

Ms Sarah Taylor
Head of Governance
Lancaster City Council

19 August 2011

Dear Ms Taylor

Petition to Lancaster City Council regarding Gibraltar Farm, Silverdale

Please find enclosed a letter regarding this petition, enclosing copies of over 440 signatures of Silverdale residents, together with some supporting documents.

We understand from a telephone call to the Council yesterday that protocol requires that this petition is delivered to you. However, it seemed appropriate for the covering letter on the substance of the issue to be addressed to Councillor Hanson, as the cabinet member responsible for planning. We have included labelled copies for all members of the planning committee, plus the committee's secretary, and some of the planning officers concerned. Planning Services know this petition is going to be delivered.

The copy documents intended for the cabinet member, the chairman and vice-chairman of the committee and the committee secretary include copies of all the signatures. For the time being, we have retained the original signature pages, simply because some of the record-keeping has been noted on the back of some of the sheets, and we wanted to keep those in case of any queries. However, if you need the originals, please telephone either 701573 or 701043 and we can deliver them very quickly.

Yours sincerely



Denise Dowbiggin, Wolf House, Lindeth Road, Silverdale



to Joy Sharp P.P.

Joy Sharp, The Tower House, Silverdale



Bob Hamnett, The Blossoms, 33 Stankelt Road, Silverdale

Ms Sarah Taylor

Councillor Janice Hanson
Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Planning
Lancaster City Council

19 August 2011

Dear Councillor Hanson

Petition regarding Gibraltar Farm Caravan and Camp site, Silverdale

We enclose copies of over 440 signatures from Silverdale residents, calling on Lancaster City Council to apply local and national planning policy and prevent further unauthorised expansion of this site, and its over-use.

What's the problem? The owners of this site, which is in a coastal location in the Arnside and Silverdale AONB, have taken advantage of the Existing Lawful Development Certificate ('ELDC') system, the lack of monitoring by the City Council and an error by the City Council in the issue of an ELDC to drive a coach and horses through local planning policy. The site has got bigger and busier, especially since 2007. The Council intended to give it an ELDC for 34 caravans, for 8 months a year, but appears to have issued one for about 60, for 12 months a year. (Planning permission was originally granted for 15.) In addition, there is increasing use of surrounding fields for tents, more caravans and club events. There were some 170 caravans there over Easter. Other development has been carried out without planning permission. We are therefore concerned that history will repeat itself, that further ELDCs will be applied for and granted in future, and that the site will not only expand further but will be over-used.

Why a petition? There are two reasons. First, the enforcement process at the Council appears to have stalled. Second, because some people in the village, including some of our elected councillors who appear to support this unauthorised development, have been publicly and privately suggesting that it is only 'two or three' residents who are concerned. We knew this was wrong, but have felt required to prove it.

We have no confidence in the owners' restraint, or good faith on this subject. The owners' planning consultant has said that the owners have imposed on themselves a limit of 60 caravans, although they would be entitled to far more than that, and that there are no plans for expansion. Our response is that very little confidence can be placed on such a statement of 'no expansion plans', for the following reasons. 1) it is highly ambiguous and unspecific; 2) it commits the owners to nothing; 3) the site has a long history of exceeding the limits set for it and 4) factual statements made about the

site by the owners have varied enormously over the years, according to expediency. In 2004, when they were applying for an agricultural dwelling, the application said that when the caravan site was busy it had 15 caravans. In 2009, when they wanted an ELDC for 60 caravans, they claimed there had regularly been 55-70 caravans at busy times for the last 20 years or so. Both those statements cannot be true.

Complaint to Ombudsman. The error in the certificate and other apparent failures of process by the Council have already led to a complaint being made to the Council, as you are no doubt aware. If, as the Council seems to believe, the error in the certificate is irretrievable, that complaint is likely to go to the Ombudsman. The complaint also calls on the Council to:

- Take enforcement action along the lines envisaged in the original enforcement notices it issued, amended as necessary
- Consider removing permitted development rights and the right to hold club events outside the certificate area
- Ensure detailed and regular monitoring, including permitted development and club use
- Settle other outstanding planning issues
- Apply appropriate, mitigating conditions if any retrospective planning permission is granted for other development that has taken place
- Ensure waste is properly dealt with
- Ensure future planning policy protects the area from further development of this kind

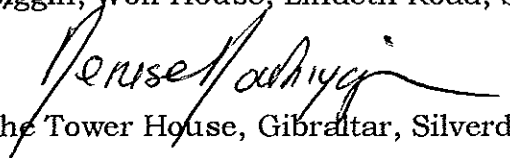
We repeat that call here. The Council should not compound the error on the certificate by failing to use the powers (both formal and informal) that it has to keep this site under proper control.

The petition suggests nothing outrageous or extraordinary. All it does is call on the Council to apply and enforce what has been, and can be expected to be, local and national planning policy and not allow unauthorised and inappropriate development, or over-use.

Yours sincerely

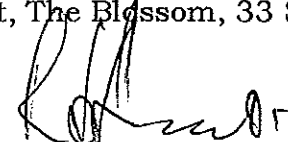


Denise Dowbiggin, Wolf House, Lindeth Road, Silverdale, LA5 0TX



Joy Sharp, The Tower House, Gibraltar, Silverdale, LA5 0TU

Bob Hamnett, The Blossom, 33 Stankelt Road, Silverdale, LA5 0TF



Enclosures:

Text of petition
Copy of leaflet distributed in village
Explanation of leaflet and petition process
Map of areas in now in use
Copies of signature pages

cc

Members of the Planning and Highways Committee (copy signature pages included for Chairman and Vice-Chairman)

Secretary to the Committee (with additional copies of signature pages)

Andrew Dobson, Mark Cassidy, Andrew Holden – Planning Services (w/o signature pages)

David Morris, MP (with signature pages)

Arnside/Silverdale AONB (w/o signature pages)

Arnside/Silverdale AONB Landscape Trust (w/o signature pages)

The National Trust, Silverdale (w/o signature pages)

Petition wording to Lancaster City Council - July 2011

We, the undersigned, are concerned about the increasing expansion of the caravan and camp site at Gibraltar Farm, Silverdale.

We recognise that a well-run site with an appropriate number of pitches (the current legal certificate is for about 60 caravans) benefits the economic life of Silverdale, helps the farm and attracts visitors. However, expansion beyond this will adversely affect an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and will, we fear, start to undermine the beauty and peace of the area - for residents and visitors alike.

We call upon the Council:

1. to ensure that the caravan and camp site at Gibraltar Farm is properly monitored;
2. to prevent further expansion and over-use; and
3. to ensure that all legal requirements as regards numbers, noise and environmental protection are met.

Have you visited Gibraltar Farm Caravan and Camp site recently?



We are concerned at the increase in area and intensity of use at the Gibraltar Farm camp site. We are even more concerned about how much bigger and busier it will get in future, if not controlled. This picture was taken at Easter - and it doesn't show all the tents and caravans that were there. There were some 170 caravans - about 60 on the approved site, over 100 at a 10-day club event (the club told Lancaster City Council there would be 30), plus caravans on other fields, plus tents. This could become the permanent state of things. Is that what you want?

Set out below are responses to comments we hear when this subject comes up in conversation.

There's been a campsite there for years, without any real problem. There are problems now. Many changes have been made, some of them without necessary planning permission. The site has become significantly bigger and busier since 2007. Several hundred people have an impact on the village as well as the immediate neighbourhood, and that impact should be properly considered, not imposed on others by a single family.

It supports a young family on a working farm. The Burrow family told the parish council last year that they wanted 'a traditional, simple caravan and camp site on their working farm'. Most residents would, we think, be happy for the farm to have that financial support. But there is a question of scale and balance. The picture looks more like a major commercial enterprise than a farmer's side line. The farm is now entitled to have 60 or so caravans on the approved part of the site for over 8 months a year (Lancaster City Council meant to approve 34, but made a mess of it). Those 60 caravans alone can produce a substantial income (individual touring caravans are charged £16/night minimum with hook-up).

It's good for village shops and businesses. Yes, it's part of the village's life and economy - but again there's a question of balance and appropriate scale. Residents have legitimate interests as well, and we spend money locally all year round.

Aren't you being alarmist? We don't think so. The site has a history of exceeding the limits set for it - it had planning permission for only 15 caravans. The family may say they want a 'simple site' but actions speak louder than words. When they sought planning permission for a second

farmhouse in 2004, supporting documents said that there was a 'full complement of 15 caravans'. In 2009, when a claim was made to be allowed 60 caravans on the basis of 10 years' use, the application said that there had consistently been 55-70 caravans at holidays and summer weekends for 20 years or so. The risk, of course, is that there will be further claims for even more caravans and tents, if the current level of activity continues without being challenged. So there could be 100 or 150 pitches in the foreseeable future. Even without such a claim, large areas in addition to the approved site are already being used for tents, more caravans, rallies, and private parties. Lancaster City Council has yet to make a decision on what action it will take on these.

The economy is more important than landscape. The local economy *benefits* from landscape. The opening sentence of the Gibraltar Farm website reads: 'Welcome to Gibraltar Farm, a traditional family run working farm situated in the heart of the Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, surrounded by breathtaking scenery and views of Morecambe Bay.' In other words, it uses scenery, views, and the AONB to market the business, just like most other local tourist enterprises. The business gains a clear commercial benefit from these, so should (like the rest of us) accept some restrictions in return.

It's not really visible/it doesn't affect us. It is visible, and it could affect you. It's very conspicuous from viewpoints further round the Bay (e.g. Grange), and was visible from Lindeth Road at Easter. Everyone will know places which have become bywords for being surrounded and spoilt by extensive caravan development. Do you want Silverdale to become one of them?

'They' won't let it happen. It is happening already! Moreover, the perception in some official or semi-official quarters is that there is strong support in the village for continued expansion at Gibraltar and no widespread concern or opposition. We do not think that is true - but the concern and opposition need to be voiced.

Opposition is pointless, because of powerful local interests and ineffective councils. That is defeatist, and self-fulfilling! None of us wants to spend time arguing about caravan development, but we think it needs to be done. No one should feel intimidated.

What can I do? You can sign the petition we will soon be circulating, urging Lancaster City Council to apply its own policies, meet its legal obligations with regard to the AONB and keep Gibraltar properly controlled in future. And you could give us your contact details in case further action is needed.

Set out below are the names of some of those of us who are concerned about this. We are all Silverdale residents, many of whom have lived in the village for a long time. Some of us are, or have been, caravan owners.

Thank you for reading this.

Marie Atkinson
Barry Ayre and Monica Placzek
Pauline Beckford
Ann Bond
Joan Brindley
Major and Carol Brownhill

Roger and Nancy Cartwright
Denise Dowbiggin
John and Brenda Eden
June Greenwell
Bob and Val Hamnett
John and Jean Holland

Margaret Haworth
Stuart and Anne Imm
David Player
John Pritchard
Joy Sharp
Roger Spooner and Dorothy Bates

Gibraltar Farm petition - explanation of the process

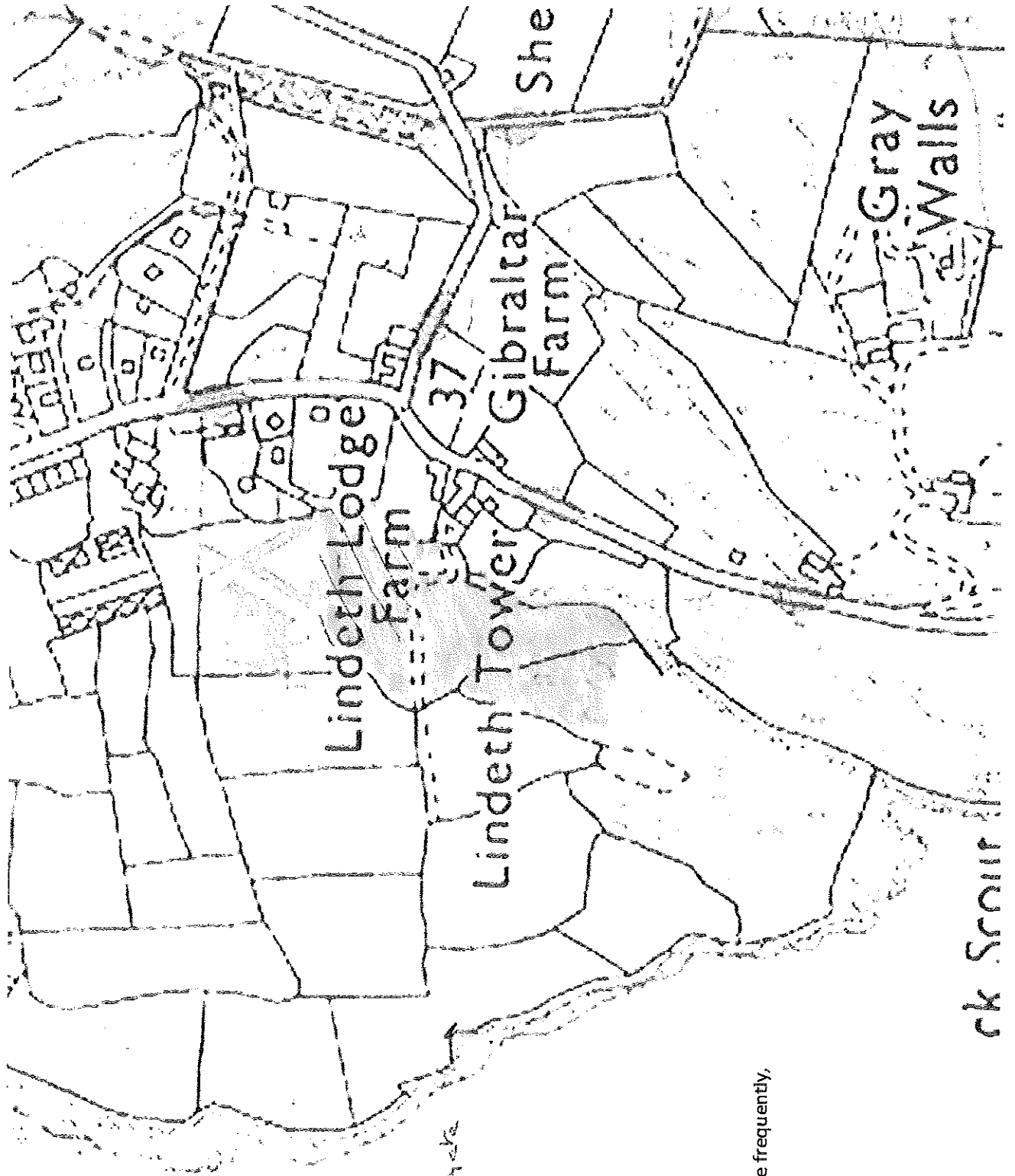
The decision to invite residents of Silverdale to sign a petition was not taken lightly. We decided to embark on upon this course because:

- a) It had been suggested in some quarters that concerns about the caravan development at Gibraltar Farm were confined to a handful of individuals. We knew that was not the case;
- b) We wished to emphasise to Lancaster City Council that there was a strong body of local feeling expecting it to meet its legal and regulatory obligations;
- c) Other local bodies had apparently failed to act; and
- d) Generally, we wished to draw attention to the current most unsatisfactory state of affairs.

The petition was organised as follows:

- 1. After discussions among concerned individuals, an explanatory leaflet was prepared setting out the issues regarding development at Gibraltar Farm.
- 2. Some 25 village residents put their name to it. They represent a cross-section of the community, both old and relative newcomers.
- 3. Leaflets were distributed to homes in Silverdale. Some were handed over personally. Others were put through letterboxes, particularly if there were any concerns about cold calling.
- 4. A team of volunteers (all local residents) then visited homes about a week later. They were able to answer questions, or deal with any concerns and invited individuals to sign the petition. No attempt was made to pressure people into signing if they did not wish to. Signatures were restricted to Silverdale residents. Where individuals were out, the text of the petition was left with details of whom to contact. In some cases there was a second visit to collect signatures. In others, copies of the petition were signed, and delivered by residents to the volunteer.
- 5. At all times
 - a. the process was properly monitored and names and signatures checked
 - b. It was made clear that the petition would be presented to Lancaster City Council
- 6. The response to the petition was remarkable, and in some instances overwhelming. Silverdale is a modest-sized village, yet we have over 440 signatures of local residents. We call upon the City Council to take note of the strength of local feeling.

Know End Point



Lawful use area

Other areas being used, some frequently, others less so

Lindeth Lodge Farm =
Wolf House

Gray Walls =
Ridgway Park