



Autumn 2010 - Issue 3

Theale Newsletter

Welcome to the Issue 3 of the Theale Newsletter, published by *Theale's Future*. Please contact us (see back page) with any feedback, suggestions, or offers of assistance.



2010 Trees for Theale in 2010

Theale will soon be a greener place to live and work, with the planting of 2,010 new trees in and around the village. The scheme, designed to coincide with National Tree Week (Nov 27th - Dec 5th) is the brainchild of Ricky Josey, of the local Theale's Future (TF) group.



He says: "The trees are being supplied from different sources. TF has applied for, and been awarded, a Woodland Trust Community Trees pack of 420 trees. Along with West Berks funding, private donations, and corporate sponsorship we are approaching our target of 2,010 trees, but we're still a few short. If you would like to get involved in tree planting, sponsoring trees or would just like to know more, please email us at environment@thealevillage.com. A whole week of activities around the planting is planned. Help is coming from corporate volunteers, local organisations, schools and conservation groups. As well as planting, we will be staging talks and organising walks. A full calendar of events will be available at the end of October, and published on www.thealevillage.com."

IKEA in Calcot: blessing or curse?

Village website:
www.thealevillage.com
Email:
info@thealevillage.com

Andy Lynam writes: The proposed IKEA megastore alongside Sainsbury's in Calcot (on the current Homebase site) seems to be provoking much soul-searching in the village. It's hard not to welcome the creation of 400 jobs, and the easy availability of low cost, functional, but generally attractive furniture and household items. Not to mention cheap hot dogs. But on the debit side, we face a traffic nightmare.

The Swedish giant's PR team rolled into Theale on Monday September 20. The presentation at the village hall was well attended, with around 150 visitors in the first 90 minutes. It was clear that increased traffic was the main concern, and even the IKEA representatives acknowledged that without any plan to build a new slip road from the M4, access to the proposed new site is likely to create severe congestion at times.

IKEA are keen to hear residents' views before the application is formally submitted in October. See www.ikea-calcot-consultation.co.uk for more information.

Green Drinks: Enjoy a drink and a chat about local / environmental issues: see Page 3

Dog fouling - a plea

Fancy helping out on the village website?
Email:
andy@thealevillage.com

One of the actions in the Parish Plan aims to reduce the amount of dog fouling in the village. To make progress with this, the West Berkshire Neighbourhood Wardens have been engaged to assist in educating dog walkers and reminding the public of the consequences of allowing dogs to foul in public places. This programme is in progress now, and due to run until October, after which time recommendations will be made for locations for additional dog litter bins and re-positioning of existing bins. If you see dog foul, please post a reply to the discussion on the forum at www.thealevillage.com so we can advise the wardens where bins may be required! Alternatively, please email andy@thealevillage.com

Village plan update

The Village Plan was produced in 2009 based on a village-wide questionnaire the previous year. If you are new to the village, or would like a new copy they are available from the Parish Office, the Library or from the Theale's Future Committee. Just email us and ask for a copy. As a reminder for everyone these are the key topics from the results and the ones TF are working on. If you have any ideas or concerns about any of the items then let us know at info@thealevillage.com. The aims are to help make the village...

SAFER, by:

- Reducing speeding and enhancing traffic calming.
- Reopening a manned Theale police station.
- Creating pedestrian crossings outside the Co-op, Lloyds bank and medical centre.
- Increasing take-up of Neighbourhood Watch schemes.



PROSPEROUS, by:

- Fostering a greater spirit of community, for instance by promoting community events.
- Increasing the purchase/awareness of local produce.

HEALTHIER, by

- Improving the performance of the sewerage and storm drainage in Theale.
- Promoting a Good Neighbour scheme.
- Increasing bicycle usage.
- Improving provision for young people.
- Reinstating Theale swimming pool.

GREENER, by:

- Reducing dog fouling.
- Developing an effective environmental group.
- Creating a Village Design Statement.

MORE ACCESSIBLE, by

- Campaigning for a footbridge over the A4 to link the village with Arlington Business Park.
- Improving Theale train station access.
- Improving access from Theale to the farm shop at Wickcroft Farm.
- Keeping Theale residents informed about local facilities and events.
- Encouraging wider availability of bus timetables.

Neighbourhood Watch

Jim Barron writes: Following the item in last summer's newsletter, I contacted Thames Valley Police to find out more about Neighbourhood Watch. Seven households in my street expressed an interest in forming a group. After a security check I attended an induction session at Pangbourne police station where I was given signs to attach to streetlamps (with permission from the Highways Agency). I now receive messages from Thames Valley Police Community Messaging via email, and pass these on to the members of the group. The existence of the group hasn't completely eradicated crime from the street, but being in the group has increased the community spirit, and can offer financial benefits. There are currently 6 Neighbourhood Watch groups in Theale. "You don't need to form a Neighbourhood Watch group to receive messages: you could join the Community Messaging scheme. If you're interested in either of these, please contact Deborah Morton at Thames Valley Police on 01635 264718 or email her at deborah.morton@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk.





Drink to the environment

Fancy a pint and a chat about local environmental issues? Theale Green Drinks is an informal monthly gathering of Theale residents and workers. It's free to attend and happens on the second Tuesday of the month at The Crown, starting at 6:30pm. There is no formal agenda or speeches! Topics of discussion vary by month, so if you have an idea Theale could benefit from, or would like to see a change to something already happening, then come along and discuss it! We'll be pleased to see you. www.greendrinks.org



Christmas starts on 3 Dec

Theale's Christmas lights will be turned on on Friday December 3rd this year. As usual, we are expecting plenty of festive events to accompany the big switch-on. For details, check www.thealevillage.com nearer the time.



Eat Local:

Good news for local food fans. Check out the **5-a-Day Community Garden** opposite Englefield garden centre. Open for fresh fruit and veg sales every Wednesday and Friday 11am - 5pm. www.fiveaday.org.uk.

Also, **Fielders Farm Shop** has opened at Wickcroft Farm on the A340. www.fieldersfarmshop.co.uk

Would your community like a Good Neighbour Scheme?

64% of Theale residents who responded to the Village Questionnaire would support one. So what is a Good Neighbour Scheme? It's a local Voluntary group who are willing to give help and support to others in the community in a number of ways. The people who may need support may be older people, people with disabilities, single parents and young mothers. There are those who are temporarily in need of support through illness and also any one who may be isolated within the community.

If you have a couple of hours a week to spare and would like to set up a Good Neighbour scheme please contact andy@thealevillage.com with your details.

Beating a path to the farm shop

Improved access to the Farm Shop at Wickcroft was identified as a possible solution to increasing the purchase of local food. In particular, a footpath was suggested.

The proposal to West Berks was investigated by the Highways Agency, who reviewed the area and produced a proposal. This included land purchase for the path, movement of existing signs to allow safe passage, and a new path being laid.

The total cost was estimated at £50k, a price considered by the council to be too high to be justified in current economic circumstances. Theale's Future is looking into alternate access route(s). Any suggestions can be emailed to: environment@thealevillage.com

A bridge too far for the council?

The need for a footbridge over the A4, to help connect the Arlington Business Park to the village, has long been talked about. In 2006, West Berks Council conducted a survey, but stipulated that there needed to be further development within the park. Had the planned development occurred, safety improvements would have been made during 2007/8 and a footbridge constructed during 2009/10. A draft design for a bridge was created, but development of the park did not take place as expected, and funding is not currently available to build one.

There are, however, plans to update the roundabout junction where A4, Waterside Drive and Hoad Way meet to make the junction safer. Work is expected to start in October and finish before Christmas this year. More detail is available (including a link to the 2006 survey) on the forum at www.thealevillage.com.

Developer appeals Pincents Hill decision

Blue Living have lodged an appeal against West Berkshire Council's decision in February to reject the redevelopment of Pincents Hill to build 750 homes.

The argument against the redevelopment is based on the loss of green space and the lack of infrastructure in place to cope with the increase in the number of people into the surrounding areas.

Concerned residents should remember that the go-ahead for the development at the west end of the village was also rejected, before being allowed on appeal, without much publicity. More information about the campaign against the development is available at www.savepincentshill.co.uk and www.savecalcot.co.uk



Theale's Future

Vacancies

If you are interested in getting involved with local issues we currently have vacancies for two roles:

Secretary - required to attend monthly meetings, take minutes and distribute to Theale's Future members. To support the Chair in organising each meeting.

Publicity Officer - to contact local press, radio to promote the activities of Theale's Future. To be responsible for the advertising of the achievements and plans of Theale's Future. If you can help, please email us at info@thealesfuture.org

Are you a business owner?

Theale's Future is keen to work with local businesses to understand the concerns of the business community, and to ensure that your views are represented. If you run, or work for, a local business, please get in touch, and we will be happy to tell you more.

andy@thealevillage.com

Website help

Are you interested in helping to maintain the village website, www.thealevillage.com?

We are always on the lookout for new ideas and perspectives.

If interested, please email andy@thealevillage.com

Theale Station disabled access - update

Andy Button writes: Although it's happening very slowly, progress is actually being made...! An initial meeting was held on 16th September between First Great Western (FGW), West Berks Council (WBC), and members of Theale's Future and the Parish Council. Both FGW and WBC listened carefully to what we had to say, and it was generally agreed that improving the access to Theale station was a good idea. Two possible solutions (ramps and lifts) were discussed in detail. As ever, money is the main stumbling block, however, FGW and WBC have agreed to try to identify funding for a detailed feasibility study. This is clearly a project that is going to take some time - we will keep you posted.

It is also interesting to have learnt that Reading Borough Council have independently identified access to Theale station as a problem. The more people and organisations we can get on board with us, the better the chance of something actually happening.

Christmas disruption: You may be aware that Reading Station is going to be closed from Christmas until the New Year - this will be the first of a number of closures over the next few years to enable rebuilding work, including the addition of five new platforms. During these closures Theale station will become the 'railhead' for all services that normally run through Theale towards Reading. A temporary platform will be built between the goods line and the car park, with a ramp to allow disabled access. Further details will be published at www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/reading.

Theale swimming pool plans resurface

In the village survey, the desire for a local swimming pool was one of the most popular facilities requested, with a startling 82% of the respondents in favour. Interest remains strong, and several steps have been taken to test the viability of a swimming pool by the Theale's Future steering group.

Possibilities previously considered included resurrecting the Theale Green School pool, as well as the feasibility of building a pool at Denefield to serve the local community, but both these plans have been dropped. For 4 years or so, little progress has been made.

The latest activity was to talk to West Berks Council concerning the strong interest, and to review the possibility of finding a site for a local pool. This is now under review, with a decision imminent. Finances are clearly tight at the moment but a strong plea was made on behalf of the village to the council and this, reportedly, will be taken into account when making their decision.

New MP in Theale

Theale's newly elected MP, Alok Sharma, attended the monthly Theale's Future's Committee Meeting at the Red Lion on Aug 17th to learn more about the group, find out what has been achieved so far and listen to the plans for the future.

An overview of the Action Plan derived from the village questionnaire was completed with some insightful suggestions being supplied by Mr Sharma, including drainage performance, the planned Good Neighbour scheme, provision for young people and the A4 crossing projects.

Theale gym needs you

Take a look at the newly refurbished, 15-station gym at Theale Green Community School, open to the public during term time from 4pm - 10pm Monday to Friday, and all day Saturday and Sunday (and during school holidays). It's a great local facility, and excellent value for money compared to the big chains. As well as the gym, there are plenty of fitness classes to take part in. Most villagers don't seem to know it's there, so it tends to be underused. Take a brisk walk down to the school today, and follow the signs to the recreation centre.