

# Chesworth Farm - hidden jewel in the crown under threat?

HORSHAM has many things going for it, which is why it's such an attractive place to live.

There's the Causeway, the Carfax and a nice compact shopping centre. It's also got its oases of natural beauty such as Horsham Park and the Warnham Nature Reserve.

And then there's Chesworth Farm. How many people know where it is, what it is or what it was?

That's all changed to some extent due to the recent furore caused by West Sussex County Council's plans to sell off Muggerridge Field for development, subject always to receiving planning



by **David Moore**  
chairman of the  
Horsham  
Society

permission from our council.

Muggerridge Field is immediately adjacent to Chesworth Farm and it's been used for many years by the public as if it were part of the farm. Suddenly, someone wants to build houses on it and destroy yet another part of our in-town countryside.

It's a good example of how any green space within

a town can be perceived as an ideal building site. Unfortunately, we've all got so used to it over the years that if we're not careful it becomes a fait accompli.

Whatever we might wish, the pressure to build more and more houses in and around Horsham will continue for many years.

The town, its surroundings and its proximity to London have always made it a desirable location for inward migration and, fortunately or unfortunately depending on your point of view, the pressure will not abate.

Experience has shown that the best way to retain green spaces in urban areas

is to nurture and use them, which means that we have to be seen to take a positive interest in these areas on an ongoing basis if we are to keep them.

For this reason, the Horsham Society and Forest Neighbourhood Council have got together to look at the possibility of setting up a Friends of Chesworth Farm.

A Friends group can assist the council through its countryside wardens to maintain and develop a nature reserve like Chesworth Farm and ensure that it's kept for future generations to enjoy.

The success of such an approach in Horsham can be

seen with the success of the Friends of Warnham Nature Reserve.

The first thing that needs to be established is how much interest exists in helping to preserve Chesworth Farm.

With this in mind, a public meeting will be held at 7pm on Monday April 11 in the Drill Hall, Denne Road.

At the end of the day, our choices are very simple. If we wish to retain Chesworth Farm as an unspoilt natural jewel in the crown, we have to be prepared to put something in and the formation of a Friends of Chesworth Farm is one step on the road to achieving this.

Who knows what will happen to Muggerridge Field? What we have to ensure is that Chesworth Farm doesn't become a prime building site at some future time. The motto 'use it or lose it' is quite appropriate in the longer term.

*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 our website [www.horshamsociety.org](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or telephone 01403 263870.*