

Response to Arnside & Silverdale DPD Consultation

Name - Stephen Gibbs

Number of pages 14, including this one

Section 2 Background

I have been a resident of the AONB for 15 years, 13 of them in Silverdale, and although my remarks apply to the AONB in general, they have a Silverdale focus.

Some general comments:

1. The DPD and the consultation that goes with it is an excellent initiative, and the AONB Office and the Councils are to be commended.
2. Plans have inherent dangers. It is very sensible to have a plan that focuses on the whole AONB and ignores the (arbitrary) county boundary but it is vital that the AONB be considered in the context of the surrounding areas. Size is important. In relative terms, the AONB is tiny. The landscape is concentrated and unsuitable for any further major development. Such development is unnecessary within the AONB, not least because the obvious centres for new housing and other development in the area are Milnthorpe and, in particular, Carnforth - on the fringes of the AONB.
3. Carnforth and Milnthorpe are towns with substantial existing facilities and transport links, which could absorb and benefit from further development. Carnforth, for example, has good road links, excellent rail links, primary and secondary schools and a high street desperate for new investment. There would appear to be land suitable for both commercial and residential development. It is undervalued as a tourist attraction, transport hub and local centre.
4. Which raises the question whether and why should there be any development in the AONB when there are more suitable existing areas for commerce and housing close by? There are government imperatives to identify and promote development. But it is quite clear that these are rebuttable, particularly in areas such as the AONB, where great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty.
5. **Paragraph 6.9** At paragraph 6.9, the discussion paper rejects, apparently without discussion, a 'no development' option or a 'no allocations' option for the AONB. I think this is wrong, and such an option needs to be considered to ensure balance. Personally, for the reasons set out below, I favour appropriate sustainable development, but the examination of such options will help to focus upon why any development may be reasonable and help to inform any guidelines to be followed. There is a risk that any development plan will take on a life of its own and see development as a goal, which may well not be appropriate. Hence the need for balance.
6. At the risk of stating the obvious, one must never forget that none of us owns the AONB. It is a recognised natural and cultural treasure of national importance which is held in trust for the benefit of future generations. It is currently available to be enjoyed not just by those who work and live there but by the thousands who visit each year to enjoy its unique character. Opposition to unsuitable development is not nimby-ism but an attempt to preserve a natural and cultural heritage for all.

7. The AONB is highly successful. One of the reasons for this is the strength of the communities and the pride in the area held by those who work and live here. It is not an area pickled in aspic and for that reason a modest degree of sustainable development is desirable, indeed important, if the communities and the area are to remain in rude health. But it must be appropriate for the area, and that places a heavy burden of responsibility on planners, Councillors and residents alike.
8. I have read Rowena Lord's submissions, which I support and endorse. I set out a few additional points in answer to specific questions. Where I do not specifically comment, I adopt Rowena's points.

Q1 Major development

Given the unique nature of the AONB, all proposed development should be considered major development and permitted on an exceptional basis only if there are sustainable reasons.

Section 3 Evidence Base

Q2 Housing requirements

Yes, the Councils should seek to identify housing needs, but they should be real needs, not aspirations. I am hugely sceptical of the suggestion that 72 affordable houses are needed over the next 5 years. Who needs them? Where? Why? Why here? Why not outside the AONB? That said, if there is evidence of genuine need, it must be catered for. Has a survey been undertaken of the current extent of affordable housing? Could a small proportion of existing brownfield caravan or camp sites be used, benefitting from facilities already in place and avoiding encroachment onto greenfield sites?

Q3 Infrastructure

Is there an up to date survey of numbers visiting the AONB? How do they get here - bus, train, car, cycle, walking?

How can unnecessary car use be discouraged?

Is there a population breakdown available?

- Youngsters: schooling needs
- Local work; who works where and doing what?
- Retired: numbers, transport needs

Section 4 Vision and Objectives

Q4 Vision

The supplementary vision for the AONB DPD should read:

‘Any new housing, employment, services and infrastructure, etc’

Section 5 Policy Issues

Q6 Affordable housing

The AONB appears to have an adequate supply of family homes, larger houses and bungalows. Evidence: houses sell but take time; prices have been relatively stable for some years.

If a need for affordable houses is demonstrated, then the starting point for 'proportion' should be 100%.

How might this be achieved?

- Encourage self-build
- Aggressively pursue government subsidies and grants
- Community schemes
- Make it easier for large houses to be converted into apartments and small homes for rent (said to be the main need)

What must be avoided in the AONB is a proliferation of large new executive style homes 'subsidising' low cost housing. Such houses and schemes are inappropriate. Another model must be found.

Q7 Restrict to local people and main occupancy

Yes, for new developments

Q12 Community infrastructure

Suggestions:

- More cycleways (e.g. Silverdale to Carnforth)
- Coastal footpath (e.g. Silverdale to Carnforth)
- Increased car parking at Silverdale station
- Address car parking needs in centre of Silverdale village
- Proper, speedy broadband
- Mobile phone coverage
- Bury more overhead electric cables

Q15 Impact of development on highways

There is very limited scope for 'improving' roads within the AONB without destroying the character of the area. This means development should necessarily be limited. Cycle routes should be promoted. Local bus services are vital. Designated 'layby' parking on country lanes to enable walkers to park would be a benefit.

Q 16 Parking

See Q12 and Q15 above

Q17 Caravan sites

There should be absolutely no new sites or further expansion. Those that exist are a benefit to the area economically and enable visitors to enjoy the area. Holgates in particular wins national awards and is obviously well run. But I suspect that most (visitors and residents alike) would say that the area is now saturated in terms of caravanning and camping. We should make the most of what is there, but any further development is likely to impact upon the nature of the area which attracts visitors in the first place.

A survey needs to be undertaken so that the number of sites and pitches is recorded, which would enable monitoring. Caravans and tents seem to suffer mission creep, if not controlled.

Q18 Open Spaces

Private open spaces. These comments apply to Silverdale. One of Silverdale's unique features is that it grew up over quite a large area, with clusters of houses grouped around wells, connected by footpaths but with fields and open spaces in between. This gives much of the village a garden-like and very rural feel. Visitors enjoy the variety (and the surprises) walking along the many village footpaths.

While I am not suggesting that the whole village should be designated a private open space:

- The lower planning thresholds for infill housing should not apply in Silverdale
- The green spaces throughout the village should be retained as essential to its character.

Q20 Open space designation

Other specific areas to be designated? In short, the coastline. The AONB has a significant area of undeveloped coastline and this should be retained. Once lost, it will be lost forever. This is consistent with the establishment of coastal access and a coastal path. So, for example:

- Site A2 Arnside Edge - prominent coastal land, highly unsuitable for development
- Leeds Childrens' Holiday Centre: absent exceptional reasons, the surrounding green areas should be preserved.

Q23 Places without mains drainage and sewerage

Silverdale has no mains drainage or mains sewerage system. It is unlikely to have one in the near to mid-term (or perhaps ever) on grounds of cost (who would pay for it?) disruption and the toughness of the limestone on which the village sits. This will have an unavoidable limiting effect on development.

Q25 Standards of design for new development

The Councils and developers should look at what has worked and not worked recently, and guidelines might take account of this. In Silverdale:

- Cove Orchard is a delightful, low rise development of 14 units: supported housing for the elderly. It is well and imaginatively designed and enhances the landscape.
- Stoneleigh Court -well-designed housing in the centre of the village with good use of stone, timber and variety.
- New housing at West Lindeth and also next to the Masonic Lodge on Emesgate Lane. One wonders if the architects had visited Silverdale - bland, suburban executive homes out of a catalogue. Simply inappropriate.
- The Royal Hotel. While one has high hopes for the new café/bar, it is disappointing that the renovations did not pay more attention to the nature of the building as an historic coaching inn. The housing permitted in the hotel garden to the rear is soulless, and particularly disappointing given its prominent position in the centre of the village.

Section 6 Options

Q26 Approach to development

See introductory comments, the most important of which are copied in here for ease of reference.

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Q29 Development boundaries

A rigid development boundary for Silverdale is inappropriate given the delightfully fragmented nature of the settlement, which is an essential and characteristic feature worth preserving.

Section 7 Delivery

Q30 Phasing

Phasing is essential.

Q31 Other issues

Some suggestions:

- 1) Restrictions on caravan movement (times and routes) might ease congestion.
- 2) Positive steps should be taken to avoid further suburbanisation of the villages, particularly Silverdale. This means limiting further street signs, lights, white lines and urban items and furniture inappropriate for a rural setting.
- 3) Without wishing to increase signage, could one consider a 40mph speed limit for the whole AONB?

S46 Kayes Garden Centre

This is a potential site for small scale development but there is a limit to how much traffic Lindeth Road can absorb. Some development along the road frontage and immediately behind might enhance the area. Development of the whole site would be out of proportion and context. Could the failed café (which received substantial public funding) be incorporated into any scheme, particularly for affordable housing?

S48 Land east of Lindeth Close

A bizarre suggestion. No access. Part is not for sale. Part is protected limestone pavement. It is a significant site for wildlife. There is a well-used footpath running through the middle. It would overlook the back gardens of Lindeth Close - privacy issues.

A49 Land East of 12 Emesgate Lane

A brownfield site in the centre of the village. Close to amenities. Good access. Stoneleigh Court (immediately adjacent) sets a good precedent. A sympathetic development would enhance the village centre.