

SWAN WALK TOTEM SIGN, WEST STREET, HORSHAM

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Introduction

1. This heritage statement supports an application for a proposed ‘totem’ signpost for the Swan Walk Shopping Centre in West Street, Horsham. It was prepared by Michael Copeman MSc BA IHBC as instructed by Michael Worthington of DARA Planning. It should be read in conjunction with the plans and design statement submitted by Urban Edge Architects (August 2025). The author visited the site on 29 September 2025.
2. The proposed sign will be located within the Horsham Town Centre Conservation Area, which covers the eastern and central parts of West Street, including the entrance lobby to the shopping centre. There are statutorily two listed buildings in West Street, nos. 21, 21a and 22. No. 55. Lloyds Bank, 1 West Street is included in the new local list (2025).

Historic, architectural and urban context

3. Horsham developed at a crossing-point of the River Arun. The parish church dates from the 12th, and the settlement is documented the 13th century, although it doubtless had earlier origins. Its core was along Causeway, South Street and Carfax, which were lined with burgrave plots by the late medieval period. By the early 16th century, the town was among the most important and prosperous in Sussex, benefitting from its position on an important route across the Weald from London to the south coast. East Street and West Street emerged from secondary routes leading outlying parts of the town and were built up from the 16th century. West Street led to the medieval suburb of Bishopric.
4. West Street is now one of the main shopping streets in Horsham (Fig. 1). It was pedestrianised in the 1980s. Its buildings have a pleasant, broadly traditional, architectural character, in a variety of styles dating from the mid-19th century onwards; consistent in scale and building materials. There are several late-20th century developments towards its west end. The limited heritage significance of this area is reflected in the fact that it is outside the conservation area.
5. West Street is lined almost continuously with two-and three-storey buildings, mostly faced in red brick or render, with red tile roofs. The grade II listed nos. 21, 21a and 22 are a row of two-storey cottages of c.1800, in red brick with Horsham slab (riven sandstone) roofs. They have late-20th century shop fronts to the ground floor. (Fig. 2) The grade II listed no. 55 is an early-19th century two-bay three-storey stucco-fronted building, also with a modern ground floor shop front. (Fig. 3.) The locally listed no. 1, (Lloyds Bank) is a three-storey Tudor-Gothic style commercial building of c.1907. Immediately opposite the entrance to Swan Walk, nos. 14-15 is a plain three-storey building of c.1900, altered by partly blocked first-floor bay windows and a modern shop front and no. 13 is a modern building in loosely ‘Victorian’ style. They are not of special interest, although both fit within the general scale and character of the area.
6. Swan Walk shopping centre is a covered ‘mall’ dating from 1976. It has two main street-level entrances: from roughly the mid-point of West Street, and from the north end of

Carfax. The West Street entrance occupies the site of the 18th century Swan Inn. The *Buildings of England* volume for West Sussex notes that Swan Walk ‘manages fairly well the problem of fitting into a historic town of completely different scale’. The West Street entrance is quite small, faced with contextual materials, and conforms with historic plot widths; so that is a discreet and unobtrusive feature in the streetscape.

7. The *Horsham Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal* highlights that ‘West Street forms a vista to Bishopric Square, and to the attractive buildings at the junction of Middle Street and South Street’. West Street is paved with modern concrete blocks. The appraisal notes that ‘the hard landscaping seeks to break up the width of the former road.’

Heritage Impact assessment

8. The proposed ‘totem’ sign will be located at the centre of the pedestrianised street opposite the entrance to Swan Walk Shopping Centre. It will comprise a post surmounted by a sign to mark the shopping centre entrance. The lower section will support an information board with the names of the shopping centre retailers on one face and information about the historic town on the other. Currently the only signage identifying the shopping centre on West Street is the lettering within the gabled entrance archway (Fig. 1).
9. The new sign will have no physical impact on any historic building, feature or surface. It will be seen- as it is intended- from some distance away, but it will not interrupt the long vistas noted in the conservation area appraisal. The sign will be c.20m. from the listed no. 55 and c.40m. from nos. 21-22. Therefore, it will not affect the immediate setting of either building (Figs. 2, 3). It will be a minor feature in the busy urban scene that makes up Horsham’s historic townscape, of which they are a part. The sign will not affect the setting of no. 1, which is c.120m. away, at the junction with South Street.
10. The design of the sign is based on the one that originally stood outside the historic Swan Inn (see *Design Statement* p.12). It acknowledges the heritage of the building that once stood on the same site and gave the centre its name, and it will be a reminder of the town’s history. The size and form of the totem reflect the scale of the surrounding streetscape. The proposed materials have been selected for their high-quality finishes, and durable nature. The totem will be distinctive but not overbearing. It draws inspiration from its context but avoids imitation or pastiche. As such it will contribute positively to the public realm of the conservation area.
11. The sign will have no detrimental impacts on the historic townscape. It will preserve the area’s character area as required by the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act* 1990 s.72. It will result in no harm to the heritage significance of the conservation area, the nearby listed buildings, or their settings; thereby conserving them in line with the provisions of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2025) (para. 212ff.). It complies with the requirements of Policy 34 of *Horsham District Planning Framework* (2015) for the protection of the historic environment. It reflects the objectives of the *Horsham Town Centre Vision* (2023) to secure a high-quality public realm. In conclusion, the proposal will cause no harm to the heritage significance of the conservation area, and it complies with the relevant national and local heritage planning policy and guidance.



Figure 1: general view east along West Street, Swan Walk to centre left



Figure 2: Nos. 21-22 (right); Swan Walk (not visible) to left



Figure 3: No. 55 to right; entrance to Swan Walk to centre

Sources

Baggs, A.P., *et al*, (1986), 'Horsham: General history of the town', in *A History of the County of Sussex: Volume 6 Part 2, Bramber Rape (North-Western Part) Including Horsham*, London, Victoria County History

Harris, R.B., (2004) : *Horsham: Sussex Extended Urban Survey*, English Heritage, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council

Hudson, T., Nairn, I., Musson, J., Williamson (2019) *The Buildings of England Sussex: West*, London and New Haven, Yale UP

Horsham District Council (2008) *Horsham Town Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document*

Horsham District Council (2022), *Horsham Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan*