

From: Eddy Marshall [mailto:e]

Sent: 15 April 2011 12:31

To: Development Plans

Cc:

Subject: Regarding the Proposed Housing Development on Grange Fell

To: SLDC Development

cc: Mr Tim Farron, MP

Re. Proposed Housing Development on Grange Fell

Dear Sir / Madam

I'm writing to you regarding the call for responses to proposed housing developments in the South Lakeland area and in particular the current plans for building 36 houses on the Spring Bank site on Grange Fell.

First of all, I wish to state that my reactions to the proposal are not based on knee-jerk NIMBYism.

I fully recognise the necessity for building affordable homes in rural areas, where sympathetic to existing development and properly supported by improvements in infrastructure. My late father was the historian Dr J.D. Marshall, who founded the Centre for North West Regional Studies at Lancaster University and I know that Westmorland used to support larger rural populations than it presently does. There's nothing truly fixed in the landscape and negotiated change is sometimes to be welcomed. I believe there's a need for affordable housing and I have no objection to sensitive and responsible development, which genuinely serves the needs of those who require lower cost housing.

However, the proposed development of Grange Fell does not fall into the this category.

It seems that of the 36 proposed houses on the site, only six will be actual affordable housing. This alone ought to make the proposal highly questionable. Houses built on the Spring Bank site, offering as it does absolutely stunning views, will command a premium price. This is no doubt an attractive prospect for developers but is surely too high a price to pay in terms of despoilment of the landscape and loss of public amenity for *six* affordably-priced units out of a total 36. Surely this is too high a cost? The building of affordable housing on the Fell should be considered a side issue, when around 83% of the housing is anything but low cost.

I'm aware of the representations which Sarah Wiseman and Grange Fell Action Group have made to SLDC and I agree with many of the points they have raised.

Indeed, as Sarah Wiseman has previously stated, I can confirm that there is a problem with water running off the Fell. I've seen evidence of this, with water often running down Charney Well Road in rivulets after rainfall, the flow being heavy enough to cause drifts of stones and gravel from the unpaved road at the top of the lane. Similarly, water runs down the side of my own property on Charney Road and there is an ongoing problem with water in the basement, which may be getting in from the outside wall but which may also be coming from underneath the house, via an underground spring.

The local names offer a clue to its geological make-up - Charney WELL and SPRING Bank. South Lakeland has a lot of porous limestone, which often tends to have springs and underground aquifers, which can behave capriciously. There certainly is a movement of water down the Fell towards Grange and it's very hard to predict how development at Spring Bank might affect it these flows. In terms of rainwater run-off alone, building on Spring Bank with the increased run-off, does seem likely to exacerbate an already problematic phenomenon. With the likelihood of higher rainfall in the future due to climate change, this should be taken very seriously indeed.

My last point of pleading relates to more abstract considerations, those of beauty and amenity.

Grange Fell is one of the most beautiful areas in South Lakeland. Attractiveness is, of course, a wholly subjective notion but I'm sure no-one who knows the Grange Fell area would say that it's anything less than beautiful.

The Fell offers peerless views of Morecambe Bay to the south, the Howgills to the east and the Lake District fells to the north. These views are arguably amongst the best in the UK and they have been attracting visitors to the area since the 19th century. The Fell is a precious public amenity and it's rare to walk on it without seeing others enjoying the open views and remarkable sense of freedom it offers, all within a few minutes walk of the main Grange Fell Road.

Grange Fell looks across the Bay to Arnside Knott and Silverdale, which were declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1972.

In terms of aesthetic appeal, there's little to separate Grange Fell and the neighbouring limestone woods at Eggerslack and Hampsfell from Arnside Knott and the view from the Fell is undoubtedly superior, with its greater elevation and, from Hampsfell, the added remarkable view across to the southern fells. Ironically of course, Grange Fell is sandwiched between the National Park to the north and the AONB at Arnside to the south, so naturally it is far more vulnerable to attempts to build on it, without the legal protection offered by governmentally sanctioned preservation orders.

Please note this though, in the strongest possible terms: To build on Grange Fell will be *an act of despoilment*. Grange Fell ought to be a place of open, unspoiled public amenity, nothing less. Building on it will be an act of wrecking.

On a personal level, I would like to add that Grange Fell is and has been an important part of my and my family's life for over thirty years. My late father and step-mother, the poet Frances Marshall, regularly enjoyed views from the Fell and their ashes are scattered upon it. As a teenager, it was walking on the Fell which opened my mind's eye to the beauty of nature. In short, the Fell helped make me more fully human.

I would like future generations to enjoy this possibility, to allow their eyes to extend across the rolling, undeveloped slopes and see the incomparable beauty of Morecambe Bay without the intervening clutter of houses, cars, concrete and tarmac.

In short, the Grange Fell area is incredibly precious and I appeal to SLDC Development to reject plans to build on it, under any circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Marshall