

Time to wake up to threat to our town



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Society

WHAT makes Horsham such a special town in which to live?

Of course there are many reasons, but above all it is the distinctive character and unique qualities of our built environment that give it a sense of place.

We are fortunate that our medieval origins as a market town are still visible not only in

some surviving buildings but in the layout of the town centre.

It would be difficult to stand in the Carfax and mistake the street scene for anywhere else.

The enclosure of the Common and the arrival of the railway brought the Victorian boom with its magnificent detached houses and iconic terraces that we cherish today.

Change is always with us, and has produced the stimulating variety of buildings that we see now.

However change needs to be controlled and managed if we are not to lose the best of the old in pursuit of the new.

Piecemeal redevelopment and too little concern for good

design in replacement buildings are threatening our town.

Recent events suggest that Horsham's heritage is in greater danger than at any time in our recent past.

A number of significant Victorian buildings – Kestrel House in North Parade, the former art college in Hurst Road and the Nelson public house – are under threat of demolition, to be replaced, it seems, by yet more blocks of flats.

Buildings are not only important in terms of their contribution to the street scene but the part they play in the life of the community.

Horsham Town Hall, once

our village hall and venue for countless public events may, after years of neglect, be sold off for commercial use.

The King's Head, not so long ago a busy and popular meeting place, is left shuttered with an uncertain future.

We should be able to rely upon Horsham District Council to act as guardian of our heritage but instead there seems to be a sense of inevitability, as if there is no alternative to our being at the mercy of commercial interests riding roughshod over the very character of our town.

It is time to wake up to what is happening before it is too late. Once lost, our heritage can

never be replaced.

● *The Horsham Society, one of the largest amenity societies in the country, is principally concerned with watching over the heritage of the town.*

It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces of Horsham and speaks up for residents when it considers decision making to be detrimental to the well-being of the town's character.

For more information, or to become a member at modest cost, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org, phone 01403 272814, or write to 2 Old Denne Gardens, Horsham, RH12 1JA.