

MILLER DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED

Registered Office - Miller House

2 Lochside View

Edinburgh Park

Edinburgh EH12 9DH

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Development Planning and Environment Manager,
West Lothian Civic Centre,
Howden South Road,
Livingston,
West Lothian,
EH54 6FF

20 November 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

**THE WEST LOTHIAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) PROPOSED PLAN
PUBLIC CONSULTATION OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015**

**SOUTH OF THE EASTERN PART OF HOPETOUN HOUSE ESTATE, BY SOUTH QUEENSFERRY (EAST OF
BALFOUR BEATTY SITE)
SITE REFERENCE - MIRQ 0125**

On behalf of SQ1 LLP representations were made to the WLC LDP Main Issues Report Consultation process, which sought the release of the site referred to as MIRQ 0125 for residential development. The rationale for the representation was based on the site being brownfield in nature, well contained with mature tree belts that would screen any development on the site and is sustainably located in terms of local services and infrastructure, lying adjacent to an existing settlement. The site will also benefit further from added accessibility resulting from the Replacement Forth crossing and potential Winchburgh train station.

Despite the fact that the Council recognised that the site is brownfield land, upon which there is “in-principle” support for redevelopment, the alternative proposal put forward by SQ1 LPP was not supported for the following key reasons (as identified in the MIR Consolidated Summary of Representations):

- The site is too remote and would result in an unsustainable development in the countryside contrary to the Council’s approach to development in the countryside.
- The site is also within a candidate Special Landscape Area (present AGLV) as well as being in the inventory of Designed Housing Landscapes.
- The site is now recognised as Greenfield in appearance.
- The site used to house military armaments and a military hospital and therefore is flagged up a contaminated site.

Dealing with these issues in turn, the site lies immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary of South Queensferry, which benefits from public transport connections and also good local services in terms of shops and community facilities, the site should not therefore be considered to be in a remote location.

In addition the concept of residential development in this location is not contrary to the Council’s approach to development in the countryside as outlined in Policy ENV 2 of the Proposed Plan, which specifies individual scenarios in which housing will be considered acceptable. These scenarios do not all need to be satisfied to ensure compatibility with the policy, in fact only one such scenario need be met to demonstrate acceptability. In this case *part c.* would apply whereby the proposal “*provides for the*

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restoration of a brownfield site where there is no realistic prospect of it being returned to agriculture or woodland use and the site has no significant natural heritage value in its current condition”.

The site does lie within a candidate Special Landscape Area (present AGLV) and is include within a wider designation (Hopetoun House) in the Historic Scotland Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland. However the sites location within these non-statutory designations doesn't not in itself prohibit its redevelopment and in fact the accepted brownfield nature of the site indicates that development of an appropriate scale could be accommodated on the site without adversely affecting the role the site plays within these wider designations.

This is particularly the case in relation to the Inventory designation, which has recently undergone a review by Historic Scotland. The site has been retained in the Inventory due to the contribution made to the wider coastline by the perimeter shelter belt that encloses the site. The Inventory also confirms that this 19th century tree belt and the Linn Mill Burn that runs along the southern boundary of the site are the defining features of the site. In both cases redevelopment of the main site could be accommodated without any adverse impact on these features, and in fact development could fund a maintenance/management regime for the site and these defining features that will provide for their long-term future and enhancement.

It is precisely because of the lack of funds that the site has begun to resemble a greenspace, however in actuality significant areas of hardstanding remain on the site and the low level vegetation that is present simply overgrown weeds and scrub. It is unclear given the limited views into the site as a result of the tree belt and its location between a small housing enclave and the Balfour Beatty site, how the site could possibly be “recognised” as greenfield in appearance.

Whilst the development history of the site has a military background as both a hospital and later as a barracks, there is no evidence to suggest that these uses could have resulted in levels of contamination or other geotechnical issues that would impact upon the viability of any redevelopment proposals for the site.

SQ1 LLP do not therefore accept the Council's assessment of the site and would respectfully ask that the alternative approach proposed by supported.

LDP Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

In addition to the Council response to previous representations we wish to object to the site assessment carried out for the site in the SEA. The site has been significantly marked down in the SEA Environmental Report Update on a number of grounds that we do not accept and would wish to rebut.

Topics on which the site is marked down which we wish to rebut are as follows:

Avoid adverse effect on integrity of designated international nature conservation sites?

The site is not within any such international designation and its redevelopment would have no effect on the integrity of any existing international sites. It is assumed that the site has been marked down for its

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proximity to the Firth of Forth SPA, however there is not legible connection between the site and the SPA and appropriately planned development on the site would have no effect on the SPA.

Avoid causing significant effect on designated National / regional/ local biodiversity sites & ancient woodland / geodiversity sites?

The site is not designated for nature conservation, biodiversity or geodiversity and whilst surrounded by woodland, this would be preserved and enhanced as part of the development.

Occupy a location at risk of increased flooding or instability due to climate change?

The site is well above sea level (over 30m) and as the SEPA Flood maps clearly illustrate is not currently at flood risk. There is therefore no reason to mark the site down on this basis or suggest that it might be at increased risk due to climate change in the future.

Avoid adverse (or create positive) effects on listed buildings and/or its setting?

It is assumed that the Council have determined that development on the site would have an adverse impact on Hopetoun House, being the closest listed building to the site, however there is no visual connection between the site and the House that could justify this position. The site is entirely enclosed by mature woodland, which is the feature that ties the site to the wider, non-statutory designation with the Inventory of Designed Landscapes.

The site also lies adjacent to the Balfour Beatty industrial site, which has successfully coexisted alongside the Hopetoun Estate, without an adverse impact on the listed building, despite its aspect being a more open and despite the industrial nature of the development.

Avoid adverse direct impact on species/ habitats/ or makes a positive contribution to the emerging green network?

Redevelopment of the site would provide an opportunity for the enhancement and long-term management of the surrounding woodland would make a positive contribution to the green network and wider non-statutory designations. Equally, given the lack of formal designations or protected species the development would have no adverse direct impacts on species or habitats for which appropriate mitigation could not be found.

Avoid conspicuous locations that require extensive landscape treatment / structural planting?

As discussed previously the site is well contained by extensive mature woodland and therefore is not conspicuous. The existing woodland would be retained and enhanced through redevelopment, consequently no new extensive landscape or planting works would be required.

Avoid loss of/ adverse effects on public open space / improve open space provision (quantity/ quality)?

The site is private land, not public open space. Access to the site is currently enjoyed by members of the public at the discretion of SQ1 LLP as it is considered impractical and undesirable to restrict access to the

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site as this may limit enjoyment of the wider area and pose a safety and security issue for residents living close to the site.

Avoid loss of land important to avoidance of coalescence/ preservation of settlement identity?

The site lies to the west of the approach to the Queensferry Crossing, between a small housing enclave and the Balfour Beatty industrial development. Its redevelopment would have no effect on settlement identity nor would it lead to coalescence, especially given the enclosed nature of the site, which screen development from views into the site from farther afield. The site cannot be considered to be too remote but also be at risk of coalescence, the two are not mutually compatible characteristics.

Minimise use of "Greenfield" land?

The site is brownfield, which has been accepted by the Council. By its very definition therefore it falls that development on the site must minimise the use of Greenfield land, to mark the site down on this basis is incorrect and inconsistent with the Council's own assessment of the site.

Avoid co-location of sensitive development with industrial facilities/economic allocations?

One of the key objectives of sustainable development is to reduce the need to travel, it is therefore inconceivable that sites should be marked down on the basis of their proximity to employment allocations.

Whilst it is accepted that there must be some care taken to avoid siting sensitive development near to heavily polluting industrial uses (be that emissions, light or noise), the Balfour Beatty (formerly Hewlett Packard) site is not one such use. The site has always been designed and used for the production of high technology parts within a carefully controlled and contained environment. The processes involved do not generate pollution levels that would adversely impact upon residential development.

Summary

As discussed already and as has been accepted by the Council the site is a brownfield site that is located on the edge of the Hopetoun Estate and is surrounded by mature woodland that robustly define the boundaries of the site.

Redevelopment would only affect the site itself, whilst the surrounding woodland, seen by Historic Scotland as the defining feature of the site would be retained and in fact enhanced because it would be positively managed providing a robust visual screen, local amenity resource and local biodiversity resource for the development.

Having reviewed the SEA, we believe that site has been inaccurately assessed against the topics within the SEA to the extent that the site should be considered as a preferred site within the SEA document.

The development would deliver positive economic and environmental impacts that would outweigh any potential adverse impacts that may result. Consequently, SQ1 LLP maintain their objection to the

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Proposed Plan on the basis that the site at Hopetoun House, South Queensferry MIRQ 0125 should be removed from the countryside and allocated as a residential opportunity site.

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Chris Gardner

Development Manager