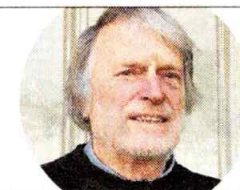


Opinion

Horsham Society

with David Holmes



‘Too big, too ugly and too close to me’

When an application is made for a new building this may well be the first thought of those living nearby. Next, you might wonder whether there is anything that you can do to stop it from being built.

The Horsham Society monitors planning applications and whilst it welcomes proposals that improve the town it seeks to have applications that might harm the town improved or refused.

Sadly, for both the town and for individual residents, the ability of the Council to control development has been greatly reduced by Government legislation over the last ten years with many changes to buildings no longer requiring planning applications.

House owners have great freedom to extend into their roof space, or their gardens. Landlords can convert offices into flats.

However, the latest government planning rules, the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2018, does say that “poor design should be refused” so it might be easier to refuse ugly buildings in the future.

Indeed, in a recent appeal, APP/



J1860/W/17/318794, the inspector criticised a design for being neither an imitation of historic street scenes around the village nor bringing innovation, its own distinctive character and sense of place.

The inspector had sympathy with the view that the proposals were mundane, monotonous and mediocre, and concluded that they did not amount to good design.

Although there were other reasons for refusing the appeal the inspector’s

conclusion said that replacing attractive landscape with poor design when judged against the NPPF pointed towards refusal.

Some proposals seem unacceptable because of the extra road traffic generated and the risk of yet more on street parking.

Unfortunately, while Horsham District Council has the responsibility of deciding whether or not to approve a planning application the impact on the road system and parking is considered by West Sussex County Council and virtually always their verdict is no objection.

This is because government requires that, “Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.”

As for parking for too long WSCC assumed that garages would be used for parking whereas too often they are not.

So, what can be done? Well if you do not like a development that you feel will affect you personally you can submit objections, but I would also suggest that you find out from the Council web site which councillors represent the ward that you live in and talk to them.

They can hear your concerns and talk

to the planner who is considering the application. If there does seem to be a sound planning basis for objection the planner should seek changes or decide that the application should be refused.

If the planner never the less considers that the application should be approved, your councillor can ask for the application to be decided by the planning committee.

At the committee the councillors who represent the ward will be asked for their views.

In my experience, the views of the local councillors carry a lot of weight and your reasons for objections, if sound, should get weighed against any recommendation for approval.

If the planning application is one that you feel will harm our town then contact The Horsham Society and we will see what we can do.

You could even join us!

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.