

Horsham Society

Nigel Friswell



Burn the rubbish and use the heat

Hey mate, lets incinerate! *One member shares his views.* With all the fuss about leaving the European Union, you might be excused for not noticing that the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, included a proposed piece of planning legislation in his Spring Statement.

From 2025, new homes will be barred from having a gas-fired boiler or a gas hob. Government advisers say new homes should have low-carbon sources such as heat pumps or district heating schemes. At the same time noises from Whitehall are suggesting a trend to do away with log-burners and open fires.

When I was a junior engineer 60 years ago there was much publicity for heat pumps (think of a refrigerator in reverse) but it never happened for various technical and economic reasons (mainly that they tend to cost a lot more than a gas-fired boiler).

That leaves district heating schemes, the most famous of which was in Pimlico (London) where homes were heated by pipes brought under the Thames from Battersea Power Station. When Battersea



There have been numerous protests against plans for a Horsham incinerator.

closed Pimlico built its own power station, now gas-fired.

Similar schemes are widely used in continental Europe, not always buried underground. Not that I am suggesting large green pipes along the roadside are a good idea.

Understandably, there is local concern about Britaniacrest's application to put an incinerator at Langhurstwood. It raises a lot of questions, not least 'why do you need such a high chimney if the exhaust gases are safe?'

I remember a North London open-air swimming pool next to the 'dust destructor' where, if the wind was in the wrong direction, you swam among charred paper and other debris.

However, the concept was right; burn the rubbish and use the heat, in this case to heat the swimming pool.

In St Albans, as in many other towns, the city council had its own power station which generated electricity from burning refuse.

There were stories of the power station superintendent looking anxiously up the road for the next dustcart of rubbish to burn.

With modern technology, many of the environmental problems of incineration can be overcome. There is still the challenge that the incinerator will be right next to Horsham's largest housing and business development for many years, ie, North Horsham, the former Liberty, now Legal

& General, estate. But perhaps this could be turned to advantage. Why not use the heat from the incinerator for the homes and businesses on the proposed estate next door?

I ask "Why not?", the answer seems to be that the two developers, on adjacent sites, are not talking to each other.

Meanwhile instead of being pro-active, our two planning authorities, Horsham District Council (for local development) and West Sussex County Council (for refuse disposal) just sit back and let it all happen around them.

Using waste heat and power will not make the incinerator go away, but it could make it more acceptable, particularly to the new residents and businesses that Legal & General will want to attract to their new 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 or phone 01403 259038.