

B/16/01365 Hopkins Homes Development

Land North and West of Capel Community Church, Days Green, Capel St Mary

Erection of residential development comprising 100 dwellings (including 35 affordable units) with associated vehicular access from Days Road, landscaping, open space, car parking and pedestrian links.

Capel St Mary Parish Council Recommendation to Babergh District Council

Following an Extraordinary Meeting on 15th November 2016 the Capel St. Mary Parish Council recommended **REFUSAL** of this application. This follows extensive local consultation with residents. The principal reasons for this decision are as follows and where appropriate we have highlighted in bold relevant sections of **Babergh Local Plan 2011-2031**.

- 1. LOCATION. Rural Housing and Core Strategy Policy CS11 Supplementary Planning Document July 2014 Para. 9** states that *'In considering the suitability of sites for development under CS11 the Council will have regard to the sequential approach. In the context of CS11 this means: In the first instance considering whether there are other available, suitable and deliverable sites within the built-up area of the village. If no suitable sites are available within the built-up area then the next preferred location is sites which adjoin the built-up area of the village'*. The Strategic Housing Land Allocation identifies several sites around Capel St. Mary which are currently being considered for development and these should be considered as part of this sequential process, but we are not aware that this has been done. The Hopkins Homes rating of the various other sites is overly simplistic and gives a false impression. In our view it is not helpful to consider these potential developments on a piecemeal basis. There is a real need for a strategic overview of how Capel is to be developed, in accordance with **Policy CS15 Implementing Sustainable Development in Babergh Para iv)**.
- 2. INFRASTRUCTURE.** The Parish Council had envisaged a fair share of 1050 homes along with other Core and Hinterland villages (**Babergh Local Plan 2011-2031 CS3 Strategy for Growth and Development**). It seems that this no longer applies. **Rural Housing Policy CS11 Para. 10** states that *'Proposals for both core and hinterland villages will need to demonstrate that the development can be accommodated without adversely affecting the character of the village and that the services, facilities and infrastructure have the capacity to accommodate it or will be enhanced to accommodate it. Where enhancements to facilities and services are required the impact that this will have on the viability of the proposal will be taken into account'*. We believe that there is a need for a complete review of the village infrastructure – roads, services, schools, open spaces and recreation – before any developments like this are approved. This review should also encompass the A12 which is already congested and dangerous, and will become more so. In general terms, we believe that this development has many positive points but has to be considered against the background of inadequate infrastructure. Should the Planning Committee be minded to give this development approval it is imperative that, in accordance with **Policy CS15 Implementing Sustainable Development in Babergh Para iv)** a full infrastructure survey is completed, and appropriate action taken or agreed, before erection of properties is commenced.
- 3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.** Following consultations held with our residents we have published our Parish Plan (February 2014), the results of a Drop-in Event co-hosted by BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL Planning Dept. (October 2015) and a Housing Needs Survey (July 2016) conducted jointly with BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL Planning Dept. These have consistently reinforced the

fact that, whilst development is expected, it should be limited to smaller groups of well-designed houses integrated within the existing village framework. The underlying need is for Starter homes and houses or bungalows suitable for the elderly. **Policy CS20 Rural Exception Sites** requires that *'the type of dwellings to be provided are consistent with the needs identified by the Housing Need Survey'*. Whilst the development of 100 homes proposed by Hopkins Homes goes some way to meet these needs it does not in our view comply with the requirements of **CS20** or of **Policy CS15 Implementing Sustainable Development in Babergh Para vi)**. The number of four/five bedroom properties should be reduced and the number of bungalows increased. Should the Planning Committee be minded to give this development approval it is imperative that, in accordance with **Policy CS19 Affordable Homes** there is no deviation allowed from the proposed provision of 35% affordable housing. Regarding sustainability, **Policy CS15 Implementing Sustainable Development in Babergh Para viii)** requires that the development must *'address climate change through design, adaptation, mitigation and by incorporating or producing sources of renewable or low – carbon energy'*. We do not believe that the plans submitted adequately address this requirement. One further concern relates to the lack of provision for street lighting throughout this development. Other areas of Capel St Mary are adequately lit and this is instrumental in maintaining the village as a low crime rate area.

4. **SITE ACCESS.** Days Road is, at the point of access to this development, narrow and dangerous with a footpath on one side only. The proposed road widening to 5m is in our view inadequate and it is difficult to see how this can be achieved. When nearby Dove Close was built, it was a condition that the road was widened – this was never enforced. The proposed footpath is too narrow at 1.5m bearing in mind some elderly residents of nearby Dove Close sheltered accommodation use mobility vehicles. They would need to cross the road to access the narrow footpaths, and cross back again where Days Road meets The Street. Two crossings within a short distance at dangerous junctions. The proposals do not comply with **Policy CS15 Implementing Sustainable Development in Babergh xvi)** *'promote healthy living and be accessible to people of all abilities including those with mobility impairments'*. Should the Planning Committee be minded to give this development approval it is imperative that road improvements are made before erection of properties is commenced, and that appropriate safety measures are incorporated into the design.
5. **TRAFFIC FLOW THROUGH VILLAGE.** Hopkins Homes have been unwilling to provide us with their detailed traffic flow data. To reach the A12 most traffic must drive past the Primary School and through the village centre. The existing traffic flow causes concerns, especially as it passes the drop-off and collection point for the Primary School. There are already problems with parking at this point of The Street, and the police carry out occasional checks. Increased traffic will exacerbate this problem and put our children at risk. The Parish Council in conjunction with County Councillor Jones have also previously looked at improving safety adjacent to the shops in the village centre with Highways Department. Again, greater traffic flow will cause greater problems. To avoid using The Street we envisage that Rembrow Road and Thorney Road will become *'rat runs'* with speeding vehicles, and there is evidence that this is already happening. It also seems probable that Pound Lane and Brook Lane, both narrow country lanes, will be used by vehicles returning from Colchester or Hadleigh to the proposed development and this would be very hazardous. We understand that SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL are currently modelling traffic flows through Capel St. Mary, based on mobile phone data. Should the Planning

Committee be minded to give this development approval it is imperative that the impact of increased traffic flows should be modelled to give accurate and up to date data, and any necessary road improvements carried out prior to commencement in accordance with **Policy CS15 Implementing Sustainable Development in Babergh Para iv).**

6. **HEALTH SERVICES.** There is considerable recent history of problems experienced by residents with the Constable Country Medical Practice in Capel. At one stage it was placed in Special Measures by the CQC. Getting an appointment remains difficult. Hopkins Homes state that there is capacity to deal with new patients. This is disputed by the NHS who has stated that the capacity of the existing premises will need to be increased and have asked for a CIL contribution. The Practice Manager has confirmed to the Parish Council that it is not possible to increase the capacity of the existing premises and that any increase in patient numbers will result in more Capel residents having to travel to East Bergholt for appointments. This would not be appropriate for an ageing population. The proposed development will not comply with the requirements of **Policy CS15 Implementing Sustainable Development in Babergh Para iv)** *'ensure an appropriate level of services, facilities and infrastructure are available or provided to serve the proposed development'*. Should the Planning Committee be minded to give this development approval it is imperative that any CIL grant awarded to the NHS contributes to the provision of a *'fit for purpose'* GP Surgery in Capel St. Mary.
7. **PARKING.** There is already congestion in the village shopping precinct, a problem that will be exacerbated by any new homes built. Parking is inadequate as the car park services the shops, village hall, library and doctors' surgery. Road side parking near the entrance to the car park, and road narrowing, make this a difficult area for both drivers and pedestrians. Regarding the development site itself, there is no provision for visitor parking and several of the drives have 'in line' rather than 'side by side' driveway parking. The Council is concerned about the developers' extensive use of un-adopted roads. These un-adopted roads will be inadequate for roadside parking and cause potential problems for emergency services access. We envisage that visitors to the development will park in Days Road itself, thus making this too narrow road even more dangerous. Should the Planning Committee be minded to give this development approval it is imperative that adequate parking is incorporated for visitors and that emergency services are happy with access issues.

In conclusion, whilst there is much to like about this development, Capel St. Mary Parish Council recommends **REFUSAL** of this application, as it does not fully comply with various requirements set out in **Babergh Local Plan 2011-2031** and **Supplementary Planning Document July 2014**.