

David Moore: proper story with a beginning, middle and an end?



comments related to the proposed development north of Horsham.

I know that you'll remember the proposal to destroy a swathe of countryside by possibly building a 70,000ft² retail store, 2,500 houses, a 500,000ft² business park and a new railway station.

In reality, there is no guarantee that a business park and / or a railway station will ever be built and it could be that we finish up with 4,500 or so houses on the site instead of the suggested 2,500.

Cllr Vickers in response to a question reminded everyone that the Preferred Strategy is not just about housing numbers; it's also about the local economy.

There's no doubt that this is

true but it's been very difficult to sort out the facts from the fiction in the strategy as there's no storyline for us to follow.

What needs to happen during the council's deliberations on what to do next with the Preferred Strategy is to insert the missing piece so that we can all understand the conclusion that's eventually reached. Currently, it reads like a badly written novel.

The council needs to start at the beginning, namely in 2007 when the Core Strategy for Horsham District was produced.

Some very clear conclusions were reached, especially about the size of Horsham town, and its boundaries were clearly identified for the future. For example, one of the defined

boundaries to the north of the town was the A264.

And it clearly signalled that future major development beyond that in the 2007 strategy would be centred on Southwater and Billingshurst.

So what's changed?

As far as retail businesses were concerned, it was considered inappropriate to support any further out of town retail units, which might affect the viability of the town centre.

As recently as 2012, the Horsham Town plan emphasised this point.

Despite this, we've got a proposal to build a large retail unit north of the town within the strategy.

This is in addition to the proposed Lifestyle Ford redevelopment on the

other side of Albion Way to accommodate a new store for Waitrose.

Why's it all changed? We've got a beginning in 2007, we've got an end in 2013 but we don't have a middle. We should expect our council to fill in the missing pieces of the jigsaw and tell us what changed between 2007 and 2013.

If we can understand the reasons for the changes and they're logical, it will be easy for the council to sell its Preferred Strategy to us, the public.

It was a real shame that the councillors missed a wonderful opportunity last week to become involved in a public debate on your comments concerning the current proposals.

We can only hope that there

will be a public debate at some future time as this is what has been missing during the preparation of the documents for consultation and the consultation process itself.

Consideration of the public's comments in private is not an option.

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 261640.

Your comments on Horsham District Council's Preferred Strategy were presented in summary form at last week's meeting of the full Horsham District Council. In many ways, this was a waste of time since all the councillors were expected to do was to take note of the report. It was made absolutely clear that the public's comments were not for discussion at the meeting.

The majority of the