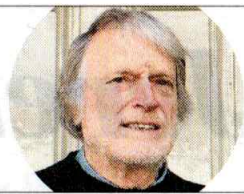


Horsham Society

by David Holmes



Town open space that must not be lost

Rookwood Golf Course, the surrounding woods and green space are under the threat of development with the proposed building of around 1,000 homes. After very careful consideration of the pros and cons, the executive committee of Horsham Society has decided that this is totally unacceptable.

The council's main argument is three-fold; the use of golf courses has declined and so this one is no longer required, affordable housing is needed and the development of this site will yield significant income for the council.

The Government is going to require Horsham district to accommodate between 1,000 and 1,400 homes each year. This number will vary, depending upon how many the council is required to deliver to make up for the fact that Crawley and towns on the coast have little available land. It is therefore inevitable that very large areas of land outside of Horsham town will have to be built upon. Given this sacrifice, it is surely short sighted to give up a large open green space within the town.



Photos by David Holmes

The green space loss will be irreversible – once the wildlife is scared away it will never return. We recall that against signification opposition, Horsham District Council downgraded the whole area from nature reserve to golf course, with solemn promises of no further development. Now it is proposed to downgrade the site further by putting a large housing development on it. The proposers of the development hope to ensure that the Warnham Nature Reserve would not be adversely affected. Building across the SSSI and next to a wildlife reserve will mean that damage by domestic pets, traffic, light pollution and noise cannot be



avoided. The bats will lose their foraging grounds, the birds their safety for nesting and the wildlife the quiet it needs to thrive. The proposed intention to increase biodiversity by ten per cent on the site is a worthy objective but lacks any credibility in a currently relatively undisturbed wildlife retreat.

Demand for golf may be in decline across the country. Many clubs have closed, their land becoming vineyards, or developed for housing. Surely this means that a course like Rookwood, close to the town and accessible from the A24, will be sought after when it is one of the few that remain. The demand for the golf course

now, and in the future needs to be properly evaluated. Similarly, the potential of the old 'Warnham Barn' needs to be reviewed. Recent use of it has shown that it is an excellent venue for events, set in stunning scenery. Perhaps it could be financially more viable with improved marketing.

Horsham is a town of great character, whose charm is enhanced by its large open spaces; Horsham Park, Chesworth Farm, Warnham Nature Reserve and Rookwood Golf Course. The last three linked by the rather special riverside walk. We should treasure these aspects of our town; open areas that provide everyone with easy walking access to green open space.

We do not want the density of building in the town to continue to steadily increase. Horsham's open spaces are precious. If we give up one of these green areas, is it not inevitable that eventually another of them will be built upon?

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns. Visit www.horshamsociety.org or call 01403 259038.