



The future of Rookwood matters

Regrettably, over future years a large conurbation is going to form around our existing town, whether we like it or not. These new expanses of housing must be well planned with their own open spaces and be well connected to Horsham Town, which will be at its heart. Equally importantly, our town at the centre of this large community must not only retain but improve its pleasant character; its shops, leisure facilities, pleasing architecture and design, and open spaces.

Horsham Town can thrive if properly cared for. The council are already considering proposals to improve what they refer to as the 'Public Realm'. This is welcomed, and alongside this in order to maintain the character of our Sussex market town we must retain and care for our large open areas.

We are blessed to have the highly valued Horsham Park at its centre linking the station to the Carfax. Circling the town there is the countryside of Chesworth Farm and the Cricket Field both nestling at the foot of Denne Hill to the south, woods and forest to the east, and Rookwood with its



Rookwood. Photo contributed

adjoining Warnham Nature Reserve to the west. This outer ring is all linked together by our riverside walk. Altogether this is a unique aspect of our town providing both an attractive setting and easy access to the open air, exercise and the natural environment for all residents.

Given that over the next twenty years around another 25,000 houses will come to

this area, how foolish it would be to harm this town by nibbling away at things that make the town special. Why build 1,000 of these on Rookwood Golf Course? Indeed, no village or town across the district which is being built around should simultaneously be spoilt.

We already have Broadbridge Heath now significantly expanded and houses being built at Highwood plus Kilnwood Vale on the A264 towards Crawley. The development north of Horsham for 2,500 houses is just starting and another 10,000 homes planned by the Government's 'Homes England' wrapped around Kilnwood Vale. It makes no sense to build on Rookwood Golf Course as well.

The Victorians improved our cities by creating what are now large city centre parks. Our town already has them and we should value them. Rookwood should be kept as a park whether or not it remains a golf course.

The council estimate the population of Horsham Town at 51,000, over a third of the District's 142,000. This excludes the residents of Broadbridge Heath, Southwater, Kilnwood Vale and those who will eventually be living in houses that will

be built north of the bypass. The council must give careful consideration to whether they would be acting in the interests of this large number of district residents and future generations were they to remove Rookwood from the town.

The council unfortunately did not define enough potential sites for development allowing the public and councillors a real choice. The council may now say that given the number of houses that they will be required to build they have to select Rookwood. However, an inappropriate site must not be built on just because alternative sites have not been identified.

If anyone has strong views on the plan to build on Rookwood they can sign the 'No to Rookwood' change.org petition or write to their Horsham district councillor via www.writetothem.com

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 or phone 01403 267712