

# SENT ON BEHALF OF WEST BERGHOLT RESIDENTS

SENT VIA EMAIL

31<sup>st</sup> July 2018

## **Briefing | Land Adj Armoury Road, West Bergholt Colchester | 180733**

Dear Councillor,

We are writing with regard to the Outline Planning Application on land adjacent to Armoury Road, West Bergholt, which will be considered by the Planning Committee on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

This note has been produced by residents of the village to give members of Colchester Borough Council's Planning Committee background information from the local community's perspective in order to help in the determination of the planning application.

Residents are at pains to stress that they are not against new housing in the village, pointing to the emerging Neighbourhood Plan which has allocated over 100 new homes for West Bergholt as part of Colchester's Local Plan. The Plan has progressed well with the support of the village and is due to be completed and ratified in early 2019.

### ***Background***

Many residents remember Maltings Park being developed in the late 1990's. As part of the discussions on this application, a number of people have recalled how the site off of Armoury Road was originally not included as part of the development due to it being outside of the village envelope. Indeed, a number of the gardens adjacent to the land have the village boundary running through their gardens. The village envelope has not been altered and this should remain the case since there is ample land suitable for housing contained within the village already.

### ***Community asset***

The local community were shocked to read the land be described as 'waste land' in the Officers report. It is far from this. The land is used by dog walkers, children and families as green open space. At no point during the consultation were these users consulted specifically about the current uses of the space, rather the attention focussed on the proposed houses on the site.

### ***Sustainability***

The site is simply not sustainable. The primary school, whilst a short walk away, is at capacity. Despite the financial contribution as part of this development, children will still be allocated places at schools outside the village which will lead to a rise in the number of car journeys generated from the proposed development.

Additionally, the village GP surgery is in the process of being restructured. At the moment, patients in the need of emergency appointments visit the Layer Road practice. This is already of concern to residents who do not drive, especially the elderly. Appointments are already difficult to come by so despite the surgery being legally obliged to accept new patients, the reality is very different.

### ***Community engagement***

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The community engagement from the land owner and planner has been woeful to say the least. It has been nothing more than a tick box exercise rather than meaningful engagement. The initial leaflet drop made claims that the applicant had been involved with the Neighbourhood Plan process – a claim which was dismissed by the Parish Council.

The drop-in event itself which should have been held for a longer period of time or at a weekend in order to allow as many residents as possible to attend rather than on a dark winter evening.

At the event, the project team had marked the access from Coopers Crescent as 'Pedestrian Only' which can be seen in the photo of the exhibition board. They claimed that this was due to the overwhelming feedback received during the event. Nonetheless, when advised that access from Armoury Road would fall foul of Highways, they switched it back despite the feedback from the community.

Rather than the statutory 14-day extension for comments by Colchester Borough Council, a full consultation exercise should have taken place in order to consult on the new plans as the parameters of the plans had changed fundamentally.



### ***Harm from the development***

Residents are concerned about the potential increase in air pollution caused by the additional through traffic and what impact this would have on the health of existing residents. On top of this is the loss of open space within the village as well as the thriving habitat and species which are currently located on the site.

### ***Impact on Maltings Park***

Maltings Park is a thriving community in its own right as well as being part of West Bergholt. The change from it being effectively a cul-de-sac to a through road would change the very nature of the existing development.

### ***Access***

Since access has been changed to Coopers Crescent, it is worth highlighting that there are ongoing issues with the current access for the existing village. When a fire broke out on the estate in December 2015, emergency services struggled to gain access due to the narrow nature of the entrance. Refuse trucks also regularly have to mount curbs in order to complete their rounds. This problem is exacerbated when cars are parked on the road.

Highways have clearly not run a survey on the private road element of Maltings Park. This is a crucial oversight and one that should be highlighted and full and comprehensive surveys carried out.

It is also worth noting that the building with overarches the entrance to the estate was the final one to be completed in order to allow construction traffic access. This is not a suitable entrance to use for construction. Similarly, construction traffic should not be allowed through Armoury Road – if it's not suitable for the main access, then it certainly isn't suitable for large HGVs.

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### ***Conclusion***

This application has brought together the whole village of West Bergholt. Almost 750 signatures have been collected across the community from local residents who are concerned and wish to protect the unique village identity. We implore you reject this opportunistic and speculative application and back the village to complete its Neighbourhood Plan and deliver the houses it is required to in a community friendly way.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information.

Kind regards,

Residents of West Bergholt