



27 August 2011



Development Plans Manager
South Lakeland District Council
Lowther Street,
KENDAL
LA9 4DL

Your ref. DH/60.12.43

Dear Sir,

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
LAND ALLOCATIONS - FURTHER CONSULTATION**

Levens Village Sites RN291 and RN 282

I wish to register my strong objection to the allocation of these two sites for development as residential land on the following grounds.

1. Topography - sloping hillside land overlying or close to the geological boundary between porous carboniferous limestones and underlying impervious sandstones and siltstones. This has resulted in the existence of numerous "spouts" all along this hillside, especially in wet weather.

2. Drainage - the existence of these "spouts" (Spout House so named), has resulted in serious problems of run off and flooding for some properties on Hutton Lane in recent years. (Studio Cottage). Disturbance of the sub-soils and rock strata could conceivably cause potential risk of further run-off damage to existing properties on Hutton Lane. My reading of the Storey Homes plan suggests surface water drainage from the site will be directed into the catchwater below the site. Currently this catch water is subject to pumping by the Environment Agency, but they are proposing to end this practice at some time in the not too distant future. Where then is the drainage to go?

3. Visual aspect - these sites are visible from the Lyth Valley, an area included in the plans for extension of the National Park. This organisation is not too keen to have modern estate development close to Park boundaries. The view from the Lyth Valley of this hillside has been reported in the past to be of some environmental quality. Residential development of the size envisaged would completely destroy this aspect of the landscape giving it an urban rather than its present rural character.

4. Access - whilst immediate access to the RN291 site from Brigsteer Road may be satisfactory, access to RN282 is much less so. At its north-east end it abuts onto a single track lane on a sharp blind bend. Access to any other point would be steep and again onto a narrow lane.

Access to both these sites from outside Levens Village is restricted by single track lanes with passing places, no street lighting and no pedestrian pavements. Levens and its countryside attracts many visitors on foot especially during the summer months and access has to be gained via these narrow, often unsighted lanes. This is also true for the existing residents of the village. The lanes are currently used by many cars, large delivery vehicles to the shop, businesses and farms around the

village in addition to farm traffic - tractors and very large agricultural machinery. The additional vehicle movements generated by such a large residential development both during its construction and after occupation would render these lanes extremely dangerous to all users with potential for damage to verges, adjacent hedgerows and trees and nearby property.

5. Local Infrastructure - Currently Levens has just over 400 dwellings. A further (proposed) 70, almost 20% will put a severe strain on utility services to the village. Improvements to these services are certain to be expensive and extremely disruptive to village life. Where local facilities are concerned, the potential for a population increase around 18% whilst it may benefit trade (for example in the village shop - but will not necessarily do so because of the proximity of existing and planned superstores in Milnthorpe) will strain the capacity of the village school and village hall. Levens has only a "hosted" post office for seven and a half hours weekly, no surgery nor pharmacy, an infrequent and poorly routed bus service through the village that does not directly serve Milnthorpe, the nearest location for general shopping, banks, medical, dental and personal services, four miles away. Private transport is an essential for most Levens residents to access all but the limited local facilities.

6. Type of housing proposed - What inclusion is there for social housing, and/or housing for the elderly? Because of the lack of employment opportunities in the local area, there would be a risk that the development would become a commuter estate with residents journeying into Kendal, Lancaster, Barrow, even further afield so increasing daily traffic flow into and out of the village. Is this appropriate when national policies are attempting to curb the use of private transport and polluting fuels. Levens is currently a close-knit community and such development would be detrimental to its character. There could also be a risk of potential purchasers buying to use as holiday homes, again with no improved benefit to the community.

7. Alternatives - Suggestions for the allocation of land to the south-east of the village overlooking Levens Bridge and the A590 would certainly have much less impact on the village, its narrow lanes, infrastructure and services, but would nevertheless present an "urban" aspect to an otherwise rural setting. These sites are beyond the current "envelope" of the existing settlement and would have easier access to major routes taking them away from Levens. Although this might ameliorate the impact on the village, there could be a risk that such development would encourage residents to consider themselves a separate community with little allegiance to the village community.

Levens is not a village suitable for any large "estate" development but **does** offer opportunity for infilling and minor growth both within and on its edges that would not have such a gross impact on the infrastructure, services, nor the community. Such development(s) are more appropriate to South Lakeland villages and in the case of Levens were outlined and accepted for inclusion in the Levens Village Plan, a document that to my knowledge is still extant.

Yours faithfully,



Brian Hutchinson