

For the attention of Andrew Smith

Dear Sir,

Planning Application Church Road – 7/2017/5313

**Proposal – Residential Development with all matters reserved except for access location;
Land to the North of Church Road, Witherslack.**

Witherslack, Meathop and Ulpha Parish Council are continually actively looking for sites for Affordable Homes and would appreciate any suitable site being identified in our area. However, the site on Church Road which the LDNP previously identified on agricultural land and passed as suitable back in 2013 in your Land Allocation Plan, still remains unsuitable in our opinion and also in the opinion of a large number of residents who reside in this area.

It came as no surprise to the Parish Council that as soon as you posted this application notice on the field gate and publicised the application details, the Parish Council were inundated with complaints. It also came as no surprise that once the LDNP identified and approved this site for affordable homes back in 2013, it would give the land owner the opportunity in the future, to explore the possibility of building non-affordable homes, for a higher commercial return.

As a result of the controversy over this site, the Parish Council had to convene an additional Parish Council Meeting, on Thursday 8th June 2017, which was attended by 18 residents and included the farmer who farms this land, who all spoke against this application.

At the conclusion of this meeting the Parish Councillors agreed unanimously to continue to oppose the use of this 'Greenfield site' for any house building, whether affordable or non-affordable.

The main objections of the Parish Council and those of the residents fall into two categories:-

(A) Location of the proposed site

1. The site is located on a single carriageway road with a 60 mph speed limit. The road is a main thoroughfare for traffic to Cartmel Fell, High Newton, Dean Barwick School, St Paul's Church, Halecat House and Garden Centre, Witherslack Timber Yard and many private houses, farms and a camp site. The route is also used by Agricultural Vehicles, deliver vehicles, tourist traffic, cyclists and walkers. There is no footpath, or street lighting and historically there have been a number of accidents on this road.
2. The existing housing on Church Road which includes 8 housing association houses (2 recently purchased by their occupiers), have insufficient off road parking at present and together with the one directly opposing the entrance to the site, which has no off road parking at all, add to the congestion in this area.
3. The proposed site entrance is the existing field gate next to a private driveway, from which emerging traffic have extremely poor visibility and as indicated by one of the objectors at the meeting, should comply with the Development Control Advice Note 15 (2nd edition) Vehicular Access Standards 1999 Policy Document. Perhaps if the Highways response document displayed on the website for this site referred to this planning application and not one for a property in Grasmere (7/2016/5521), we may not have had to mention this.
4. The fact that the proposal is for 7 family houses with small gardens, and parking for up to 21 vehicles, raises the question as to where the children might play. As yet Witherslack has still to establish a recreational area for the children of existing families in the village and to add the possibility of this number of vehicles seeking access to this site is indeed worrying.

(B) Impact on the Neighbourhood.

1. This small area of Church Road is already densely populated and any additional housing would have an adverse effect on the character of this picturesque Lakeland Village. Housing whether affordable or not, needs to be spread throughout the community, to maintain the special feel to a village and not concentrated in one area.
2. The development of this Greenfield site would have an adverse effect on the tenant dairy farmer who recently bought his farm from the applicant, and who still has to rent this area of pastureland because it was withheld from the sale because of this planning application.
3. There is no mains sewerage system in Witherslack and at least 10 of the neighbouring properties are connected to a large septic tank located in the field immediately behind the proposed semi-detached house. It follows that as a large number of homes discharge into this septic tank, it requires emptying frequently, with visits to the site by a Tanker which uses this same gateway. This begs the question as to how the vehicle will access the septic tank if these houses are build and what route the sewer pipes follow from the various houses in Church Road and Town End.
4. There would also appear to be a lack of surface drainage on the roadway in this area which causes minor flooding issues to a number of existing house on Church Road, so the effect of further building and hard standing in this area is likely to compound the issue.
5. Whilst the land on this site appears to be flat, it actually rises to the east and the building of two storey properties are likely to stand higher than the existing housing and therefore be seen from a considerable distance and impact on the landscape.
6. There is little doubt that allowing this planning application to go ahead would cause a number of properties in this locality to be devalued. One house in particular 'Rocklea', with the adjoining driveway has failed to sell after being on the market for a number of years, as a direct result of your previous decision to identify this site for affordable housing. It now stands empty and 'To Let'. Two other properties that face this site were built with no gardens areas on the front of their properties (westerly side), but gardens and conservatories to the rear facing this field. The value of these properties will no doubt suffer greatly.
7. The 23 page Planning Statement submitted on behalf of the applicant appears to add little to clarify this application, it contains more assumption than fact and is misleading, both with the statistics about this village and it's compliance with both National Park Policies and National Planning Guidelines. To try to justify the building of non-affordable housing on this site with a suggestion that the Parish or District will benefit from a financial contribution towards affordable housing elsewhere is absurd.

The Residents of Witherslack have an historic sense of community, inclusiveness and warmly welcomes new residents, whilst being mindful of preserving the character of the village. We do not oppose further affordable or non-affordable housing in our area, but strongly oppose this particular site not only because the access road is already congested and dangerous but also because of the lasting impact it will have on the residents in the immediate vicinity.

We trust you will visit this site and consider our objections.

Yours Faithfully,

Kevin M Price Parish Clerk, Witherslack Meathop & Ulpha PC