



Crunch time for the countryside

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Editorial

This issue is shorter than normal, but we just wanted to quickly bring you up to date with what's happening as decision time for our village is drawing near. The proposal to build 146 houses on the Abingworth nursery site has met with wide-spread (although not universal) opposition. The parish councils of Thakeham and Storrington, environmental organisations and ordinary villagers all agree that this development is in the wrong place and cannot be sustained by the local infrastructure. TVA also has serious doubts about the so called 'enabling' argument and doubts that building lots of houses in our village can in any way guarantee the survival of the mushroom business. Your last chance to make your voice heard is at the planning committee meeting which is currently scheduled to take place in March – more of which below.

If you want to make your voice heard on a more regular basis, there is a chance to stand for office as a parish councillor. The parish council represents the community on a wide range of issues, including the environment, planning and the improvement of open spaces and community facilities. See details at the end of this newsletter.

Mushroom Sites - D Day is Dawning!

It is a long time since we first made objections to build 146 houses on Abingworth nursery and growing sheds and other buildings on the main Chesswood site. Horsham District Council (HDC) has indicated that it intends to make a decision on the applications at its planning committee meeting on Tuesday 15th March, starting at 2 pm at the Council's offices. Once the date of the planning meeting is confirmed, details will be posted on the TVA website: www.thakehamvillageaction.org.

As you probably know, the central argument put forward by the developers is that £2.7

million of the profits from building these houses will be given to Sussex Mushrooms to develop their business – a so called 'enabling development'. However, Sussex Mushrooms say they need to invest at least £10 million to survive and become competitive – otherwise the future of the business is in doubt.

TVA has met the Council's case officer on three occasions – twice concerning the viability of the project as a whole and once regarding planning issues such as transport and landscape character. In a second submission to HDC, TVA said that viability has not been proved and that there are serious doubts concerning several financial issues.

Official bodies, including West Sussex County Council, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Southern Water, have either objected or have significant reservations on the project. Both Thakeham Parish Council and Storrington & Sullington Parish Council have objected to the proposals.

TVA argues that the proposals are a colossal departure from the government's planning policy and the reasons offered by the developers to override the rules do not add up. We would like to see the mushroom business continue – but not at the expense of a large housing estate and the loss of many of our fields.

The future of our community and its ability to retain its well-loved character or to lose it under a housing estate will be decided soon.

...and When Will We Ping the Pong?

It does not matter if the planning applications for the mushroom sites are refused or permitted – under the new Environmental Permitting regulations the bad smells will

have to stop anyway. However, the timing is uncertain as the regulations say that the permit has to be applied for by 1st October 2011, not that the smell has to stop by then. As long as Horsham DC's environmental health department is satisfied that measures to stop the smell are in hand, Sussex Mushrooms will get a short while to implement them. However, stopping the pong now could easily be achieved by bringing in ready-made compost, instead of importing the compost components to make it on site (which is what causes the smell) and of course this does not depend on a new building being permitted. Is it just us or has the pong been worse recently?

Land next to Venters

In the summer of 2010, a planning application for ten houses on land next to Venters on Storrington Road, near Snapes Corner, was made. Its landowner, St Mary's Church Thakeham, wants to fund repair work on the church by using the money raised from selling the land. This planning application was refused by Horsham DC in November of last year. The applicants, Croudace Homes, have now made a second application to build eight houses rather than ten. The application id is DC/11/0111.

Although we still have concerns about this development within TVA relating to its sustainability and countryside location, we note that the number of houses has been reduced and we are in the process of responding to the amended proposal.

Village Cricket

Peter Jones has recently been elected president of the West Chiltington and Thakeham Cricket Club and tells us about the long history of cricket in this area. As far back as 1864, there was a newspaper

report of a match between the two villages (which have more recently joined forces). The two-innings match ended in a narrow victory for Thakeham and was followed by refreshments at the White Lion Inn provided "in a very praiseworthy fashion". It is interesting to note that in the second innings, the last six West Chiltington batsmen were out for nought. Maybe their minds were on the forthcoming refreshments rather than the game?

In his role as president, Peter wants to continue the club's rapid expansion of both junior and senior sections and invites those interested to a club registration evening at the Pavilion Recreation Ground in West Chiltington on Friday 15th April. Junior registration (under 7 to under 16) takes place 5.30 – 7.30 pm and adults' registration from 7.30 pm. Weather permitting, there will be a barbecue. The club also wishes to raise a girls' team (ages 10-13). Any further information can be gained from the club's website www.westchiltingtonandthakehamcc.co.uk or by phoning Peter Jones on 01798 813222.

Parish Council Elections

After no parish council elections in living memory, we have lately been getting into the habit of electing our parish councillors! The next election is on 5th May. If you want to help look after the community, or help make the changes our community wants – then put your name forward to become a parish councillor. For full details on how to apply contact the Parish Clerk, John Denman, by telephone on 01798 815305 or email on clerk@thakehampc.plus.com. If you want to find out what being a parish councillor is really like, then talk to one of the current councillors. Your village needs you!

Thakeham Village Action - Membership Subscription

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
(1st house on left immediately after the school),

or 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 _____