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Mr. Dan Hudson
Development Strategy Manager
South Lakeland House
Lowther Street
Kendal LA9 4DL

25th August 2011

Ref. Local Development Framework, Site R124
Amended submission:

Dear Sir

We write to urge that you confirm your rejection of site R124 as suitable for residential development in the current Land Development Plan Document. We find it extraordinary that this site is once again up for consideration given the previous conclusions reached.

Our concerns are most acute with respect to to the southern field of the three included in the R124 parcel and to the area that bounds Stock Beck where that stream briefly emerges into the adjoining field before disappearing under the Sedbergh Drive estate.

Our chief objection is that the inclusion of the southern field in site R124 seems utterly illogical given the topography of the area. While the two, much larger, northerly fields in this parcel are flat and adjoin the existing Sandylands and Sedbergh Drive estates, the southerly field slopes steeply upwards from the stream to meet the higher ground of the Cherry Tree Lane (Birds Park Farm Lane) area off Sedbergh Road. In specific terms, development of this area would have the following deleterious consequences:

Visual Aspect

Because the field has a significantly higher elevation than the rest of site R124, any development there will be very prominent and mar the visual aspect of this area of eastern Kendal as viewed from the north. Seen from a distance, the field is part of the rising hillside and appears integral to the Cherry Tree lane neighbourhood

rather than part of the valley floor. Previous planning applications concerning the field have been refused for this reason, among others, including one for two detached dwellings in 1990. Any examination of an Ordnance Survey map reinforces this point.

Visual Impact

The public footpath that runs from Sedbergh Road up Cherry Tree Lane to Birds Park Farm and on towards Benson Knott or down to Sandylands is one the most popular such routes on the eastern side of Kendal, used by hundreds of people a week. Development of the field in question would urbanize what is currently a rural pathway and also rob those who use it of spectacular views across Kendal to the Lake District mountains. Other than across the field in question, those vistas aren't visible until the high-walled lane emerges into the open at the railway bridge several hundred yards later.

Wildlife Value

The field, stream and adjoining green lanes and woodland are of great wildlife value:

- * The field forms a green corridor between Round Hill Wood on the field's south-western boundary and the woodland to the east of Cherry Tree Lane. Round Hill Wood was once Kendal's biggest rookery, but rook populations were affected by a loss of habitat with the development of Sedbergh Drive and the birds now nest in a single large Oak tree on the field boundary and in the Cherry Tree Lane woods. Were the field to be developed the rooks would inevitably be forced to abandon this tree and the population would decline further.

- * The trees dotted around the field's perimeter are also of significant wildlife value, providing a haven for numerous insect species and attendant birds including Red List species such as marsh tit, bullfinch, song thrush, lesser spotted woodpecker, starling and house sparrow, whose rapidly declining populations has caused the government to accord them ``high conservation concern'' status. Amber List species (of ``medium conservation concern'') recorded in and around the field include mistle thrush, fieldfare, redwing, goldcrest, redpoll, dunnock and green woodpecker. Birds of prey that hunt over the field include kestrel, sparrow hawk, tawny owl and buzzard.

- * The short stretch of Stock Beck that flows through the field has specific value to scarce species. Grey wagtail, on the Amber List, nests annually (confirmed in 2011) in the dry-stone wall that forms part of the field's

boundary, and when the Kent is in spate the stream becomes an important feeding ground for dippers that move up from the main river.

* Expansion of the urbanized area as far as Cherry Tree Lane would also inevitably impact the large area of protected woodland immediately to the west of the lane. Studies suggest species richness is sharply lower in wooded areas next to houses when compared with equivalent ground cover that adjoins farmland.

* It should also be noted that Kendal does not have an inexhaustible supply of this type of habitat. Elevations begin to rise rapidly to the east of this area and beyond the railway there is no further broad-leaved woodland and the stream is reduced to a trickle.

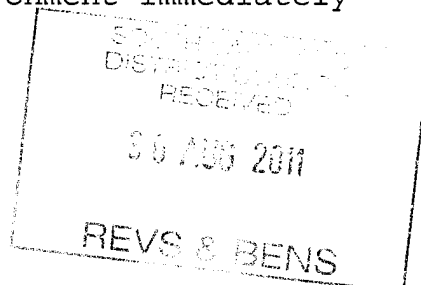
(I should add that I am an experienced wildlife surveyor and have undertaken survey work as part of the RSPB Volunteer & Farmer Alliance, which aims to reverse the decline in farmland birds by working with landowners and making them aware of any appropriate support grants.)

Local Amenity Value

Were the rest of R124 to be developed, exclusion of the southern field would be of amenity value in that it would provide an open space acting as a buffer between the homes of Sedbergh Road and those of Sandylands and Sedbergh Drive, preventing complete urbanization of the area. The short stretch of Stock Beck within the field and the adjoining one could also be retained as a natural amenity for residents, including those in any new houses built on the lower fields. The green lane along the field's eastern edge could also provide access to the public footpath on Cherry Tree Lane from any new houses, if so desired. The field itself is used by local children every year for sledging, as its steep, north-facing slope holds snow far longer than any other field in the area.

Threat of Flooding

While various flood-relief measures have helped reduce instances of severe flooding along Stock Beck, the stream still overflows its banks every few months. Large floods form in the wood on Cherry Tree Lane from which the stream emerges and this water typically pours across the lane and deluges the field in question. Were the field to be developed this would become a major and costly issue. Any further relief measures would also be extremely damaging to the woodland environment immediately upstream.



Road Traffic

Development of the field in question would inevitably lead to increased traffic flows on Cherry Tree Lane, which is currently a farm lane used only to access Birds Park Farm and Birds Park Cottage. The lane could not sustain such a jump in traffic and its transformation into a road would completely alter the character of the existing built environment, especially were a route to be put through to the Sedbergh Drive area.

General Concerns

Like many thousands of residents in South Lakeland we have wider concerns about the wisdom of seeking to make such large parcels of land available for housing for the period through 2025. Adding to the population in this way without any guarantee of an equivalent increase in available jobs seems to us risky indeed, and more likely than not to be harmful to the overall prosperity of the district. Kendal remains a market town serving a wider rural community and has an economy built on this and on a tourist industry entirely dependent on the unique qualities of the area. Any threat to these qualities could be injurious to tourism in the medium and long term, will put further pressure on schools, hospitals, roads and other infrastructure, will make the district more pollutive and will doubtless hurt housing values in an area that may struggle for some years as a result of the current recession.

That said, if the District Council is indeed obliged to offer more land for development in the current plan, a more considered approach to the allocation of sites could do much to mitigate negative consequences.

We therefore appeal to you to reject development of site R124, and certainly to exclude the southern field and associated stream. The field covers less than 20 percent of the R124 site and its topography dictates that only a minimal number of houses could be accommodated there. Retaining it will reduce the visual impact of the town's planned expansion while preserving the rural character of the neighbourhood, limiting flood risk, safeguarding a local amenity and helping to protect scarce wildlife.

Sincerely Yours,

Chris Jasper
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Angela Jasper Smith

