

John Steele: one rule for all with town centre street furniture



type of highway obstruction, we asked both West Sussex County Council and HDC to take action to curb their proliferation.

Both agreed there was a problem but neither accepted responsibility for resolving it until in 2010 a joint HDC/WSCC pilot licensing scheme was introduced in West Street.

Despite a few hiccups it has worked pretty well by limiting the number of boards to one per premises and defining where they may be placed.

Standardisation helps pedestrians to know where to expect them and thus avoid collisions. A suggestion that the scheme should be withdrawn after the recent refurbishment was sensibly ignored.

However, our requests that the scheme be extended throughout the town centre have made no headway and the situation in parts of Carfax in particular has reached ridiculous



West Street in Horsham

proportions with some traders with several boards, some a long way from their premises.

Some of these are potentially dangerous and a form of litter.

Recently HDC's town centres manager emailed businesses in the town to say that the council was

boards outright. We claim to be a market town and with that goes a degree of hustle and bustle.

One only has to look at old photographs to see the way in which in former times shops and their goods overflowed on to the streets outside.

If properly controlled A-boards should pose no more of a hazard to pedestrians than the planters, seats and waste bins.

Some A-boards are very imaginative and attractive in their design and messages.

Many small traders say A-boards are an important means of attracting shoppers in competitive trading conditions.

In recent years we have seen the emergence of a café culture with the council licensing traders to place tables and chairs on the highway, complete with advertising screens.

How could we now justify a ban on the shop next door which only wants to display a single A-board? It simply

wouldn't be fair.

The answer is simple. The council should extend the present licensing scheme throughout the town centre, with its simple one premises, one board, rule and then enforce it robustly.

Properly controlled, A-boards could become both an asset to traders and an accepted part of a vibrant street scene.

Who knows? Perhaps in time we could see an annual competition for the most attractive A-board.

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 the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 272814.

A-boards placed on the highway by businesses to advertise themselves and attract custom create an unusual degree of public concern for such a ubiquitous piece of street furniture.

Some people claim they are a danger to pedestrians, particularly the elderly or visually impaired; others that they are ugly, untidy and above all too numerous.

The Horsham Society has wrestled with this problem for a long time. Back in the early 1990s, when A-boards were almost the only such