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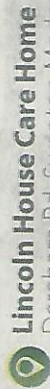
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Councils meet to review planning applications

Two Norfolk councils have met to review the "sorry history" of the past 15 months of planning applications after issues were raised about private firm Capita handling hundreds of miles away.

Yaxham Parish Council (YPC) wrote to Breckland Council last month to request a meeting with officers due to "increasing concern" over a "systemic issue".

Parish councillors have since met with district councillor Gordon Bambridge and council officers.

YPC chairman Peter Lowings wrote: "There has been increasing concern expressed by residents and members of YPC. This has not been the case in every application, [but] it has been sufficiently frequent that we have chosen to set out for you the sorry

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history of the last 15 months."

Councillors expressed their frustration over issues including:

- An officer report into a Lanpro application for 25 homes north of Norwich Road, described as "one of the worst we have seen";

- An application to develop land off Elm Close which was validated by Breckland Council within one day, and described as "unheard of";

- An application for land on Dereham Road being granted, described as "one of the poorest performances by officers in handling and presenting an application".

Vice chairman of YPC, Ian Martin, said: "We have been unhappy with Breckland's handling of

planning and have been concerned about consistency.

"We're talking to people who don't know the area; who are sitting hundreds of miles away and don't have the facts."

He added: "We appreciated the constructive approach to the discussions and the points taken for review by Breckland, and we look forward to meeting in the new year to review progress."

A spokesperson for Breckland Council said: "All key performance indicators related to our contract with Capita have been met routinely and we continue to work closely together on further improving the service.

"However, we take any concerns about the service being delivered very seriously and have met with representatives from the Yaxham parish to discuss their issues."