



The Thakeham Oak

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“Cherish it, fight for it, look after it well”

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Editorial

This edition is dominated by two issues. One is new: the threat to our safety and well-being due to the planning application at the old Rushfield Nursery. One is old, the threat of a landfill site at Laybrook brickworks, first promoted over five years ago in November 2002.

Regarding Laybrook, we have been strengthened by the stand taken by our MP in support of our campaign. His comments to the County Councillors have given us hope.

In relation to the planning application for industrial B1 class use for the old Rushfield Nursery site, whatever is decided, there has been at least one positive outcome. The efforts to overturn this application has demonstrated a heartening example of the strength of Thakeham's community spirit. In this case, by coming together, the residents of High Bar Lane, Linfield Copse and Furze Common Road now know each other better, new friendships have been made. It is a pity that it has been due to an obvious threat to people, but so be it.

We should be proud and pleased to live in an area with so many advantages, a good place to bring up a family, a good place to enjoy the natural world and the planet on which we all live.

Last November's issue of the RSPB Birds magazine reinforced the message to us all to take care and look after what we have. In an article on Pulborough Brooks nature reserve it said, in relation to our county, West Sussex: "If you live that way, cherish it, fight for it, look after it well". We in Thakeham Village Action are doing all we can, we are sure all the residents of Thakeham are doing just the same, not just for ourselves, but for everyone now and in the future.

Rushfield Needs You

The fate of the old Rushfield Nursery site next door to the childrens playground in High Bar Lane will be decided at the Horsham DC development control south committee meeting on Tuesday 18th March. Everyone who can make the meeting at 2.00pm, Park North (next to the Capitol) in Horsham should do so.

As the residents have so eloquently said: "If you want to maintain the pleasant rural ambience of this area, where we can all enjoy the pleasures of living in the countryside, please do come if you possibly can. At present, we wake in the mornings after peaceful nights to the sounds of the countryside and the children can walk to school, run around, ride their bikes, and go to the playground in relative safety."

"Don't be fooled by the "one small building" argument. Do we really want to leave the door open to the very real possibility of the first of several industrial units, with all the associated traffic, safety and crime issues springing up in our midst, not to mention the effect this would undoubtedly have on local house prices, because we didn't go the final mile?"

With over 100 letters of objection, Horsham District Council will have to take this application seriously. Owing to the genuine concerns about children's safety, the loss of quality of life and changing the agricultural character of the area, TVA believes this application should be rejected.

Without any economic justification for the change of use, TVA says the obvious harm to the social fabric of the area and the damage to the environmental character should mean that District Councillors will agree with the residents and refuse this application.

Fight for Laybrook supported by MP

At several meetings with TVA, Nick Herbert MP has heard our views on the threat of a landfill rubbish tip at Laybrook brickworks at Goose Green and that the County Council do not seem to be taking sufficient action.

His response: to organise a Waste Summit, inviting TVA and fellow communities in his constituency fighting landfill proposals at Small Dole and Washington, with Parish, District and County Councillors, representatives of local environmental groups such as CPRE and the Sussex Wildlife Trust. together with reporters from the local newspapers and Meridian TV. The Summit took place on 7 March and, by the time you read this, you may have already seen the press coverage.

At the start of the Summit, Nick Herbert said he was opposed to landfilling rubbish in principle and supports the three community action groups, including TVA's campaign against a landfill rubbish tip at Laybrook brickworks.

Each of the community groups was invited to explain its position. In its presentation, TVA told the audience that Laybrook has never been used for dumping waste. If it ever started, rubbish tipping would cover an area as large as Brighton Marina, or 130 full-size football pitches. Dumping rubbish would carry on for at least 50 years, probably 100 years if not longer, polluting local streams feeding into the River Adur, fouling the land and air, harming children's health, adding to global warming, affecting not only Thakeham but also Ashington, Storrington and the surrounding area.

TVA also said in its presentation that the County Council was apparently acting as a dinosaur authority, seeing the current lack of landfill capacity as a problem, seeing the tax designed to dissuade landfilling as a problem. Also, it was behind public opinion and neighbouring authorities like Hampshire, in stopping landfilling rotting rubbish. TVA said that opening up a new landfill tip in Thakeham was totally unnecessary, with new waste processing technologies capable of turning rubbish into valuable resources like compost and renewable energy.

At the Summit, TVA was taken aback by the County Council's presentation. It looked almost identical to one given at Thakeham Village Hall in December 2006, figures were out of date, graphs appeared misleading. An attempt to maximise the amount of landfill capacity required in the County seemed to have been made, to show that new landfill sites were necessary. In its presentation, the Council's estimate for landfill from commercial and industrial sources remained constant over time - the Government's Waste Strategy expects that commercial/industrial waste declines by 20% in 2010 versus 2004. Likewise, any landfill exports from London remained constant over time; the representative from the Greater London Authority at the Summit said that published data forecasted a decline.

Several presentations, including TVA's, pointed out how badly West Sussex compares with Europe, where the majority of EU countries have already banned landfilling rotting rubbish, with England as a whole and particularly with neighbouring Hampshire, which puts hardly any rubbish into landfill tips.

In his final comments, Nick Herbert said that it matters what local communities think, that the resistance to landfill is understandable and unanimous and he made a plea to West Sussex County Council to think again, to accelerate its moves to minimise landfill, not just to be better, but to take real action. A plea with which TVA heartily concurs.

In a press release issued after the event, TVA said: "The Council's attitude shown in its presentation, and in previous discussions we have had with them, is, to say the least, alarming. It threatens the future of Thakeham and all parts of West Sussex where landfill has been suggested. It flies in the face of public opinion, international and national policy. If anyone can get the Council to change its mind, accept that landfilling rotting rubbish is outdated and an environmental disaster, it is MP Nick Herbert. Thakeham Village Action fully supports him in his efforts to persuade the County Council to change and act now."