



The Friends of Warnham Local Nature Reserve

Warnham Local Nature Reserve
Warnham Road,
Horsham
RH12 2RA

13 June 2020

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you on behalf of the trustees of the Friends of Warnham Local Nature Reserve as we welcome HDC's decision to reopen the Reserve following the Covid-19 lockdown. It is really great to be able to visit the Reserve again and experience its huge diversity of wildlife!

Rookwood Golf Course was identified in the recent draft Local Plan as a potential strategic development site. We appreciate that each of these sites has a support group mounting a public campaign opposed to its development; in Rookwood's case it is the [Keep Rookwood Green Alliance](#).

Wildlife does not observe the lines we draw on maps. For example, birds, insects, bats, deer and badgers habitually use the Rookwood land as an extension of the Reserve. Development will sever the vital wildlife corridors between the Reserve and the Sussex countryside, causing long-term damage and reducing its viability. The Friends strongly advocate keeping the land North of Warnham Road as green space, ideally as an extension to the Reserve.

Recently, HDC commissioned the [Rookwood Development Ecology Impact Report](#) from an independent consultancy. Alarmingly the report (Map 4 p26) shows that 75% of the Rookwood land north of Warnham Road poses a medium to high risk to the Reserve, if developed. In contrast, 25% of the land south of Warnham Road has the same level of ecological risk.

The report also identifies a number of threats to the Reserve including cat predation. It states an expected residency of 160 cats per 500 dwellings and observed predation rates are referenced in the [Friends Local Plan Consultation Response](#). Together, these tell us that cats from the proposed 1,100 dwellings will kill 6,441 to 12,320 prey every year. The Reserve, as a wildlife hotspot, will undoubtedly bear the brunt of this assault.

Well established green and blue corridors, centred on the Red River and Boldings Brook, pass through the land to the south of Warnham Road and we consider it essential that these corridors are protected under all circumstances to avoid damaging the Reserve.

In November 2019, HDC and Sussex Wildlife Trust announced the [Wilder Horsham District Partnership](#) whose laudable [aims](#) to: "help wildlife thrive across the Horsham District" and "create networks of land that are protected and enhanced for wildlife" are impressive commitments.

However, we feel that developing Rookwood is not consistent with these aims and sends a conflicted message to Horsham District residents. If HDC increases the risk to the Reserve, and any development of Rookwood will do this, surely it will not be able to defend any other green space from predatory development?

We welcome HDC's publication of a [Report on Initial Local Plan Consultation Outcomes](#) showing that Rookwood received the second highest number of objections and is clearly the least favoured site when response numbers are normalised by either the proposed number of houses or the impacted land area. The conclusion is clear, people do not wish HDC to build on Rookwood.

Covid-19 has underlined that green space is vital for mental as well as physical wellbeing. Rookwood represents 29%, by area, of Horsham's "large green spaces"¹ and HDC is planning for an increased population, surely it is not right to reduce the amount of large green space as part of this process? The amount of large green space should increase rather than decrease as the population rises.

As an elected councillor, you are a custodian of our green "natural capital". We ask that you protect Warnham Nature Reserve, by preserving Rookwood as a green space, leaving both as an outstanding legacy that future generations can enjoy for decades to come.

Yours sincerely, Peter Simpson

On behalf of the trustees of the Friends of Warnham Local Nature Reserve

¹ Leechpool/Owlbeech Wood, Chesworth Farm, Horsham Park, Warnham Local Nature Reserve, Rookwood and Southwater Country Park