

Iconic swans and an ugly duckling



by **John Steele**
chairman of
the Horsham
Society

IT IS now over nine months since Lorne McKean's iconic sculpture of swans landing on water was removed from Swan Walk amid the largest outcry of anger that Horsham has seen for many a year.

Norwich Union, owners of the shopping mall, quickly realised that it was a big mistake and promised that the swans would be reinstated within the centre in spring 2008 following a planned refurbishment.

Subsequently a meeting was held involving the sculptor, the council and the Horsham Society to discuss where the swans might be located.

The conclusion, unsurprisingly, was that they should be returned to the original location for which the sculpture had been designed.

Since then there has been no sign of the planned refurbishment and the only significant change has been the unwelcome removal of public seating which was popular and well used by shoppers.

It would be understandable if the refurbishment has been put on hold because of the economic situation, particularly since most shoppers cannot see what is wrong with the present colour scheme, but that is no excuse

for delaying the promised return of the swans.

Last month we chased up the centre management and were assured that the swans would be reinstated by the end of June or early July. Yet here we are, approaching the end of July and still nothing has happened.

It beggars belief that Norwich Union can allow this situation to continue. Enough prevarication, we want our swans back now!

Now from swans to a potential ugly duckling. The pedestrianisation of East Street looks like it is turning into a joke.

The Horsham Society has never accepted that a case has been made for pedestrianisation but when our objections were ignored we

decided to judge the experiment on its merits.

So far, we are not impressed. The very limited adjustments to the road layout, with a few odd kerb extensions do nothing to improve the attractiveness of this important street, and the bench which has been erected a few feet from the doorway of Steamer Trading is positively bizarre.

Allowing cyclists to continue to use the street when other traffic is banned is dangerous and will encourage them to continue on to Middle Street and West Street where cycling is supposed to be illegal.

We were told that pedestrianisation was intended to encourage a cafe culture with tables in the street. Quite how this is supposed to work

with cyclists weaving between pedestrians is not clear.

There is more to pedestrianisation than just closing a road. East Street will never become a thriving thoroughfare until life returns to the King's Head and the town hall. If this experiment is to be a success, and we hope it will, it needs a lot more thought and imagination. Meanwhile we will monitor the situation and report our views to the council.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the town's past, present and future and seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. For more information and details on how to join visit our website www.horshamsociety.org.