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

Reference R96M



12 April 2011

Dear Mr. Hudson,

I would have to welcome some sort of development on this Brownfield site, and in theory its size in itself would indicate that your proposal would not seem inappropriate, and it could provide a useful amount of 'affordable' housing.

However, there are so many highly relevant issues that need to be looked at on this very unusual site.

Cumbria County Council and/or developers have obviously been unwilling to respect the terms of the Quaker covenant because 6(7) dwellings would not yield sufficient financial gain. Alternatively, 40-50 dwellings would be a far better option for both parties concerned. This would also perhaps appear to an outsider as a sort of change of use, but not necessarily the end of the world! The Quakers may have had a point in suggesting that only a small number of dwellings should be built on the site, however, though current and historical reasons for that may not be the same.

The land was originally designated for housing, then for educational purposes, and as such would have fitted in more appropriately with the surrounding area. Looking at the current concrete footprint you can appreciate to what extent the land had not actually been used for building on, as schools need space for extra-curricular activities, setting and recreation. The impact of the relatively low school building on this site would not have had too serious an effect on the visual impact and amenity from and over the west, and would not have been too un-neighbourly to any buildings on Firbank.

Highways and access must be prime considerations. The volume of traffic generated within the site and onto it will be huge. The existing access can hardly be improved, and coming out onto and from that sharp bend on Sedbergh Drive will be extremely dangerous for vehicular traffic and pedestrians, many of whom will be young children. This part of the road is particularly bad in frost and snow, when cars regularly skid down and across the road. Turning right onto the site will be tricky at the very least. School times will be unbelievable, and in particular the mornings, when the residents of these 49 dwellings will be on their way to work and clashing with the school traffic that drops pupils off at the school. There will be nobody to supervise the area at these crunch times either. Sadly no other access to the site seems possible.

Stock Beck must naturally be a consideration, though I note that quite a lot of the land is already concreted, so there will currently be a certain amount of building run off. However, additional run off should be gauged very carefully, not only because of the proximity of the basin, but because it would be unwise to contribute to the possible compromising of the whole scheme. Because of the layout of the existing site, much water will be absorbed before it seeps down into the basin, I would assume. A lot would depend on how much of the site is built over as to how serious a problem flooding and run off would be.

‘An existing area of important open space for amenity adjoins the site to the west’ and SLDC recognises ‘the need to landscape the site, mitigate any potential adverse impact on setting/amenity/role of the adjacent open space to the west.’

Mitigation, however, will not be easy to achieve successfully, because of the prominence and highly elevated nature of the site and the quality of the surroundings to the west and the south, in particular. This sight is highly visible as you leave Kendal on the A684, and we should be very sensitive to the perception of locals and visitors alike. Everybody is entitled to a quality environment to live in. Every attempt should be made to ensure, therefore, that any development on this site is not out of keeping with what is in the area already.

So, overall, I have to object to the proposed development as it stands.

Either the covenant has to be respected or else the number of dwellings has to be reduced considerably/drastically.

I do not believe that the bottom level/tier should developed at all and for various reasons, and my overall concerns revolve round highways, safety, access, loss of visual amenity, increased run-off, the unusual nature of the site and its elevations and tiering, and the need to retain some green space on this particular, and I would argue, sensitive site.

I would also add that the height of the houses should be considered very carefully in order to ensure that the dwellings do not become overbearing and overpowering, especially at the top end of the site.

It could well be advisable for SLDC and Cumbria County Council to explore the possibility of alternative uses, if they are not prepared and/or are unable to accept the terms of the existing covenant.

I am genuinely sorry to come up with this response.

Yours sincerely,



(Austen Robinson – Town Councillor for Castle Ward)