



A 'DISASTERPLAN' FOR TUDELEY

On October 20 and 21, 2020, the public was invited to attend an exhibition in Tunbridge Wells hosted by the Hadlow Estate to publicise its 'masterplan' for a new town in Tudeley. Representatives of the Save Capel executive, local residents and planning specialists attended to assess the proposals. A report of their impressions can be read at www.savecapel.com/news.

Whilst the exhibition was low-key, consultants were on hand to answer questions, with varying degrees of success. On one map, Sherenden Road vanished between the railway and B2017, but the consultant was confident it ran behind Bank Farm, rather than in front. Another had experience of building bridges over railways, including the 'busy' commuter line to... Newquay.

There was a surprising lack of detail; nothing showed how the town would connect to other areas, beyond the unrealistic idea of a railway station, and there was little on drainage and sewage. These key elements should be in place before construction. And what would that construction look like? There were no images of housing style, but visitors were told it would be 'Kentish'. Indeed, visitors were asked to vote for building styles by choosing images of houses from elsewhere in Kent. This smacks of multiple-choice masterplanning, and none of the images reflected the rich character of our area.

The development is being planned in isolation, with no consideration to the wider impact on this special area, or local and neighbouring communities. The proposals, including a new secondary school, will merge Tudeley with Five Oak Green, which will merge with Paddock Wood at East Capel. With Kent County Council's mineral excavations, a suburban sprawl linked by an industrial loop will be created across the parish, from Tonbridge to Paddock Wood.

There will be a significant loss of



wildlife habitat but, like all developers, the Hadlow Estate claim they will achieve 'net biodiversity gain'. But will the results ever be measured? Reputable studies indicate the concept merely disguises habitat loss, and no effect on the squeeze on wildlife through the various plans for Capel is being considered. The same is true of flood risk, which will increase without measures that look beyond the parameters of the development itself.

This historic landscape will be lost forever, and once the development is complete, the eyesore will be a permanent feature. When asked about this, Mr Teacher commented: "I want people to see it". But for at least 15 years a huge and open wound of construction will be visible for miles around, during which the local community must suffer air and noise pollution and a significant decline in their way of life, health and wellbeing.

Given the cost of building a railway station and necessary connectivity, and the improbability of gaining permission, it seems unlikely the site's north section will be developed. The result will be a smaller, car-dependent estate, using existing roads that cannot cope. Tonbridge will be the magnet, with its transport infrastructure and other services which are already under pressure. As one of Save Capel's professional advisors commented, "...there is no demonstration that these measures will result in anything other than

a car-dominated dormitory of Tonbridge."

On the information available, the Tudeley settlement is not credible, let alone sustainable.

As the Chair of Save Capel told Mr Teacher at the exhibition, "...we remain flatly opposed to your plans and will continue to do whatever is needed to stop them."

Together we are strong, and our voice is loud. Let's sink these plans before the next phase of the Local Plan in 2021.

**Think again, TWBC!
Bin the disasterplan!**

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Show your support for Save Capel – We are refreshing our signage for the Parish and Tonbridge & Malling, to visibly demonstrate the public's overwhelming rejection of the plans. If you are located in a prominent position, please let us know so we can maximise the visibility of our placards and banners.

Donate – we have recently raised over £2,000 through Go Fund Me, but we need more funds to fight these threats to our parish and the surrounding areas. Please donate what you can and encourage others to do the same at www.savecapel.com/donate.



IT'S NOT A GAME IT'S OUR FUTURE

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has appointed David Locke Associates (DLA) to analyse the infrastructure requirements for the proposed developments at Tudeley and East Capel and to provide masterplanning advice for the full Paddock Wood proposals. This is in addition to Hadlow Estate developing its own masterplan for Tudeley only.

On September 28, DLA hosted a workshop attended by members of the Save Capel Executive. The purpose of the workshop was to 'engage' selected community organisations on how best to develop the area.

Unfortunately, the workshop proved to be a predictably dispiriting experience:

- **Objective:** We clearly stated that in the light of the overwhelming rejection of the proposed developments in Tudeley and East Capel in the Regulation 18 consultation, the discussion should be about 'whether' and not 'how' to develop. While this is not part of DLA's brief, ignoring this means that the purpose of the workshop was misdirected and that DLA's planning effort is happening in a vacuum.
- **Local insight:** Sadly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, DLA's facilitators were underprepared and unfamiliar with the parish. Examples included incorrect place names ("Paddock Green", "Five Oaks"); suggestions to introduce new footpaths... when



we are already well-endowed with footpaths which are threatened by the proposed developments; or lack of awareness of local heritage sites or recent flooding. Based on this experience, DLA's efforts feel like a theoretical, desk-based exercise with no understanding of the detrimental impact of the proposed developments on the parish.

- **Scope:** Similarly, there was no real recognition that Paddock Wood and Capel are two distinct parishes and areas. Representatives from Capel were asked to comment on Paddock Wood and vice versa – which felt very inappropriate. It was also unclear how DLA's infrastructure plans are coordinated with Hadlow Estate's 'masterplan' for Tudeley. No details were offered during the workshop, and the preliminary and superficial nature of Hadlow Estate's plans published since do not inspire any

confidence in achieving sound outcomes.

- **Play-time:** Perhaps most dispiriting was the closing exercise of the workshop where participants were invited to use modelling software to simulate building housing and infrastructure across Paddock Wood and East Capel. Dropping hexagons on what are people's homes or on countryside that the local community has enjoyed for generations felt deeply inappropriate and was a depressing experience.

We clearly communicated to DLA – both during the workshop and later in writing – that our participation should not be seen as evidence of 'community engagement' but that our sole purpose in attending was to voice our opposition to the planned developments at Tudeley and East Capel. To date, we have received no reply.

CHARITY STATUS FOR CGPS

The Capel Green Belt Protection Society (CGPS) has been established to support organisations that share their objectives of protecting and enhancing our Capel green belt.

Shared objectives with Save Capel have meant that CGPS has been able to securely hold the funds Save Capel has raised towards its goals. Following a

year of working with the Charity Commission to formalise the long-term position of CGPS as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), we are pleased to report that the society has been successful in achieving charitable status. As well as the help this will bring to the Save Capel campaign and in particular its fundraising activities, this will benefit other

work CGPS is involved in, including the development of a Vision for Capel and the Neighbourhood Plan which is set to follow.

The Save Capel Executive would like to thank the charity's trustees, Dave Parrish, Konrad Legg and Martin Pengelly, for the considerable work they have put into what is a complicated and involved process.

**STAY IN TOUCH
WITH SAVE CAPEL**



@SaveCapel2020



@SaveCapel



EVERYONE CAN PLAY THEIR PART AND HELP SAVE CAPEL

With the Hadlow Estate 'masterplan' now published and the Regulation 19 consultation of TWBC's Local Plan looming large, fundraising is paramount in our efforts to fight this unsustainable and disproportionate development which is threatening our beautiful Parish.

We recently had a boost in donations bought about by the fantastic efforts made by Andrew Stanley and his brother walking the perimeter of Capel Parish; twice. But we still need funds to enable us to engage first-class professional support to ensure the best chance of success. This is

where you can all help.

The current restrictions make social face-to-face events difficult, so we need to be innovative and would welcome ideas which could be taken forward to raise funds and engage the community. Additionally, we need volunteers able to help our team through to the next stage of the Local Plan. Please let us know if you can spare time, however limited, by emailing us at savecapel@gmail.com. The very best professional support is expensive but necessary to defend Capel against landowners determined to destroy it.

There is another important way you can help. To highlight our

cause we have Save Capel boards available to those who can site them in visible locations within the Parish and surrounding areas. These can be supplied free of charge. However, a donation would be much appreciated as a contribution to their cost. Also, you may want to consider tying ribbons in the colours of our campaign (green, purple & white) in visible places, being mindful to act responsibly. Inexpensive florists poly ribbon is ideal as it is waterproof, durable and can be purchased from outlets such as Amazon or Hobbycraft.

Thank you for your continued support of this important campaign from the Fundraising & Events Team



New boards (100cm x 60cm) available from the Save Capel team, email savecapel@gmail.com

TONBRIDGE SUPPORT GROWS

We are very pleased to welcome Charlie Keeling to the Executive Committee of Save Capel (SCE). Charlie will replace Nigel Tansley who is leaving the area soon, and we would also like to give sincere thanks to Nigel for all his hard work as an SCE member, and wish him and his family all the best for the future.

Although Charlie is not a resident of Capel Parish, he and his wife, Helen, are both active members and supporters of the Save Capel Campaign. Charlie lives on The Ridgeway in Tonbridge, close to the boundary between Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)

and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC). Many of our members and supporters live in and around Tonbridge and share our concerns about the impact of the TWBC proposals for the Tudeley development and the East Capel/Paddock Wood plans. If these developments go ahead, there is a danger that a suburban sprawl will be created between Tonbridge and Paddock Wood, as opposed to the wonderful countryside we share today.

Charlie has established relationships with leading TMBC Councillors, and also with Tom Tugendhat, the Tonbridge & Malling MP, who share our

concerns about the impact on Tonbridge, particularly of the Tudeley Development. Charlie is in regular dialogue with these TMBC Councillors, and one of our objectives is to get the Save Capel signage, placards, and banners, into prominent positions within the Medway ward of TMBC. You may have already seen a placard outside Charlie's house in The Ridgeway and another from a supporter in the Hadlow Road.

If you are a resident of Tonbridge, and a member and/or supporter of Save Capel, and would be happy to display a placard or banner, please contact Charlie via savecapel@gmail.com.



NEXT STEPS FOR SAVE CAPEL

Over recent weeks, members of the Save Capel Executive have attended meetings with our MP, other campaign groups, national agencies, and with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) representatives who continue to work on the next stage of the Local Plan.

As reported in this newsletter we have also attended a masterplanning workshop for Paddock Wood/East Capel led by a consultancy appointed by TWBC, David Lock Associates (DLA). This work, along with the infrastructure planning DLA is carrying out and the masterplanning for the Tudeley development, will inform the Council's decision on whether to include either or both East Capel and Tudeley in the next version of their Draft Local Plan.

Alongside this activity, we continue to work behind the scenes on the identification of sustainable alternatives, as we have been for some time, through our brownfield team. Our message to TWBC remains that there are many alternatives to the destruction of our Parish, and we will remind them of this ahead of their decision.

The Government's current proposals for extensive changes to the planning system and calculation of housing need in local plans have met widespread condemnation. Save Capel has responded to the consultations. Whilst we expect the proposals to be modified, to limit the projected bias towards the South East, in particular, TWBC is determined

to keep to its timetable to avoid a potential further increase in housing requirement. The newly proposed and increased national housing targets are not expected to change, although there may be a numerical shift north. One major point of interest is that protected zones, like green belt, may remain so, and we will be closely watching the development of government policy and its effect on our local housing numbers.

THE NEXT MAJOR MILESTONE

Our campaign is focussed on the Pre-submission Local Plan being published for public consultation (Regulation 19) in March/April 2021, and we must assume, at this stage, that both Capel sites will be included. Legal compliance and the duty to co-operate, with neighbouring Boroughs and key stakeholders, are major considerations and we will continue to work with our experienced legal advisors to identify the grounds upon which we can challenge TWBC's Local Plan.

TWBC's Local Plan will also need to demonstrate its sustainability and soundness, which was



overwhelmingly questioned in the unprecedented response to the public consultation last year (Regulation 18). The Executive will continue to work with our teams to gather further evidence to support our arguments and will be preparing resources and information to make our Save Capel submissions at Reg 19 and to support the community in making their own arguments.

But this all takes time, and the executive and the active team members continue to work hard on the community's behalf. And so we would like to ask anyone who has some free time, however little, and can help us, to get in touch via savecapel@gmail.com. Perhaps you have relevant expertise such as planning, or you can spare some time to support other activities like research or fundraising. Or do you have some useful contacts who could help support our cause? Any help would be much appreciated.

A VISION FOR CAPEL: THE RESIDENTS' VIEWS

After the deadline for responses to the parish questionnaire – answered by nearly one quarter of Capel households at the end of August – the Neighbourhood Plan working group has spent a very busy two months analysing the feedback and writing the Vision for Capel.

The document of nearly 40 pages is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of a small group of local volunteers and parish councillors who took on the task. The document attempts to present parishioners' views on the most important issues facing their community.

The Vision for Capel is available

to view on Capel Parish Council's website at bit.ly/CPCVfC. It will also be sent out to the media, local MP's and councillors, planners and representatives of the agencies that most affect our lives.

As a result, no-one in authority should be in any doubt about what its parishioners want for Capel.

Save Capel is not anti-development. The campaign supports sustainable development and especially affordable housing in both the borough and in Capel Parish. But, any development needs to be proportionate, suitable (for local needs and in line with the local environment) and above all sustainable.

