

Record of Meeting to Form Rawdon Billing Action Group 7pm, 30th March 2012 – Emmott Arms, Rawdon

Speakers

BC – Cllr Brian Cleasby, Horsforth

DC- Cllr Dawn Collins, Horsforth

DI – Dr David Ingham, WARD

GB – Graham Booth, Menston Action Group and WARD

GL – Cllr Graham Latty, Guiseley and Rawdon

GM – Greg Mulholland, MP Leeds NW

SA - Stuart Andrew, MP Pudsey MP

SE – Dr Steve Ellams, Menston Action Group and WARD

Nearly 200 people turned up, filling three rooms, with some having to leave as they could not hear or even get further than the stairs. .

DI, opened, telling the meeting about Rawdon Billing, and the role of WARD, and the aim to set up both an action group and a separate neighbourhood forum for Aireborough; both to combat any harmful development. Stressed that being on the committee was not an easy task, and dedicated people with relevant skills wanted. List to fill in for being on the committee; slips to fill in for being on the neighbourhood forum; and a bucket to start a fund for Rawdon Billing Action group, which would be looked after by WARD until the Action Group was ready.

SA, stressed the need to get organized now, and to start pulling together the research and evidence about the use of the Billing that would be needed to combat planning applications. The new NPPF revolved around evidence. Also, advocated that as many people as possible comment on the current Leeds Plan with its SHLAA allocations, which they only had a short time to do before the closing date

GL, remonstrated about the neighbourhood forum, and producing a local plan for Aireborough (Guiseley and Rawdon) as there was no Parish council. This was the only way people would be able to shape the area they lived in, and what it would look like, without it the community would be at the mercy, as they had been, of planners and developers.

Questions and Answers

1. Gentleman [local historian] talked about the historic and wellbeing importance of Rawdon Billing to the community. Said that the Land Agents for the Trust were based miles away from Rawdon (outside Yorkshire) and so could not have any feeling for the area. Rawdon, is sandwiched between the built up areas of Horsforth and Yeadon is a village still with it's own long history . The Billing is a unique place of beauty used for many years by families and people wanting to get into the peace and quiet of the countryside and to enjoy the fantastic views. To give this up for the sake of profit for The Rawdon Trust would be a tragedy.

2. No one has told us why houses are needed? There are 15,000 empty houses in Leeds ?

DI - Developers want the most profitable land, and that is green; they landbank brownfield land to get it; and they keep permissions until the conditions are right to build. They don't care about the aftermath of their development

3. What about the footpaths on the Billing what will happen to them. It is a beauty spot, and a place tourist go to watch planes. [ie it brings in some income to the area]?

BC- None of the footpaths are designated, but we have collected the 21 year evidence to do so. Rawdon was 36th on the list of areas to be looked at, this will now be done in 2013. Paths Dept at Leeds short of money and staff!! Need to look at route of paths so would be able to list land as farmland, with paths going around the edge of fields. There was a need to act responsibly with an eye to the future. But this area would not be dropped.

4. Who or what are the Rawdon Trust?

Land agent for the Emmott family from Lancashire. Have no link with Rawdon. DI compared the value of farmland at £3,000 an acre for grazing with the price if it had planning permission which was 100 times more.

5. I live in Guiseley and it takes me 1hour 5min to get to Leeds at peak times. Do the SHLAA allocations take account of the infrastructure.?

SA – Explained the SHLAA, and that the questioner was correct that roads, schools and doctors were full already. Stressed this was why people HAD to feedback now on the draft local plan, it was very important

DC – The problem is that we've been told the Billing could never be built on even though it is listed in the SHLAA, but we must not believe it. We all need to get ready with the information to help planners reject any planning applications

6. Why are we just talking about the Council decisions, isn't it the case that decisions are taken higher up at Central Government. We've all heard the talk about a growth agenda?

DI – This is why we are involving MP's. Clariant was stopped by Leeds, but overturned by an inspector, and the community has no right of appeal. This needs to be changed at the top.

GM – NPPF has made things a little better, but the equal right to appeal as an idea was thrown out of the Localism bill. Local communities (parish councils, neighbourhood forums) do need that. "I am astonished and outraged that the Billing, which is part in my constituency, is in the SHLAA at all. We have to get it out, so it will not be developed".

SA – We do also need to bear in mind that young people are trying to find low cost housing in the area, I get them and their parents in my surgery all the time. That is why we need the neighbourhood plan, to say where houses will go, and what type.

DC – Appeals are arising because there is no local plan. Leeds are late with this, if they had had it on time the area would have more protection.

7. An action committee is all well and good, but why can we not question now what is in the SHLAA.

SA - A neighbourhood forum could look at the SHLAA now and make comments. It could be done in tandem with what the council are doing, so it would be a shadow forum with the comments coming before all the neighbourhood planning is done.

8. Can we see the answers that the Rawdon Trust gave to [not heard]? In 1936 there was a covenant put on the Billing land to give “land and air” to the people of Rawdon. I’ve had dealings with the Trust and Mr Lees, who is part of it, is not going to back down easily. It is also the case that money from the land rental is supposed to go the poor children of Rawdon, where is that, and what will the Trust do with it?

GL – Unfortunately covenants have no weight with planning departments. “I could get planning permission on your garden, if I so wished. Of course I would then have to fight you for ownership of it.” The best course is a neighbourhood forum, producing a local plan, which then becomes part of the Leeds Local Development Framework. If we do nothing it will be the Planning Department who takes the decisions.

9. Why do we have to accept building at all. We come here to live because of the countryside, and fresh air, this is what we have worked hard for. Where are our rights? We keep hearing it is for growth, but it didn’t happen under the last Government and it will not happen under this?

SA – Children from the area do need houses. Talked about the population estimates in the Leeds plan, and the fact they had been brought down from those given. The census results would be out in June and maybe that would help look at the situation.

10. Soon we will have no countryside left, all the villages will join up: when will we join with Bradford? People need more than a house !!

SA – Exactly. That is why we need a neighbourhood plan with evidence behind it.

11. Is there a link between the by-pass and what is happening with the Billing – the seeking of planning permission by the Rawdon Trust?

BC – Rawdon Trust have seen an opportunity, yes. The Hungerhills Trust is doing the same. The neighbourhood plan is how we stop it. Leeds have been too ready to give away our employment land in the past to housing, now we need more employment land and the airport by-pass is the reason this has stirred up an opportunity.

GB – If Menston had realized that Bingley Road/Derry Hill had been taken out of green belt in Bradford’s unitary plans eight years ago, we would perhaps not have been in this position (fighting development) now. So Rawdon needs to stop this happening to the Billing now. “if you

snooze you lose". So you need an action group now to gear up. Rawdon does not have a Parish council so it needs a local neighbourhood plan.

12. Is all the Billing green belt? I had heard that some behind (Markham Avenue?) wasn't?

SA – examined map. There was a small area without full protection of green belt status.

DI – Builder work by getting a foothold on one piece of land, then everyone sighs with relief, that this is the start of development not the end; this may well be what is happening.

SE – In Menston I am looking at village green status with Open Spaces. It might be worth an action group for the Billing doing that. It would now cost £1,000 just to apply, but it could be worth it, if the conditions are right.

13. The Billing may be protected but what about other land towards Horsforth which isn't?

DI – Get Savilles sales document off the web and have a look at it.

14. Can we declare the Billing an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

SE - Go to Open Spaces, and join them. That is what Yeadon Banks have done. Explained Yeadon Banks situation and how long they have been fighting for it. But, you need to get solicitors on board with your group, or it will be too expensive. WARD could give advice on that.

Greg Mulholland had to go to another appointment. His final word was.

I have had a meeting with all the parties involved with Yeadon Banks and, preposterously, Yeadon Banks has been put in the SHLAA [gasp of amazement all round]. This is just incompetence on the part of Leeds Council, given they granted the Village Green status and the subsequent cost of the fight. This extraordinary incompetence is now seen with the Billing going in the SHLAA. There are two MP', nine councillors here tonight and we have to thank WARD for bringing us all together to fight this. They are all volunteers, but we need WARD more than ever to get things organized cross area boundaries. It really is preposterous that the Billing should ever be built on. We need to throw this out. The planning department in Leeds are incompetent, and the Rawdon Trust has no affinity with the local area. We will not have a single brick laid, we must stop this and we must organize professionally.

15. Is the Council selling any of their land as part of the Billing Sale?

GL and DC – need to find out what the council does own on the Billing. Council do put their land on the SHLAA.

Final meeting addresses to close.

DI – People who have put themselves forward for the Action Group will get an invitation to a further meeting. And there will be another for those interested in the neighbourhood forum.

SE – You must network, that was what we did in Menston. We talked to people, in the library, in the butchers, at church. Make sure people know what is happening and what they can do. This is what we learnt in Menston.

SA – This has been a powerful start to a great campaign. We have to protect the community that we value. United we stand and we can beat these developers.

Quotes Afterwards

Stuart Andrew – *“The turnout of so many people, and so many people turned away, demonstrates the strength of feeling and value local people put on an important community asset like the Billing. This clearly demonstrates we need to take advantage of the new National Planning Policy Framework,(NPPF) to give a greater voice to local people”*

Cllr Pat Latty – *“I was fascinated by the history of the Billing from the local historian at the beginning; in particular the story of Rawdon mill. It put the meeting on the right foot, and reminded us that we are just part of a continuum of people who have looked after that land; we need to save it for future generations, just as our forefathers did for us.”*

Cllr Graham Latty – *“When something that people love is in danger they come in their thousands. They come to be empowered; the fact they knew so little about it is a cause of deep concern.”*

Cllr Paul Wadsworth - *“People have come along tonight to offer assistance to fight the development. It is important to deal with this at an early stage, it has been proven that early intervention works. Hopefully, an Action Group will prevent a plan getting anywhere near an application”.*

Notes taken by Jennifer Kirkby, Friends of Parkinson’s Park and WARD