

Greater Norwich Food Enterprise Zone Local Development Order (Draft)

Easton Parish Council

9 February 2017

After careful consideration and consulting the views of residents and taking into account the perceived need for employment within the area, Easton Parish Council (EPC) must object to the current development order as it stands for the following reasons.

- Broadland District Council is failing to follow its own planning and development management policies.
- Broadland District Council failing to follow the guidance in the Guidance for the delivery of a Food and Agriculture Hub for Broadland and South Norfolk SPD.
- Broadland District Council has failed to comply with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive
- No safe guards built in for the protection of heritage assets.
- Highways England has raised concerns to EPC.
- There is an alternative access point – Blind Lane – that can be made to work.
- The Landowner has expressed that the Easton western roundabout is not safe.
- Existing granted planning permissions change the local road network and require the Church Lane junction set up differently to the LDO proposals.
- Does not take account of the policies in the emerging Easton Neighbourhood Plan.
- Proposed changes to Church Lane in the LDO cannot be delivered.
- South Norfolk Council has requested a full Environmental Impact Assessment be reconsidered.
- South Norfolk Council stated the Food Hub LDO, if it were to go ahead, significant impacts on the parish of Easton.
- Visual impact of the Food Hub on the countryside.
- Increase in flood risk has not been assessed.
- Location of water retention lagoon not detailed in LDO.
- Light pollution not addressed.
- Air quality not addressed.
- Timing is premature due to infrastructure improvements to A47 scheduled for 2020 – should have a joined up approach.

The reason for each of EPC objections is explained in the following text: -

The proposed route and its supporting documents as currently provided are at the very least limited. At the Broadland District Council (BDC) cabinet meeting where the proposed LDO Food Hub was considered Councillor Shaun Vincent requested the BDC Planners to carry out a comprehensive traffic report, there is no evidence of his request being fulfilled.

BDC would seem to have failed to comply with one its own policies TS2 Travel Plans and Transport Assessments as required in Broadland District Councils Development Management DPD 2015. The policy states: In the case of major development, or where a particular need is identified, a Transport Assessment and/or Travel Plan will be required. Developers will need to include proposals to deal with any consequences of their development in terms of maximising access by foot, cycle and public transport and the means by which this will be secured in perpetuity.

EPC ask why these documents have not been made available?

Why is BDC failing to comply with its own policies?

On the 10th July 2014 BDC adopted SPD Guidance for the delivery of a Food and Agriculture Hub for Broadland and South Norfolk states:

“a specific proposal would need to be fully justified as acceptable through the planning application process”

This is the polar opposite of an LDO. Why is BDC looking to circumvent its own adopted policy in relation to the mechanism for the delivery of a Food and Agriculture Hub.

As a parish council we have reviewed the modelling figures that have been provided by Rossi Long Consulting - Greater Norwich Food Enterprise Zone Trip Rate Note - Dated 4 May 2016 and find they lack any degree of certainty. The model figures are taken from a proposed development in Stowmarket, Suffolk application reference number 0371/15 which still has a status of Pending Decision. This document in itself is 350 pages in length and when it was reviewed bears no resemblance to the proposed development. Firstly it is a left in left out access off a roundabout on a dual carriage way and only a few hundred meters from the A14.

It was stated at a consultation meeting by a Broadland Council Officer that the figures stated on the Trip Rate Note as provided were adjust by the Council officers. These figures do not take into account the 150% increase in size the village will be bearing over the next few years as a 890 housing development is started South Norfolk Council (SNC) planning 2014/2611.

The EPC has been in discussion with Highways England in relation to this matter they have stated;

“Highways England would expect all approved planning applications to have been included in any decision we would have taken regarding the traffic figures.”

We have asked for evidence to show that this was the case to date there has been a failure of both Highways England and BDC to provide this evidence and as such brings in to question the validity of the basis for the original agreement that Highways England supported this application.

At a recent consultation meeting Phil Courtier Head of Planning BDC stated that an alternative exclusive access route to the site had been investigated. EPC have asked for evidence from both Highways England and BDC to show that formal meetings had taken place, what plans had been discussed again no evidence has been forthcoming. EPC has suggested an alternative route which would overcome many of the traffic concerns raised by residents of Easton.

It was suggested by EPC since the outset of this proposal that Blind Lane be improved with a left in, left out junction off the A47 giving safe direct and exclusive access to the proposed development. BDC officers state Highways England have said no to this, however when Highways England are asked about this they provide a different account. When EPC ask for evidence of these discussions from the parties involved again nothing is forthcoming.

The current roundabout next to St Peters Church Easton is a major hazard to current road users. The visual splays are very limited; the land owner Ian Alston made the following public comment as part of his response to the Easton Neighbourhood Plan, under the section, Any omissions in draft plan?

"I am concerned that if this plan is seeking to improve the living environment at Easton that there is insufficient consideration given to improving safety on the Easton roundabout....traffic heading West on the A47 seems intent on seeking out the highest possible speed at which drivers can speed through the junction. Due to a poor design and poor vision splay, this results in significant danger for Easton residents and others. To request a 30 mph speed limit on the final approach would transform this "lottery" junction into a safe junction."

When the land owner with in this proposal makes the statement above in relation to the junction that will service the proposed food hub and feels it is a lottery if you survive crossing it, how can this route be supported by BDC at this time. I also ref to PMQ's of 9 March 2016, the prime minister stated that Parish Councils should be listened to in relation to potentially dangerous junctions – as they have the best local knowledge.

With regard to the original scoping application to South Norfolk 2014/1792 Highways England's response of 26th September 2014 to the EIA, which was subsequently withdrawn - concludes by saying that;

"crucial pieces of policy relating to the strategic road network have not been considered...a very strong case for new access will need to be developed."

EPC feel there is nothing essentially new or different in this current proposal however we would point towards the increase and proposed traffic increases due to new housing development in the area, the difference now is that there is a proposal to widen one of the approach roads, so logic would suggest that a proper evaluation would reach a very similar conclusion.

It is easy to rely on computer models for justification of capacity however EPC believe common sense needs also to be taken into consideration when considering these matters.

Many local residents have written to us and BDC in relation to the traffic concerns they have in relation to using the current junction and on this point alone this matter should not progress until such time as an alternative safe exclusive access is provided with direct access to the A47.

Should BDC still wish to proceed then the proposed traffic route from the roundabout along Church Lane, Easton will need to be considered in light of the following comments.

Firstly the proposal changes the priority on Dereham Road in favour of traffic from the proposed development which will have a major impact for the residents of Easton.

No adequate indication of how HGV traffic would be stopped from using the local roads, it is suggested that a 106 agreement with a routing plan be implemented but no monitoring or enforcement proposals with substance have been provided.

Secondly the proposed changes will have a major effect on the agreed new spinal route for the village as set out in the 106 agreement dated the 1 November 2016 planning number SNC 2014/2611.

Thirdly this proposed route along Church Lane, Easton will pass directly in front of the historic grade 1 listed Church of St Peter, cutting the church off from the residents.

Placing the Church in essence on a traffic Island surrounded by heavy traffic movements. This proposed route is in direct conflict with the emerging polices 1,2, 4 and 6 within the Easton Neighbourhood Plan.

The Church is in regular use, these changes will make the Church isolated and very dangerous to cross too especially with the blind corner so close to it. The children of St Peters primary school Easton are frequent visitors and as such they need a safe means of passage. The Church hosts many joyful occasions such as weddings and more sombre occasions such as funerals for local residents.

EPC have looked at the proposal with this in mind current documents state that expected volume of traffic from commercial and employees plus Colton traffic devised from 2009 estimates, this does not take account of the traffic movements that will be created by the existing 620 homes in Easton nor the planned 890 homes that will be coming over the next few years. The land owner states he is looking for at least 1000 employees on site as well as 10% retail usage which do not seem to be taken into account in the figures provided. The figures estimate 400 trips per day = 17 lorries per hour one way = 34 both ways if 24 hours working and will increase if over shorter day or reduction in night processing.

This equates to approximately one lorry every 1 minute and 45 seconds, we would suggest that BDC considers the findings of the following report Characteristics of Vehicles Producing Excessive Noise and Ground Bourne Vibration - Phase 1 commissioned for the Transport Research Foundation (Prof. R. Kimber). This document highlights the level of noise that will be produced by a wide range of vehicles and highlights the impact heavy industrial vehicles will have on the local environment with regard to noise and vibration.

The setting of this grade 1 listed Church will be severely affected by the current proposal and is detrimental to the protection of heritage assets. It will also have a detrimental effect on the use of this historic asset for generations to come. Church lane will need to be widened to 6.5 meters plus it will need a path and cycle way of at least 1.8 meters.

Highways Norfolk have stated this would be a likely requirement, however they have no detail to provide on how this would be achieved and if it would be in place before the development was allowed to commence.

Highways Norfolk have been asked by EPC to provide drawing etc to support the viability of this proposal so far nothing has been made available for us to comment on and in fact it is our understanding nothing exists. This proposal that is being put forward would seem to have no infrastructure planning to support it, so how can a consultation move forward without all the facts? Does Highways Norfolk own enough land to widen Church lane and remove the blind corner to provide a road of 6.5 meters wide together with a cycle and pathway? Who will pay for all this work? Has an independent viability assessment been undertaken to prove that these proposals are in fact a viable option?

As we move along Church Lane an agreed new site for the parish allotments has been agreed under SNC 2014/2611 this agreed new site would now be in question as it would now be sited next to a busy road with all the pollution that entails from noise, vibration to toxic pollutants from HGV's. No mention has been provided with regard to these factors and how BDC plan to mitigate them.

EPC has long called for a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be completed in relation to this development as this proposal will have a major impact on the lives of the

residents of Easton, even the site used for the traffic modelling had a full EIA completed. Adam Nicholls Planning Policy Manager SNC in his response on the 26 September 2016 to Easton Neighbourhood Plan – Sustainability Scoping Report stated

“Although it is accepted that the potential Food Hub Local Development Order area adjacent to Easton does not currently (and may never) have any official status, if it were to go ahead it would have potentially significant impacts on the parish of Easton (for example, through traffic movements, new employment and landscape).”

In 2014 when a Scoping Opinion for Norfolk Food & Agricultural Hub, Easton all be it on a slightly larger scale Helen Mellors, Planning Manager, Growth and Localism SNC requested that a full EIA was undertaken. The conclusion of BDC own EIA Screening document 5.1 and 5.2 questions if not having a EIA is lawful It is EPC’s belief that s5.3 is wrong in its assumption that it will not have a significant adverse environmental impact given the comments made by senior planning officials at SNC.

The current screening document is as far as EPC are concerned inadequate in its protection of the local environment, and does not address fully concerns relating to transport and access, air quality which has only looked at visible dust clouds, however air quality is more than what is visible to the naked eye. Easton is down wind of the proposed development and as such any detrimental air quality issues will have a potential major effect on the residents of Easton.

The landscape and visual issues that surround the siting of this proposed development have not been fully addressed, the impact of large industrial units on the local landscape and across the valley needs greater scrutiny than that offered in the current screening document.

The screening document does not provide detailed safe guarding of archaeology and built heritage if it did then it would not have the issue of the potential road that will cut off the historic Grade 1 listed Church of St Peter.

EPC see no evidence that the screening document has considered Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive states that:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

The purpose of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is therefore to ensure the protection of European Designated Sites (Natura 2000) wherever practicable.

These sites are designed to form an ecologically coherent network of designated spaces across the whole of Europe.

Referred to as ‘European Designated Sites’, Natura 2000 sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas Referred to as ‘European Designated Sites’, Natura 2000 sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas for Conservation (SAC). As a matter of policy the government also expect authorities to treat Ramsar sites, andidate SAC (cSAC) and proposed SPAs (pSPA) as if they are European sites for the purpose of considering development proposals that may affect them.

A long list of Natura 2000 sites was compiled as part of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Screening Report considering sites within 15 kilometres of the potential zone of influence around the JCS area. This was subsequently agreed by Natural England.

EPC have identified five sites which have been identified within relative proximity of the proposed LDO site. These are as follows:

- i. Broadland Special Protection Area (SPA)
- ii. Broadland Ramsar
- iii. Broads Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- iv. Norfolk Valley Fens (SAC)
- v. River Wensum (SAC)

The effects of potential pollution from the proposed site given the aquifers in the area may need to be considered in more detail, as a bore hole exists within the boundary of Easton which is currently supplying water to the Norwich area. The impact of potential pollution may also have a major impact on the areas covered under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive.

Ground Conditions and Water Management have been mentioned however the reports do not show that filtration is good in that area. EPC at the last consultation meeting with BDC mentioned that the current proposal had a lagoon situated outside the proposed LDO area in South Norfolk.

It was stated by Phil Courtier that the lagoon would have to be inside the LDO. EPC is very concerned that no plan exists to confirm details of water and waste management has been provided and given the current ground conditions and the regular flooding of the A47 which would be classed as downstream of any run off from this proposal. How will the current limited screening policy protect the environment.

The screening document has mentioned noise at very low levels but how will these be achieved as soon as an HGV arrives on site these noise levels will be doubled. Once a vehicle starts to reverse either an HGV or a forklift truck how will the noise limit be regulated and enforced as health and safety would top in an argument over noise limits.

Vibration has not been considered in any part of the screening document.

The screening document has not fully addressed lighting with respect of their potential to have an adverse impact of existing residents of the area. This screening document in our opinion needed to include details of the design, location, orientation and level of luminance (in Lux). Any lighting in our option should be selected to provide for security and site safety but prevent upward and outward light radiation and the screening document shown have safe guards built in to it to protect the local environment.

Currently the A47 between Easton and North Tuddenham is under consultation for dualling with the announcement of preferred routes due in March 2017 and the Western link road consultation is now moving forward with planned routes under consideration. EPC believe that a joined up approach to development should be adopted and the current proposed development is mistimed in being brought forward at this time. Once the major infrastructure routes are known an alternative site may come forward which does not have the issues that surround the proposed site.

SNC has put forward a large number of suggestions to the current screening document and has highlighted a concern with regard to the protection of a heritage asset (Church of St Peter Easton). EPC's understands that a request will be made by SNC to relook at the issue of undertaking an EIA (agreed at SNC cabinet meeting 6th February 2017).

Given that this consultation has raised a large number of material facts which seem to have been less than adequately covered within the current consultation round it is EPC's opinion that either BDC has one of three choices:

1. The current application as it stands is refused by BDC.
2. A review is undertaken and all the matters raised are addressed and the matter is then put out to consultation again due to material changes that have been identified.
3. Ignore the weight of public opinion and the material questions that have been raised and press ahead regardless.

Given the weight of local public opinion and the potential impact on traffic, the environment and countryside setting; Easton Parish Council request that Broadland District Council should refuse this application as it currently stands.

On behalf of Easton Parish Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Milliken', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Peter Milliken BABA (Hons)

Chair Easton Parish Council