Horsham Blueprint
A plan for Horsham

Horsham Blueprint Neighbourhood Forum

Response to the Consultation on Horsham District Council's Draft Greenspace Strategy 2024-29

1 Is the Vision statement relevant and appropriate in its ambition?

1.1 The Vision as currently drafted is fairly conservative and could be more ambitious.

1.2 The Vision should seek to increase the public's use and enjoyment of their green spaces and the value they can play in a healthy lifestyle [**education and information**]. The Greenspace Vision should reflect and support the Council's wider healthy lives ambitions.

1.3 The Vision should seek to increase the overall number of green spaces as opportunities arise either through development or otherwise [**increasing provision**]. The major green spaces we value and enjoy today, such as Horsham Park and Chesworth Farm were purchased by HUDC and HDC. The route of the Riverside Walk has been improved through opportunities given by development.

2 Do the Strategic Priorities encompass the key issues?

2.1 The Strategic Priorities should be expanded to include specifically **education and information** and **increasing provision.**

3 Are there any actions that could be added or amended in the draft Strategy?

3.1 There is no mention in the Strategy of Rookwood Golf Course which is owned by the Council and managed by a private

company under a lease. This is a strategically important amenity site with significant links with other green spaces within the town, adjacent to the Riverside Walk and providing recreational opportunities apart from golf. It is important that the Council factors this site into its overall Greenspace Strategy. We understand, for example, that Rookwood was managed organically and won awards in 2007 and 2008, but that this may no longer be the case.

3.2 The Riverside Walk has been omitted from the list of sites in Table 2. Although different in nature from other sites It is an important strategic route circling the town which deserves consideration as a whole.

3.3 There is an action to the review of sites which may be suitable to for protection under Fields in Trust but there is no timescale for this work. We are particularly interested regarding Horsham Park as this action is included in our Neighbourhood Plan. Please give a deadline for completion of this work. (Page 6)

3.4 Whilst properly managed amenity green spaces can enhance the appearance of residential areas (Table 1, page 5), they can be blighted by inappropriately located or designed infrastructure such as communications cabinets. The Strategy should seek to influence their location and visual appearance to minimise impact.

3.5 Individual management plans, as well as being used to enhance species diversity, for example by creating log piles for stag beetles, adjusting mowing regimes and leaving seedheads for birds, should consider native planting such as English bluebells, snowdrops, primroses, cowslips and fruit and nut trees. This might also support applications for agri-environment grants. (Page 9)

3.6 However, whilst the management of green spaces needs to take account of biodiversity and climate change it also needs to have regard for tidiness and the role that green spaces have on softening the urban street scene. Individual management plans need to be responsive to public expectations about, for example, the frequency of mowing of areas which form an integral part of housing developments. (Page 9)

3.7 It is important that new green spaces created as part of residential development provide a truly welcoming pubic space in

perpetuity. We are concerned that the trend for these to be managed by a company funded by the immediate residents could imply an exclusivity of use. In our view all the larger amenity spaces in new developments should be owned and managed by the Council as part of its overall Greenspace Strategy. (Page 9)

3.8 The Strategy rightly stresses the importance of 'Friends Groups' in the day-to-day oversight and physical management of smaller green areas. The Council should actively encourage the establishment of such groups where they do not at present exist. The reference to annual H&S training should stress 'relevant' training. (Page10)

4 Have you got any other comments on the Council's strategic approach to its public open spaces?

4.1 We support the Council's recognition of the importance of our local green spaces and its strategic commitment to their continued improvement and maintenance. This will only be successful, of course, if sufficient resources continue to be assigned to undertake the work.

4 June 2024