

# Where is the housing that local people can afford?

261412

WE HAVE just finished the consultation period on the number of new houses that the council believes should be built in Horsham district.

The council's next step will be to decide on the precise number to include within its 20-year plan. This will be followed by discussion of where to build and how many of these houses should be in the affordable category.

The numbers issue was contentious enough but when you turn to the question of where to build and who to build for, it becomes a minefield. However, let's just restrict this discussion to the question of meeting our local needs and exclude the subject of immigration into our area.

The first question that we have to address is the subject of empty properties in our town and ask why are they allowed to remain empty?

The council has the power to do something about this but can find itself in an embarrassing situation. A good example of



by **David Moore**  
chairman of the  
**Horsham Society**

this is the Groundsman's Cottage, which is near the cricket field behind Cricketfield Road in Horsham. It's been empty for so long, it is deteriorating rapidly and it is an eyesore. Why isn't it brought back into use so that a local family, which is waiting for accommodation, can be housed?

The second question that will be in everyone's mind is the question of affordable housing, the panacea to all our local housing problems. We see ambitious targets being proposed when new developments are being considered, and targets such as ensuring that 40 per cent of the new housing will be in the affordable category.

When the developer's plans are eventually approved, we find that, if we're lucky, the development might include 20 per cent of affordable housing, half of the desired target.

Matters then get worse when the development gets under way, when it is possible for the developer not to build the planned affordable housing but instead to build higher value houses for sale in the general market place, as happened recently at Faygate.

It's not really much consolation to local people to know that the developer has to pay a sum of money to the council for not building the affordable houses when their children and grandchildren cannot find anywhere to live.

This is not just a council issue, it's a national issue and it's about time that central government got its act together and sorted out this mess. It's not that many years ago when the buzzword was social housing and we all knew what it meant.

Today's buzzword of affordable housing just

serves to obscure the picture. We shall never achieve the reasonably priced accommodation for the younger local people to buy in our area if the current policy continues.

These questions have to be addressed during the consultation period concerning the council's plans for new housing in Horsham district over the next 20 years.

We do not want to find that we have even more and more expensive houses built solely to service immigration into the area.

We want to see the inclusion of a viable plan not only to build affordable housing for local people but, more importantly, to actually ensure that they are built.

*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](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or telephone 01403 261640.*