

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Anne Kerr

27 September 2011

SLDC

Local Development Framework

Land Allocations – Emerging Options Consultation

South Lakeland House

Lowther Street

Kendal

SUBMISSION BY LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL REGARDING THE SECOND ROUND OF PROPOSALS FOR THE L.D.F. SEPTEMBER 2011

Throughout this official consultation period, and indeed for a number of years, Levens Parish Council has continued to work with SLDC to help form a cohesive plan within the LDF framework.

Following on from our letter of the 13th April 2011 a great deal of work has been done within our village community to inform, consult and relay information. This culminated in the Parish Council holding an Open Meeting with the community on Monday, 12th September to assess their views, and we are pleased to have this opportunity to present herein the views of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council is mindful of the increasing problems being faced by the younger generation with regard to the rising costs of housing in Levens and the surrounding rural area. However, the

Parish Council is aware that many of our residents are very concerned about the sheer scale and the location of the proposed new housing developments, and their impact on an essentially small rural community.

In structuring any plan we call upon SLDC to have due consideration for proportion, landscape, traffic, infrastructure and drainage. Levens is a village that has grown considerably over the years, however, at present it remains essentially a village in size, atmosphere and profile.

Regarding traffic, Levens can be approached in three (or more remotely) four different ways. Two of these are by single track roads, the other two are narrow – one from the A590 and the other over Dukes Hill which often freezes in winter and can be impassable. Levens Lane, despite being single lane in two places is the most heavily used by cars, buses and pedestrians. The top of the lane as you enter the village is often semi-blocked by school and playing fields parking. The centre of the village around the single shop can be very congested.

Although Levens has been designated a Service Centre it only has one shop, two churches, an inadequately small village hall, a primary school and a pub. The bus service is minimal with no buses at work times to and from the village. Any residents have to rely on cars to get to work as there is very limited employment within the village. The Post Office has closed and is now run on a part-time basis three afternoons a week.

We expect full consideration be given to the current Village Plan which speaks of small developments of suitable design for the area. The Parish Council would wish any new dwellings to be predominately in the affordable housing category, and for the remaining to be small to medium dwellings. Levens Village does not need any more 'executive homes'.

Our comments on the specific sites earmarked in the second round of consultation are as follows:-

Levens Village has an outstanding hilltop position with sweeping views out to Morecambe Bay from one side and the Lyth Valley and Lakes hills to the other. In consequence any development of size would be extremely exposed to view from all directions. The Parish Council feels strongly that any development on RN291, RN282 and R142 should be excluded on the grounds of landscape, access, size and the overbearing nature of a large development. Residents are particularly averse to development on RN291 with 80% in the recent survey registering their total opposition to development on this site. They are also very concerned about any loss of farm land, the principal local industry, when food production is going to become increasingly important. The Parish Council are also extremely keen to maintain these open spaces on the edges of the village which provide a contrast to the intensity of development within the village. In 1996 these fields were the subject of a Public Inquiry. The Inspector declared that this was a Landscape of County Importance. That remains the case. It must be noted that the proposed extension of the Lake District National Park will closely border Levens Village to the North and to the West and that this could have important implications with regard to landscape issues and the appearance of the village from the protected areas.

The Parish Council would suggest that some development could take place without detriment to the village on RN295 particularly if the adjoining land i.e. the old stables also on Brigsteer Road is included in the allocation. This would not be regarded as 'ribbon development' because Levens village originally evolved from the joining of various hamlets so has always been very spread out.

R105 would also involve the loss of farm land, and the extension of the Greengate Estate could cause serious traffic congestion at the exit point where the only estate road meets the main road into the village near to the school. RN127 which, although it is near the A590, is adjacent to another new house which was recently granted planning permission. The old carpet shop could become available in the centre of the village where two-storey homes with gardens would be most suitable cf. the adjacent houses. Flats would overlook existing dwellings and be un-neighbourly.

We would like to emphasise that since 2003 Levens Village has increased in size considerably and the Parish Council feels that, unlike many surrounding villages, we have already absorbed a great many new homes. Planning permission has also been applied for on Greengate House which will bring seven dwellings to the village.

The Parish Council would like all these new houses built since 2003 to be counted into the total numbers required of the Village, as well as existing undeveloped planning permissions, when any further sites are considered.

With regard to the proposals put forward in the second round of consultation, the Parish Council would refer SLDC to the work carried out by Levens Residents Group. The Group has carried out a tremendous task conducting a consultation with every household in the Parish and collating the results. That data, complete with comments from the Village, evidence, photographs and a copy of the Parish Plan has been supplied to SLDC.

Levens Parish Council ask that SLDC note that these results and views from the residents are fully endorsed by us and should form part of any ongoing plan.

At the next stage of consultation when specific sites have been put forward, then the Parish Council would wish for all *appropriate* sites to be considered and for any evaluation exercise to involve the Parish Council in order to select and agree the most appropriate sites for development over the plan period. Such an approach would surely result in a more considered and balanced view. It would help ensure that any development in the village is acceptable, and that any new residents will be both physically and socially integrated into the village community.

In conclusion, within this consultation there is a real opportunity for SLDC to show that they are listening, taking on board the issue of “Localism” and working with a community to achieve some further housing, especially for young people. To date it has been carried out in a co-operative and beneficial manner and Councillors Bagot and Burrow were especially grateful to Dan Hudson for meeting with them to discuss the many issues.

We have tried to work together to achieve a conclusion that suits everyone – the Levens Parishioners and SLDC alike. We have consulted and communicated with residents and with SLDC. At all times we have been trying to reach an informed and mutually beneficial conclusion within the LDF. The Parish Council supports some housing on small sites in line with the Village Plan, but on sites *they* believe to be suitable as opposed to those that have been put forward speculatively with no concern for the opinions and wishes of the residents of Levens Village.

Yours sincerely

A Kerr

Mrs A Kerr

Clerk – Levens Parish Council

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