

# David Moore: proceed with caution and protect town centre first



**W**hen I look at today's town centre, there's no comparison with what I first saw when I came to Horsham. The traffic flow through the centre of the town has long gone as have the obnoxious fumes that used to emanate from the exhausts of the vehicles. It's altogether a far more pleasant experience for people to shop in the town. Last week, people were

asked to comment on Horsham District Council's range of proposals concerning how the Bishopric area might be redeveloped and there's still a display of some of the possibilities outside Wilkinson in Swan Walk.

It's essential that people comment constructively on what's on offer. There's nothing worse than listening to someone saying what's wrong with how something changed when they couldn't be bothered to say anything before the change occurred.

If we ignore the Shelley Fountain, the starting point has to be what we currently have in this part of Bishopric. It's a tranquil area, very similar

to what you might see in many continental towns.

It's nice to sit down in for a while, whilst the trees and the water features tend to disguise the fact that the very busy Albion Way lies just beyond the acoustic screen of trees.

It's the sort of area that you could imagine surrounded by small cafés, where people would meet on the way to somewhere else in the town.

One of the problems that the area has suffered from in the past is the failure of many businesses to be successful in the premises that lie on both sides of the area. This needs to be addressed as a matter of some urgency.

The other obvious problem

is the non-operational Shelley Fountain.

In its day, when it was working, there's no doubt that it was an attraction and you'll recall that it was used during the introduction to BBC South Today.

Whatever its replacement, it needs to be dynamic and not static so as to draw people towards the Bishopric whilst at the same time giving the impression that there is some life in the area, even when the crowds aren't there.

The first thing to remember is that the objective of any refurbishment is not for the benefit of the Waitrose / John Lewis development on the other side of Albion Way so

it's essential to ensure that we fully understand the reasons for making any changes.

The first priority is to ensure that we retain an attractive area at this end of West Street if for no other reason than to encourage people to walk down the street and look at what's on offer in the various shops.

It's a great shame that it was considered impossible to move Albion Way, as envisaged in the council's 2012 town plan.

This means that we need to find some way to encourage people, who visit the Waitrose / John Lewis development, to cross Albion Way and come into the town centre.

This is very difficult to

achieve, when there's no way to make Bishopric visible from the Waitrose / John Lewis site.

If we get this wrong and destroy what we've currently got in Bishopric, any money spent in refurbishing the area will be a wasted.

*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.*