



with David Griffiths

Horsham Society

Why don't councils listen to concerns?

Since being vacated the old Novartis site, formerly CIBA, which is accessed from Wimblehurst Road, has been the subject of much conjecture.

Horsham District Council originally proposed that it would be the site for a new university campus. This proposal was welcomed by the local Horsham residents, as it would possibly be an additional source of employment in the area.

However this fell through and as a result West Sussex County Council purchased the site, with the promise of a science park. These proposals also seem to have fallen by the wayside as WSCC then promised a site of mixed use, being residential housing and a commercial development for 1,200 high quality jobs.

There is now a 'consultation' period for the site, allowing the public time to comment on the proposed scheme. However, mysteriously all mention of 1,200 high quality jobs has been omitted from the consultation papers!

The proposals put forward by West Sussex County Council are contrary to the Horsham District Council planning policy.



The site is an important example of Art Deco design.

This states that the site should be used for higher education until 2021 and thereafter for combined education and training. If not used for education, the longstop would be to use the site solely for employment. It would seem that West Sussex County Council and their consultants are totally disregarding current planning policy, the concerns of Horsham residents and the heritage of the site.

It is an important example of Art Deco

design, from the 1930s, of which the main building is locally listed. However, the current plan proposed by WSCC is to demolish the two gate houses, which form a commanding entrance to the site and replace them with housing!

The avenue of blue cedars forms an integral part of this Art Deco site, but unfortunately there are several trees missing. Instead of enhancing the development by replacing the trees, WSCC and their planning consultants intend to take advantage of these spaces and construct buildings.

In addition to the main building, the gatehouses and avenue of blue cedars should be retained in their entirety, thus preserving the integrity of our local heritage, which WSCC seem intent on destroying. It would not be rocket science to produce a sympathetic design for the site, which incorporates the existing buildings and tree lined avenue.

In ascertaining the development possibilities for this site, WSCC have made little or no attempt to consider any impact on traffic movements.

Two boundaries of the site are constrained by railways and the other

boundaries are Parsonage Road and Wimblehurst Road, which link with a mini-roundabout. Both roads suffer from considerable traffic congestion, including cyclists and pedestrians at peak times. Additionally three bus routes use these roads. Furthermore, these roads will suffer from additional congestion when the North of Horsham development becomes active.

Are West Sussex County Council going to dismiss the concerns of Horsham residents and produce a mediocre development which does not take into account the needs or constraints of the area, or reflect the heritage of this site, in order to maximise profits? Furthermore are Horsham District Council going to be an accessory to these proposals and relax their planning policy to allow the scheme as proposed to become reality?

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.