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Mr William Nunn
Leader
Breckland District Council
Elizabeth House
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27th July 2018

Dear Mr Nunn

Lanpro's proposal for a new garden village between North Elmham, Bintree and Billingford

I am writing following an emergency meeting on Wednesday 25th July of a working party of North Elmham Parish Councillors to discuss the proposal. We have had sight of the following documents:-

1. Lanpro's Summary Document dated November 2017
2. A draft FAQ document sent to us by Chris Leeming, Lanpro's Managing Director
3. Anna Graves' email to Mr Leeming following your site meeting with Lanpro on 26th June. (A copy of this letter was forwarded to us by Bill Borrett on 20th July).
4. The letter prepared by Trevor Wood of Hoe and Worthing Parish Meeting regarding the inadequacy of the process taken by Lanpro to date, and Breckland District Council's (BDC) apparent lack of policy in respect of new garden towns and villages.
5. Gordon Bambridge's report following two meetings on 19th July.

NEPC first heard about this proposal via an email sent to us by Bill Borrett on 11th July. You will be aware that a meeting was arranged on Wednesday 18th July between representatives of North Elmham, Billingford, Bintree, and Bawdeswell Parish Councils, and Trevor Wood of Hoe and Worthing Parish Meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to pass on our initial views to Gordon Bambridge prior to his site meeting with Lanpro and the BDC meeting on Thursday 19th July.

For the avoidance of doubt, all those present at that meeting strongly endorsed the contents of Mr Wood's letter (4 above).

It is fair to say that all those present at the 18th July meeting were vehemently opposed to the choice of this site. This was echoed in NEPC's Working Party meeting of 25th July.

Lanpro is keen to point out that so far they are offering simply 'proposals' within the Government's next garden towns and villages call-for-sites. They say that the three month window for submitting proposals opens at the end of this month. It is not clear to us whether or not any initial responses,

either from residents, PCs, DCs or County Councils have to be submitted during this window. However, they have clearly not undertaken any local consultations, as required by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Homes and Communities Agency in their Application Process Guidance. At this stage, the proposal cannot by any stretch of the imagination be described as 'Locally-Led'.

We also understand that Bill Borrett has asked BDC to send him an outline of the process that it will follow once the Government launches its prospectus. We hope that all PCs will also be informed of the details of any such process.

Turning to the substance of this proposal, it appears to rely heavily, if not entirely, on the suggestion that the Mid Norfolk Railway can be reinstated as a link between the old station at County School and Wymondham. Indeed, Lanpro's prospectus states *'The site selected is designed to connect the operational and underused 28km Mid-Norfolk Railway that is a private heritage railway with its own rolling stock connecting the town of Wymondham (on the Norwich to Cambridge rail line) with the A1067 Fakenham Road that is a main arterial route into Norwich'*.

We understand that MNR has not made any decision on the proposal and we must leave it to the Trust respond to Lanpro's comments on page 5 of the prospectus. However, we take the view that it is laughable to suggest that this railway could ever be used as a commercially viable commuter route to Wymondham. Any journey from County School to Wymondham would take approximately one hour (at the current maximum permitted speed of 25mph) following which any passenger wishing to proceed to either Norwich or Cambridge would have to change trains and then spend another half an hour or more travelling to their final destination. The return journey would take as long. We doubt that Lanpro has established whether or not any commercial rail operator would be prepared to take over the running of such a route: this must be a vital component to Lanpro's reliance on the railway as a trigger for the selection of this site.

Lanpro also states in its prospectus that Norfolk Railway Village Ltd has *'...full control of the freehold interest of the former North Elmham Station site'*. This is misleading: the site it controls is separated from the railway line by land belonging to MNR.

Further, Lanpro's prospectus highlights the 'Y' shaped route between Wymondham to Wells-next-the-Sea and Holt. Its final GIS layer shows sites north of County School along that 'Y' shape as *'Suitable locations for new garden cities.'* Lanpro appears to be unaware that it is not possible for a train to travel north of County School, since the railway bridge over the B1110 no longer exists and the route of the old line travels along private property. We are left wondering how many erroneous statements and facts Lanpro will be relying on in its submission to Government.

These are questions, along with numerous others, which will have to be put to Lanpro when and if it eventually decides to engage with the local communities. Until such time, we believe that promotion of the railway as a hook on which to hang the selection of this site is seriously flawed.

It should also be pointed out that the A1067, the only major road expected to link this new settlement to Norwich, is a busy single carriageway road with a maximum speed limit of 50mph along most of its length, reducing to 30mph through Lenwade. As such it is totally unsuitable to sustain the massive increase in traffic that would result from this proposed development.

All the other reasons Lanpro states for selection of the site could easily be superimposed on any other site in Norfolk, or indeed the country.

We have not, in this letter, touched upon whether or not there is a need for a new settlement (which could be the fourth largest in Norfolk) at all, since we are unaware of any feasibility study having been carried out. Nor have we commented on any other infrastructure issues. That is perhaps something for a later date.

To conclude, NEPC is strongly opposed to the selection of this site as suitable for a new garden village, whether it has 4,000, 6,000 or 10,000 houses. We will respond more substantively once Lanpro has provided the details required but in the meantime hope very much that BDC will take our views on board and not support this proposal.

Yours sincerely

Jennie Borgnis
Chairman, North Elmham Parish Council

Copies to: Gordon Bambridge, Upper Wensum Ward Member
 Bill Borrett, Upper Wensum Ward Member
 George Freeman MP
 Chris Leeming, Managing Director, Lanpro
 Anna Graves, Chief Executive BDC