

The Green is registered as Common Land under the Commons Registration Act 1965. That legislation came about as a consequence of, amongst other things, campaigning by an organisation called the Open Spaces Society. Their campaign was in response to a worrying increase in the loss of open land that had historically been used communally for recreation and town or village activities. The Act created the opportunity for any such land to be registered. However, there was deadline.

It seems that at the time of the initial application, The Green was a flat, open piece of land incorporating a pond adjacent to the northern edge. It was, by many accounts, freely used by the community. That would seemingly put it into the category of land to be protected under the Act. Accordingly, Mrs Lowry, who lived in Cottage on the Green at the time, responded with an application to our then local authority - Berkshire County Council - to register The Green as Common Land.

There were no objections and so registration duly became final. It's worth noting that no **Rights** of Common were registered against The Green at the same time. Rights of Common could be registered by anyone claiming a right to, for example, graze stock, collect firewood etc. etc.. The upshot was that The Green ended up on the register as Common Land but with no parallel Rights of Common.

Since then The Green has been fenced, hedged and partially re-profiled and the pond has been filled in. As a result, it has substantially lost its former open character. On the positive side, Common Land status has protected it from development and fairly recently it has been designated as Open Access Land under what is known as CROW – the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

We now know that the Rosser family has, for some time been disputing the original Common Land registration – arguing that the land was never anything other than totally private. Now that the law has changed, they've been able to formalise a request to reverse that registration. The basis for their application has become particularly clear from material added to the consultation website by OCC during the course of last week.

They say that (i) Mrs Lowry's 1960's application was made in spite because her application to buy some land had been rejected and that (ii) the landowner at

the time would have made an objection to her application had he received notification from Berkshire CC.

Whatever, we're now in a position where the only response to the **de**-registration application is to prove, 50 years on and in just 5 weeks, that The Green properly satisfied the criteria for registration as Common Land. This means gathering memories of how it was used together with old maps, photographs and anything relevant written down in the past.

We already have some evidence of communal use going all the way back to 1778 but we really need to put flesh on the bones.

The hope is that some of that can be collected tonight if, indeed, there is a wish to resist de-registration.