



Fw: Docking Parish Council – Local Plan Scoping Consultation and Call for Sites Consultation

From clerk@dockingparishcouncil.gov.uk <clerk@dockingparishcouncil.gov.uk>

Date Fri 2026-09-25 1:35 PM

To Local.Plan <local.plan@west-norfolk.gov.uk>

 1 attachment (953 KB)
minutes ECM sept 26.pdf;

Dear Local Plan Team,

I hope you are well.

Docking Parish Council would like to submit its formal comments on the Local Plan Scoping Consultation and also share the feedback received from parishioners at the Parish Council's extraordinary meeting on 14 September 2026. Approximately 50 members of the public attended and the Council extended the public session to allow all views to be heard. The full minutes are attached and provide the detailed discussion and individual concerns.

A survey was completed, but it was not possible to fully express concerns on these as a PC. The council therefore asks that you consider this as a response to the Call for Sites Scoping consultation.

1. Docking Parish Council's concerns

Recent development and community capacity:

Docking has already experienced significant development and cannot take further development at the scale now being proposed. The scale of the proposed sites is wholly unsustainable and would fundamentally change Docking and destroy its character as a village. It is simply not possible for the existing community to absorb this level of additional development, particularly having recently experienced significant growth. The community needs time to adjust to, absorb and integrate the development that has already taken place.

A further development of this scale would place unacceptable pressure across every aspect of village life, including local services, roads and access, existing amenities, the ability to access and retain green space, and the community's capacity to provide a good quality of life for existing and new residents. It would not simply add more houses to Docking; it would fundamentally alter the village and the way in which the community functions. The Council considers that the scale proposed would be profoundly damaging to Docking and that further significant development cannot be accommodated.

Unsustainable scale and location:

Docking Parish Council is opposed to the large-scale development currently proposed for Docking. The scale being considered would fundamentally change the existing rural community, its character, identity and way of life. Continued outward expansion of the village cannot be regarded as sustainable where it would effectively create a second village attached to the existing community. If a new settlement is required to accommodate significant growth, this should be a distinct settlement rather than an expansion which fundamentally changes Docking.

Unsuitable development pattern:

The Council does not support continued outward expansion of the village envelope. If housing must nevertheless be allocated to Docking through the Local Plan, the Council's position is that this should be limited to smaller, discrete sites within the existing village envelope and only where development would not alter the character of the village. This is not support for large-scale expansion.

Amenities, utilities and services:

Docking's existing amenities, utilities and services are already at or beyond capacity. The shop, surgery and school are all experiencing capacity problems. Parking is already inadequate, the shop can run out of essential goods during busy periods, and residents are experiencing difficulty obtaining surgery appointments. The school is already at capacity. These are the very facilities which contribute to Docking being classified as a key rural village, but they do not have the capacity to support a significantly larger population. For the purposes of new development, the village might as well not have these services if they are not available to the additional residents that development would create.

The wider infrastructure and services are also inadequate. There are existing problems with water supply and pressure, sewage and drainage, poor mobile phone coverage, poor connectivity and inadequate public transport. Residents experience periods without water and lack of water pressure, while the Council understands that planned water infrastructure improvements do not provide capacity for additional development. Secondary schools are some distance away and hospital services are also a concern.

Taken together, these are not services capable of supporting the proposed scale of development. There are essentially no adequate services available to make Docking a key rural village for new development. The existing situation means that the proposed scale of development cannot be supported and is not sustainable or deliverable.

Sustainable community:

Housing alone does not create a sustainable community. A sustainable community also requires employment, education, healthcare, public transport, utilities and essential services. Docking has limited local employment opportunities, and reasonable wages often require people to travel further afield for work. Public transport is inadequate. Providing affordable housing for families without the employment opportunities and transport needed to support them does not create a sustainable community and risks setting families up to fail, leaving them dependent on cars and longer journeys for work and essential services.

Highway safety and cumulative transport impact:

Docking already experiences significant highway problems, including extreme congestion, speeding, dangerous parking, hazardous junctions, worn road markings, narrow physical bottlenecks and difficulties for pedestrians and cyclists. Fakenham Road, for example, cannot currently provide adequate space for pushchairs. The village road network was not designed for the current volume of traffic, and further development would increase traffic, crashes and incidents. The Council is particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of multiple proposed developments and considers that those impacts cannot be satisfactorily mitigated.

Environmental and biodiversity impacts:

The Council opposes the loss of Green Belt land and is concerned about loss of biodiversity, habitats and wildlife, including endangered species. The Council considers that developments taking up green space, views and green land would be environmentally damaging and represent unsustainable development that cannot be permitted.

Community, identity and quality of life:

The proposed scale of development would fundamentally alter Docking's rural character and community. The Council considers that the loss of green space, village identity and the existing pattern of community life must be properly considered alongside housing numbers.

Lack of deliverability:

The Council is concerned that the proposed scale of development has not demonstrated that the necessary infrastructure, services and mitigation can actually be provided alongside the housing. Deliverability must therefore be considered on the basis of evidence of infrastructure provision, suitability and achievability, rather than assuming that infrastructure can be provided simply because additional development is proposed.

Consultation timing and process:

The Council remains concerned about the timing of this consultation and the way the information has been provided. The consultation deadline of 29 September has required the Parish Council to consider substantial proposals and community concerns within a very limited period. Parish Councils also need sufficient time to consider information, obtain member views, engage with residents and lawfully determine their response through the Council's normal governance arrangements. The Council therefore asks that the Borough recognises the limitations created by the current timetable and does not interpret the absence of detailed comments on any particular aspect as support. The Council also asks that the concerns raised about the timing and presentation of information are taken into account when considering the effectiveness of the consultation and future engagement.

2. Parishioners' concerns

The Council also wishes to formally pass on the concerns expressed by residents at the meeting and echoed by the Council, even if not formally expressed above. These included:

Housing affordability and local need: Concern that new housing would not be affordable to local people, and that development should address genuine local housing need rather than simply increasing the housing supply.

Second homes and holiday lets: Concern about the already high number of second homes and holiday lets, and that further development could create more homes which are not occupied as part of the local community.

West Hall Farm: Particular concern regarding the two larger proposed sites, comprising more than 250 homes, including their location outside the development boundary and the severe cumulative impact that residents consider they would have on the road network.

Choseley Road Sites: Concern that existing roads are unsuitable for the proposed scale of development, including the condition and narrowness of Choseley Road and the safety of access to proposed sites.

Tourism and overcrowding: Concern that increased visitor numbers and tourism are already placing pressure on the village and contributing to resentment, with further development potentially increasing this.

Employment and public transport: Concern that local employment opportunities are limited and not always well paid, while public transport is inadequate, potentially leaving new residents dependent on cars and longer journeys for work and essential services.

Social and affordable housing delivery: Concern that developers have historically withdrawn promised social or affordable housing, and that commitments made through development may therefore not ultimately be delivered.

Existing housing: Concern that existing properties, including Freebridge properties reported to be unoccupied or poorly maintained, should be considered before creating substantial additional housing.

Rural infrastructure: Concern that rural communities and their infrastructure requirements are not being sufficiently recognised, and that investment in highways, public transport, utilities and basic

services should come before further housing development.

Green Belt, wildlife and biodiversity: Strong concern about the loss of Green Belt land and the potential destruction or damage to habitats, biodiversity and endangered species.

Developer-led growth: Concern that development may be driven primarily by commercial considerations rather than by the creation and preservation of a vibrant, lived-in rural community.

Docking Parish Council supports and echoes its residents' concerns and asks that these are fully considered alongside the Council's formal position. The attached minutes provide the fuller detail of the discussion and are submitted as part of the Parish Council's response.

Yours sincerely,

Annalisa Dovey
Clerk/RFO
Docking Parish Council