

Welcome to Thakeington – Twinned with Storr, West Chilt & Sull!

Editorial

It's that time of year again, the time for writing Christmas Cards and letters to Horsham District Council! Once again, the planners have opened the floodgates for a slurry of new planning applications, designed to turn Thakeham from a 'ham' to a 'ton'. As part of the process of formulating new plans (Why? Change for change's sake?) under the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) and the Parish's Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan (TNP), the trawl is out for possible housing sites – and we do not mean a granny flat extension in your garden!



Abingworth

While we have all realised that the Abingworth Nursery site was a blot on the rural landscape and that we have lost the fight to prevent development, we are sure that many people including, possibly, the Councillors who voted in favour of it, were not aware that the 'built up area' of the site accounted for less than 20% of the land allocated for building. Permission was granted in April 2013 but there is still a long way to go before the first sod is turned and the development can start. Some of the community's concerns have been listened to in the latest planning application – retention of the sports field, moving and redesigning the Village Hall and a few 'ransom strips' around the site – but are these concessions sufficient?

Are the proposed allotments in the right place? Are only 52 parking spaces for the Hall enough? Is the proposed access from the main road (nearly opposite High Bar Lane) safe? Write Now to HDC with your concerns and suggestions - the application reference will be available on the HDC website - go to www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/view-and-comment-on-planning-applications, or email to planning@horsham.gov.uk, or write to the Planning Dept, Park North, North Street, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1RL



Right: The demolition site with unprotected, discarded, asbestos sheeting

The Possible Housing Sites

Because Councils need to be seen to be proactive and because Governments need to produce plans – otherwise what is the point of an expensive Civil Service – and because landowners want to convert soil from growing food to growing houses, we are now in the throes of yet another ‘planning framework’. 16 sites within the parish have been put forward, to the District and Parish, as contenders in the contest to ensure that ‘Thake’ joins ‘Sull’, ‘Storr’ and ‘West Chilt’ in the proposed urban sprawl to the North of the Downs. These sites, currently green fields, may well be urban – not rural – developments in your village.

The sites are shown on the map, but the full list is as follows:

- 1) The fields north of Snapes Cottage (north of the current Water Lane appeal site)
- 2) The fields at the back of Crescent Rise to Rock Road (open fields)
- 3) The land at Thakeham Tiles, Rock Road, including surrounding woodland (the trees should be left alone)
- 4) The woodland south of Rock Road east of Hampers Lane (more trees taken from the Weald!)
- 5) The fields east and south of the Abingworth Nursery permitted development site (nice and easy access from the Strawberry Lane bridle path!)
- 6) The land around Abingworth Hall hotel (well, it is only a few more houses to add to the current plans)
- 7) The field south of Furze Common Road (tremendous! outside the built up area with no practical access)
- 8) The land alongside Threals Lane (more trees!)
- 9) The land near Rushfield House, High Bar Lane (well, there are houses already in High Bar Lane, a few more ...!)
- 10) The field east of the children’s playground on High Bar Lane (after all, the new occupants won’t realise that it was a green field)
- 11) The fields north of the Abingworth Nursery site alongside Woodlands Way (it will be easy to walk to the new Village Hall!)
- 12) The land to the east of Church Gate Cottage, The Street (easy to get to church on a Sunday!)
- 13) The land between South Hill and Town House Farm opposite The Street (an extension of ‘Town Houses’?)
- 14) The land at Town House Farm (more Town Houses!)
- 15) The field opposite Goffsland Farm, Coolham Road (if everyone else can, why not?)
- 16) The fields off East Street near Lower Voakes Farm (as it is nearly West Chiltington, why not?)

Map Key

Red: sites proposed to the District Council, for more details go to <http://www.horsham.gov.uk/planningpolicy/planning-policy/housing-land-availability>

Blue: sites proposed to the Parish Council, for more details go to http://www.thakehamparish.co.uk/Core/Thakeham-Parish-Council/Pages/Default_7.aspx

Pink lines: land recently permitted for development or under appeal

NB: if a site is proposed to both councils it is coloured **red**

Map on page opposite contains

Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright

Looking North to The Street – The Abingworth Nursery demolition site is to the left



Water Lane Appeal

The Water Lane appeal hearing took place at the Horsham District Council offices between 14 and 17 October. Members of the public were invited to speak on the first day with submissions made by Thakeham Parish Council, CPRE, Councillor Roger Arthur and two from the Fighting For Our Fields (FFOF) group, detailing issues on flooding, local infrastructure (surgeries, schools, etc.), air pollution, traffic, planning criteria and housing targets.

It must be remembered however, that the appeal centred on the decision to refuse permission on the grounds that it contravened the planners 'CP1'(Landscape and Townscape Character), which seeks to protect, conserve or enhance landscape and townscape character.

The main evidence and cross examination by the barristers revolved round the Grade II listing of Snapes Cottage, views to and from the South Downs, design, the positioning of the development 45m above sea level and the need for housing in the area. Presumption in favour of development was discussed at length with emphasis on the fact that refusal can only be decided if the adverse effect is "significant" and "demonstrable".The inspector will make his final decision in the next 6-8 weeks.

Membership

What is the point of TVA? For those who are new to the Village, here is a potted history. It has been in existence for over 15 years and was formed to add backbone to the then Parish Council who were, it appeared, all too ready to accept the diktats of the District council and act as a 'rubber stamp' on planning applications. The Parish Council has changed and is now a vibrant part of the community, but TVA has the ability to make assertions and contentious remarks that would be possibly inappropriate for a local government body that has to toe the Westminster line for sound legal reasons.

TVA has had some notable successes – it managed to defer the desecration of the countryside around Abingworth for some 15 years; in conjunction with other stakeholders it succeeded in getting the rotten rubbish landfill at Laybrook rejected; the conversion of Cray's Court from offices to houses was stymied; the 'Save Thakeham's Only Pub (STOP)' campaign STOPped the de-licensing of the White Lion and, with sound planning arguments has, to date, prevented housing development on 13 proposed sites.

For those who do not know, membership of TVA is not restricted to a band of tree hugging, grow your own sandals, make your own muesli, conservation nutters. It is open to every family (including tree huggers!) in the Village and membership costs a trifling £5 per year per household. It holds an Annual General Meeting, with the next one on the **12th January 2015**. Even if you do not have the time to participate actively in the organisation, you owe it to your children and your grandchildren to belong – because this is your community and you should have a voice in its future and TVA aims to provide that voice for you.

So if you are not already a member or if you are a lapsed member, consider joining us – the Village is in your hands!

Thakeham Village Action - Join or renew your membership 2015

I enclose a cheque (payable to TVA) or cash for £5. I include a donation of £ _____

Name & Address _____

_____ Telephone No. _____ No. in Family _____

Send to:

Mark Keenan, Copper Beeches, The Street, Thakeham, RH20 3EP

If you wish to help you can email thakehamva@yahoo.co.uk

I would like to receive information from TVA by e-mail. My address is _____