



Should housing quotas be questioned?

To satisfy the apparent needs of an ever-growing population, the Government has promised to construct 300,000 new homes per annum by the mid 2020s. Is this a realistic figure which accurately takes into account any population increase, or vacant properties, due to deaths in the population? I fear not!

Furthermore, in its manifesto, the Conservatives promised to review the provision of jobs and upgrading of the transport system in the north of the country. However, I do not believe that this is reflected in the apparent spread of new build across the country. As ever, the south becomes the loser, having to shoulder responsibility for building the majority of new homes required by the Government. As a consequence, both the infrastructure and capacity of services in the south, which are already creaking under existing demands will require a radical upgrade as additional housing will only add to the problem.

The Government recommends that around 35 per cent affordable housing be provided on new projects. On an annual output of 300,000 homes this would amount to 105,000 affordable dwellings. However,



this percentage is rarely achieved, the figure nationally being nearer to 20 per cent.

In the case of the Legal and General site - Land North of Horsham, Horsham District Council has agreed a percentage to nearer 18 per cent for 'traditional affordable' housing, which is in no way acceptable. Strangely, HDC has even accepted that they would never ask for more than 23 per cent on this site, even if viability calculations permitted. Why?

Developments continue apace in our district. The problem is undoubtedly exacerbated by Horsham District Council having to pinpoint suitable sites for proposed residential development in the current review of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) - a

Government requirement, and one which will undoubtedly feed the needs of hungry developers.

However, it is the responsibility of the local authority to calculate the number of properties that will be required, to satisfy Government directives, using a formula developed by them.

Originally Horsham District Council advocated some 910 houses per annum, being the figure achieved by applying the 40 per cent National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) cap to the calculations, as per Government guidance.

For some inexplicable reason this figure has risen to 965 units. This is made up of two components - 600 units based upon the local population projections, plus 365 units being an adjustment for 'affordability' by 'over supply'. If this increase is due to Government intervention, why do Horsham District Council not apply the 40 per cent cap to the calculations, resulting in the lower figure of 910 houses per annum and be prepared to justify the calculations to the Planning Inspectorate?

To make matters worse, in order to satisfy Government requirements, it is possible that Horsham District Council will have

to provide additional homes in excess of their agreed quota, in accordance with a 'duty to co-operate', where adjacent local authorities are unable to meet their supply requirements!

Proposals by Horsham District Council to develop greenfield sites such as Rookwood can only fuel directives from the Government to develop more housing. If the councillors and their officers do not become more proactive and question and appeal directives from the Government, our district will rapidly become a concrete jungle, devoid of any green field areas and countryside which we can enjoy.

Councillors are only in post at the behest of the electorate, so perhaps they should listen to our concerns.

Similarly, our local MP - Jeremy Quin - should be proactive and assist with our concerns.

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 267712