

Affordable Housing - what can we really afford?

THE RECENT decision by a financial services group to team up with Britain's largest housebuilder and offer loans of up to £50,000 to the parents of first-time home buyers certainly drags the whole business of affordable housing back onto the agenda.

There has been considerable furore generated by the ongoing discussion on the construction of new houses in and around Horsham.

There is no doubt it is a contentious issue and, unfortunately, the sometimes negative comments on this subject hide one important fact that we have to address on a personal basis.



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grandchildren should be allowed to continue to live in or near the area in which they were born?

If the answer in the affirmative, where are the houses for them to live in? In simple terms, they don't exist as they still have to be built.

We have to be prepared to look at our local needs, which will always be there whether or not new people

migrate into our area.

We need to be clear about where houses can be built and where they shouldn't be built.

We also have to ask how much our children and grandchildren will be prepared to pay in such an expensive housing area.

This opens up the debate into whether the new houses should be available to rent, buy or perhaps a combination of both.

These matters have been discussed many times in the past and plans put in place to resolve the problems. Despite this, we still have a shortage of affordable housing.

The idea that everyone should own their own home

is unrealistic.

Not all will want or be able to afford to do so and it is far better to provide young people the opportunity to rent a home at least in the early days of their working life.

But where are the new homes to come from? The days of massive social house building programmes are long gone and, in our area, the housing associations will not be able to meet our affordable housing needs in the foreseeable future.

We cannot solve the shortage without the help of the private sector, which in return for being allowed to develop a site, provides a proportion of affordable

housing within the development.

This has the advantage that the 'council estate' tag is lost and we finish up with an integrated estate, which contains both privately owned and rented properties.

But, care has to be exercised so as to ensure that local authorities are not held to ransom by unscrupulous developers.

The last thing that any of us want to see is our pleasant environment destroyed by the construction of the wrong type of building in the wrong place and aimed at the top end of the housing market.

We all expect to have to help our children to get a

start in life but the idea of having to borrow up to £50,000 to achieve this seems to be a step too far.

Common sense needs to be applied and we have to encourage and require the construction of more affordable housing within our area.

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 our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 263870.