

## 'Ere we go! 'Ere we go! - Again!

### Editorial

Looking at copies of The Thakeham Oak over the last 15 years is instructive in that the village is still being threatened with inappropriate development. Greenfield or agricultural land should be used for agri, horti or even floriculture and not as a means of making a fast buck by selling for development.

If large scale development of this area of West Sussex is part of the political manifestos of any of the main parties, they should be clear, lucid and open and not hide behind obfuscation and gallimaufry. If large scale development is intended, the concomitants of employment and infrastructure should also be made apparent. There are 9,000 parishes in England. If all of them were to increase their housing stock by 20 houses (not, as in our case by over 200), that would mean accommodation for some 300,000 people and a dissipated – rather than a concentrated - strain on the rural infrastructure.

### Abingworth – Again (and Again!)

For 15 years, we have been campaigning against the level of development at Abingworth and the fact that 146 new houses there would cause a disproportionate strain on the community. We were supported by the majority of residents in the village but not, significantly, by our representatives on the District Council. Finally, the decision was reached and we not only accepted that decision but also suggested ways in which the impact could be minimised.

And then ...!

Just as we thought the work was about to be commenced, a letter was sent to the Parish Council by CALA Homes stating inter alia 'The consented scheme on the this (sic) site as it stands is an inefficient use of the land and ... the site can comfortably accommodate a greater number of units representing a more balanced mix of dwellings sizes (sic) geared towards meeting local demand.' Nowhere in their letter do they state what they consider to be the optimum amount of numbers involved but they do try to link their plan in with the existing permission.

Also Abingworth Developments seem to be progressing slowly with work to the site. In January this year, they circulated a letter that stated 'During January and February, the demolition and clearance of the old Abingworth mushroom buildings and hard standing will continue ... ground works for the new housing, Village Hall, Thakeham Pre-School and village shop will start ... , hopefully in the late Spring'. However demolition work has currently stopped and the contractors have moved off site.

The original permission was granted only on the basis of 'enabling development. HDC agreed that Abingworth was, in itself, an unsustainable location and otherwise should not be built on. We understand that the 'enabling development' funds have already been paid over to Monaghan Mushrooms who we understand now own the Chesswood site and have secured the jobs there.



*Right: The Abingworth Nursery site February 2015*

## Snapes Corner

The planning inspectors continued their remorseless quest to urbanise the countryside by allowing 75 more houses to be built off Water Lane in the south of the Village. Not to be left behind, Gladman Developments have announced they wish to build a further 107 houses on land adjacent to that, extending north towards Greenhurst Lane. A lot of time and painstaking research was done on behalf of the Parish Council and residents in the formulation of the Neighbourhood Plan; one of the significant findings was that there was no requirement to build any more houses on greenfield sites in the parish.

The Water Lane and Abingworth proposals will meet local needs (and some would argue that even these are too much!) and unless there are political reasons for the urbanisation of the countryside, there do not appear any logical grounds for the application to succeed. But on the other hand, when have planners demonstrated logic or even common sense?

## Parish Boundary to be Altered?

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, the Parish Council has said it has received a comment from Storrington and Sullington Parish Council that it wishes to incorporate Water Lane, Crescent Rise, Hillside Walk and, no doubt, Snapes Corner into its parish boundary. Interestingly, in the brochure for Gladman Developments, they assume (wrongly) that Snapes Corner is already part of Storrington. It is our view that this proposal of unification is not wanted by the residents affected.

There are further implications. There is every danger that by being part of a larger conurbation, residents' council tax will increase and by the same corollary, the amount of Precept paid to Thakeham Parish Council would reduce, thereby necessitating a request for an increase, from the householders still in Thakeham, to meet recurring expenditure.

We would urge that this matter is taken up by the Parish Council and it is challenged strongly.

## The Small Plots off Duke's Hill and Coolham Road

Planning rules to allow acceptable development without the requirement for a planning application appear not to work well when the plot size is small. The rules look like they were designed for putting up sheds in gardens - not for little plots of land in an agricultural field. HDC's enforcement team seem to have difficulty in controlling these matters - see the photo.



*Left: The small plots off Duke's Hill*

## Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan has found its way through the local levels of bureaucracy, consultation within the village has taken place, the consultation draft has been sent to Horsham for their input and it is hoped it will not be long before it is considered by an Independent Examiner. We believe that practically all residents of the village are in favour, with the obvious exception of landowners wishing to flog their land for housing for a fast buck!

We understand that once a neighbourhood plan has been through the consultation period, local authorities have to take cognisance of it and we hope that HDC steps up to the plate and refuses any planning application that is not in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Vote Early & Vote Often!

Mayor Bill Thompson of Chicago is attributed with coining the phrase 'vote early and vote often' in 1915. He intended it as a type of electoral fraud so that he could pack in his supporters – we mean it in the sense that not only will there be a General Election in May but also District and Parish elections.

The District elections are politically based, we can only advise you to follow your political convictions when voting. The Parish elections are non-political we would urge any of you who have the interests of the village at heart, to put yourself up for election. Too many people think that being a member of the parish council is a waste of time and that nothing valuable is achieved. They could not be more wrong! Good parish councils are the heartbeat of a parish and, with the right members, can achieve much more than the sum of their parts. Look at the way the Neighbourhood Plan was compiled – this now carries statutory weight and will (we hope!) affect all decisions pertaining to the parish for the foreseeable future.

As you are all aware, the Parish Council, traditionally, finds it difficult to find members to sit and deliberate the (generally) mundane matters that have an immediate effect on us in the Parish. Normally they have to 'take soundings' and co-opt volunteers to assist them. It is a thankless task and they are often damned instead of being praised for putting their spare time to benefit of us all. 'The Vicar of Dibley' is a cruel parody of what appears to happen in council meetings. Nevertheless, your Parish Councillors are important with the devolution of powers to a local level – if nothing else, they decide how to spend part of your Council Tax.

We would urge you to put yourself forward so that if, for no other reason, we have an election as any Parish election is something of a rarity and in any event will be non-party political (which, after the tedium of the General Election, must be a bonus)!



## Did You Know? - The Penn Stone

By the entrance to Abingworth, there is a large piece of limestone with an inscription put there by the Quakers of the 'Blue Idol' next to Coolham.

There is a (probably) apocryphal story that this was placed there by Canadian soldiers waiting for D-Day stationed at Abingworth during World War 2. William Penn lived at Warminghurst and is credited with founding the State of Pennsylvania in the USA. The story goes that the Canadians used the stone as a road block and told the Americans, based in Sullington, that Penn preached from the stone. The fact is, that Quakers don't preach – as such; they practise 'waiting worship' and occasionally feel the need to speak out, so it seems unlikely that Penn 'preached'.



*Above: Penn Stone*

## Membership

As stated previously, we want as many people as possible to become members of TVA. Membership is open to all who support TVA's aims and has remained in the same format since inception - £5 per household, irrespective of how many people live in a household.

We also receive donations in lieu of or in addition to the membership fee and all income is gratefully received. Membership numbers have varied over the years, as have cash donations. Membership fees help to fund expert advisors and witnesses.

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### 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](mailto:thakehamva@yahoo.co.uk)

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