

# Hearing Statement

Pablo Dimoglou  
The Old Post Office  
Norwich Road  
Clint Green  
Yaxham  
Norfolk NR19 1AB

## **Matter 5 - Housing; the settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution**

## **Matter 13 - Housing: the basis for the housing allocations and the settlement boundaries**

I put forward this statement in my official role as District Councillor for The Mattishall Ward, Breckland. It brings forward further detail in relation to my previous submissions.

I am also a Yaxham Parish Councillor, elected by 325 people in my Parish to represent their views and do what I feel is right for the long term sustainability of the Parish. To that effect, this statement represents my own views as a Parish Councillor. It does not represent the 'organisational view' of the Parish Council.

In addition, I operated a large tourism business in Yaxham since 2009 along with a Village Shop, fishing lakes and Farm Cafe. When I sold my share in the business in April 2017, 31 local staff were employed.

Given the above, I feel that I am not only qualified, but am perfectly placed to provide important background information to The Inspector.

I do not believe that Breckland Council has fairly or consistently determined the settlement hierarchy. Further, I say that Breckland Council Planning Officers have been put under pressure by senior elected members to amend recommendations.

An example of a report being amended is The Local Service Centre Topic Paper dated May 2015 which was replaced with an almost identical one in July 2017. The May Topic Paper clearly identified that Yaxham met all of the criteria to be a Local Service Centre, even when recognising some of the services in villages were more than 800m away, subject to a preferred maximum of 1200m

During this time I was not only District Councillor for The Mattishall Ward, I also served Breckland Council as Cabinet Member for Finance and a Yaxham Parish Councillor.

I was aware that there was political pressure designed to remove Yaxham from the May 2015 Topic Paper as a Local Service Centre. This emanated from The Neighbourhood Plan for Yaxham Working Group and Yaxham Parish Council.

On 11th February 2016, The Parish Council voted in favour of Yaxham being a Local Service Centre.

It had been agreed by the Councillors in that meeting that Yaxham did indeed have all the services required to denote it as a Local Service Centre. This had already been stated by the professional planning officers at Breckland Council (after lengthy consideration and assessment). One councillor said the fact that our parish had such a wide range of services should be celebrated and other councillors agreed.

However, when it was realised additional sites had been submitted in the Breckland Council call for sites, an Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting was called on 28 April 2016. (Agenda attached).

In particular it stated (quoted verbatim)

<start>

To reverse the decision made by the Council, at its meeting held on 11th February 2016, to support the status of Yaxham as a newly designated Local Service Centre Parish, under Breckland Council's emerging Local Plan Policy PD03

This motion arises from the decision made by Councillors at the meeting on 14th April 2016 for it to be appropriate to arrange a further meeting, following the new evidence put to the Parish Council showing the inclusion of four Additional Emerging Sites Land Allocation Options that have come to light since the Council meeting held on 11th February 2016.

<end>

From the wording of the Agenda it seemed that this was intended to restrict development rather than re-assess what services were available in the Parish.

The aim of The Neighbourhood Plan for Yaxham Working Group and Yaxham Parish Council seems to ensure that Yaxham's position in the settlement hierarchy is as low as possible, even if this meant that local people would be disadvantaged by not having the type or quantity of housing needed.

I feel this resulted in the Topic Paper being amended in a subtle but effective way.

It maintained that the village had all the services required to be determined a Local Service Centre but now had a special restriction that because not all of the services were within 800m of the houses, it could not be classed as a Local Service Centre.

This distance restriction has not been applied consistently to all Parishes deemed to be - or not be - Local Service Centres. Further - there is no planning law relating to the relative distances, indeed, the Emerging Local Plan produced by Breckland Council recognises there is a need to travel, often by car to access local services and this does not necessarily affect sustainability.

The presentation given to Breckland Council's Local Plan Working Group was factually incorrect.

A Senior Planning Officer gave the presentation which centred on a map of the village with circles showing which parts of the village were covered by which services - using the new 800m rule.

Despite there being a shop in Yaxham (Clint Green) for over 50 years - and recently having operated as a Post Office, and notwithstanding the current and previous Breckland Council Business Rate demands sent to that shop (copy attached) the Senior Planning Officer contended that there was no shop in Yaxham (Clint Green) and this was instrumental in the village being de-classified by the Local Plan Working Group.

It is true to say the shop had temporarily closed due to the death of the owner and the subsequent probate sale, which fell through on the first attempt.

There was never any intention for the shop to close and a simple search of the Business Rate register for Yaxham would have shown the business was a going concern. The building has since been purchased and an application is being submitted for the improvement of the shop and the extension of the retail offering.

Business rates have been payable on the premises for many years and continue to be levied. It was a failure of the Senior Planner to not verify statements made by the Neighbourhood Plan for Yaxham Working Group who said there was no shop in Yaxham (Clint Green) when the information was ready available at his fingertips.

This single issue of there not being a shop in Yaxham (Clint Green) had a substantial and material effect on the ultimate determination by the Breckland Council Local Plan Working Group that Yaxham should not be classed as a Local Service Centre.

A similar situation applied to Yaxham Mill, a historic and well loved restaurant/bar within Yaxham. This had temporarily closed due to the illness of the then owner Hugo Stevenson. He had worked hard to build up the trade and it was being marketed as a going concern. Another food operator has since taken over the premises and it is again reopen.

I believe that the professional planning officers at Breckland Council had been put under political pressure to produce and present a report which was skewed in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan for Yaxham Working Group and Yaxham Parish Council, and the declassification of Yaxham as a Local Service Centre.

I do not feel this approach is correct. It puts the residents of my Ward at a disadvantage by unfairly restricting much needed housing growth and may deprive the young, those starting out, the less well paid and key workers of accommodation they can afford to buy or even rent.

In addition, the many local businesses rely on proportionate growth in housing to ensure their offering remains viable. There is ever increasing competition from online shopping - which is great for (generally) 16 - 65 year olds but there remains a significant proportion of people who cannot or do not use the internet.

Most of us will remember as kids nipping down to the local shop to buy a packet of sweets when we got our pocket money - we can't expect kids to go online and do this simple thing, and nor can we expect the elderly to 'get with the internet'. It may sound trivial but having a shop to amble down to, or pick up a newspaper or get essentials from, becomes an integral and important part of the local community.

To to the location of Yaxham - the community can become isolated in times of heavy snowfall or due to flooding. I found that during these times the shop became incredibly important to local people.

Rural communities are generally under provided for in terms of services and we should be doing everything we can to make sure where they exist they remain viable.

I operated a shop in Yaxham between 2008 and 2017. It took real commitment and dedication to keep the business viable. Over the nine years I saw housing growth in Yaxham stagnate and the takings of the shop suffered as a result. Year by year more and more people use the internet for shopping but we should not lose sight of the valuable service shops offer the community.

I saw less and less 16-65 years olds using the shop but there were still a large number of the more elderly residents and children who were using the shop.

The shop I operated formed a small part of a much larger business and I largely kept it open to provide a service to villagers and holiday makers. We cannot expect commercial operators to have such an altruistic attitude nor can we rely on shops being part of a larger business.

Yaxham has always operated as one community, albeit split into main conurbations.

If you asked someone from Yaxham (Clint Green) where they came from they will simply say 'Yaxham'.

I feel the attempts by the Neighbourhood Plan for Yaxham group and Yaxham Parish Council to try to divide the community into two settlements should not be allowed to continue by pushing the community further apart. It should operate as one Local Service Centre.

The village hall (in Yaxham), built to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 has been extremely prosperous and is extremely well used by residents of Yaxham (Clint Green) and Yaxham.

Yaxham School (in Yaxham (Clint Green)) has been popular for generations and is extremely well loved within our Parish. It is made up mostly of children from our Parish - once again, drawing from both of the main settlements. There is a substantial pavement running from Yaxham to Yaxham (Clint Green) and many parents use this to simply walk or cycle with their children to school.

There is a play area in Yaxham which is used by both settlements, the major employer -Yaxham Waters (in Yaxham) has always drawn employees mainly from Yaxham and Yaxham (Clint Green)

The Chapel in Yaxham (Clint Green) attracts worshippers from both settlements, as does Yaxham Church (in Yaxham).

Yaxham Football Club draws players from all over the Parish and the sports fields are available for residents of Yaxham and Yaxham (Clint Green).

The Yaxham Village Amenities Association, located in Yaxham is run by Peter Smith - who like others on the YVAA Committee lives in Yaxham (Clint Green) but is simply able to walk, cycle or drive the short distance to the village hall.

Yaxham Mill Restaurant is located between the two settlements and has been a well loved meeting point for many many years.

Yaxham Waters has an extremely popular cafe which regularly used by residents of Yaxham and Yaxham (Clint Green).

Not only are services shared and well loved throughout the Parish, those responsible for operating them come from all parts of the Parish.

The community has always been 'as one'. I suggest the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and The Parish Council have tried to represent the separation of the settlements and community so as to further their argument against the village being classed as a Local Service Centre.

This should be resisted at all costs - not just so that the required housing can be delivered, but so that the community remains as a community not a disparate collection of people all living more or less in the same area.

I remember happily walking or cycling 3 miles to college, and back again, yet we are expecting adults and children nowadays to walk no more than 800m. I feel this does nothing to resist the serious dangers posed to our overall health and wider services by the increasing level of obesity in our society.

Issues such as development within villages are bound to be emotive - but the District Council should remain impartial and should not allow itself to pick and mix policies when it suits.

A Parish should not be allowed to 'opt out' of being a Local Service Centre because it wants to stifle development. Each community has the responsibility to take what development can be sustained in light of local services and infrastructure. To this end, Yaxham is better placed than most and should be deemed a Local Service Centre.

If Yaxham Parish Council is allowed to side step development, extra burden and pressure will undoubtedly come to rest on other communities and the most needy in our society will be further disadvantaged.

Yaxham had a number viable sites put forward in the Breckland Council call for sites. Officers had determined that site LP[113}007 was preferable and was indeed in a sustainable location. This particular site would have had the added benefit of bringing the two settlements closer together,

and it would have resulted in the reduction of the speed limit along the Norwich Road which has long been an aspiration of local people as identified in The Neighbourhood Plan for Yaxham (page 51 - Transport).

The pressure exerted on officers and indeed Breckland Council generally resulted in the parish not being listed as a Local Service Centre and this resulted in planning application 3PL/2016/1499 being refused. On just this one application Breckland residents have missed out on 25 homes - 10 of which would have been affordable.

For Breckland Council to be able to attract developers of the right calibre who can' actually deliver housing growth we need to provide a stable, fair and consistent approach.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Yaxham states (Page 1 - 1.7) "This this plan does NOT bring forward additional sites for development". In addition to LP[113]007 there were other sites which could have been selected to deliver the housing required for the parish and thereby benefit the wider district.

Even with the recently announced and extremely welcome £10m Thetford Infrastructure Grant which will unlock some development land in Thetford there are serious doubts as to whether the main urban extensions will be able to deliver the thousands of houses required to meet the plan. There are questions as to when the critical infrastructure can be in place, but also there is much discussion within Breckland Council as to firstly whether it is likely there will be developer interest in Thetford (to date it has been very muted) and secondly whether there will be public demand for such a large amount of housing in one place which is not seen as economically buoyant or as aesthetically desirable as the parts of the district.

It is therefore critical that the settlement hierarchy which Breckland Council are relying on so heavily is properly administered and delivers the right housing where it is most needed.

By having sites, such as those within Yaxham, the authority can have confidence that its plan is achievable and is positively prepared.

Summary:

It is my hope that The Inspector directs Breckland Council to rightly place Yaxham as a Local Service Centre in the hierarchy and asks that it reviews all other settlements to see if they indeed fit the criteria.

A re-assessment of the viability of the plan may be required in its current form with greater consideration given to market forces and the commercial actions of developers who prefer to release smaller sections of developments for sale before starting on others. This could have a real impact on the deliverability of the plan.

We should not expect the thousands of houses listed for development in Attleborough and Thetford to simply soak up shortfall elsewhere in the district. It is accepted as being 'highly unlikely' not only within formal meetings at Breckland Council - but also discussed without prejudice in corridors and side rooms by councillors - that Thetford in particular is not likely to meet the housing numbers attributed to it over the plan period.

This means the lower tiers of the settlement hierarchy will need to provide more of the housing required for the district, and the targeted percentages should be positively and realistically reviewed.

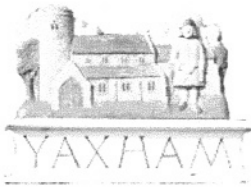
We cannot simply lump thousands of houses into two main areas and expect people to go and live there. Houses should be provided where people want to live and where they work, and by doing so we significantly will reduce harm done by long car journeys and improve our residents work/life balance by them not having to commute to work.

I feel that unless the Inspector decides to amend the plan it will disadvantage some communities by preventing development needed not just for housing - but to ensure existing services can remain viable.

Conversely, other communities with already good services and infrastructure will benefit by having an excess of housing whilst others who are forced to take extra housing but do not have sufficient infrastructure will struggle to cope.

Yours faithfully

Pablo Dimoglou  
District Councillor for The Mattishall Ward



## **YAXHAM PARISH COUNCIL AGENDA**

### **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN THE JUBILEE PARK MEETING ROOM At 7.30 pm ON 28 April 2016**

To hereby convene an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council within section 17 of its Standing Orders adopted by Yaxham Parish Council in March 2011.

1. To receive and accept apologies for absence.
2. To receive disclosures of personal and prejudicial interests and disclosable pecuniary interests and requests for dispensations from Councillors on matters to be considered at the meeting.
3. To hold a public session.
4. Special Motion – Rescission of previous resolution, section 11(a) of the Parish Council's Standing Orders – in the names of Councillors – Lowings (Chairman), Crummett (Vice Chairman), Harvey, and Goldsmith:

To reverse the decision made by the Council, at its meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016, to support the status of Yaxham as a newly designated Local Service Centre Parish, under Breckland Council's emerging Local Plan Policy PD03.

This motion arises from the decision made by Councillors at the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016 for it to be appropriate to arrange a further meeting, following the new evidence put to the Parish Council showing the inclusion of four Additional Emerging Sites Land Allocation Options that have come to light since the Council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

Peter Lowings  
Chairman to the Council.

George Crummett.  
Vice Chairman to the Council

April 21st 2016

**Chairman to the Council:  
Mr Peter Lowings**

Clint Green Post Office  
Norwich Road  
Yaxham  
Dereham  
NR19 1AB



**Account Number:** [REDACTED]  
(Please quote on all correspondence)

Bill Number: 20 /0  
Date of Issue: 10.03.2017  
NNDR Enquiries: 01842 756568  
  
Anglia Revenues Partnership, Breckland House,  
St Nicholas Street, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 1BT  
Send remittance advice to :  
accounts.receivable@breckland.gov.uk

<b>Property Ref:</b> 00047120060047	<b>Property Address:</b> Clint Green Post Office
<b>Rateable Value:</b> 1975	Norwich Road
<b>Standard multiplier:</b> 0.479	Yaxham
<b>Small business multiplier:</b> 0.466	Dereham
<b>Reason for bill:</b> Annual Bill	NR19 1AB
<b>Description:</b> SHOP AND PREMISES	

Instalment date	Amount due	Additional Notes
15.04.2017	£ 101.60	Information for rate payers which contains further information on rateable values, reliefs, multipliers and revaluation is available to view on our website: <a href="http://www.angliarevenues.gov.uk">www.angliarevenues.gov.uk</a>
15.05.2017	£ 105.00	
15.06.2017	£ 105.00	
15.07.2017	£ 105.00	
15.08.2017	£ 105.00	
15.09.2017	£ 105.00	
15.10.2017	£ 105.00	
15.11.2017	£ 105.00	
15.12.2017	£ 105.00	
15.01.2018	£ 105.00	
<b>AMOUNT DUE</b>	<b>£ 1046.60</b>	

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**Your payment method is Cash Instalments**  
Amounts due for other periods: £1282.60 (this includes any deferred amounts)

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[www.breckland.gov.uk](http://www.breckland.gov.uk)



## Calculation Details

There are two multipliers from 1 April  
The National Non-Domestic rating multiplier 0.479  
The Small Business Non-Domestic rating multiplier 0.466  
Calculation from 01.04.2017 to 31.03.2018 (365 days)

Rv for period is 1975

Non Domestic Debit =  $1975 \times 0.466 \times 365/365 =$  920.35

Transition applies to Effective Rv of 1975

NCA =  $1975 \times 0.466 \times 365/365 = 920.35$

Transitional Limit =  $1282.60 \times 0.816000 \times 365/365 =$  1046.60

Transitional Premium =  $920.350000 - 1046.601600 =$  126.25

Transitional Chargeable Amount = 1046.60

TOTAL CHARGE FOR PERIOD = 1046.60

Less Payments Made 0.00

AMOUNT DUE 1046.60