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Sent: 15 April 2011 09:01
To: Development Plans
Cc:
Subject: Land Allocations Consultation

Allocations Consultation

There is an urgent need for more specialist housing for adults with special needs, learning disabilities, autism and complex multiple and high support needs.

Family carers have identified the need for village / intentional community provision in Cumbria and have raised this on several occasions with Cumbria County Council, Adult Social Services, Children's Service for those entering transition from education, Cumbria Learning Disability Partnership Board including via their Commissioning Intentions Consultation and the newly formed Cumbria Autism Partnership Board, including via the Adult Autism Strategy Consultation preceding it. Other studies, including that by the social housing charity Housing Options have identified the need for more specialist housing and care options.

The Community Care Act entrusted local authorities to help develop a spectrum of care and housing types to meet different needs. For many this did not materialise. The Department of Health White Paper Valuing People and later endorsed by the subsequent Valuing People Now emphasised the need to develop a range of housing and care options, especially to support those with high support needs. The minimum range of housing and care options was to include independent living, support with living at home with parents / relatives, different types of supported living, residential care and village / intentional communities, eg based on the Camphill Village Community model. Apart from some success and the development of more independent / supported living placements the needs of those with severe autism and in combination with additional complex needs or multiple disabilities have been largely overlooked again.

Some of the sites being looked at may be suitable for the establishment and development of village / intentional communities on a small scale for those who are too vulnerable to manage alone and for those who have complex needs where it is not possible to develop the specialist provision needed on an individual basis. The Camphill Village Trust, the Association of Camphill Communities, L'arche, Norwood – Ravenswood, Brookvale are all examples of organisations providing village / intentional community type provision for those with special needs and who could be consulted along with the National Autistic Society, SENSE (The Deafblind Rubella Association), etc in addition to local family carers.

Site M9M2 in Milnthorpe near the site of the proposed new E H Booth and Son Ltd Supermarket in association with Houghtons may be a suitable site for the development of a small village / intentional community or cluster of special needs housing with easy access to the new supermarket. Relatively level access to other services and facilities in the centre of Milnthorpe (always a problem in Cumbria) and near new employment sites (M9M1 & M30) with the possibility of developing sheltered / therapeutic work opportunities for those with disabilities able to access such provision.

The disabled population are also ageing and there will be the need to develop specialist provision for those with special needs, autism and complex disabilities who are becoming older which may need to be developed alongside or near provision for the rest of the ageing population and especially for family carers who may wish to stay in contact with and close proximity to their ageing, disabled relatives.

However, I have reservations and concerns about the proposed housing at RN57 & R93 in Milnthorpe being near the top of a steep, winding hill whose access is via St Anthony's Hill and St Anthony's Close, often blocked with parked vehicles, not gritted in winter and whose salt / grit bins are not routinely refilled relying on the goodwill of residents to purchase their own salt / grit and clear the snow and ice themselves.

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