

Pleasley Hill Community News

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Issue 1

Call For New Community Group in Pleasley Hill

Pleasley Hill is often looked down upon as a poor, unsightly area. A place of drugs, anti-social behaviour, poverty and depression. In the 10 years I have lived here, I have experienced many negative reactions when I have told people where I live. The council are clearly embarrassed by the area, as frankly they should be. As any landlord should that lets his property fall in to the state of disrepair that this area has.

With the arrogance of authority, many councillors, politicians and members of the establishment display, it is easy to see how they confirm their opinions of this area on sight. The stigma attached to living in Pleasley Hill has even cost some people job interviews, credit, and who knows what else. In many ways it has cost the people of the area a quality of life and a dignity that most people take for granted. Mansfield Council has largely abandoned Pleasley Hill during my time here. As the Coal Board did before them. And although there has been much talk over the years of redevelopment, little has materialised in that time.

In a meeting on Wednesday 6th May of the Western Area Assembly, the residents of Pleasley Hill were given the latest date that the council expect to move forward with their plans. A date that has always been much like the date of the apocalypse. Predicted often, but is yet to actually

happen. Many residents said that this had been going on for 7, 10, and one said 15 years.

Regardless of whether or not the redevelopment of the area moves along as planned, it doesn't excuse the years of neglect, and the suffering of the residents. Every day we and our families have to walk streets filled with rubbish. Past empty house after empty house. Avoiding sewage from drains that have overflowed on our streets. Or watching out for needles callously left stuck in road crossing buttons. And we have to tolerate a stigmatised view of our homes.

Employers, and businesses are no better. Many now check out their potential employee's address on the internet. This generalises people unfairly. It degrades us and it tars everyone with the same brush, regardless of their personal circumstances. It is a prejudice just like racism, discrimination based on where we live. A popular site for this is upmystreet.com which says:

"Often, many of the people who live in this sort of postcode will be low income families living in terraced estates

Neighbourhoods fitting this profile can be found throughout the country, including in Motherwell, Knowsley, Dagenham, Hartlepool and Sunderland.

These are poor families in low-rise estates.

To be earning anything approaching an average income is rare. Long-term unemployment is high, and employment is routine factory or manual work.

Travel is on foot or by public transport since few own a car.

With money tight, food shopping might be in Aldi or Kwik Save.

In common with other low income types, the pub, betting, football pools, lottery and bingo are common activities and entertainments. One luxury might be cable TV."

Mansfield council also offer on their web site a "neighbour hood profile" which at best paints an ugly picture. It Describes in a cold detached way how the area is among the 10% most disadvantaged in the country. It details, categorises, and pigeon-

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Interesting Facts:

- Pleasley Hill amongst the 10% most deprived areas in the country
- Unemployment is at 20%
- 37% houses left empty.



The Gateway to Mansfield

holes the residents of Pleasley Hill as a series of numbers to be improved upon. Targets. A complex equation to be balanced.

But there is more to Pleasley Hill than people believe. We are not numbers, or profiles. We are people. We are a community.

As I walk around this area, I do see a community of people. People whose children play together. People who donate to each other, and people who share their skills and their labour when their neighbours need a hand. Yes there are divisions in our own community. But when we stop and think, we are united by so much. When I walk out my door, people are friendly, and talkative. What is lacking in Pleasley Hill is not community, but organisation. It is organisation that has brought about change for communities throughout history. It is organisation that makes authority listen. And it is organisation that has freed people throughout history.

An organised community has the strength to hold its council to account. The ability to enact change through pressure. And it has the power, if it so chooses to reject the authority of the council, and take control of its own future.

This newsletter is about addressing these issues. It is a call to all the people of Pleasley Hill to put aside any differences we may have, and to work together to create a future for ourselves. A future for Pleasley Hill in which we have a say. A future for ourselves in a time when the future we were promised is so uncertain.

This is a call for the formation of a group with the ability to shape the future of Pleasley Hill. Founded on the principles of shared circumstance and mutual aid. Between us we have the skills, adaptability and resources to set whatever target we want for our selves. And by acting in solidarity and union we have the ability to make our targets a reality.

New Community Group Will:

- Arrange a public meeting to discuss issues
- Engage with council to address some problems.
- Begin tackling problems in the area through direct action.
- Be accountable to the community.

Pleasley Hill Redevelopment

At a recent meeting of the Western Area Assembly, there was further discussion of the future of Pleasley Hill. Although Mansfield District Council opened by blaming the credit crunch for the continued delays, they claim to be still on track.

Developers were due to submit their proposals to the council by the 20th April. We understand that the council are now considering the proposals submitted by any potential developers, and will return to the residents after their meeting at the end of June. At some point a consultation process will start with residents, who either wish to be re-homed or choose to remain in the area.

Home owners in the area raised concerns about the recent drop in property values, due largely to the economic crisis and the state of the surrounding area. It was put forward that compensation would be paid to these residents, and that previously similar cases had received up to £20,000. However with homes losing their value and mortgages hard to come by, to some this offered little hope.

There were also concerns raised over monies and how much will be put in by the council and the developers, suggesting that no clear cost or budget has been established. And a local councillor pointed out that the residents had once been told that the money was allocated, only now to be told that the money needed to be raised. Some residents were left wondering about the cost of public art in the town centre, while they continue to live in a poorly

maintained and neglected environment.

Other residents raised concerns about already growing heating bills being exacerbated by empty properties on each side of their homes, pleading with the council to act.

Should the development move forward in June, it will be interesting to see how many of the requirements Mansfield council placed on the development are actually met. Mansfield Council's vision for Pleasley Hill as the Gateway to Mansfield is a lofty ideal. At the heart of their plan is the desire to transform the area in to a visually attractive "Gateway to Mansfield". They have also asked developers to show that they have considered a whole host of sustainable building methods, and energy saving measures. These include such things as water re-cycling, solar power, wind turbines, green roofs and much more. While we have found no reference to this project as an "eco-town" it is clear that the houses they would like build broadly fall in to this category. It was also noted that the portion of the development allocated for social housing would not end up as council properties. Instead they would be housing association houses, that many view as more expensive. We can only wonder how much rent will be demanded for these new houses. Especially from people who simply want to stay in the area. We also wonder how many of the eco-friendly features will be a part of the social housing.

Eco-houses are of course good news. New houses that are cheaper to run, and environmentally friendly can only be a good thing. So long as a premium is not demanded simply because of their features. One resident did ask if these plans were going ahead, and Mansfield Council's spokesman said that they were. Hopefully once a developer has been chosen, and the residents get to see the developer's proposals. Residents will be able to ensure that their interests are not neglected again.



Pleasley Hill and the Credit Crunch.

Anyone who has followed the news recently will be aware of the problems facing the world and the country. Politicians, bankers and big businesses are suffering more than they have in some years. Some call it the credit crunch, some call it the economic downturn or recession. But how does it effect the local people of Pleasley Hill?

It may seem a world away, but the effects of the "credit crunch" impact directly on communities just like ours. As the costs we face for our food, for our utilities and for just about everything we buy go up, our wages, and social security remain the same. In many cases incomes fall, through short time working, redundancies, and the like. At every stage it is the people that make sacrifices so companies can remain profitable. And as we lose our jobs we are told that with the coming reforms to the benefits system, we will soon have to work full time for benefit too. All this while unemployment rises, and politicians use tax payers money for all manner of frivolousness. They pump billions in to failing banks, who continue with their bonus culture using more tax money. And they spend billions upon billions on wars that are illegal under international law, that the people did not want, and that have achieved nothing but the loss of millions of innocent lives.

All of this money is ours. It could have been spent on the council's redevelopment project. It could have been spent on better crime prevention, youth facilities or any number of positive, constructive causes. Instead the government, the council, the big businesses - collectively the establishment - have neglected us. They have appeased us with promises. And as the establishment falls in to crisis, you can bet that Pleasley Hill, our community, and our lives are far from top of the agenda. But Pleasley Hill can little afford yet more unemployment, more poverty, and more deprivation. And it doesn't have to be that way.

Humans have not always had these problems. We were not always subjected to the will and the mistakes of big businesses. In days gone by and not so long ago, working class people were less dependent on companies, and more dependent on their peers, their friends, their families, and their community.

All we need to do is remember our history. Not many years ago, during and after the wars, communities pulled together to help in any way possible. There was a shared sense that "we are in it together". It happened again in the 80's with soup kitchens and other activities to support the miners strike. And it must happen again now, because the only people who are going to look out for the interests of our community are us.

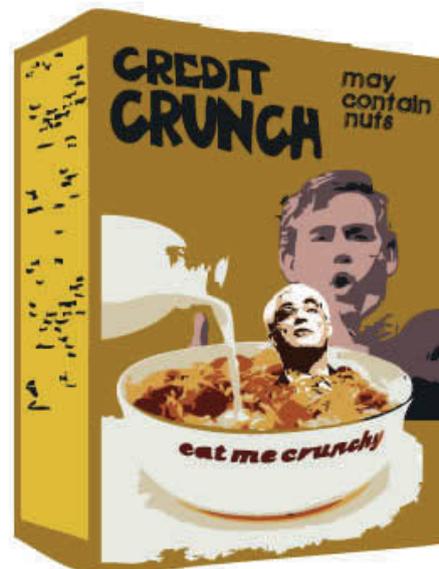
Unfortunately, over the last half a century, businesses have gradually stepped in to commoditise everything. Ensuring that it is easier to just buy something than it is to make it, grow it, or otherwise produce it.

It is not uncommon now to find young families who spend their limited food budgets on processed, chemical ridden, supermarket food. When with only a little help and education, they could be eating healthy, home grown, organic food for free. By commoditising everything, turning everything in to a product, it ensures not only that they make the profits, but that important skills and knowledge are lost to communities and younger generations. It further divides the consumer from the producer. It further divides people socially, through less local interaction. And it ruins local businesses and tasks away the choice of the consumer. Leaving only their inferior, low quality, price-fixed goods.

By breaking up local communities, and reducing the chances of local employment, people are forced to look further afield for work. This adds further to the problem, by giving people less time in the place where they live. They have no time to care about it, or the problems of their neighbours. They have no time to get to know one another. And because no shared sense of ownership of the area develops, the area falls in to disrepair. Only small groups of friends remain to complain to each other about the state of the area, and feel powerless to do anything about it. But this can change if we want it to.

We are taught from an early age that we must be successful, work hard and do what our bosses say. Anyone who questions the logic or chooses to live differently, is alienated and rejected, singled out and persecuted. Ridiculed by the people who blindly follow the establishment, and who have far more in common with their target of ridicule than they do with the establishment.

We have been raised to believe that we must live to work. Upon leaving school we are expected to give up the vast majority of our waking lives in the quest to make more profit for our bosses. Never to question authority, and to accept that someone else always knows better than us. We as people need to realise that our interests and the interests of "our



bosses", the council and the government are not the same. Making ever more profit is not in our best interests. Our interests lie in the future of our children, the quality of our homes and our environment. They are in ensuring we have food on our plates, and roofs over our heads. And if we can organise together, we have the resources at our disposal right now to provide all of these things for our selves.

In short, the problems in Pleasley Hill are, and always have been, the interests and profits of businesses, councils and governments - of capitalism - taking precedent over the lives of people. The truth is that the economic crisis can't do much that capitalism has not already done to Pleasley Hill. But unlike them, we have the power to change it. To make our own fate. And not be slaves to their boom and bust system.

There are ideas and examples in this country of how we can change Pleasley Hill for the better. We have many ideas. There are skilled people from all walks of life living among us. Everyone has something to offer, whether they know it or not. And everyone can gain from the support of their neighbours.

We believe that with the formation of a new community group, we can help everyone in Pleasley Hill enjoy a better environment, crisis or not.

Let's Get Started!

This leaflet has been published to determine interest for a new community group of some kind. It may take the form of a residents association, a community action group, a campaign group or something altogether different. Perhaps even many groups!

The ideas and principles that have been presented here are not set in stone. They are open to debate. You have a choice over what happens in your area. And if you have an interest in anything that has been said I urge you to make contact with me. I accept that people have different views and I welcome both support and criticism.

A small number of people have already shown an interest in forming a new group, and we hope to organise a public meeting soon, to determine the aims principles and direction of the group. And indeed if there should be a group. It is the choice of the community. We have many ideas to put forward, and we would like to know what you think, and how you feel about them. Hopefully we will aim not to be a political extension to the council or any other system, but a group that takes action to improve the quality of life in Pleasley Hill. We would like to try and address every problem in the area, and with organisation we can do it.

So if you would like to talk about anything you have read, want to know more or have ideas of your own, please contact me any way you like. My name is Mark Jones and I have lived within the same hundred yards for the last ten years. I only live just around the corner from you. Number 9 Hillmoor Street. Email me at mark.jones180@ntlworld.com

What can we achieve?



Looking around Pleasley Hill

- Fly-tipping and rubbish. Hold the council to account over neglect of the area
- Push for progress and community involvement in the council's redevelopment project
- Address the empty property issues until re-development is underway.
- Build a network of community support to help each other through these times of hardship.
- Organise free youth activities, to address anti-social behaviour .
- Organise free workshops or skill share events for residents. For example, cooking on a budget. Basic DIY, or mechanical skills.