

29 July 2011

Mr. D. Hudson.
The Chief Planning Officer,
South Lakeland House,
Lowther Street,
Kendal,
Cumbria.
LA9 4UF

Dear Sir,

Local Development in Leasgill and Heversham
Sites R167 and RN221

The following outlines my specific objection to the request for a re-introduction, via a review, of sites R167 and RN221 in Leasgill for proposed housing. Objections were upheld when these sites were previously discussed and neither the situation, nor landscape has changed.

The consultation process has lacked transparency, in that neither of these sites have been mentioned in documentation available for the local public meetings in recent years. Consequently, neither site has formed part of the recent consultation procedures and therefore due process of consultation with the residents of the parish has been disregarded by the Parish Council in their request to review these sites. In terms of maintaining openness and trust in these local government processes, I believe this action to be reprehensible.

I support the recommendation from members of the parish for the development of 20 houses, put forward at the village meeting to allow for a mixture of affordable and higher priced housing, to ensure the diversity of the village is encouraged.

However, my numerous concerns and grounds for objection to opening a review of R167 and RN221 are summarised as follows:

- **Vehicular access to the northern boundary of the proposed sites presents a health and safety hazard to pupils at Heversham Primary School.**

The narrow, single track lane passes by the entrance to the school. It is too narrow for two vehicles to pass, there is no room for a pavement and pupils from the school walk up the lane each day to go to Forest School, their outdoor learning area.

New dwellings, with the subsequent increase in traffic, would place them at risk.

The safety of all pedestrians, as many use this lane to access Heversham Head, would be compromised by an increase of traffic at all times of the day and night.

The increase in traffic will cause a hazard both by way of pollution, emissions and safety on this country road.

The access point to this lane, opposite the Athenaeum, is narrow and cars turning left onto the main road have to move into the path of oncoming traffic. Consequently increased traffic presents a danger, not only to children attending the primary school, but to oncoming traffic. Increased car use during the day and particularly at the beginning and

the end of each school day, would affect both pedestrian and highway safety.

- **Access to the site RN 221 is restricted.**

There is a steep, narrow, privately maintained lane providing limited access to Plumtree Hall, (now a retirement home,) Layke House and Plumstone and two properties next to Plumtree Hall. This narrow lane is bordered by stone walls and mature trees and is unsuitable as an access for further development. The lane is steep and near a blind corner, without any possibility of widening the access.

Currently, neither the Plumtree Management Committee, nor individual home owners who maintain this access route, have been approached by members of the Parish Council and it is therefore difficult to uphold the published statement by the Council that they believe 'access issues can be resolved.'

- **The increase in dwellings and consequent increase in people and traffic close to the summit of Heversham Head, would be highly likely to cause environmental damage both to the woodland and local wildlife.**

The area supports an extremely rare breed of bats that breed and nest in St. Peter's Church porch, which are nationally monitored and these fields form part of their flight path. It is also a recognised area for migrating toads and would provide a threat to their route. To develop these sites, which are close to the woodland at the top of Heversham Head would generate noise, disturbance and pollution, endangering a range of wildlife.

- **The proposed sites would have a detrimental impact on existing properties to the south of these sites.**

RN221 in particular, has a steep slope to the north and west and any development would dominate nearby buildings and overlook adjoining properties, one of these being a listed building.

- **Building on these sites would extend Heversham on to higher land than previously developed.**

Developing these sites would be over development and be harmful to the character and setting of the village. It would present a conflict with the current pattern of development. The higher elevation of these sites would make the new build very visible from the A6 and further afield.

- **The proposed sites extend too far out of the natural boundary of the village.**

Leasgill has a low ribbon of building alongside the road, bordered on either side by green fields and on the northern side by woodland leading to the summit of Heversham Head, providing the rural setting for this part of the village.

To raise the building line would mean building very close to the summit of the Head and change the character of the village, creating conflict with the character of the area.

There is identified space to infill at the lower level and so protect both the environment and extend the existing pattern of development.

- **The impact on longer distance views from the west would be negative.**

Currently this higher area forms a valued part of the rural landscape. Building on these sites would be prominent to distant views and visually damage the landscape.

- **These sites would not present suitable sites for affordable homes for people with**

local need.

This land is privately owned and there is no compulsory purchase. It would be a costly venture for a developer and a difficult site for only a very few and therefore expensive dwellings.

This negates the aim to encourage young people to stay in rural communities and support the local economy, or provide for local need.

- **The proposed development of the sites is not within easy reach of existing amenities and will result in extra vehicular use to access them.**

More expensive homes usually mean more than one car per dwelling. All new development should be able to show that it is as environmentally friendly as possible.

With the limitations and cost of public transport, residents of any development will not be able to access shops and employment easily, without the use of cars. With no local shops or amenities apart from the Blue Bell, Church and Village hall and with the high cost of using public transport to Kendal, the nearest centre with larger stores, further pressure would be put on the narrow road through the village and the village's infrastructure.

It would also extend the carbon footprint of the village at a time when globally, the aim is for this to be reduced. Not only would new building extend the carbon footprint but would create further environmental damage by building adjacent to a conservation area.

- **In the current depressed economic climate, it seems unlikely that new properties would actually sell.**

A number of houses of various prices and sizes have been on the market in Heversham and Leasgill for some time, without being sold. To build more homes when there are homes for sale that cannot sell, seems very short sighted. These homes should form part of the solution for new homes.

Therefore I would call on you in your capacity as the officer with responsibility for the local development framework, to reject outright this review, or failing this to ensure that there is an opportunity for voices from the parish to be heard openly, before decisions are taken.

I look forward to receiving a response to my concerns.

Yours faithfully,

Miss S. E. Wilson