

## **Submission by Heversham Parish Council**

### **Key Points:**

**Residents of the parish are very concerned about the proposals as they affect the parish and at a public meeting they strongly indicated their opposition to anything but the most modest of development.**

**The Parish Council regards the suggested 99 houses as wholly inappropriate.**

**The Council has reviewed the sites identified in the framework and provided comments on each. It also identifies other potential sites for modest development.**

**The Council seeks an ongoing dialogue with SLDC, recognising that needs and circumstances will change over the fifteen year period.**

**In the light of the Council's assessment of the Parish and its continued wellbeing over the next fifteen years, the Council does see scope for infill and other development of no more than 40 houses.**

**(40 is derived from the 16 houses deemed necessary in the last housing needs survey undertaken in 2008, multiplied by the three 5 year periods minus the 8 houses currently available (for sale) in Heversham.)**

# **Response to the Consultation on the Local Development Framework (LDF).**

## **Preface**

It is incumbent upon us, the Parish Councillors of Heversham, to ensure SLDC is made fully aware of the strength of feeling of the inhabitants of the parish. However, the Parish Council has also to stand back and view the issues in a more dispassionate manner thus ensuring the long term interests of the village are better represented.

The draft Local Development Framework (LDF) proposes development of 99 houses on three sites. It is clear from the 100+ residents who attended a public meeting held by the Council that the many in the Parish want little or no development. The Parish Council associates itself fully with this sentiment. However, the Parish Council's perspective is somewhat different and although not seeking to contradict the strong views expressed at the meeting, is at variance to some extent.

## **Introduction**

As part of the consultation process for the LDF, Heversham Parish council arranged a public meeting in the Athenaeum on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. The meeting was attended by in excess of 100 residents and provided an opportunity for the Council to highlight the LDF to the community alerting them to the need to make individual responses. This meeting also provided an opportunity for individuals and the Heversham Action Group to air their views. It is clear from the meeting that widespread confusion and uncertainty about the LDF remains and there is considerable opposition to its content and the implications of the same. A summary report of the views expressed at the meeting is being sent separately.

The Parish Council has discussed the LDF in public in the course of its monthly meetings<sup>1</sup>. Councillors attended the public meeting and listened to the views of all those members of the public who were present. Councillors have spoken informally to the public of the parish and held informal discussions among themselves.

This submission draws from this activity of Councillors. It is presented on behalf of the Council having been approved a meeting on March 28th in the absence of the two Councillors who had declared a personal interest.

It is our intention to ensure this submission is available to people within the Parish. It sets out:

1. The Parish Council perspective of the village of Heversham and Leasgill.
2. The principles upon which we have based our consideration of the LDF.
3. Our deliberation on proposed numbers.
4. Our comments about sites.

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<sup>1</sup> In the January and February meetings

## **Heversham and Leasgill**

Any development arising as a result of the LDF will clearly have a lasting impact on the civil parish of Heversham and Leasgill. It is therefore worth starting by being explicit about how the parish council view the existing settlement.

The current settlement is essentially linear (along the line of the old A6 and up Woodhouse lane to the old railway bridge). It has a clear focal concentration in the conservation core around the Church in Heversham. It has a defining separation from the A6 to the west, albeit with some houses and the Bluebell to the west of it.

Heversham's rural nature is enhanced by its setting below 'Heversham Head.' It is above the moss and surrounded by open land with The Yorkshire Dales National Park ten miles to the east, The Lake District National Park two miles to the north and the Arnside and Silverdale area of Outstanding Natural Beauty within a few miles.

The roads in and around Heversham are all generally narrow and include pinch points around the church and up Woodhouse lane. Even the more modern Dugg Hill/Parkhouse Drive is relatively narrow. The main entry from the A6 to both the North and South is clear, but junctions with the minor roads between the A6 and the villages are all dangerous with restricted visibility.

Heversham is a retirement centre with a significant proportion of retired people. There is a successful primary school, but an increasing number of its pupils are not from the Village. Dallam School has a strong local presence in the form of newly constructed boarding houses, an outdoor swimming pool and a large sports hall. The school currently owns a sizeable, but unused field, which the trustees have agreed can be sold for development. The school makes the tennis courts and swimming pool resources available to the public and offers a range of weekend and evening classes aimed at older learners from the community.

The village boasts a well-equipped playground for younger children, but the overall sense is of a community of middling to maturing years. Although Heversham lacks an individual focal point, it does sports a well used Parish Hall (in the shape of 'The Athenaeum') and a number of clubs, many of which utilise the facilities afforded by the Athenaeum. The village has no Post Office or shops and consequently, is not a local service centre. All things considered, it is a village with an identity and with real assets, but one dominated by an increasingly aged population, reflecting but amplifying the wider demographic of the District.

## **Principles**

The Parish Council is preparing to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. This will provide an opportunity to develop a more robust assessment of the community as it is and to set some clear principles about how we would want to see it develop in five, ten and fifteen years. It will also provide us with a clear agenda for action in partnership with the District and County Councils and other public and private sector partners.

At this stage we have some early working principles which underlie the way in which we have integrated the 2008 Heversham Housing Need Survey with the LDF. The survey indicated a need for 16 houses over the next five years and it is this figure which is used in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

We want:

- A sustainable mixed community including children and young families.
- Housing to enable young working couples and people who have grown up in the area to put down their roots and bring up their own families,
- A primary school excelling in the education it delivers that caters for both local children and those from further afield.
- The young people who live in the school boarding houses to connect with our community and thus, to maintain and develop the range of social, recreational, cultural and spiritual activities on offer in the village.
- Older people to continue to feel they have a voice, supported and connected as they are and for this to continue as they become more frail and physically restricted.
- To build on the social assets of what is an established and relatively prosperous community.

We also want to:

- Maintain and strengthen a distinct physical identity of Heversham thus preserving the conservation area.
- Avoid further turnoffs from the A6 and better manage traffic flow through the pinch points.
- Enhance the sense of community whilst increasing the range of resources within the village.

Achieving these aims will ensure that the village contributes to the rich pattern of varied and diverse settlement across South Lakeland, thus sustaining an essentially rural feel in the changing social and economic context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

### **Numbers**

Heversham Parish accepts the need for up to 40 dwellings over the next 15 years to meet housing needs. However, that acceptance is based on the assumption that population growth calculations in the District are correct, and any additional housing that is required will be spread through rural as well as urban communities in the district.

The proposed LDF suggests a need for 99 new dwellings in Heversham and a number of ‘infill’ builds. The Parish Councillors of Heversham fully support the parish members in their belief that this number is totally inappropriate for a community the size of Heversham. Development on such a large scale would entirely change the nature of the existing settlement and as such the Parish Council resolutely opposes it.

At the public meeting it was clear that most people favoured little or no development with not more than 20 dwellings. The Council understands the deep concerns expressed and the associated desire to maintain something close to the status quo. Councillors believe that development of 40 new dwellings in the parish over the fifteen year period may be more appropriate. This figure would include both infill and new sites.

The council wishes to make clear that it would expect to start and maintain an active dialogue with SLDC with respect to:

- Potential sites. What is or may be available now should not be a definitive and absolute constraint for such a period.
- Outline planning proposals. The scale and layout of a development will potentially have a major impact and the local perspective of its positives and negatives must form part of the process in due course.
- Detailed planning proposals. The specific design and finishes of planned buildings will have a direct and lasting impact on the streetscape and village scene and will potentially undermine the logic that made a site acceptable.

### **Sites**

We recognise that there are potential infill sites that will take a proportion of the housing required. We anticipate that perhaps 10 to 15 properties could be developed through infill.

Given that the Council accepts that there will be some development, it follows we want to shape where it should be. It was inevitable that this would prove a difficult discussion point at the public meeting. Quite naturally individuals particularly affected by each potential site saw reasons why it should not be developed. There is no site within the Parish which does not have a downside from some individual perspective. The Council has sought to consider the overall interests of the Village, the local environment and the impact development would have. Our starting point is the desire to maintain the broad physical characteristics of the existing linear settlement of Heversham and the principles set out previously in this letter.

We favour infill development on the line of the old A6 as a first option and specifically R39 and, subject to the limitations of the site, R14.

On the basis of it being infill, we would support development on the Dallam car park area (R445) utilising some of the grassed area, but preserving some of the triangle towards the junction. Our support for development on this site is contingent on Dallam School providing parking on its site on the other side of the road without unduly compromising the recreational areas for its boarders.

The Parish Council strongly favours a review by SLDC of sites R167 and RN22. We recognise that there are access issues around Plumtree but believe these can be resolved. We believe that the site would have minimum visual impact whilst actually serving to consolidate the core of the village. Noting that it has not been identified in this draft of the LDF, we would welcome further discussion with SLDC about this.

We recognise the potential for modest expansion of the Dugg Hill/Parkhouse Drive estate. We do not support a development of the scale indicated by the LDF but believe there is scope for a small development of up to 10 houses (or no more than one third of the site being developed) as a maximum from Parkhouse Drive on the western edge of RN 118.

We can see potential benefit of extending this as a single line of development on the eastern edge of R168E which is available for development. The Parish Council does however, have concerns about access to the site.

We believe that the open land formed by R48 is an important defining feature of the entry to the village and would prefer no development in that area. However, we believe R455 has potential for development.

We strongly reject R41 as a potential site. Its development would compromise the new conservation area boundary. More importantly, it would affect pedestrian safety. The access is dangerous going towards the A6 as it is a blind corner and is on a pinch point going into the village by the church which has a dangerous sharp corner.

To the north of the village we note that R109 and R75 have not been included in this draft of the LDF. We are aware of the ownership issues associated with R75, but we would urge SLDC to review the south east corner of R75.

### **Employment**

We believe that the only potential site for employment purposes is E15. We believe that there are site constraints but we see the logic of some small scale development on this site either in E15M or in the main area of E15 along the line of the Princes Way.

### **Conclusion**

The proposals in the LDF as they impact upon our parish have roused strong feelings. It is important that SLDC understands and gives due consideration to these and that they move forward with the subsequent stages of the process in ways that acknowledge and respect these views.

As a Parish Council, we have sought to listen to our community and carefully consider its needs in order to be a vibrant and living community in the years ahead. On this basis we have responded to the consultation and we will develop our Neighbourhood Plan and review our Housing Development needs.

We acknowledge there needs to be an on-going dialogue with SLDC, the Council and the wider community, in order that the LDF can be a meaningful and relevant process in the changing and unpredictable circumstances of the next fifteen years. We are ready to share in and contribute to that dialogue on the specific issues identified above and more generally.