

# **PLANNING APPLICATION 2022/2148, LAND NORTH OF CAISTOR LANE OBJECTIONS FROM CAISTOR ST EDMUND & BIXLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**This Parish Council objects to this application. In summary, housing**

- **that would double the population of this rural parish,**
- **that would further strain local services and infrastructure,**
- **that is contrary to settled and emerging local planning policy,**
- **that is based on incorrect traffic analysis**

**cannot be justified by the offer of a poor site for a primary school, a possibly unusable site for a community hall and an unneeded country park.**

## **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The site lies outside the local development area in both the current and emerging Local Plans. The site was offered under the emerging Local Plan process, and was rejected, together with several others, where development in excess of the status quo plus already-scheduled schemes could not be supported by the local infrastructure. In effect, this part of South Norfolk had already 'done its bit' and focus for the Norwich area should shift to land north of the Yare and Wensum becoming available as a result of the completion of the Northern Distributor Road (Broadland Northway).

This Parish Council believes that this strategy holds good, both strategically and with reference to the application site.

## **HOUSING**

This parish forms a 'green' break between the Poringland settlement and Norwich. It is sparsely populated (499 residents in 181 houses, and a population density of 42/km<sup>2</sup> in 2021). The application's housing represents a major threat to the rural nature of the parish.

The application's 180 approx. houses would double the number of houses in the parish.

**For the avoidance of repetition, this Parish Council wishes to associate itself fully with the objection to the housing element dated 14 December 2022 lodged by CPRE, for the reasons stated therein.**

## **THE OFFERED SITE FOR A PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Even with an associated new housing, a primary school here would be more remote from its catchment area than others known to have been offered to Norfolk County Council. In particular, the site related to Framingham Earl High School is to be preferred, having so many education-related facilities on hand and being a net smaller travel distance from the local housing it would serve, even allowing for the primary-age children in the application's proposed housing. Based on experience elsewhere, the proportion of pupils being taken to and from a school here by car would be larger than the application purports.

The site adjoins the existing pond known as the Raking Pit. All ponds and lakes are a temptation and a hazard where children are concerned. The current risk is low because the number of children that pass it is low. That number would increase dramatically.

### **THE OFFERED COUNTRY PARK**

There is no proven need for this. The walks in the Parish at High Ash Farm and at Caistor Roman Town already serve this need, as does Whitlingham Country Park only a short distance away. A new Country Park would only attract more car traffic (see below). It is not clear how a country park would be managed and financed, and it should not be assumed that this Parish Council would be in a position to take this on.

The claim that the proposed open water would assist nutrient neutrality is questioned. When ponds and lakes are established on former farmland, they can unlock nutrients beneath and around, resulting in the sort of algal growth that is the cause of current concern, especially if there then run-off further into the drainage catchment.

### **THE LOCATION OF A FOOTBALL PITCH**

This is remote from the proposed School or community building and from any suitable changing facilities. There is no proven need for it, it is not clear how it would be managed, and it should not be assumed that this Parish Council would be in a position to take it on.

### **SERVICED SITE FOR A COMMUNITY BUILDING**

It should be noted that the element of the Community Infrastructure Levy that would pass to the Parish Council is capped at £100 per existing dwelling per year, producing a sum that would be far short of the amount needed for the Parish Council to build a community facility. Even if the construction could be funded, it is doubtful that it could cover its running costs.

Therefore, even with the proposed development, it is hard to justify the construction and maintenance of a new facility for 360 households, even with the gift of a serviced site.

### **MEDICAL SERVICES**

The application quotes pre-Covid data on the ability of local medical centres to cope with a further increase in population. The post-Covid situation is quite different, with residents finding it difficult to get timely appointments.

### **ROAD TRAFFIC**

This Council supports previous objections by Norfolk County Council Highways to the development of this site on traffic grounds.

**The application's data is incomplete**, as it takes no account of:

- additional traffic that would use the already-inadequate Caistor Lane west to Caistor crossroads at Markshall Lane; and
- the traffic that the approved nearby site (land north of Heath Farm, 2018/2232) will have added

**The forecast of traffic flows is flawed.** It takes peak-flow data collected in November 2021, and projects them using factors from central government, namely plus 7.5%-7.8% (morning peak, evening peak) out to 2026, and plus 12.4% – 12.9%) out to 2031.

This Parish Council has long-term daily traffic data of its own for Caistor Lane, derived from its permanent SAM unit located at several points in Caistor Lane, close to the proposed access to the development.

AVERAGE DAILY NOVEMBER TRAFFIC MOVEMENTS, CAISTOR LANE, WESTBOUND		
YEAR	Number of Vehicles	Number Indexed to Nov 21 = 100
2018	704	128
2019	788	144
2020	515	94
<b>2021</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>100</b>
2022	697	127

So average daily vehicular movements were already **27% higher** in November 2022 than they had been in November 2021 (when the applicants' traffic data were collected), and **44% higher** in November 2019. It is clear that the applicant's traffic flows were depressed by the ongoing effect of Covid-19, and 5- and 10-year projections from them have already been overtaken in a single year.

The application focuses on peak traffic flows. Similar data are also available from this Council's SAM unit, indicating peak hourly flows in November 2022 being **21% higher** than in November 2021, and that November 2019 peak flow had been double the November 2021 figure (morning peak). The actual peaks as recorded were not necessarily in the time slots employed by the applicants.

This Council's data supports the intuitive observation that, at times of heavy traffic on the B1332, Caistor Lane is a rat-run, offering an alternative access to Norwich via Caistor Crossroads, Stoke Road and Long John Hill. When Covid-19 depressed road traffic generally, there was less need to make use of it, as traffic ran smoothly via the Trowse Bypass. Before Covid-19 and since then, B1332 traffic flows were and are again larger, resulting, especially in the morning peaks, in nose-to-tail traffic, making Caistor Lane once again an attractive alternative.

Since there are no known highway improvements planned to ameliorate the B1332 being at or near capacity at peak times, and since road traffic is forecast to increase in future, traffic on Caistor Lane is likely to increase by a greater amount than the increase in traffic generally. (It should be recalled that,

when the A 47 Southern Bypass was built, it was originally planned to close the other nearby similar rat-run, Arminghall Lane, but this was reversed because Caistor Lane would be unable to cope with the resulting traffic increase.)

The junction of the B1332 with Caistor Lane is already substandard, with traffic seeking to join the B1332 from Caistor Lane frequently being queued back at peak times to Highland Close and Bricklewood Avenue. During school arrival and leaving times Caistor Lane also becomes a carpark for parents wishing to wait and drop off or collect their children, adding to the congestion at the junction. When the 'Bennetts Homes' development nearby on the B1332 was approved, it required the developer to provide a turning lane. There does not appear to be any space for a similar lane at the B1332 / Caistor Lane junction, nor does the applicant propose any junction improvement.

As a result of this substandard junction, Norwich-bound traffic generated by the application site would be tempted to turn west rather than east on Caistor Lane. The level of traffic on the narrow and winding west part of Caistor Lane is already in excess of capacity much of the time and, lacking a footpath, is a permanent hazard to pedestrians. No development should be permitted that would worsen this.

Caistor St Edmund & Bixley Parish Council  
18<sup>th</sup> December 2022