

Objection to the Allocation for Housing Development and Public Open Space on Site A8/A9, Hollins Lane, Arnside

Policy Background

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

This is the government's policy for controlling development. It is not guidance. It must be adhered to by local planning authorities. Various paragraphs are relevant to this site.

110. In preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. **Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value**, where consistent with other policies in this Framework.

111. **Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land)**, provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land.

113. **Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged.** Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.

115. **Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.** The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

AONB Management Plan

The management plan is a statutory plan adopted by both local planning authorities and should be taken into account within the proposed AONB Development Plan. It puts some detail into the NPPF requirements. Some key paragraphs from the ANOB plan are as follows – in italics.

The plan will identify appropriate sites for the delivery of housing to meet local community needs demonstrated by a housing needs survey, prioritising affordable housing and the use of brownfield sites.

*Development of infill plots for residential housing and extension to settlements can lead to loss of important semi-natural habitat and greenspace and can have an urbanising effect on villages -
Development of brownfield sites can lead to enhancement of settlements.*

Pastures within villages are integral to the rural settlement character of the ANOB villages, in particular Arnside, Silverdale and Storth.

Open spaces within settlements are an important aspect of settlement character - Open spaces add distinctiveness to the character and interest of settlements and the quality of life of their inhabitants, and are a key part of the rural character of the AONB's villages.

In 2015 Landscape Assessments were undertaken by Hyder Consulting UK Ltd as part of investigation of potential sites. The Landscape and Field Survey Sheet for this site states the following – in italics.

Site 9 is located on the eastern lower settled slopes of Arnside Knott and forms an intrinsic part of the mosaic urban and pasture farmland landscape which defines this area. It is surrounded by hedgerows and hedgerow trees and overlooked by residential development beyond on all sides. The context of the surrounding built form affects the sites' tranquility. The combination of perimeter vegetation and residential properties gives the site a sense of containment, although its elevated and gently rolling nature provides views out to the north to the fells beyond Kendal. Site 9 is considered to form part of the wider urban and pasture farmland mosaic character which defines this part of Arnside within LCA F1. The mature individual trees within the site contribute to the character and amenity of the surrounding townscape and form a minor, but perceptible element in the wider urban / pasture farmland mosaic landscape within this part of LCA F1 and in distant views from LCA A2, LCA D1 and LCA F7.

It is considered that the scale of the development (20 Dwellings) on Site 9 would result in the total loss of an important landscape element which contributes to the defining characteristic of the local area.

Recommendations

There is the potential for some small scale development on part of Site 9, although the bulk of the site should be retained to contribute to the urban / pasture farmland mosaic character. As part any the mitigation the existing vegetation along the perimeter and within the site should be retained or, if removed due to access requirements should be replaced to provide a buffer to adjacent residential properties, to retain the intimate character of the site and to retain features which are an important element within the urban and pasture farmland mosaic within LCA F1 and are discernable in distant views from SCA A2, LCA D1 and LCA F7. The nature of Site 9 is considered to have the capacity to accommodate up to 6No dwellings without resulting in harm to the character and visual amenity of the AONB.

The above confirms the comments of the government inspector in his report in 2013 on the land allocation proposed in the local plan. He refers to the site and concurs with the analysis that it currently forms a greenspace function and contributes positively to the character and appearance of the ANOB.

Government policy, the ANOB management plan, a detailed assessment of the site's landscape and the conclusion of a government inspector clearly show that the proposed development on the Hollins Lane site would be harmful to the character and appearance of the ANOB.

The Site

1. The land is referred to as grassland, and has been grazed by sheep for a number of years. There has been no in-depth assessment of the land's condition and its qualities in terms of flora and fauna and biodiversity. It is close to the woodland at Arnside Knott and grassland at Briery Bank, and may be part of a system of wildlife areas and corridors. The landscape assessment undertaken refers to it being part of the pasture farmland mosaic character. The AONB management plan seeks to conserve green spaces within settlements, protect ecological networks and conserve landscapes. Its delivery plan promotes connectivity by providing linkages, corridors and stepping stones in the landscape. The proposed development would be contrary to the AONB management and delivery plans and be premature without fully understanding the site's habitat value.

2. The proposal encourages pedestrian access via the end of the cul-de-sac onto Silverdale Road, and directly onto Hollins Lane. Neither route has a safe footpath. At the access onto Silverdale Road sight lines are poor and there are other nearby accesses onto Silverdale Road that also have poor sight lines. Silverdale Road is part of the national cycleway Sustrans route 700 and cycles descend the hill at speed. Hollins Lane is very narrow and sight lines in both directions are poor. It is a cut through from Silverdale Road to Briery Bank, and any upgrading of the highway will encourage its greater use and speed of traffic. Both routes involve a danger for both pedestrians and other road users.

3. The proposed site layout raises a number of concerns. It is inefficient, with a long expensive cul-de-sac requiring the provision of all necessary services along its full length, yet with development along just one side. Housing development is proposed on that part of the site that is on its highest and most visible, and consequently most damaging to the character of the AONB. The layout appears to be most suitable for private housing for sale rather than meeting the need for affordable homes, rental accommodation or homes for older people. There are numerous important views across the site not just the view in the direction of the estuary from Hollins Lane. The combined proposal for housing and public open space will alter the nature of the site totally; managed public open space being very different from unmanaged grassland. There is no indication that studies have been undertaken to show that there is a demand and need for POS in this location. It is difficult not to reach the view that the cul-de-sac design is phase 1 and that the POS will be constantly under threat of development, even if the land was held by a not-for-profit organisation.

4. The housing needs survey 2014 undertaken by the Cumbria Rural Housing Trust identified the following need.

The survey shows that that 16 respondents in Arnside Parish are in need of affordable housing within the next 5 years. Who is in need? • The largest need is for family accommodation, mainly 3+ bedrooms and some 1/2 bedroom accommodation. • Respondents in private rented accommodation make up largest group in need. Many stating that they wish to move/buy or have more security. • Five of the respondents in need are adult children who are living at home with their parents and wish to set up home for the first time. • One of the respondents made a preference for sheltered housing.

The proposed site layout does not meet this need. The need is better met via true infill sites near to the heart of the village close to, and with safe access to, local facilities/amenities.

5. The new Hollins Lane highway junction will have to be constructed to specifications that will mean that this part of the lane will change from its rural character to an urban one. There may also be pressure to alter other parts of Hollins Lane to improve highway safety. The ANOB management plan raises concerns over the urbanisation of villages and rural roads. It states 'The rural nature of the AONB and its villages is an important element of the special landscape character of the area. Gradual urbanisation of settlements and rural roads should be avoided'.

We submit that any development on this site would be harmful to the character and appearance of Arnside and its contribution to the AONB, it would be a danger to road users, will involve the loss of greenspace, and will not meet the required housing needs of the community.

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