

03-08-2011

Dear Mr McNeill

LDF current Consultation - Levens

Re: Site/s: R682LVM & R291#

Since the last Consultation earlier this year, other sites have since been put forward for consultation for inclusion in the LDF.

The Residents of Levens were consulted on R682LVM.

Now, **on that site & the neighbouring site of RN291#** there **is a collective submission**, from Story Homes of Carlisle for approximately 70 homes, which changes the face of the original consultation.

The community acknowledge the need for some housing in the village, but see small developments appropriate for Levens, NOT housing Estates.

In the last consultation, the site RM692LVM caused the greatest outcry from the whole village. The majority felt compelled to comment AGAINST this site. It is highly visible from the village, Lyth Valley, the Lake District National Park, Whitbarrow & Arnside Knott. The road is a main route into & out of the village, which is single file on Brigsteer Road. All these fields were designated as a "Landscape of County Importance," in the Public Enquiry of 1996. This has not changed. It is seen as a village amenity enjoyed by many- not simply the surrounding houses. It also has Historical issues, which, we were told, would be protected within the LDF.

For those of us who face a prospect of houses on this land, in front of our own properties, as well as within the village, this submission is abhorrent. We are TOTALLY against it. It is NOT the right site for any houses, never-mind 70 houses.

There is no evidence that Story Homes have paid any heed to:

- **the Parish Plan, where every Parishioner was consulted**
- **the recommendations within the Plan**
- **Parishioners aspirations for their village.**

It has already been raised with me, by Parishioners that if the submission for any of this land, is included in the LDF, then every subsequent

Planning Permission for every plot of land in Levens, would have to gain permission to build, as nowhere else in the village has as many weighty issues **against** it. In effect it would create an open planning policy with little regulation. It would be difficult to have any control over what was built & where, because of the precedence set by these fields & this site.

Another issue raised Parishioners with properties overlooking this area: the devaluation of their homes.

Any development here, would mean property devaluation as well as all other associated losses for us as a village. Whilst in Planning terms, nobody is “entitled to a view” all properties on the fringe of this area, have in effect, paid a premium on their house price for that view, when they purchased them. People are already getting agitated about this and seeking compensation has been mentioned.

Having studied the Story Homes submission very carefully, it is a professional presentation using Consultancy firm & their “own in-house expertise.” It presents the reader with a very positive picture.

However, there are:

26 issues which record incorrect/misleading information to the reader.

There are also 14 points of significant information which are missing from their documentation e.g. The Parish Plan, The Community views, The Lake District National Park, the site’s relation to the Landscape Area etc.

These are listed at the end of this document.

We, the village of Levens, have our own huge, “in house” resource, of information about the village, its people & feelings. This cannot be underestimated, ignored, nor excluded from this process. The Levens Residents Group has worked very hard to keep villagers informed & aware. They have tried to keep a balanced, representative view & work with SLDC, for the benefit of their villagers. They have consulted the whole village once already (as they were for the Parish Plan.) The second LDF consultation form is about to be dropped into letter boxes, any time now. We are unaware that any other village has consulted so widely or as effectively as Levens, through this LDF consultation process. All findings will & have been, forwarded to you at SLDC, to inform your processes.

As a family, we are totally against any of these fields being included in the LDF for all the reasons raised on the attached paperwork, the Parish Plan & the submissions from LRG.

We -“The community” need to be listened to, but above all, need to heard.

Yours sincerely

D, H & J Burrow.

STORY HOMES SUBMISSION TO SLDC FOR SITE R682LVM- LEVENS

(LAND WEST OF BRIGSTEER RD, LEVENS) NOW LABELLED WITH RN291.

PLEASE NOTE: THE PLAN ATTACHED TO STORY HOMES SUBMISSION DOES NOT REFLECT THE NUMBERING SYSTEM FROM SLDC, NOR THE CORRECT SITES OR SIZES, NOR TALLY WITH THE SLDC PLAN.

S/H PLAN SHOWS 3 FIELDS WITH A LABEL OF SITE RM682LVM.

ON THE LAST CONSULTATION IT WAS ONE FIELD AS THAT SITE REFERENCE.

ON SLDC'S PLAN THE SITE NOW HAS 2 FIELDS TO BE CONSULTED UPON:RN291#

IT CANNOT BE CLEAR WHAT PEOPLE ARE BEING ASKED TO CONSULT ON: 1 OR 3 FIELDS? LOCATION REFERENCE?

On the attached application document produced by Story Homes there are:

- **26 points of incorrect information** in it- labelled x with number
- **14points of missing information-** labelled> with number
- **Points of ulterior motive with spurious backing-** labelled U/M
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INCORRECT INFORMATION:Not only is this information inINCORRECT but it is also very MISLEADING to the reader.

1. The south side of this site (R682LVM) was NOT identified as “suitable site to deliver 24 houses.”

It was a nominated site for CONSIDERATION to be included in the LDF. The land available @ 30 dwellings per H/A generated the number 24.**Misleading**

2. States this as a “suitable residential site & offers the most sustainable site in Levens”

In January 1996, at a PUBLIC ENQUIRY, THIS SITE was labelled by the Inspector, Patrick Whitehead as one that should **NOT BE ALLOCATED for development** as it was **within an area designated as Landscapes of County Importance (LCI) .**

That **has not changed**. There is even more protection for such places than there was in 1996. Story homes have made no reference to this land being the subject of a previous public Enquiry or that it was turned down. Their “suitability statement” is their own, ill- informed labelling. **Misleading**

The majority of residents of Levens have shown themselves **NOT to agree with Story Homes** in their **Village survey of 2011** on sites nominated for consideration in the LDF, & their **Parish Plan of Dec 2008**.

Story homes are clearly **unaware of the historical nature of this area** either: the **original small historical hamlets** of Beathwaite Green, Underhill, Cotes & Cinderbarrow. **In previous documentation from SLDC Historical Issues would be upheld.** **Misleading**

3. Identifying this land for “deliverable” is ambiguous to say the least. It is **NOT DELIVERABLE** if you take into account the views of the **MAJORITY** of the village in the **Village Survey 2011**.

IF this land were ever to **be included in the LDF against the wishes of a majority of the village, then there is no need to bring it into Phase 1 & 2** of the Land Allocations, except to avoid further confrontation with the Village & **avoid issues within the Localism Bill.** **Misleading**

4. “We consider this site to be significantly restrained by mature trees.”

S/H fail to mention the mature trees are on ONE SIDE of the proposed site.

The site is HIGHLY VISIBLE TO THE VILLAGE, RESIDENTS AND THE LAKE DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK. **Misleading**

5. The “residential dwellings **which contain mature trees** to provide a degree of screening mature trees” **number 2- “Madeleine”** (2 mature trees)& “Rock Cottage” (its own small orchard of fruit trees.) **Misleading.**

6. **There is no assurance that if there were a development on this land; it would “contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities.”** The last new development in Levens, of 29 properties, saw many people from outside the area retiring there & buy to let investors seizing an opportunity. The “Affordable”

properties were inappropriate in size & bedroom capacity & outside space. Only 2 were capable of housing a family with 1 child. It brought 1 child to the Village School & 1 child to the local Secondary School. It may have brought some benefit to the Village Store, Pub& Church but **these factors remain immeasurable. Misleading**

7. **“Achievable” – reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered in 5 years- NOT in view of the Localism Bill & the views of the MAJORITY OF LEVENS RESIDENTS. This is the site the MAJORITY WERE OPPOSED TO in the previous Consultation. Misleading**

8. **“Until the Localism Bill gains Royal Assessment”** They are hoping to alter the time scales to escape the restrictions this Bill would bring.

They have NOT consulted the Community.

They have not got a majority vote on their proposal.

It is directly against what the Community have said they want.(Village Survey 2011 & Parish Plan.)

9. **“would constitute infilling & a natural rounding off of the village envelope”**

This is **NOT INFILLING!** Look at the site **ON THE GROUND.** There are **HISTORICAL** issues with this area which clearly **S/H are unaware of**, otherwise they could not have made this **INACCURATE** statement. **Misleading**

10. **“mature woodland which would soften the impact of the proposed development”**

The site is on a **HILLSIDE** which rises from floor of the Lyth Valley below. **IT IS HUGELY VISIBLE from the village, the surrounding properties on 3 sides, the Lyth Valley&Lake District National Park.** These trees mentioned are on one end, the left hand end as it is very clearly viewed from the LDNP & Lyth Valley. It will also be very **visible to the A590**, which in the past, has been a reason SLDC have given for consideration.

11. **“gain access to the site from Brigsteer Road”**

This Access single track road is one of 3 **main arterial routes** into & out of the Village. We already have **traffic problems here now**. How can it be acceptable to bring traffic from another 70 houses minimum- **out onto a single track road with traffic problems already?** Perhaps the Highways need to do a survey at varying times of the day, before giving an opinion to S/H. They are clearly not well informed or aware. **Misleading**

12.As above 11.

13.“services including transport, school & local shops”

We have a **reduced bus service from Levens Bridge or The Heaves Hotel, NOT THE VILLAGE.** (Both on the main roads below the village **with a 10 minute walk, up or down hill, with no street lights or pavements.**) This constitutes a huge problem & areal danger for anyone less able, elderly, with children, with a pushchair etc.

We have lost our Post Office& have A SHOP.**Misleading**

14.“United Utilities have confirmed there are no current issues in Levens with regard to foul drainage.

The person a t U/U who gave that information **must be badly informed, as letters from Villagers have been sent to them, the PC & SLDC.**The proposal is to connect into the public foul sewer on Hutton Lane, which joins Underhill. **See the letter submitted to SLDC from Mr & Mrs C Phillips, Underhill, Levens.**

U/U also appear to be unaware of the **contamination of the cut with raw sewage on numerous occasions, because the system doesn't cope- even since the new methods for taking sewage from Levens to Milnthorpe Works(This happens below the Hare & Hounds at Levens.)** If there were no problems, then these instances would not be occurring.**Levens PC has written to U/U on these issues previously.** **Misleading**

15. “Story Homes can confirm there are no utilities & servicing constraints that affect the proposed development.”

The electricity supply to Levens houses is already on 3 inefficient phases. We have repeated power failures in one area or another. We have Water supply problems already in the village, particularly on Greengate. (Letters & evidence already submitted.) The supply for any development here would be taken off the supply coming down Brigsteer Road from Whitegate underground water storage facility. This would take water off the supply before it went on down the road to Greengate & the rest of the village. How is that not a significant problem? **Misleading**

16. “Intergra Consulting has undertaken a desk top assessment”

This might have given better, more accurate advice if they **completed their assessment on the ground rather than a desk top the site, & at least read the Parish Plan of 2008, available on the internet via Levens Village Website.** Their research has been lacking. They have been able to access all information submitted to SLDC on the LDF. Either they are ill-informed or only select information that is of use to them & **disregard everything that reflects the feelings & aspirations of the Village.** The reader must be the judge of that. **Misleading**

17. “The land is available now for residential development”

It is not! They do not have Planning Permission.

They do not have the backing of the Village.

IF this site were to be included- there would be an outcry.

If it ever got to Planning Permission there would be uproar.

Parishioners are very protective, in the best possible way, of their environment. The Government are encouraging Communities to make choices for themselves. The Villagers of Levens have already shown their feelings & opinions via consultation for the Parish Plan of 2008 & the more recent Village Survey 2011. **They need to be listened to!**

18. “Site R71M” was excluded from the process BEFORE consultation! No comment on their opinion was necessary or called for.

19. “It is in our view...”

Why do any of us have any duty to listen to a prospective developer from CARLISLE, who is in this process, along with a land owner based in BIRMINGHAM, purely for financial gain,& who would quite happily DISREGARD anything the Villagers thought- just to get their own way? How is there any justification in that, under Government views now?

20. “In relation to sit R51M....would in essence, represent a bolt on site, which has no bearing upon the historical development of the Village.”

Not according to the Parishioners in their submission to the last Consultation. The area always was **one of the original hamlets of Levens with the Pub, the Church, the cottages & farmstead. It is still within a 2or 3 minute walk of all, & a further 2 or 3 minutes to the School.** Their information is incorrect & misleading.

21. “R682LVM is the most suitable site for development in Levens”

SIMPLY NOT TRUE.

Site R682LMV was ONE FIELD, WHICH WAS **OBJECTED TO BY A MAJORITY OF THE VILLAGE**, under the last Consultation.

NOWit is site R682LVM WITH SITE RN291 INCLUDED WITH IT,

MAKING 3FIELDS FOR 70 HOUSES.(S/H figures)

If the Ha sizes of the fields concerned are added together (as per the SH plan attached to their application):

RN291# = 3.23 Ha

R682LMV= 1.1 Ha

The total Ha for those 3 fields is 4.33.

At SLDC’s level of 30 dwellings per Ha 4.33 X 30 = 129.9 dwellings

It is 5 times worse than it was at the last consultation& therefore even LESS suitable than it ever was.

22. “it I our view that the site is deliverable...”

Not if you take notice of information from the Parishioners. **Misleading**

23. “ has no constraints or limitations that would prevent the scale of development.....”

That is **ONLY TRUE if you totally IGNORE:**

The last Public Enquiry, The Inspector, The Lake District National Park.

The proposed new LDNP boundary comes within about 150 metres, (as the crow flies,) **from the bottom of this site,** nearest to Lyth Valley,)

The Parish Plan, The Village Survey of 2011 and all comments submitted to SLDC in the last Consultation on these sites. **Misleading**

24. “offers the most sustainable & accessible site in Levens”

UNTRUE for all reasons already identified in this document: Utilities, traffic/highway issues, visual impact on the village & the LDNP, historical issues, Village opinions, Parish Plan, loss of Village amenity. (See Consultation submission on R682LVM- all issues apply to that one field, which becomes 3 in this submission labelled RN291.)

25. “ to deliver 70 units”

Our Parish Plan of 2008 speaks of “small scale developments” within the village from then on, with “control” over size & design. Clearly S/H has never even read the Parish Plan or they would have ascertained that a site with 70 units was inappropriate & unacceptable for the Village.

This site, as per their plan is 3 fields, with a total Ha of 4.33 Ha

4.33 Ha @ 30 per Ha = 129.9 dwellings.

They are quoting 70 in their application.

Any builder with a site for houses, needs to build to capacity/almost capacity as it affects the profit. The profit is the sole reason they are in the trade they are.

Are S/H deliberately trying to be misleading by not using the same references as SLDC on the sites &/or the number of houses quoted for their plan?

Do they think the Parishioners are unaware of the standard 30 dwellings per Ha as quoted by SLDC as a yardstick. Very misleading

26. “..it should be identified within phases 1 & 2 of the Land Allocation DPD.”

The **majority of the village do not agree with 1 field being allocated, never-mind 3.**

The only reason S/H would want it bringing into Phase 1 & 2 is to **avoid the impact of the Localism Bill, get started building quicker to get faster financial gain for them & for the land-owner, with total disregard for the village, its evidence & opinion**

MISSING INFORMATION:- LABELLED > WITH NUMBER ON DOCUMENT

1>.Description of site: OMTS that it is:

- a **current Village Amenity**
- a **Village focal point**
- a **Tourist attraction**
- **identified by the Public Enquiry of 1996 as sites within an area designated as Landscapes of County Importance (LCI)**
- **Highly visible from the Village, the A590 (a consideration of SLDC’s in the past,)**

The Lyth Valley, A..... to Bowness &The LDNP.

2>. & 3> “..physical problems..potential impacts of developing the site...”

ALL the above apply but are OMITTED.

4> “ This section of the report is based upon the in-house expertise at Story Homes, together with consultant advice.....as well as consultations with...”

Their in-house expertise will no doubt have used the Internet, where they would have easily been able to access **Levens Village website, listing the Parish Plan& all submissions to**

SLDC concerning the LDF, but fail to mention any of it, as it would be to their CLEAR DISADVANTAGE.

5> “This has clearly established the suitability of the site for residential purposes.”

The EHLSS that they mention, **was prior to current Government guidance**, or the Localism Bill, or Parish Plan & Village Consultation, & therefore **should carry little, if any, weight. Things have changed. Issues need to reflect current measures.**

6> Fails to mention the views from the site across the Lyth Valley to the Lake Hills, or the site’s position in the landscape, or the Inspector’s comments on these fields from 1996, which are even more relevant today.

The Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance & Toolkit gives sensible guidance:

“Sensitive Characteristics or features:

.....The limestone & sandstone vernacular, traditional scale of villages and their siting that follows the grain of the valleys are sensitive to unsympathetic expansion.....Undeveloped valley rims & their relationship with adjacent landscapes are sensitive to rim edge development.”

7> How can the building of 70 or more properties, NOT impact on the landscape & existing properties?

(Note the sites they are proposing are 3 fields: The nominal 70 could be changed at any time as it is not done using SLDC guidelines of 30 dwellings per Ha.)

R682LVM of 1.1 Ha PLUS SITE

RN291# of 3.23 Ha

TOTAL 4.32 Ha- if using SLDC guidelines of 30 houses per Ha- potential for 129 HOUSES or MORE

8> assess the “.. potential visual impact of the proposed development”

Surely this **OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN DONE PRIOR TO THIS APPLICATION**& taking **all available information into account?**

9> “..gain access to the site from Brigsteer Road.... S/H has designed a potential priority access junction to serve the site”

IF this is such a suitable site according to S/H, why then is there any need to make traffic controlling road changes?

They fail to mention this road has traffic issues already.

They fail to mention that much of it is single line traffic access.

This was the subject of **considered traffic calming measures within the Parish Plan.**

Concerns from residents over vehicle speed have been raised at Parish Council.

It is one of 3 arterial routes into/out of the village, with traffic problems compounded by street parking from visitors & houses with inadequate parking of their own, already.

10> “The Highways Agency has not raised any site specific issues relating to highway capacity.”

Is that because they have not been specifically asked?

The 3 arterial routes into & out of the village are ALL SINGLE TRACK prior to entering the village. Many of the side roads, apart from some of the Main Street, are single track.

S/H claim “.. future trips associated with the site, would be evenly distributed between these routes, minimising the traffic impact upon the village.”

They have no idea which routes anyone entering or leaving the village may take. **There is no prediction & therefore this claim CANNOT be made.**

We already **have atrocious congestion by the Playing Fields, every-day** at School times & whenever there is a Bowling Match, or Sport straining, or any other multi-participant sport or activity at the Playing Fields. **There is no car park-only the sides of the roads, reducing them all to single file, if they aren't already.**

There is also a **20 MPH speed limit to give some added safety for the children & School.**

There have been **lines put on the road to stop parking which causes additional dangers, visibility etc.**

As the 20M.P.H. speed limit & the lines, were put there by the Highways Department-how can any of that Not be known to the Highways Authority?

A minimum of 70 houses may predictably generate from 70 to 140 cars.

At least a car per house or else they cannot get in/out of the village unless they walk on roads without pavements & minimal street lighting in the village. There is **NO streetlighting** below or above the village where people need to walk to Heaves or Levens Bridge to catch a bus.

HOW CAN AN ADDITIONAL 70 TO 140 CARS DO ANYTHING TO “MINIMISE” TRAFFIC IMPACT UPON THE VILLAGE?

11> “.. improve connectivity of the site & settlement by providing a footpath link from Brigsteer Road to Hutton Lane.

Questionable gain or benefit& information missing in the description:

BrigsteerRoad as far as “Sharrow” has a tarmac pavement on 1 side of the road.

There is **no pavement at all above “Sharrow”**, where the **road is single file**. It is a place where **extreme caution has to be exercised** when walking, for the elderly, for those with a child, a buggy or a dog for example.

Hutton Lane is also a single track road without any pavements at all. The same safety considerations have to be applied.

Why would there be **any gain in this proposal** or **any additional safety measure given?**

Is there a right of access along Chapel Lane as it is not an adopted highway?

12> “ However development that increases the amount of impermeable surfaces can result in an increase in surface water run-off, which could result in flooding on site or elsewhere in the catchment.”

2 issues ignored :

a) All of these **fields are on a slope with houses below.**

Little soil on top of limestone but any soil does absorb some water

All water has to drain to below the site to the cut below the village for drainage.

The village has problems already with rainwater drainage- drains don’t cope, water on roads etc.

b) **The Lyth Valley Land Drainage Board** is in the process of being set up. When the Environment Agency switches the pumps of in the Lyth Valley, the plan is that this **Group will take over the drainage of the Lyth, to preserve the farm lands, houses etc.** There will have to be a **levy to all households** where water runs down into the cuts & into the valley- thus **affecting all houses in Levens.**

13> “...discharging surface water to a public sewer subject to the approval of the relevant statutory authorities.”

The **capacity & efficiency of the public sewer in Levens** has already been high-lighted & questioned in this paperwork. Any additional surface water could well cause additional problems. For **any additional housing in Levens**, this **needs thorough investigation prior to any permission being granted.**

14> “Levens Catch water Drain located 100m to the west of the site. Should a discharge into this watercourse be required then greenfield run-off rates would be maintained to ensure no detrimental impact upon the watercourse elsewhere in the catchment.”

This means the **new proposed boundary for the LDNP** is equally 100 metres from **this site**. The catch water will be the new boundary.

Secondly is the issue already raised elsewhere in this paperwork, about **managing the drainage into & of the Lyth Valley. The catch water is part of that drainage scheme.**

It is the same catch water that gets contaminated with raw sewage periodically.

HOW are these run off rates going to be maintained?