

John & Ann Ralph

[REDACTED]

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15<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing to object to the proposed development of **Preston Farm Field**, Site Ref. **H-LL 12**.

This is the first time we have made representation on the proposed plan to build houses on Preston Farm Field.

These objections are our own views on the proposed housing scheme on Preston Farm Field; site Reference H-LL 12.

Please can you acknowledge receipt of this letter and provide assurance that its contents will be reviewed and be considered by the appropriate personnel who have responsibility for this planning application.

Our objections are:

#### **Protected Green Belt Area**

This area is in the foothills of the Bathgate Hills and has been a protected area and should continue to be a designated Special Landscape Area as advised by the Council's environmental department.

- Loss of Special Landscape Area.

This picturesque field is highly visible from any approach to the town from the west and is clearly part of the foothills leading to the Cockleroy. Any building on this field will impact greatly on the character of the town and the scenic panoramas enjoyed by the community and tourists to the area.

The field is also seen clearly, edged by woods, with the Cockleroy towering behind it and the canal to the foreground when walking east along the canal towpath. Again any building will be detrimental to the character of the area, replacing a rolling field with houses making the area less attractive.

With the kelpies and the wheel at Falkirk tourism using the canal is both being encouraged and is increasing. During the year you often see a large number of narrow boats, obviously occupied by tourists, at the canal basin at Linlithgow. A large housing estate on the approaches to Linlithgow is going to impact people wanting to use the canal and also overnight stay at Linlithgow so affecting businesses in town.

- Loss of green belt.

No other significant housing sites proposed around Linlithgow requires the loss of protected greenbelt.

#### **Transport**

Housing on this field would add significantly to the already overstretched transport system in the area. Considering the amount of houses on the Cala Homes plans, and because of the sizes of the proposed houses, it is reasonable to assume that there will a minimum of 2 cars per household but it is likely that there would be households with 3 or even 4 cars. If you multiply

the cars per household by the proposed number of houses, the result is a significant increase in the number of cars in the area. The increase in traffic would have significant consequences as follows:

- Increased chaos on Preston Road.  
Traffic on Preston Road is already chaotic, especially around peak commuter and school times. Another housing scheme, with the attendant increased traffic, will add to existing problems and make school journeys (with 4 schools in the vicinity) more dangerous, especially during winter times when snow and ice are on Preston Road. During winter, cars already cannot get out of housing schemes and, therefore, park on the hill causing seriously dangerous driving conditions. Additional housing will exacerbate this with an increased risk to pupils travelling to school.
- Increased traffic on Preston Road and small roads over the Bathgate Hills.  
These roads were not made to hold the amount of traffic currently using them, never mind increasing their usage further.
- Increased danger to residents of [REDACTED].  
The proposed entrance to the Cala housing scheme which is sited in [REDACTED] would be detrimental to the residents of [REDACTED]. It could double the amount of traffic entering the scheme, making the entrance very busy. There are always children in the scheme and it has been relatively safe for them to play outside on their own. The exit from [REDACTED] onto Preston Road is difficult with reduced visibility especially looking up hill towards Donaldsons School. More traffic increases the possibility of an accident.
- Increased journeys through the town.  
Although walkable to the town centre, it is reasonable to assume that the majority would use cars to access the local shops impacting adversely on the traffic in Preston Road, High Street and out towards Linlithgow Bridge. Travel time through Linlithgow via the High Street is already extremely slow, the infrastructure cannot support more traffic.
- Exacerbate bottlenecks with traffic trying to avoid the High Street.  
When Preston Road is not used to travel to the East side of Linlithgow, the only alternatives are Priory Road to Strawberry Bank, or along to Manse Road and on to Back Station Road. Both of these routes are already bottlenecks because of the volume of traffic, not just cars, using them. Again extra traffic would be adding to existing problem areas.
- Increased pressure on commuter car parking around the station.  
Proposed housing will increase the number of commuters to Glasgow / Edinburgh using the station. The proposed area of housing is not near enough the station to encourage commuters to walk and so they will drive and park at or near the station. Parking here is already under pressure with no capacity for absorbing more. Commuters already park on roads leading to the station with increased risk of accidents involving cars and pedestrians.
- Increase in pressure on Linlithgow's already stretched transport infrastructure.  
The transport system in Linlithgow is creaking at the seams. The High Street is often congested as is the road to Linlithgow Bridge forcing drivers to try to bypass these areas by yet again using roads that have not been designed for higher volumes of traffic. In particular, the bridge over the canal at the Canal Basin is a bottleneck already, with many incidents and near misses and more traffic will cause only more problems.

### **Preston House setting**

On the southern boundary of the field is a Grade A listed building, Preston House.

- Effect on a Grade A listed building.  
The Scottish Government and Historic Scotland are explicit in their legal guidance about listed buildings of this level of importance. The settings of such buildings should be protected even when they extend beyond the boundary that is owned by the house. Historically Preston Field was the exact extent of Preston Hall estate.

Building on Preston Farm field would be like building on the Peel as Linlithgow Palace is also a Grade A building!

### **Protected Species and Biodiversity**

Preston Farm field, its pond and the adjoining canal strip create a rich biodiverse environment.

- Contravening UK Policy covering Protected Species  
Bats and Badgers are protected species by law. The field with the adjoining woods and canal provided valuable habitat for these creatures which would be greatly disturbed or even destroyed by building on the field.
- Loss of biodiversity:  
Bats, badgers, hedgehogs, owls, birds of prey, small birds are just a few of the wildlife species supported by this area. All of these would be adversely affected, and may even be driven from the area by building on this field.

### **Town Services**

- Increase in demand for school places.  
All schools in Linlithgow have little capacity. Houses of the size proposed by Cala Homes are family houses so an increase in children would be inevitable.
- Increase in the demand for medical services.  
The Health Centre is yet another part of Linlithgow's infrastructure which is creaking at the seams with the current population. How can it cope with anymore?

### **Loss of prime agricultural land**

#### Loss of prime arable land.

This field is used for growing arable crops. Building on this ground would be a significant loss of "prime agricultural land" as defined by the MacAuley Institute.

### **Adversely alter the Character of the current residential area**

#### Loss of amenity.

This is a peaceful and tranquil area to stay in, which is enhanced by the semi-rural setting. Every time we turn into [REDACTED] and look into and across the field it instils a feeling of relief to be here. It is lovely to be next to the planting and harvesting of crops and for the children to see this for themselves. The field is used by the community for walking around, with most people respecting the farmer's crop. Replacing this tranquil environment with housing would significantly reduce the sense of wellbeing experienced by living in the current environment.

### **Loss to the town, community and businesses**

#### Make Linlithgow less attractive to visit.

The whole effect of the above points is to make Linlithgow much less pleasant to visit, whether by car, coach, barge, train or walking at a time when the town is selling itself as a tourist spot. A decrease in visitors to the town would result in a loss of badly needed revenue to the shopkeepers, support industry and the town itself. Less money coming in would result in businesses closing and a less attractive High Street for both the local community and visitors.

This is an area which is fully developed and cannot cope with any further housing pressure.

Housing should be close to the town centre so as to lessen the effect of increasing traffic volume. The site allocated for a fourth supermarket could be developed for housing instead.

Linlithgow Planning Forum is clear that Linlithgow needs social and affordable housing close to the town centre or where infrastructure can be built.