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GANGES PUBLIC INQUIRY STATEMENT

I am a Parish Councillor in Chelmondiston and I whole-heartedly agree with all the reasons given against this application in our statement to BDC Planning Dept. and our statement to Babergh's Development Committee in June last year. Those reasons are well rehearsed and I will not go over them again here. This is a personal statement from me as a resident of Chelmondiston, which, I know, reflects the personal feelings of many other residents.

I was appalled that the Development Committee decided to agree to the proposed development, despite the wealth of evidence and public feeling against it. If it were to go ahead, this development would seriously impair quality of life in our area in several fundamental ways. The most overwhelming of these in Chelmondiston is the effects of more than doubled traffic flow through the village.

Already we suffer from quite heavy traffic through what is essentially a rural lane connecting villages. In fact, within living memory, it was only a single track lane between Chelmondiston and Shotley. The main centres of Chelmondiston are situated on the main road – the village hall, two pubs, the post office, two shops. The school playing field fronts onto the road. These are places that many of us need to get to frequently, running the gauntlet of the road. We are exhorted to leave our cars behind and to use other means of getting about. Yet simply walking to the shop can be quite hazardous. For example, over the Xmas holiday when we had snow and icy pavements I had to walk with my 83year old mother as she could not safely get to the shops on her own. Several times I found myself only inches from a large speeding vehicle in places where the pavement is so narrow that there is hardly room for 2 people side by side. There were places we simply could not go to because there is either no pavement at all or one too narrow even for one person to feel safe. This affects particularly the elderly and those with young children. We will no longer feel safe using our village facilities if traffic levels worsen, as they are bound to do.

When, as I do regularly, I cycle around the peninsula, I am already confronted by thundering lorries and speeding cars. It is very intimidating and I am aware of a considerable increase in traffic just in the last 2 or 3 years. I am always anxious when I see elderly neighbours on their bicycles. How much more dangerous is this going to become with doubled traffic flow? I have had several near-misses caused by drivers' carelessness of cyclists, indeed I was almost knocked off my bike on the way back from Shotley after the Development Committee meeting in June. The B1456 is a narrow winding road, and therefore inherently dangerous. Despite this, a refuse lorry started to overtake me at a point where the driver really could not see far enough ahead. When he saw an on-coming vehicle, the driver just pulled in, in front of my bike, narrowly missing me and causing me to wobble in the slip-stream as he was so close. I wrote to BDC to complain, but to little effect. This sort of incident will only increase with increases in traffic and increases in drivers' impatience as the road

becomes busier. Do we have to wait for more deaths before anyone will take us seriously and believe that this road cannot safely handle more traffic?

In a rural area of all places we should be able to encourage our teenagers to cycle to the high school, but which parent could happily send their son or daughter out on a bike on this road as it is today, let alone as it may become? Even cycling through the lanes away from the B1456 is not a safe option as these are busier and busier with vehicles “rat-running” to avoid traffic on the main road. The fact that the other lanes are largely unrestricted as far as speed limits are concerned means that they encourage dangerously fast driving in unsuitable conditions. Ideally our younger children should be able to walk unaccompanied to school as many of us did in our childhood, but this also is already too dangerous. Our children’s independence and freedom are being curtailed to the detriment of their development.

Not only is the traffic dangerous, but it adversely affects our health and quality of life. Many houses are close to, or right on, the roadway (about 100 in Chelmondiston). Their residents suffer the constant rumbling of passing vehicles – which include large farm vehicles, heavily laden lorries and boat transports, not to mention the cars. Such daily noise and air pollution cause stress and ill-health, putting greater pressure on limited support facilities.

Much of the current economic life of the area depends on tourist-driven activities which are encouraged by the rural nature of the area. We and our visitors need access to the countryside, its beauty spots and historic sites, without having to run the gauntlet of urban levels of traffic thundering along country lanes, many of which are single car width only. If this development is permitted I believe there would be severe detrimental effects to many existing businesses and many people’s livelihoods in both Shotley and the surrounding communities through which a huge increase in traffic will flow. Recreational businesses and our few remaining shops will suffer if people cannot get to them easily and safely.

The development proposed represents a significant urbanisation of what is still a largely rural area with special AONB and Conservation designations. The Peninsula provides amenities for a wide range of people from well beyond its boundaries. Walkers, sailors, bird-watchers, fishermen, horse-riders and so on come here, from far and wide to escape the pressures of urban life. With the inevitable increase in traffic, noise, air pollution and danger from vehicles travelling to and from the development, our special areas will be put at risk, and possibly lost to future generations. People come here *because* it is rural and quiet. If it becomes urbanised why would they bother to come and spend time (and money) here?

Life in rural areas has its downsides – one of which is that we have limited resources for health, education, recreation and non-car travel. The huge and sudden increase in population will put these infrastructures at further risk than is already the case. Section 106 measures are unlikely to make much difference when people find they cannot get to see the doctor without an even longer wait, or that their children have to travel into Ipswich for secondary education.

It is not only local opinion that the development is unsustainable. The Planning Officer of BDC recommended refusal, as did The County Highways Authority. We

are not just hoping to keep development from our back yard for the sake of it. It *is* truly an unsuitable site for such a large development (even in its scaled down version), especially bearing in mind that we will also have 150 dwellings at the marina site in Shotley in addition to whatever goes on the Ganges site. The only reason there was ever any development beyond agriculture at Shotley is because of the naval training college – which used the sea as its preferred route in and out. Alas sea-travel is not a viable option in the 21st century (as anyone who has crossed the harbour by boat on a windy day will attest!). The end of a peninsula is simply not a good place for large-scale development – that's why there never was any there prior to the Ganges college.

Please listen to the voices of reason and not the voices of financial gain or political expediency in deciding on this application. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak.