

Caton-with-Littledale Parish Council has unanimously agreed to object to this application

We accept that there is a need for more housing in the area in line with national and district policies. We also accept that the mix of housing in the proposal is better than in many other recent developments, with over half of the houses having one or two bedrooms, including some bungalows. Thought has been given to environmental matters including heat pumps, high-quality insulation and car charging points (though no solar panels). The proposed layout is spacious, with grassland and woodland included, and the biodiversity report suggests a net gain well in excess of the minimum threshold.

However, there are several reasons why the Parish Council is objecting to the proposal.

1. The Caton-with-Littledale Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was approved by the community in a democratic vote only two years ago. This rejected most of the site as unsuitable for housing. The southern section was declared deliverable, but only for 12 bungalows using materials which “reflect the vernacular character of mill workers’ cottages off Quernmore Road and traditional farm buildings at Escowbeck Farm”. The application thus deviates from the NP proposals to a massive extent.
2. A development of 44 houses with only six “affordable” dwellings clearly goes against AONB/NL (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty/National Landscapes) principles which do not normally allow “major” developments and insist on a minimum of 50% affordable housing. The application is for a development which is clearly “major” in the context of a village such as Caton and the proposal includes under 14% affordable housing. Moreover, the proposed building materials are not appropriate for the AONB/NL. The application therefore fails the AONB/NL tests by an enormous margin. We greatly value the fact that the parish lies within the AONB/NL and accordingly we object to this application on these grounds also. Regardless of the AONB/NL guidelines, six affordable dwellings out of 44 is a very disappointing proportion.
3. There are already serious problems relating to drainage and flooding on the site, and the addition of 44 extra houses will intensify these problems to a very large extent. Although the developers have made some attempts to mitigate these problems, it is clear from the Lead Local Flood Authority’s report that their attempts are seriously inadequate. The extent of flooding is not exclusive to the proposed development area but will have a knock-on effect to adjacent properties. A recurring issue of flooding has taken place to the west of the proposed development where properties neighbouring the culvert of Escowbeck have flooded numerous times. The height of the development sits above these properties and this does not appear to have been considered in the flood reports submitted.
4. Quernmore Road is already a very busy road, and the proposed development would make it significantly busier – 44 houses probably imply at least 60 cars, maybe more. Moreover, the 4-way junction could cause serious difficulties for the likely amount of traffic. Even with mitigation measures in place, such as the proposed pedestrian crossings, traffic calming and a 20 mph speed limit, this increase is wholly unacceptable. Severe disruption and nuisance would start from the moment that construction starts.
5. Regardless of all of the above concerns, the proposal would represent a significant and highly visible extension of the village – much more so than other recent developments. Moreover, there are a number of significant issues that would need addressing such as the major negative effect on East Lodge; heritage concerns – for example, evidence of a Roman road has recently been discovered on the site; and utilities including water pipes, sewage pipes and broadband fibre under the field.
6. The plans do not allow for refuse trucks, fire engines and other large service vehicles to turn round. This is surely an obvious issue for all developments, and it is very concerning that the developers were apparently unaware of this.

In summary, therefore, the Parish Council is objecting to the application on several highly important grounds.