

# Horsham Society

with Nigel Friswell



## We must care for urban environment

**M**oving to Horsham over three decades ago we were impressed with how friendly the natives were and how everyone seemed to care about the town. Since then, Horsham has grown, but the underlying feelings seem to be the same. However, with growth has come the impression that the local services cannot cope and things seem to be deteriorating.

Many of Horsham's residential streets were laid out in the 1960s when land was cheaper and it was possible to have grass verges as well as the pavement footpaths. These have become an important feature of the street scene and give the town much of its character.

Too many of these verges are getting attacked, being torn up by uncaring motorists and, dare I say it, residents who should know better. Churned up green verges are a bit like 'graffiti', creating a sense of an uncaring community. Once they are damaged there seems to be little (or no) money or resources in place to reinstate them.

Like the litter problem, once a green verge is destroyed some people think that



**Horsham in Bloom contributed this photo, taken by Jack Morrice, in January to raise concerns about damage to a verge in North Street.**

parking there or driving over an adjacent area is accepted practice.

There have been recent instances of deliberate removal of posts from green verges to allow parking or access

for builders' vehicles, with no evident enforcement. Once the posts are removed, the green verges have no protection at all.

In Redkln Way, large vehicles have caused appalling damage but there are commonly examples in almost every street from both visiting tradesmen and even the residents themselves.

In London, the local authorities have, for many years had the power to pass bylaws to prohibit parking on verges. It is time our councils did the same. Sadly, County Council Highways is remote (in every sense) and seems to care little for the Horsham street scene.

In view of this lack of official concern, perhaps it is us, the residents, who should be taking care that our visitors, be they private individuals or tradesmen, do not damage our verges.

Outside greater London, the law seems to be very hit and miss. Some councils, like Brighton & Hove, have introduced bylaws to make parking on the verges of certain particular roads subject to penalty charges. Surrey's 1985 Act of Parliament makes it an offence only where there are 'No Parking' signs but what we really need is an all-embracing bylaw to make it an offence to

drive onto or park on the grass verge of any road in Horsham town.

The trouble is that getting an Act of Parliament is expensive and our councils are always pleading poverty. However, the damage to verges costs money, too. If the problem is ignored and we then risk the image of our beautiful town deteriorating to a level where people no longer want to come. That has financial implications, too.

One way to deter driving on verges is to put in posts or plant trees but we have seen that posts can get dug up by rogue workmen and both posts and trees make grass-cutting difficult. Uncut verges can have as much a neglected look as damaged ones.

So, like the litter problem, it comes back to all of us. We must take care of our urban environment and persuade others to do the same.

*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 the website [www.horshamsociety.org](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or phone 01403 259038.*