

Can we really call Horsham a market town today?

IT'S ALWAYS worth looking at a town from the inside to see if it lives up to its description. For example, when we talk about Horsham, we call it a market town, but how do visitors see us?

So what do people expect in this day and age from a town the size of Horsham? The first thing that they expect to find is an indoor or outdoor market taking place at least once a week.

We are very fortunate that currently there are two viable street markets, one in the Bishopric every Thursday and Saturday, and one in the Carfax every Saturday. We also have what might be



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called the occasional feature markets, such as the Big Nibble, French Fest and Piazza Italian. So it's fair to say that we pass the first test.

The visitor might then expect to find what might be called the quaint side of the town. They can easily achieve this by walking down the Causeway towards St Mary's Parish Church. In some

ways it's like a walk through history and there's even the River Arun a bit further down. We certainly pass test number two.

What would we expect to find next? We all expect to find the larger stores embedded within our towns but it's always nice to also find that the smaller independent outlets have survived. We've managed to achieve this in Horsham and the key is now to try to retain the correct balance.

Visitors always want somewhere where they can get a snack or even a meal and we have eating establishments in abundance

to satisfy most tastes. We've managed to pass yet another test.

Whatever we might think, there is no doubt that the Shelley Fountain is an attractive feature for visitors, provided it can be kept operational. To be fair, this has been achieved recently. As an additional bonus, we have our three green areas within the town, the park, Warnham Nature Reserve and Chesworth Farm. So what more could the visitor expect?

The thing that we fall down badly on is the appearance of the town. We've all got used to the ongoing work in the Forum, which hopefully

will be finished one of these days. We've all got irritated by the frequent digging up of the paving in the Carfax and leaving an asphalt surface, which we are told will be reinstated later.

Unfortunately, later seems to be a long way away and there seems to be no urgency to get it into an acceptable condition.

The final straw is the condition of the road leading into the Causeway, which is in a terrible condition. There is an urgent need for some resurfacing work and it does detract from what should be a walk back into the past for a visitor to our town.

It's fairly easy to bring a visitor into a town. The key to our success is whether we can encourage them to become frequent rather than one-off visitors. We've got most of it right. Let's finish the job.

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 or telephone 01403 261640.