

ELSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Dear Sir/Madam

Reference APP/Q2371/W/15/3134385

Elswick Parish Council understands that Cuadrilla has submitted plans to service its proposed Roseacre Wood site via three routes, two of which pass through the centre of Elswick. Neither of the routes through Elswick were included in the original planning application and the Parish Council was therefore not represented at the previous planning inquiry. The Parish Council considers that these new proposals are a major departure from the original planning application and that therefore a new planning application should be submitted by the company.

- 1.
2. Elswick Parish Council objects to the proposals on the following grounds:-

Blue Route

3. The Parish Council has no specific knowledge regarding the safety or road conditions relating to the blue route (via Clifton) but is aware that the roads along this route are narrow with sharp bends and safety hazards such as the children's playground in Clifton. The Council considers that the introduction of temporary traffic lights and laybys along this route will not alleviate the problems and that the planning inspector's decision was correct and should stand.

Green and Red Routes (Common Section)

4. In contrast the Parish Council is fully aware of the problems affecting the two proposed routes (red and green routes) which pass through Elswick village. The Council has recent experience of the problems that HGV traffic through the village creates due to the operation of an unauthorised HGV operation in Lodge Lane Elswick. 25 HGV'S have operated from the site over the past few months without planning permission and have been the cause of several accidents in the village. Fylde Borough Council recently rejected planning permission for the site and has served an enforcement notice on the operators (Fox Brothers) which is now subject to an appeal.

5. The red and green routes both link with the A585 at Thistleton and use the same route between the A585 and Elswick village crossroads and share the following road safety issues.

- 6.
 - **A585 Congestion** The A585 from the M55 to Windy Harbour is a single lane road in each direction and is notorious for daily delays and congestion. The trunk road provides the main access from the motorway to the Borough of Wyre and carries 35000 vehicles per day. Highways England has restricted house building in Wyre due to the fact that the A585 is already over capacity particularly this stretch of road for which Highways England has no improvement plans. To access the Green and Red routes Cuadrilla will need to use this stretch of the A585 and this will add to further congestion particularly if the convoy system which operates at Preston New Road is adopted.

- 7. **A585 Road safety at the Thistleton Junctions** These junctions are a major road safety concern with vehicles queuing on the B5269 to access the A585.(see photograph) Highways England is well aware of the serious safety issues which are created by motorists who after queuing on the B5269 to access the A585 and waiting for gaps in the traffic, take chances by pulling out in front of speeding traffic. The accident statistics show that this is an ever increasing problem with more accidents at these junctions in 2016 than in the preceding five years. The accidents on this stretch of the A585 are currently running at approximately one per week and have escalated since the 'improvement' work was undertaken last year at the Windy Harbour junction, reducing the gaps in South travelling traffic. Highways England has repeatedly warned both Fylde and Wyre Councils of the cumulative effects of introducing more traffic on these junctions from new developments in the area. Last year Wyre complied with this direction by rejecting an application for 93 houses in Copp Lane Great Eccleston on the following grounds:-

8. ***'The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on highway safety by exacerbating existing traffic problems caused by the poor conditions and inadequacies of existing roads. This impact on the local and strategic (A585) highway network is judged to be severe. The proposal is therefore contrary to saved Policy SP14 of the Adopted Wyre Borough Local Plan (1999) and paragraph 32 of the NPPF'.***

9. The latest response from the agency to Fylde Borough Council (reference 16/0846) for an application for 24 houses in Elswick, determined in June 2017, is quite unequivocal and includes the following sections which were printed in bold type:-

10. ***'Highways England has concerns that the increased development coming forward in this area is, cumulatively, significantly increasing the number of turning movements at this junction (Thistleton), with a correspondingly significant increase in risk to safety.***

11. ***Consequently, Highways England is of the view that, should this development (24 houses) be granted consent, further speculative development within Elswick would not now be in accordance with the Fylde Local Plan or the emerging Fylde Local Plan that is clearly cogent of the safety issues that affect Thistleton junction.***

12. ***Where development is in excess of what is contained within the adopted Local Plan there can be no deemed prior assumption that the SRN infrastructure can safely accommodate the traffic generated by such developments. Consequently, and in view of the findings of this review, there is now a need for both applicants and the relevant Local Planning Authorities to seriously consider the need for a safety improvement at Thistleton junction to accommodate further development and how this can be achieved***

13. ***We would however urge Fylde Council to seriously consider the cumulative and negative impact on safety of all these new developments with a view to resisting further development until a coordinated approach to infrastructure mitigation can be achieved via your Local Plan, or any other available planning mechanism such as SPD or CIL.***

14. *That said, in considering further developments, Fylde Council should be mindful of the potential impacts such a scheme could have for affecting the efficiency of the A585 trunk road mainline flows and therefore the wider accessibility of the populated areas of Poulton, Thornton and Fleetwood that the trunk serves. In other words alterations to the junction prompted by significant levels of unplanned growth within small, rural settlements such as Elswick has the potential to result in dis-benefits (further delays), thus affecting the sustainability of both the current and future economic growth contribution of the facilities and communities within these areas, which the trunk road supports.'*

15. So we find ourselves in a classic catch 22 situation. Highways England considers the junctions at Thistleton to be dangerous and recommends that there should be no more development in Elswick until improvements are undertaken at the junctions but then qualifies this by saying that such work could affect the economic growth in several Wyre towns. The Agency has advised the Parish council that it has no plans to undertake any work at the junctions and has considered but rejected calls for a roundabout or traffic lights on the northerly Thistleton junction on the basis that these would hinder the traffic flows. Since the advice in June 2018 one hundred new houses have been granted on appeal in Elswick and an appeal has been heard but not determined for the 93 houses in Great Eccleston. In addition Wyre Borough Council has published its Local Plan proposals for a further 400+ houses in Great Eccleston in addition to those currently granted or subject to appeal.

16. What cannot be disputed therefore is that the warnings issued by Highways England are rapidly coming to fruition. The level of housing and increased usage of the junctions is happening whilst at the same time Cuadrilla is proposing to use the junctions for their HGV operations. The slow movement of these vehicles at the Thistleton junctions will invariably increase queuing times with the result that more and more motorists are likely to take chances in accessing the A585 further adding to the rapidly increasing number of accidents.

17. • **90 Degree Bends** There are two 90 degree bends between the A585 and Elswick and a further two when entering/departing the village. These are roads which were built for horses and carts and are totally unsuitable for the size of vehicles deployed by Cuadrilla. The illegal Fox Brothers operation in Lodge Lane has recently shown how unsuitable these roads are for such vehicles and there have been a number of accidents involving vehicles visiting their site. The attached photograph shows the difficulty that HGV'S experience in attempting to negotiate the bends with the result that they often take the corners on the wrong side of the road. None of the proposed laybys provide any relief on any of the corners/bends.

18. • **Blind Corner** The blind corner at the village crossroads provides a hazard to vehicles travelling from Roseacre Rd to Ash Road or continuing along the High St to Lodge Lane. There is a very poor sight line for vehicles stopped on the junction at Roseacre Rd and what sight line exists is often further obscured by vehicles parked on the High St. The crossroads have a long history of accidents and several attempts have been made to realign the crossroads but with no success

Red Route

- 19. • **90 Degree Bends** There are four further 90 degree bends between the village crossroads and Crossmoor which HGV's have difficulty negotiating. The bend at the entrance to the village at the Watery Lane T Junction has a history of accidents. Again none of the proposed laybys will have any effect in relieving the problems at these locations.
- 20. • **Mill Lane/Lodge Lane Junction.** A development of up to fifty houses has recently been allowed on appeal and will be accessed via this junction. Apart from the problem of HGV'S accessing this site whilst Cuadrilla's vehicles are also using this route, the proposal is to reduce the width of Mill Lane to provide a better sight line. We thus have the prospect of numerous HGV'S attempting to use this narrowed lane at the same time. If Fox Brother's operations in Lodge Lane are granted permission on appeal, this will surely be a recipe for chaos.
- 21. • Elswick Parish Council has no specific knowledge regarding other aspects of this route which are outside the parish's boundary but the Council is of the opinion that the route through Inskip is unsuitable for the type and level of traffic proposed with narrow sections and tight corners. The Council also considers that this route is unsuitable with it passing Inskip school.

Green Route

- 22. • Roseacre Road, Elswick is particularly unsuitable for the traffic proposed by Cuadrilla in that many of the houses along Roseacre Rd do not have garages with the result that at many times of the day it is only possible for one vehicle to pass along the road due to parked cars. No passing places are possible or proposed along the built up area of this road.
- 23. • The alleyway leading to the housing estate behind the houses on the westerly section of Roseacre Rd is much used by young children using the village hall site who have a tendency to run straight across the road. There have been a number of accidents involving injuries to young children at this location over the years and the Parish Council has explored many options to try to address the problem. The difficulty is that railings cannot be erected at the Roseacre Rd entrance to the alleyway as the alleyway also serves as the access for garages behind the houses. Some years ago the Parish Council erected a gate halfway down the alleyway but this did not relieve the problem.
- 24. • The village hall in Roseacre Road is heavily used and often has a parking problem necessitating cars parking on the road. One of the suggested Laybys is we understand sited outside the front of the village hall. Whilst this will be a welcome addition to the village hall it will undoubtedly encourage more parking along Roseacre Rd and will have a negative rather than a positive effect for relieving traffic issues at this location.
- 25. • As this route leaves the Elswick boundary and heads towards Roseacre the road narrows considerably and only one vehicle at a time can safely pass along the road. To suggest that two HGV'S can pass along this section and other sections of road up to Roseacre is absolute nonsense.

26.

- Whilst this is the shortest route it is clearly the worst route for road and safety.

Conclusion

27. Elswick Parish Council considers that the proposals forwarded by Cuadrilla do not address the access problems for Roseacre Wood and create further traffic safety problems over and above the very real traffic safety issues that currently exist. Over the years Elswick Parish Council has repeatedly tried to address many of the concerns but has received no support from County Highways. The Parish Council trusts that the County Council will oppose these proposals at the forthcoming tribunal and in doing so will recognise the existing road safety issues in the area and accordingly introduce a 20mph speed limit in the village and liaise with Highways England to resolve the serious safety issues at the Thistleton junctions. Further work should also be undertaken at the village crossroads to improve the sight lines particularly with the number of HGV movements which will be needed to develop the building sites in Copp Lane, Beech Rd and Mill Lane.

Yours sincerely

Mark Reed

Vice-Chairman

Elswick Parish Council

