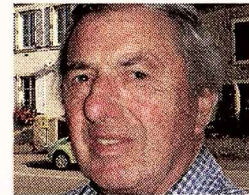


Horsham Society

with David Griffiths



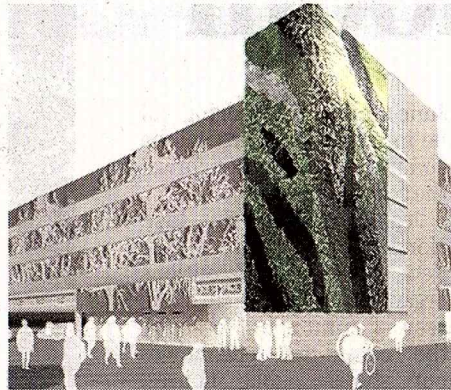
Can we believe the developers?

Why do members of the public have little faith in developers and often accept their proposals with a pinch of salt? No wonder, the information provided at consultation stage - if the public are lucky enough to be offered such an opportunity - is rarely produced in sufficient detail to enable the public to make fully considered comments on the proposals.

Is this a ploy on the part of the developer to 'muddy the waters'? Furthermore, comments submitted, are rarely taken into account by the developer when they review and finalise the schemes, as they consider their designs to be 'sacrosanct'. This gives the public little confidence in the process.

Where the developer employs an external consultant, for example for ecology surveys or traffic surveys, the briefs provided by the developer are often insufficiently detailed, resulting in the consultant producing a report which is limited and does not provide the full picture.

An example of this is the traffic survey which was undertaken for the Novartis



An artist's impression of the new Piries Place car park.

scheme. This only refers to traffic movements in the immediate area of the proposed development, whereas development of this site will have an impact on traffic movements in a far greater area.

The Prewetts Mill development is yet another instance of insufficient information being provided at the consultation and planning stages. Concerns regarding the appearance of the building were raised at the planning stage, needless

to say little notice was taken, resulting in an insipid looking building.

After planning approval had been granted and works on site were in an advanced stage, a late submission was lodged for alterations to the roof, including a small height increase. This was slipped under the radar and approved!

The Bishops Weald site can now be easily located in Horsham by the luffing jib crane looming over the building. Work has now recommenced, but will still take two further years to completion. Why is the duration so long? Has the developer negotiated an approval to increase the height of the building by adding additional storeys, in an endeavour to make the project viable. Needless to say, the public are in the dark!

The Piries Place development, which is now nearing completion, is another fine example of the development team not providing fully detailed information at the onset of a project. Members of Horsham Society were pleased to have the opportunity to take part in meetings with the project design team during the concept stages of the development.

Assurances were given that the

development would not be seen from the Carfax and that the maximum height of the hotel would not be increased from that which had been indicated on drawings.

Neither of these assurances have been kept and furthermore, quality of the project has been lessened recently by replacing the curved frontages to several of the retail outlets, with flat frontages. Additionally, HDC put the replacement multi storey car park to public consultation, with options for four or five storeys. Needless to say, the five-storey option was agreed, regardless of the public concerns. The result is an amorphous mass which can be seen from many parts of Horsham.

Until developers are open with the public, we will remain the recipients of mundane projects which do not enhance the street scene.

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.