

Councils should register greens – now



by **John Steele**
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READERS will remember the successful campaign to save the public green in Ramsey Close, Horsham, from a housing development cooked up between the council and Saxon Weald.

The plan was for Horsham District Council to sell the land which has been enjoyed for many years by residents as their local green to Saxon Weald for the paltry sum of £1.

Despite the public outcry which saved the green, the council is formally objecting to an application by residents for the registration of the land as a Town Green. This is our council, using our money, to frustrate the clear will of the local people and it is a disgrace.

It is the council's job to support the community not undermine it. And to leave the town in better shape for future generations.

The Horsham Society has long campaigned for protection for the many small open spaces which characterise our town. They provide essential green lungs for wildlife, spaces for children to play, or perhaps only a bench from which to sit and watch the world go by.

Many green spaces are quite small and tucked away. This adds both to their charm and value to the street scene in an increasingly dense built environment.

Registration of these spaces as Town Greens would safeguard them for ever.

Before a recent change in the law it was difficult to obtain the necessary evidence to support registration but now any landowner, including councils, can voluntarily register any piece of land.

We are therefore calling on the district council and the county council to identify every green space in the town that is in their ownership and apply for its voluntary registration as a Town Green.

Nearly 15 years ago the society surveyed the town and found around 80 green spaces in need of protection, not all of which are still here.

But there are still dozens which need to be registered. They include for example Pennybrook Green, a piece of land next to a stream in Guildford Road which plays an important role in framing this entrance to the town and a place to sit and relax on the way to the shops, and Ayshe Court and Kingslea Ponds which sit astride Harwood Road and are important for wildlife. Not all are in council ownership but many will be.

There are other spaces in the council's ownership which we take for granted such as

Horsham Park, the cricket field, and Barrack Field which would probably be much safer if registered as Town Greens.

There can be no reason why the councils should not take advantage of this new law unless either they do not care about protecting our heritage for future generations or they have designs on the land for building schemes like Ramsey Close.

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 or telephone 01403 272814.