

# Press Release Two

## The destruction of a village



**Circle of oak trees, East Hoathly on a field put up for development. The Village Concern Group hopes this is saved by the owner and the developer, Rydon Homes and will do everything to protect it.**

Since the meeting on May 19<sup>th</sup>, with the Sussex Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in East Hoathly / Halland, both the Parish Council and a village action group, called Village Concerns, have been working hard to: raise awareness of what potential new developments could do to both villages; educate, familiarise and understand the issues and finally work towards ensuring that any development in the two villages is sustainable, moderate and fulfils the criteria advised by the communities. For example, type of housing, respect of the environment and additional / appropriate infrastructure in utilities, health, education and transport.

*“The origin of the village name is said to be from the family name of De Hodge, landowners in the 12th century. The village was the home of Thomas Turner (1729–1793), a local diarist, in the 18th century.”*

*Wikipedia*

The new Wealden Local Plan, for 190 new homes in East Hoathly and 30 new homes in Halland, amounting to an increase of 50% dwellings in the village of East Hoathly and 25% in Halland, has been blown apart by recent announcements and now East Hoathly has a proposal for 211 new homes on Hesmond Stud green field land, about 140 new homes on green field land in the southern section of the village and a potential 40 new homes on an additional piece of land. These proposals will double the number of dwellings, turning an historic village into an urban conglomeration.

Parker Dann (acting on behalf of the Helmond's' Stud and the architects) organised a Public Consultation in the village on August 12<sup>th</sup>. Despite this being the height of the holiday season, the meeting was well attended. Surprisingly, even though two of its employees were formerly with Wealden District Council, the Parker Dann team had an infirm grasp of the reality in East Hoathly: apparently the new homes will be heated by gas (none exists in the village) and employment will not be problematic since the village has a hairdressers!

*“Halland is a much smaller village than its near neighbour, its history is mainly connected with the Pelham family who built a house here in 1595.” Wikipedia*

The Government planning guideline says: “Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brown field land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brown field land.” Section 11 ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’

One could well ask, is Wealden District Council driven by cash and not community interests? Many green fields will disappear throughout the district. Other citizen groups are expressing their outrage: Heathfield (Stop Vines Corner and Help Preserve our Area of Natural Beauty) to Ninfield (Ninfield Action Group) to Horam (Save Horam).

We are told that there is a national shortage of housing, however:

*“Britain’s biggest house builders possess enough land to create more than 600,000 new homes” The Guardian, December 2015.*

There is absolutely no need to destroy the green fields or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

*“...the result is entirely down to the individual planning officer’s ability to squeeze out as good a deal as they can get, a battle that all too often ends in the developer’s favour. The Guardian, September 2014.*

Of the many interesting points raised by the CPRE, in May, at the meeting in East Hoathly, was that WDC is the only Council in all of Sussex that has not argued or disputed central Government’s pressure to build 20,000 homes throughout Wealden. These numbers have been accepted by WDC and include over 2,000 new homes for neighbouring Councils.

A united front will be formed with other villages in the South Weald facing similar circumstances and with help from the Save Wealden from Overdevelopment Team (SWOT) and the CPRE, we hope to change the direction that we are being forced to go.

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