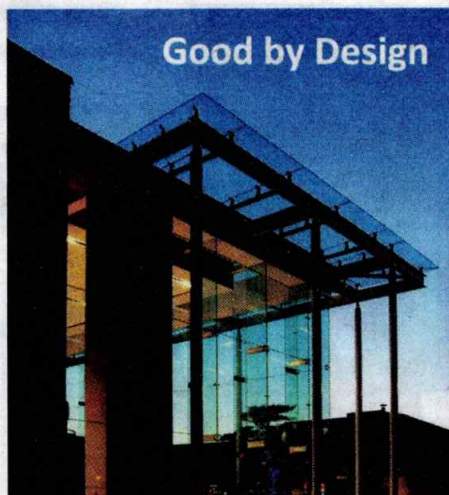
Good design is vital in fast-growing town

Horsham is expanding rapidly, and the key to making that expansion work for the town is good design. The Horsham Society has just published a guide to what that should mean.

It's not an attempt to say what the many new developments around the town should look like, or specify some particular style - what would be appropriate in the Causeway conservation area would be out of place in one of the big new housing estates - but it does call for thoughtfulness about everything from the appearance of new buildings to sustainability, biodiversity and the way they fit into the surrounding area.

Our new guide, *Good by Design*, is the product of years of experience sifting through planning proposals, good, bad and ugly, and commenting on them to local planners. The key aim is to shape new developments large or small, so they lead to buildings and spaces that fit into the town, encourage community and protect or improve the environment.

Getting things right at the design stage is essential, because it is very difficult to remedy bad design once a new building is



Part of the cover of *Good by Design*.

in place. Take the revamp of Piries Place, currently under way; how will the new, enlarged car park sit in the town centre? Why does it not make the most of its position and rejuvenate the route through to Park Place with mixed uses?

The lack of design quality in the new hotel will mean a large obtrusive and

undistinguished building will loom over the Carfax. While there is a bit more flair on view in other parts of the scheme, more thoughtful design would have made this a much more positive addition to a critical part of Horsham.

How about the redevelopment of the Novartis site? This is still at a very early stage of planning, so there is a huge opportunity to enhance the town, without losing the new housing and the hoped-for 1,200 jobs it could bring.

West Sussex County Council wants to see major new employment and new housing around the iconic 1930s building; the Horsham Society wants to ensure views of that building including the lodges are maintained, that the avenue of trees leading to it is preserved, and that the boundaries are sensitively treated, so that, for example, the trees side are not chopped down. While they're at it the planners might like to take the chance to build good cycle routes through the site.

Another important part of *Good by Design* is its call for a comprehensive approach to all modes of transport, emphasising the need for good pedestrian and cycle access, not just cars. That

includes providing access routes across the town, separating the cyclists from the walkers where possible, and providing essential but often neglected cycle storage. These often feature in glossy brochures for new developments, but frequently fail to materialise.

There is plenty more in the guide, on making sure infill developments respect their neighbourhood (although that needn't mean duplicating the buildings around them), and the need for sufficient off-street parking, and on protecting trees, hedges and biodiversity - including 'firm and funded' commitments to manage areas with wildlife.

We're circulating *Good by Design* to local politicians and planners, because in a fast-expanding town, getting design right has never been more important.

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.