



Good News and Worrying News

Editorial: Mushroom Sites Proposals - Overview & Some Specifics: Knepp Castle Picnic Concert: Laybrook - Victory! : Laybrook - The Waste Framework threat

Editorial

Spring brings with it both good news and worrying news for our community's future. The good news is Cory's withdrawal of its planning application for landfill at Laybrook. Whilst this is great for Thakeham and the surrounding communities, it is important that we engage with the WSCC consultation on minerals and waste, as Laybrook quarry could be allocated for waste in the future.

The worrying news is the future of Thakeham's mushroom sites. The recent exhibition and meeting showed us proposals not radically different from those announced more than a year ago - which were rejected by both the District Council and Parish Council and it therefore follows that these should be rejected as well.

For now, let's celebrate the Laybrook victory, help fill our funding shortfall - and enjoy the picnic concert at Knepp Castle.

Mushroom sites proposals - Overview

On Thursday 25th March, Abingworth Developments and Sussex Mushrooms presented their proposals for 146 houses and further mushroom growing buildings on the mushroom sites. Those attending the meeting and exhibition saw professional presentations by the developers who sought to convince all of the benefits of their proposals. The principal news was that they intend to submit planning applications sometime "in the Spring".

It is important to note that Thakeham is categorised by Horsham DC as a village "with a more limited level of services which should accommodate only small-scale development or minor extensions that address specific local needs". Also, all of the land is outside the village built-up area, where rural policies to protect the countryside are in force.

TVA says to put up some 150 houses on this 55 acre greenfield site which is practically all farmland and playing fields, in a small village, is ridiculous. It would completely change the character of the village to a dormitory town, the rural roads could not take the traffic, the school would be overwhelmed, the harm that would cause to the character of this area does not bear thinking about.

Moreover, the proposals disregard national and Horsham DC policies to make efficient use of land in sustainable locations and to provide affordable (social) housing in places where there is plenty of public transport. Both sets of policies demonstrate that, if development of this size is to be permissible, it has to be in the right location. Thakeham is manifestly not the right location.

With regard to Sussex Mushrooms's wish to invest in the site, it was said at the meeting that Sussex Mushrooms is now a profitable business and therefore TVA believes that investment funding from banks and SEEDA (the South East England Development Agency) should be available for the work the company believes is necessary. In TVA's view, dealing with the nuisance of the mushroom smells is not a valid reason to permit a housing estate, the smell should be dealt with anyway.

Mushroom sites - Some specifics

For the Abingworth housing estate: Development is planned to cover 25 acres of the whole 55 acre Abingworth Nursery site. Of this, some 80% (20.5 acres) is now either grassed or trees, including the playing field, and 20% (4.5 acres) is agricultural buildings. All of the land is classified as greenfield, apart from the builders yard to the south.

For the Chesswood (Main) site: Three new buildings for mushroom production, total

footprint 4.5 acres, on green fields. No existing buildings to be removed. The field between the existing buildings and South Hill (opposite The Street) to be used for 4-acre growing sheds, said to be dug into the hillside so that they would not be easily seen.

Individuals made the following points at the meeting held after the exhibition:

- how could Thakeham First School cope with the extra demand;
- how much extra traffic would be generated by the new houses;
- how would the infrastructure (water, sewerage, etc) services cope;
- what would happen if the application is refused;
- how would the ecology of the area be protected.

In addition, it was said at the meeting that the promoters of development was a new company called Abingworth Developments Ltd. The principal director of this company is Mr Tim Bryant, who was previously a director of Beamsync Ltd. According to Mr Bryant, Beamsync (owned by Bee Bee Developments) has decided it is not interested in promoting any development of the site.

Knepp Castle Picnic Concert

Tickets will soon be on sale for the second Knepp Castle Picnic Concert, to be held on Sunday 13th June. Gates open at 2pm and live music is from The Fragilistics, The Hit Squad and The Sirens.

Bring your own picnic, a bar will be provided. A fabulous family afternoon to celebrate the Laybrook victory and to raise much needed funds for TVA. Entry is by ticket only. For more information contact Dawn on 01798 817312.

With grateful thanks to all who have helped raise around £30,000 so far. Your support has been vital to enable our victory. But the costs of consultants, specialist planning advice and legal support have been over £40,000. Hence the need for further fundraising to cover the current shortfall in funds and to help continued engagement with WSCC and others.

Laybrook - Victory!

You may have read we achieved a stunning victory to save our community from the threat of a non-inert, rotting rubbish, landfill at Laybrook. On 3rd March, Cory Environmental withdrew its planning application, saying it had reviewed its options and decided to withdraw "in the light of this review and after having regard to diminishing Government support for landfill".

TVA says that Cory has taken the only sensible option open to it. The reasons for rejecting the application were so overwhelming and the proposal flew in the face of national opinion that we should deal with our waste in an environmentally friendly manner and not leave it to rot in holes in the ground.

Whilst Cory has left the door open to think of other waste uses for Laybrook, TVA will engage with WSCC to try to prevent any such possibility. Not only do the arguments that the B2133 is incapable of taking any increase in heavy vehicles still stand, Laybrook is an active clay quarry with many years of life left. The existing condition, that once clay quarrying has finished, the area should be restored to be a lake, should remain.

Laybrook - The continuing Waste Framework threat

Whilst Cory may have decided against a landfill at Laybrook, that does not mean the threat of a rotting rubbish landfill has gone away. Laybrook is still listed in the County Council's waste planning process, the "Minerals and Waste Development Framework" or MWDF, as a possible non-inert waste site. The next stage of the MWDF process, the Preferred Options stage, is due for consultation later this year. Members of TVA will be continuing to lobby County councillors and officers that Laybrook should be deleted, but to date there seems to have been a steadfast wish to keep the site in the list. However, TVA wonders how Laybrook could be considered as a possible non-inert landfill site when a commercial operator has decided not to proceed.