

9 November 2015

Steve Lovell
West Lothian Council
Development Planning
Civic Centre
Howden Road South
Livingston EH54 6FF

W.L.C.
D&RS GROUP SUPPORT

11 NOV 2015

REF=WL/LOPI/PP/0094

Dear Mr Lovell

**Objection to proposed change of long-standing environmental designation (Area of Great Landscape Value) to housing in the settlement of Linlithgow
(Site location: Preston Farm Field, Site Ref: H-LL 12)**

We write formally to object to West Lothian Council's proposal to change the designation above. This is the only written representation we have submitted relating to this specific proposal. The views below are our own.

We have a number of concerns.

First, as we understand the position, the proposed change is opposed by the Council's own environmental department. Your own officers have set out good reason why this area (including Preston Farm Field) should be protected by designating it a Special Landscape Area. That means that it should not be rezoned for housing. We are concerned and disappointed that the Council appears prepared to ignore this.

It has long been accepted that the area at issue merits protection against urban creep into the Bathgate Hills. Its ancient woodland, its biodiversity and its vistas of Cockleroy give this picturesque rolling field significant scenic amenity which is much valued locally. So far as we understand, no other significant housing sites proposed around Linlithgow in the Plan require the loss of protected greenbelt. We accept that there is real pressure for new housing - not just in West Lothian - but surely any new developments should be located first where there is no similar greenbelt protection.

Second, the proposed development encroaches onto the edge of Preston House, which is a Grade A listed building. We understand that the Cala Home proposal seeks to minimise the impact on Preston House but any development in this particular field will be seen as the thin end of a wedge. We expect our Council, which represents local people, to stand up to developer pressure. In addition, both the Scottish Government and Historic Environment Scotland have explicit legal guidance about listed buildings of this significance. Their setting must be protected from urban creep.

Third, the proposed site surely fails a number of the Council's own planning tests for infrastructure and local traffic impact. Preston Road, with 3 schools along its length, is already heavily congested. To have vehicles from a further 60 houses adding to that congestion must surely constitute a safety risk. Moreover, as most Linlithgow residents work in Edinburgh, and the local shops and services are mainly located along the High Street, the additional traffic will either be funnelled through the already busy High Street (which also already has high levels of pollution), or down Manse Road to a single lane bridge over the Union Canal which is already a bottleneck at busy times and completely unsuitable for heavy traffic. If there is to be housing development in the town, far better surely to opt for the south east sector which has better road access and which would also fit with the Council's recent decision to locate a new supermarket in that area.

Fourth, there are already capacity issues at Linlithgow Primary School and at the local Health Centre. The recent addition of retirement flats opposite Linlithgow Cross, of which some 80% went to incomers to the town, has already put additional pressure on the Health Centre.

Fifth, the additional housing proposed for Preston Farm Field would severely damage the amenity of this area south of Linlithgow which lies between the existing housing and Beecraigs Country Park. It would also (according to the local Canal Society) have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the Union Canal in the area and the tourism associated with the Canal. This area of greenbelt has been protected since the Second World War. We expect the Council to continue to uphold that protection and not to be swayed by developers whose main priority is maximising their profits.

Sixth, we accept that Linlithgow needs social and affordable housing, accessible to the town centre where infrastructure can be provided. The proposal for Preston Farm Field, so far as we can ascertain, is for luxury houses on the greenbelt. That just does not make sense, unless bolstering the profits of private developers is now to be the Council's determining criterion.

Finally, as will be clear from our address, we live relatively near to the proposed new development. There will therefore, in addition to all our other objections, be significant noise and disturbance while the building work progresses which will impact substantially on us.

For all these reasons, we oppose the development. We look to the Council to dismiss it and to continue to protect Preston Farm Field as greenbelt.

Yours sincerely



David and Stella Henderson