

Planning Control
Place Directorate
Babergh District Council
Corks Lane
Hadleigh
IPSWICH IP7 6SJ

July 2015

PLANNING APPLICATION NO B/15/00673 – PROPOSED MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AT HIGH TREES FARM, MOORES LANE, EAST BERGHOLT

I write on behalf of the Society to register the strongest possible formal **objection** to this application.

Although the precise site of this proposed development lies outside the Dedham Vale AONB it is immediately adjacent to it and, in the considered opinion of the Society, would have a seriously deleterious effect on East Bergholt, one of the most important and historic villages in the AONB. This addition of a large modern Housing Estate (however dressed up that is what it is) would alter the whole balance and ethos of the village. Two passages from the Design and Access Statement we find particularly difficult to accept. At Section 4.0. 5.it is said that “The large site offers the chance to *revitalise* an edge of the village with contemporary dwellings of high quality *organised in a coherent fashion*. The development will provide *an improved visible entrance to the village* and *create spaces reflective and expressive of the historic countryside*” (our italics). From where does the idea that this edge of the village needs “revitalising” come from? Half the charm of many of the villages in the AONB is that they are not “organised in a coherent fashion”. We do not accept that a very large Housing Estate dumped on the edge of the village will provide an “improved visible entrance to it”. The idea that the development will create spaces reflective and expressive of the historic countryside borders on the preposterous. At Section 4.2. it is said that “the desire is to create a development which respects the rural sentiment embodied in *Constable’s* paintings and promotes the character of the village which is picturesque and integrated within *his* countryside”. We do not accept that this desire is in any way realised by the creation of a large housing estate on a greenfield site on the outskirts of the village of his birth.

We are also disappointed to find (in the Planning Statement 4.8) that your Council has concluded that “...the proposed development is unlikely to potentially have a significant effect on the environment...” This conclusion does, of course, depend on what you mean by “significant” and “the environment” but we would contend that by any measure the effect on the environment of East Bergholt will be exceptionally significant.

Our fundamental objection is to the very large size of the proposal. It projects 144 dwellings with 389 bedrooms; allowing for double occupancy of one bedroom in the great majority this would result in an increase of at least 500 in the population of the village, almost 20%. It also projects at least 500 extra vehicles debouching onto the already heavily loaded B1070. While East Bergholt is a “core village” and has a substantial range of services we are somewhat surprised to learn that both the Health and Education authorities consider that this very large influx of new residents can be absorbed within

existing provision. Particularly in the case of the Health Centre, already under acute pressure, this seems unrealistic.

While we understand the pressures on your Council to provide large numbers of new dwellings within the District there is no explanation in the application as to what, if any, other sites were considered before a proposal for so large a number was accepted, even encouraged (there appears to have been extensive consultation with your officers) on a completely agricultural site on the edge of this village. Were brownfield sites eg at Brantham considered?

The Planning Statement cites the terms of your Core Strategy¹¹ several times in its support (eg at 8.4. 8.5.) and at 9.2 says “..developments for Core Villages, such as that proposed, will be approved ...*if the criteria in Policy CS11 are adhered to*”. We contend that the proposal remains seriously contrary to both the spirit and the letter of your own recently issued Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Rural Development and Core Strategy 11 (expanding on CS11) and to your Core Strategy 15.

For example the SPD states (at para 12) “The size and scale of the development should be proportionate to the settlement in which it is located” (it can not reasonably be so described).

“Proposals will need to demonstrate that the development can be accommodated without adversely affecting the character of the Village” (it can not).

At para 14 it is stated: “...proposals should meet *locally identified need*” (no evidence is advanced of any local need for an addition of this size).

Core Strategy 15 states inter alia: proposals “must/should respect the local context and character of the village” (it does not). Further it states: “the scale and nature of the proposal should:

- Respect the historic assets
- Make a positive contribution to the local character, shape and scale of the area

It will do neither of these things, indeed rather the reverse.

We are therefore of the strong opinion that the conclusion at 11.10 of the Planning Statement that the application is “consistent with (inter alia) CS11 and CS15” is entirely incorrect.

While we accept that the statement at 9.76 of the Planning Statement that the “effect on the Dedham Vale AONB is considered negligible” is correct in purely visual terms it is not so in terms of tranquillity or in the effect it would have on East Bergholt, a most important village within the AONB.

We most strongly urge your Council to reject this ill-conceived proposal so clearly contrary to your own criteria.

David Eking
Planning Secretary, Suffolk
For The Dedham Vale Society