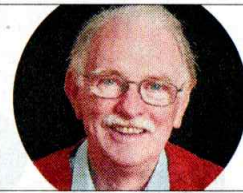


# Horsham Society

by Oliver Farley

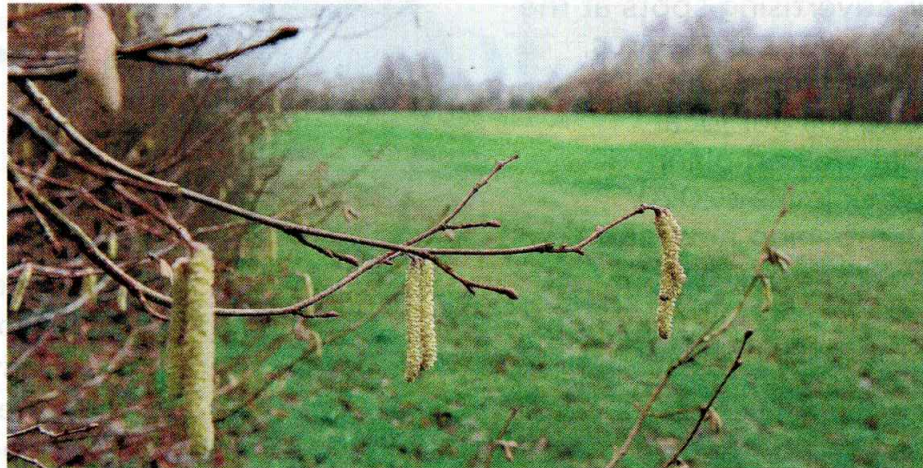


## The present and future of our town

**T**he Horsham Society exists to observe, protect and defend our town, and never in its long history has it sought to do so in such trying circumstances. We do not live separately from the wider world which often intrudes upon us uncomfortably, but the present negation of normality is unprecedented. Naturally, our primary concern is for those who have suffered loss from this pandemic; we send them our heartfelt condolences, knowing only too well ourselves how bereavement changes a life's perspective.

The daily toll of loss is quite numbing and we are in danger of becoming inured to the repeated numbers. Let's keep in mind that 800 is the equivalent of twice the full capacity of The Capitol dying each day.

Eventually all this will be over and we will have to adjust as a town and a community to very changed lives. Much of Horsham is either residential, retail or leisure related and is thus vulnerable to alterations in the housing market and to discretionary spending by consumers. The majority of businesses are closed right now, residents cannot work and the housing market



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too has ceased to function. We expect a return eventually to more familiar times but cannot foresee what differences there will be. Many budding and even thriving businesses may disappear and many households will face accumulated debt from this time of enforced idleness. Consumption will contract with a direct impact on the trading base of Horsham.

Everyone is aware of the latest local district plan and its allocation of potential sites for multiple housing development. The suspension of normal life may well lead to changes to these plans when activity resumes. Some change may be temporary, some a postponement, some a permanent alteration. There was dismay at the extent of foreseen development; that

near Billingshurst termed a mini-town for example, while building on Rookwood golf course is thought by many to involve the unacceptable loss of valued open space. It seems unlikely that the entire local plan will be voided by the emergency so it's probably fairer to say that its range and timing will be affected first and its ultimate completion put in doubt. Many might welcome the abandonment of such an extensive plan, based as it is in part upon the impact of outside forces on Horsham.

We all must remember that wrenching economic change brings intense anxiety to numerous households, to people who are our neighbours and friends, making up our community. As this pandemic is reminding us so clearly, we are all affected to some degree by this common enemy. The tragic loss of life will leave an imprint on minds for years to come, and the more mundane but nevertheless pressing financial consequences will be as intrusive on us all.

As the authorities, communities and all of us individually cope with the present challenge, the inevitable slow path to recovery, and the changed future, we must recognise that we need each other more than ever.