

John Steele: developer-led free for all is actually council policy



This is palpable nonsense. The reason that developments are being approved is because the council has failed in its duty to maintain a five year supply of housing land. It is as simple as that.

What's more, the council saw this coming and wilfully failed to act to prevent it.

In March 2011 the council published an draft interim statement designed specifically to bridge the gap until it could complete its new planning framework.

It built on the 2007 core strategy, and work that had already been undertaken on the new planning framework which suggested that future development should be focused on Southwater and Billingshurst, and offered three options.

Two options involved planned growth at both Billingshurst and Southwater, with either 500 or 1,000 new homes at each in strategic locations.

The third option was to allow unplanned growth throughout the district.

The document said if the choice was unplanned growth then 'sites will be lost through appeal against council and community wishes in order to meet the minimum of five years supply of housing land'.

After opposition from residents in Southwater and Billingshurst the council dropped the interim statement.

The council chose unplanned growth. It isn't the fault of the planning inspectors.

The council knowingly chose the path that would encourage inappropriate speculative development throughout the district which would inevitably be approved.

In the end Southwater is still going to get its 500 homes and more, and Billingshurst will continue to grow by stealth.

Far better that the councillors had had the guts to pursue a policy that they knew to be right than simply leave planning decisions to the developers.

Now communities have the worst of all worlds, unplanned development with little additional infrastructure.

The present developer-led free for all is actually council policy, whatever anyone may say.

So next time you hear a councillor say it's not our fault you will know that it is simply not true.

It would be better if Cllrs Dawe and others, instead of wringing their hands and blaming others, would instead apologise to the people for letting us down.

Which leads us to the present debate over the plans for 2,500 homes north of Horsham.

This is probably the worst possible place for new housing. The council's current core strategy says that it would be wrong to build north of the A264.

Nothing has altered which would justify changing that policy.

We must not let the mistaken abandonment of the

council's 2011 proposals, and its subsequent hypocritical hand wringing, to drive yet another major planning disaster.

The right answer is to reconsider the whole plan and hopefully this is what the planning inspector will insist is done.

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.

or more information, visit our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 261640.

The leadership of Horsham District Council and local councillors are always wringing their hands in mock despair at the way in which planning inspectors are riding roughshod over local views and allowing speculative new housing developments in inappropriate locations. It's not our fault, it's out of our hands they say.