

# WE'LL FIGHT TO PROTECT GREEN

H. H.  
27.7.95

By Bryher Golding Barrett

ANGRY people in Hythe have demanded a Town Meeting because they don't agree with the council's plan to put the new community centre on the town's Green.

They say the townspeople should have been given the chance to comment on the proposal before councillors voted to build on the Green at last Thursday's full council meeting.

Many of them say the council can't build on the Green because the area is covered by a century old covenant to prevent building. Councillors were unusually quiet during the debate at Thursday's meeting which lasted just over half an hour. The final vote was almost evenly split with all Tory councillors, except Chris Capon who abstained, in favour of the Green, and Liberal Democrats and Independents against. Thirty members of the public went along as did Hythe's community policeman John Burnett and another police officer who were asked to attend by town clerk Des Knowles in case the public caused any problems.

Many members of the audience heckled and barbed comments at councillors during the meeting but cheered Councillor Mary Done when she said: "It may be a matter of semantics if this is a building for recreation and other reasons — but a covenant is a covenant."

Mr Knowles said: "I have done some research on the Green and the covenant and there is a great deal of misconception about it."

## Benefit

"The Green has been owned by the Corporation of Hythe since time immemorial and by Hythe Town Council since the local government re-organisation of 1974. It has never been held in trust.

"The covenant lays down that the Green must be used for the amusement, recreation or benefit of the public in perpetuity. No part of that piece of land is to be applied to building purposes."

A plaque dated February 12, 1862, on the garden gate of a house backing onto the Green, reads: "The land is reserved for public recreation and no part of it is to be applied for building purposes."



Above: Mobilising ... Dave Murphy (left) and Jack Hadlum on the Green with some of their letters

Jack Hadlum, of Shepherd's Walk, Hythe, said after the meeting: "I am not happy about this at all. We weren't allowed to voice our opinions and anyone who tried to say something was threatened with being thrown out."

"About 13 of us have written letters and delivered them to the council offices in Stude Street requesting the mayor call a Town Meeting."

Council rules say that a Town Meeting must take place if a minimum of six people formally request one. Mr Hadlum went on: "We want a Town Meeting because there's a lot of questions we want answered and a Town Meeting will let us have our say. The Green was left for the children of Hythe not for the council to do what it likes with."

"The council is just running rough shod over the people of Hythe and taking liberties with the Green."

Dave Murphy, of Reachfields, agreed: "We elected this council to represent the people and if it doesn't do its job properly this town should have a voice of its own. "I am totally opposed to building on Hythe Green. If

they build on it once they will build on it again and again. There are enough halls in this town and we don't need another one. The majority of people in Hythe don't want it built on the Green but the council hasn't listened to them. We want the chance to get our points across."

Pensioner Nora James, of Albert Road, said: "This should be put to the vote of the people in Hythe. We should be able to decide where we want it built."

Town clerk Des Knowles told the *Herald*: "If more than six electors ask for a town meeting then they can have one but it's nothing to do with the council and the people must organise it themselves."

"The town mayor, as the most senior dignitary in the town, can chair that meeting if the people want her to. They can pass resolutions at the meeting but these don't have to be considered by the council."

However, Councillor John Pearson said: "There is no law saying the council must consider any resolutions passed at a Town Meeting — but it would very foolish not to do so."

Council questioned over rumours of cash incentives for choosing Green site for centre: See P.3

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