

Muggeridge Field – the threat is lifted for the time being

YOU WILL all have seen in last week's County Times that the planning inspector rejected West Sussex County Council's appeal and housing cannot be built on Muggeridge Field in Horsham. This is the second time that WSCC has attempted and failed to get outline planning permission for the site.

It's not surprising that the inspector's decision was greeted with euphoria and it was a just reward for the effort that so many people made.

However, we have to ensure that euphoria doesn't lead to complacency, as the battle now starts to ensure that Muggeridge Field is protected in some way or other for future generations as a field for recreational use, rather than allowed to become a building site.

WSCC has made it clear that the site is not required for its original purpose, which was for educational purposes. The people of Horsham have made it clear that they do not want houses built on the site, so where do we



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Localism Act is to have any meaning, councils will have to start listening to residents' wishes.

This will mean that commonsense will have to be applied to a whole range of future decisions.

Clearly, financial implications will always have to be taken into account as far as assets are concerned, and asset disposal may well have to be a key strategy in any local authority's considerations.

However, income generation is not the be all and end all for any council. It should not expect to make a profit from the sale of an

asset, which was bought nearly 40 years ago for one purpose, when it is of no further value. Muggeridge Field was bought for a specific purpose, educational, for the benefit of the people of Horsham.

Now that it's no longer required for that purpose, it should still be used for the benefit of the town.

There are three clear choices available to WSCC. Firstly, it could give the land to Horsham District Council and allow it to be incorporated into Chesworth Farm.

The transfer of Muggeridge Field could be protected by a covenant, which would prevent its sale at some future time so as not to disadvantage WSCC.

Secondly, WSCC could give Muggeridge Field village green classification and still retain ownership of the land. The management of the field could remain with HDC and the land could continue to be enjoyed as if it is part of Chesworth Farm, which is its

current status

The third option would be for WSCC to join with us and put Muggeridge Field forward as a Queen Elizabeth II Field.

This would be a great way to mark the Queen's diamond jubilee celebrations in 2012 and allow the council to demonstrate that it does wish to be part of these celebrations.

Other councils are making the effort even in these difficult times, so why not WSCC?

Whatever the outcome, the uncertainty on Muggeridge Field needs to be resolved once and for all. Let's see localism in action!

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 our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 263870.