

Northern Area Planning Committee  
Test Valley Borough Council

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11<sup>th</sup> March, 2025

Dear NAPC Member

### **Test Valley Farm, Chilbolton**

As you know, the Committee is due to discuss Planning Application 22/02668/FULLN (Test Valley Farm) under Item 8 of your agenda on Thursday evening. The Officer recommends giving permission for this development, despite substantial opposition from the community which is detailed in the pack. On behalf of the very many Chilbolton residents working hard to develop housing for the village in line with the Neighbourhood Plan, we would like to draw your attention to a number of wider considerations not covered in the pack and which we believe are relevant in making your decision whether to support this application.

### **Test Valley Farm (TVF) – A controversial site for over 16 years**

TVF is owned by former HCC Councillor Andrew Gibson. It has been the subject of significant controversy following unpermitted development in 2012, breach of conditions reserving the property for agricultural use in 2019 and changes to the Chilbolton Settlement Boundary made in the Local Plan approved by TVBC in 2016. Previous applications to build 7 and then 4 Executive homes on the site have been rejected or withdrawn for a number of reasons – many of which have still not been addressed in the current application, which differs very little. Each of these events has had a high profile in the local media.

In the 2016 Local Plan, the Settlement Boundary was moved specifically to include the portion of TVF where this development is proposed. The justification given to the Planning Inspectorate was that this was to incorporate farmland adjoining built-up areas. In fact, TVF does not directly adjoin the previous settlement boundary. Other farms which do were not included.

In a referendum held in 2024, over 90% of respondents voted in favour of requesting a return to the previous settlement boundary to the rear of Station Road in the consultation for the next Local Plan.

### **Local Councillor Representation**

Throughout this period the Chilbolton community has been unable to voice concerns through our Borough Councillor. Cllr Drew confirmed again at the Parish Council meeting on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025 that his personal relationship with the landowner precludes him from speaking on our behalf. Other adjoining councillors with very relevant experience of housing challenges in rural areas also stated this as the reason they could not speak at NAPC meetings. We are indebted to Councillor Warnes from Baddesley Ward for engaging with the needs of our community and for supporting us in this.

## **Community Support for Local Housing**

The Chilbolton Neighbourhood Development Plan, adopted by TVBC in 2021, specifically sets out the need for more housing in the village with a particular focus on affordable and smaller houses to rebalance the housing stock in line with local needs. This received overwhelming support from the village in a referendum.

Following a Housing Needs Analysis conducted on our behalf by TVBC in 2024, the Community Housing Project and a Community Land Trust have been established and a pre-application submitted for a development of 25 houses on farmland adjacent to the settlement boundary.

At public meetings to discuss this project, the community in Chilbolton has acknowledged the challenges faced by TVBC in responding to significantly higher housebuilding targets from central Government. We are ready and willing to play a part by developing the housing the community needs and in support of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and our 50-year vision.

The proposed development at Test Valley Farm, in contrast, seeks to interpret the wording of the NDP in a way which contradicts its spirit. In discussions with TVBC officers it has become clear that the legal advice received by TVBC differs from that provided to Chilbolton Parish Council on this point.

The objections of the community have nothing to do with NIMBYism but because Chilbolton residents want community-led development to meet the needs of local people – not more spacious Executive homes, unaffordable for local people and with inadequate access and infrastructure.

Thank you for your attention. We urge you to take these points into account when considering the way forward for this proposal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Hall', with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Cllr David Hall & Cllr Tony Ewer

Chilbolton Community Housing Group