

Grange-over-Sands

Evidence Gathering Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is the evidence gathering report for the initial gathering stage of the Area Action Plan (AAP), proposed to make Grange-Over-Sands and its surrounding areas part of a Regional Park. A vigorous and convincing evidence base has been established following legislative guidance as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 and numerous Planning Policy Statements. In this report the results of the investigation will be presented, explaining the demographic, economic and social characteristics of Grange. The report will continue by giving a step by step account of the various urban features of the town. It will discuss the issues relating to marketing Grange-over-sands with its own unique sense of place, taking into account precedent studies of other regional parks, and case studies of towns with similar characteristics to Grange. Evidence will be provided of discussions regarding public consultation through meetings with the locally activity community group, the 3P's, and South Lakeland District Council. The conclusions of the evidence gathering stage can be used to identify the issues and options considered as part of the next stage in the production of the Area Action Plan. This report will fulfil the requirements that will be applied by the Planning Inspector at a Public Examination.

Grange is a Victorian/Edwardian coastal resort and retirement area. It still has something to offer that is unique and different to anything else in the Cumbria District. The promenade that runs along the front of the coast is deteriorating but is still one of the main features of the area; with Grange having previously been an extremely popular Victorian/Edwardian holiday resort. In recent years, tourist numbers has been steadily declining in Grange and this has therefore taken its toll on the promenade and the general tourist infrastructure in the town: with grand hotels being converted for alternative uses due to dwindling

tourist numbers. The town is home to an older demographic compared with the UK national average and has very much become a 'retirement community' or a town well known for second-homes.

To investigate the current situation in Grange, a wide range of National, Regional and Sub-regional policy was initially analysed to fully appreciate current developments and development controls/permissions and to gain a full understanding of the wider issues concerned such an area such as sustainable development, protection of the built natural environment, and tourism.

Economically, Grange appears initially to be a prosperous area, owing to house prices way above the National (and Cumbrian) averages. However, this can largely be attributed to the 'silver pound' in the area – with many former professionals choosing Grange as the ideal location for them to enjoy in their retirement years. This, coupled with the large influx of second home-ownership in the area, is contributing to a dangerous future with extremely low levels of economically active residents living in Grange (indeed, many of the jobs in Grange are filled by people that *cannot afford* to live in Grange). Grange has little provision for *professional class* jobs – most young people are forced to move away to go to University and, despite perhaps having a desire to return, find themselves unable to secure well-paid local employment.

Given that health deteriorates with age, the need for additional health service infrastructure in the area will increase, along with the proportion of elderly residents – there are more cases of individuals with limiting long term illness in Grange than in the whole of South Lakeland and the North West.

Grange is desirable for older residents not least for its fantastic surrounding natural and built environment but also for the slow pace of life and fantastic array of cultural and educational facilities available for older generations. The

‘sense of place’ in the area has developed through history – with Cartmel priory being erected in 1190, Grange opened as a resort town following the construction of the Furness Railway in 1857. Grange is surrounded by other local service centres Cartmel, Flookburgh and Cark.

Through the report we look in detail at the Urban Design of Grange, utilising visual analysis, legibility analysis, assessment of transport and connectivity and permeability. Visually, Grange can be dissected in various districts with architecture generally from the Georgian and Victorian era – this invokes a mood of tradition, slow movement and resilience. In nearby Flookburgh, there is an interesting juxtaposition between Victorian terraces and post-WW2 semi detached housing. Similarly, Cartmel is steeped in history (with world-famous sticky toffee pudding) and a busy racecourse attracting thousands of visitors per year. In terms of legibility, everything in Grange certainly has a ‘place’.

Transport links in Grange are plentiful, but throttled. Despite being on the Furness Railway line, train services are comparatively infrequent compared with any metropolitan area. Car access is by far the most convenient method of transportation in the area but this too, is throttled by narrow streets and winding country roads. Pedestrian and Cycle access is challenging owing to poor signage and incomplete paths, walks and cycle routes. Public transport is generally infrequent and relatively unreliable – with only 54.1% of residents living with 0.8km of an hourly service.

It follows, therefore, that Grange is not particularly ‘Permeable’; with a lack of access roads into the centre. Cartmel too, lacks ease of movement for vehicles though is very permeable by foot given it has winding paths and archways throughout. Flookburgh, on the other hand, is particularly permeable. Humphrey Head, a particular attraction in the area, is poor signposted and relatively inaccessible.

There are many opportunities for the future in Grange, subject to constraining factors. The pier and promenade are in need of regeneration: how this development is handled could particularly influence the future of the area; there is potential to offer a niche slow food market to tourists, which is currently underdeveloped; there is potential for the development of the conference centre market – with much infrastructure already in place; Grange could gain national coastal trail/green flag status and Humphrey Head, in its current guise, is a hidden gem that could be revealed to all.

The constraining issues for Grange are, too, plentiful. There is the issue of sources of capital (addressed in the report); a lack of development land; the current infrastructure is in a poor state of repair (i.e. Promenade, the old lido, the pier) and the fact that younger families simply can’t afford to move into the region.

To investigate the opportunities presented for Grange, four case studies have been analysed each with a particular focus of potential development for grange. Southend-on-Sea was investigated to determine the success of a coastal resort with a thriving pier; Ludlow was studied as an example of a ‘slow food’ town; Harrogate was investigated for its achievements as a global conference centre and The Pedders Way Coastal Trail was examined to provide an idea of the possible future development of a recognised National Trail in the Morecambe Bay area.

This combined with an analysis of local development proposals and site opportunities, community consultations, and assessment of Grange in the wider context of the potential Morecombe Bay area/Duddon Estuary Regional Park, have served to provide a solid evidence base for the next stage of the task; devising an Area Action Plan.

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