

APPENDIX 1

Reference: 24/02889/F: Residential development of 281 dwellings and associated roads, parking, realignment of Back Lane, drainage, landscaping, open space, servicing facilities and associated works (as amended). Land At Roundwood, Back Lane, Graveley, Hertfordshire,

Weston Parish Council strongly opposes the applicant's request to halve both the proportion of affordable housing and the Section 106 contribution.

The applicant's request to reduce affordable housing and Section 106 contributions relies heavily upon the assertion that property prices have fallen by approximately 3.7%. This is contrary to the anecdotal experience of members of Weston Parish Council and to the very thorough review undertaken by NHC's own independent viability consultant, Dixon Searle Partnership (DSP), which concluded that prices in the immediate area have, in fact, risen by 2–2.5% over the same (or a similar) period.

Furthermore, the requirement to provide 40% affordable housing was a policy of which the developer was fully aware before submitting the application, and it is highly improbable that the Section 106 contribution falls outside the range that an experienced housebuilder such as Croudace Homes would have anticipated from the outset. Yet these are the only elements for which the viability report seeks reductions, with no suggestions whatsoever as to what cost savings or margin reductions the developer could make. Council also notes that reducing the percentage of affordable housing is contrary to the stated policy of the current Government that social housing needs to increase.

Adapting to changing economic circumstances is something that all businesses must do continually. As a business with an annual turnover in excess of £200 million, and whose website states that it has been "building new housing developments in southeast England since 1946", Croudace Homes will have been better equipped than most to factor market movements into its plans from the outset.

In conclusion, Weston Parish Council agrees with the Council's own consultants DSP that this application is without merit. If Croudace Homes no longer believe the plan they submitted just 12 months ago to be economically viable, the solution is to revisit the entirety of their proposal or to withdraw from the site entirely.

If Croudace Homes do not wish to proceed with the development, we are sure that another developer will.