

John Steele: Protecting our trees and green spaces



skyline the chances are that you will see trees framing and softening the streetscape.

In many cases they will be some distance away, probably on a green space, grass verge or traffic roundabout.

As the town becomes ever more urbanised these are the only places left that can support the large forest trees – such as oaks and horse chestnuts - that are so important to the character of our town.

On a lesser scale, our small greens are host to trees such as flowering cherries, crab apples and more, and of course the wildlife that they support.

Recently a planning application to remove the trees from the small, but important, green at Hadmans Close, Denne Road, was energetically opposed by local residents and the Horsham Society, and was thankfully turned down by the council.

We only heard about the plan because the green is in



Trees on a green in Denne Road, Horsham.

the central conservation area and therefore the proposed destruction required planning consent.

Elsewhere, many trees benefit from a Tree Preservation Order which prevents any work on them without prior approval.

But there is no easy way to know which they are. So,

if you think an important tree near you is at risk from inappropriate pruning or felling, you should contact the council to see whether it is already protected, or if not whether it is appropriate for the council to apply a TPO.

By no means all trees merit statutory protection but if they are particularly

fine specimens which contribute to the streetscene they may satisfy the test.

Trees don't live forever: they need to be managed and eventually succumb to old age or disease, so it will sometimes be reasonable to fell even protected trees.

But it is important to ensure they are replaced.

We are fortunate that HDC has experienced arboricultural officers who ensure that any work on protected trees is appropriate and proportionate.

Recently, local residents were disturbed to find that a number of mature trees had been removed in connection with a small new development in Sedgwick Lane.

Here, none of the trees were protected, and quite possibly none individually justified a TPO, but in any case it was too late.

Many people do not realise that planning consent for a development automatically nullifies any TPO on the site

unless the trees are protected by specific conditions.

Residents need to watch every local planning application to ensure that trees and vegetation which form important screens are retained or replaced as part of the scheme.

If we want to protect our trees and green spaces we must all remain vigilant.

If you spot a potential problem contact your local councillor or the Horsham Society.

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.

Two recent events serve to remind us how important are our trees and green spaces and the need to remain vigilant if we are to protect them for future generations.

Horsham is fortunate to have a significant number of green spaces, large and small. Back in 2013 the Horsham Society published a survey identifying over a hundred which need to be cherished and protected from development.

The larger ones such as Horsham Park and Warnham Local Nature Reserve are well known, well managed, and hopefully safe. But our many small spaces are at greater risk.

When you look up at the