

Proposal of SCGB to ask for Village Green status for Telegraph Hill

With so many of them under attack, we, Save Claygate Green Belt, are looking at what steps could be taken to further protect our green spaces. Following the example of Hinchley Wood and Long Ditton residents with One Tree Hill and Stokes Field, we are therefore proposing to ask for Town and Village Green (TVG) status for Telegraph Hill.

Telegraph Hill, owned by EBC, is currently classed as an “Open Space” for public recreation. That gives it the same status as green belt land. As we all know, however, that now offers a lot less protection than it used to. We have no expectation that EBC would want to put Telegraph Hill forward for development, but it would always be open to it to do so. By having it registered as TVG, it would have the same status as a registered Common. As such, it is bullet-proof against development and would in perpetuity be open to the public for recreation. Registering land as TVG involves no cost for either the owner or the public. The owner retains all its rights of ownership in terms of access for maintenance, repairs etc and public users gain no additional rights which might disadvantage the owner.

Where land is owned privately, the process of getting land registered as TVG requires proof of uninterrupted use by the public for recreation for at least 20 years without permission and without challenge. If disputed, it is then decided by a tribunal. Local authorities, however, are exempt from this process. They cannot be compelled to grant TVG status, but they can do so voluntarily. That is what we would be asking Elmbridge to do. For this purpose, we are asking for the support of Claygate Parish Council and our Elmbridge Ward councillors. With that endorsement, a case would be put to the EBC Countryside Consultative Group and thence to the full council for final approval. Thereafter, registration is done by Surrey County Council.