

Levens Parish Council Special Newsletter

Re: Possible Development of 54 dwellings with access off Greengate

A Residents Group is being formed (in conjunction with Levens Parish Council) to gather concerns and opinions regarding this proposal. Contact is sueyoung22levens@gmail.com or text Sue Young 07920 763686.

In addition, the Parish Council, with thanks to Councillor David Forshaw, has arranged an on-line survey which we encourage all to use. The link is <https://forms.gle/Xd7LPdKojSZVXki3A>

Below is a letter the Parish Council has sent to Westmorland and Furness Council.

To: Gareth Candlin (Assistant Director of Inclusive and Green Growth); Helen Houston (Planning Policy Service Manager), Nick Howard (Specialist - Development Management)

Date: 21 January 2026

Dear Sir / Madam

Land off Greengate, Levens and Implications for the Local Plan

On Tuesday 13 January 2026, Alderley Homes held a public consultation event in Levens on their proposals for the construction of approximately 54 dwellings with access off Greengate. Several members of Levens Parish Council attended that event and it was the subject of discussion at the pre-scheduled Parish Council meeting held that evening.

Whilst it understands that Alderley Homes is not aiming to submit a planning application until late February, the Parish Council has instructed me to express concerns relating both to a potential application for development on this site as well as the draft Local Plan currently being prepared.

Levens village has accommodated a number of significant developments in recent years including houses at Nethercroft, Lowgate, Church Close, Stone Lands and Meadow Wood (49 homes). There have also been many housing infill constructions around the village. Most recently was the grant of Permission in Principle (PIP) for a development at the north end of the village (Rockfield Stables).

On a number of occasions relating to these previous developments, the Parish Council has warned that the existing infrastructure necessary to support ongoing housing schemes is not adequate to meet increasing demand. In the case of Rockfield Stables, despite local objection and acknowledgement by the Planning Committee that the proposal departs from policies in the South Lakeland Core Strategy (as land not identified in the Local Plan and due to the projection beyond the development boundary), PIP was awarded. This on the basis that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply and the proposed development benefits from a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This offers developers the opportunity to submit applications at will and is not a sound basis for granting consents until such time as a new Local Plan is confirmed.

It is a matter of regret that the Planning Authority has not engaged with the Parish Council over these concerns nor embarked on any strategic review of the capacity of local services to underpin new developments.

The Parish Council has noted that in the recent Call for Sites as part of the developing Local Plan, five sites were submitted for Levens and that none was rejected at the first assessment stage. It is the Parish Council view that investment in the upgrade of local services must be addressed before consideration is given to the inclusion of new sites in Levens in the new Local Plan. Until this happens, further large building schemes cannot be claimed to represent sustainable development in relation to the services necessary to meet increased demand.

Key infrastructure issues include:

1. **Sewage:** The sewage system feeds down to the lower level of the village and is then pumped to the Milnthorpe sewage plant which is already prone to periodic failure and blockages. Cases of backing-up are increasing and there are now regular instances of the effusion of raw sewage in areas of Levens including private gardens. This issue has the potential to become worse as approximately 150 new houses are due to be built in Milnthorpe. The situation in Levens is unacceptable as it stands, let alone in the context of large new developments.
2. **Surface water drainage:** The existing surface water drainage system cannot cope, particularly in periods of heavy rainfall. Blocked and broken drains have led to increased instances of flooding

on local roads recently, which is particularly hazardous during cold weather events when ice forms on roads.

3. Water supply: The Parish Council knows that water pressure is an issue in the village. It is aware that residents suffer from fluctuating supply and that has led to some householders installing water tanks and pumps to ensure adequate domestic flow. Any proposed development will only lead to added issues with supply.
4. Electricity supply: The supply to the village is on three separate supply circuits and power outages are already higher than they ought to be. Added pressure on any one of these may lead to a higher risk of power cuts and there are no plans to upgrade the supply.
5. Road Safety and Public Transport: Levens is an historic rural settlement, approached by narrow roads with passing places in some instances. Over the last fifteen years or so, new housing initiatives, together with agricultural and business traffic associated with a working village, have had a profound effect on road safety. The village now has considerable on-street parking issues in its centre, with particular traffic concerns around the primary school site where, despite some mitigations, problems remain acute. The village is also on two busy national cycling routes and accidents stemming from this have heightened safety concerns. Buses do not service the village on a frequent basis (for those working in Kendal it is not possible to get there before 9 o'clock), and the nearest bus stop is some distance away, accessible only on foot via Levens Lane - a busy and narrow public road with no footpath or streetlights and which is single track in places. This increases the reliance on cars and therefore carbon emissions. The Parish Council has been working for years now with WFC (and previously SLDC) to create a safe pedestrian route down Levens Lane. Improvements to this route and the general transport system in and around the village are essential before any further development can be contemplated.
6. The Local School: Levens is a thriving village, and has pride in its local shop, pub, churches and school, but capacity issues threaten its social cohesion. The school role is nearly full, and the school has already been physically extended to the point where no further expansion is possible within the existing footprint. This means that existing residents (sometimes with generational connections to the village and school) are fearful that they will have to look elsewhere for educational supply. This disconnects local children from the village environment, erodes their sense of place and adds to the level of vehicle journeys that impact the village. A significant population increase (say from 54 new homes off Greengate) will only add to that pressure to the point where a new school site and building will be required.

In the wider context of the new Local Plan, further development on green field sites, which are part of the historic landscape, will have a considerable environmental impact and degrade the local distinctiveness of the village. This would be to the detriment of the whole village and a loss to future generations. A balanced approach to what the village should be asked to provide is an important requirement for maintaining local sustainability and considering the above, it is questionable whether a presumption in favour of sustainable development can legitimately be applied at present.

The Parish Council recognises that Westmorland and Furness Council has a difficult obligation to meet in respect of housing targets and is unable to meet its 5-year housing supply. This gives developers the opportunity to take advantage of a situation where the Council may give consent to developments not in the current Development Plan. In respect of major schemes in rural villages, this would be wrong and the immediate responses to the Alderley Homes plans on the village Facebook site indicate a significant level of unease about the proposals. If a planning application for this development is submitted, the Parish Council needs to be sure that its response reflects local views, and it intends to conduct its own public consultation on this by way of a survey of all residents.

Levens Parish Council does not have a predetermined view on the specific proposal for land off Greengate but feels it appropriate to provide this early feedback to highlight issues relating to sustainability and comment on the more strategic matter of the Local Plan as it relates to Levens.

Parish Councillors hope that you will take this opportunity to acknowledge its concerns and engage with it in relation to developments in Levens Parish.

Yours faithfully

Martin Curry

Martin Curry MRICS
Clerk
Levens Parish Council