



Horsham Trafalgar Neighbourhood Council

16 September 2020

To All Members of Horsham District Council

Proposed development of Rookwood Golf Course

Horsham Trafalgar Neighbourhood Council (HTNC) has been made aware that all members of Horsham District Council (HDC) have been invited to a briefing on Thursday 17th September concerning the proposal from the HDC Property department to build 1,100 homes on the site of Rookwood Golf Course.

Furthermore, we are also aware that members of the Horsham Conservative Association are to be given an opportunity to interact with HDC Cabinet members at a briefing which “will focus on planning and development across the Horsham district and will also look at the coming development in North Horsham and the viability of other sites including Rookwood Golf Club.”

Sadly, neither of these events will be open to the public or the Neighbourhood Councils, and there are no indications that any such public forum will be provided at a later date. In their open letter to the council dated 30th August 2020, The Friends of Warnham Local Nature Reserve have raised serious concerns about the impact of the proposed development on the Reserve based on their analysis of both the proposal itself and the independent ecological study commissioned by HDC. As representatives of our community, for which any proposal to develop this incredibly sensitive site is a highly emotive matter, HTNC strongly supports the Friends in the case they have made. It is also our duty to ask questions of our own.

Since we will not be able to put these questions directly ourselves at the HDC briefing, we would like to give all members the opportunity to ask them on our behalf:

- In the December 2018 Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (which was prepared **after** work commenced on the Rookwood proposal) both elements of the Rookwood Site were determined to be “Not currently developable” due to being contrary to policies 1-4 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework with some conflict to policies 31 and 38. Given that most of these policies do not seem to have materially changed in the Draft Local Plan, what has changed to suddenly make the site developable?
- Given that the Rookwood proposal was clearly well-advanced by late 2018, and presumably was initiated with the approval of Cabinet, why was such a significant initiative not put before the electorate in May 2019 so that they could make an

informed choice about whom to entrust with the governance of the District and stewardship of its assets in that election?

- Why were the HDC Property Department proposals for Rookwood only submitted as a consultation response on 30th March 2020, and made available to the public much later, rather than being made public as part of the Reg 18 consultation so that residents of both the Town and the District could make informed responses? After all, they were paid for with over £150,000 of Council Tax payers' money.
- The full presentation of the Rookwood Proposal made to members in late 2019/early 2020 has still not been made public, despite numerous requests from various parties. Why is this? This document was paid for with public money and clearly is in the public interest.
- Officers of HDC have confirmed that no consideration has been given to any use for the Rookwood land other than as housing. Other options will only be considered if the site is not selected for inclusion in the Local Plan. Whilst it is understood that HDC have obligations to consider best use of its assets and achieve value for money, doesn't such a narrow and blinkered approach fail to meet any decent standard of stewardship of the Council's assets?

There are numerous other elements of the Rookwood proposal which are cause for concern and dismay amongst both Trafalgar residents and Neighbourhood Councillors. However, we believe those outlined above go to the heart of the manner in which this process has been managed and we hope that members of HDC will consider them worthy of addressing to those in a position to answer them.

Yours faithfully,
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