

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

19th November 2015

Dear Sirs,

**Objections to rezoning proposal of the settlement at Preston Farm Field, Linlithgow
(Site Ref H-LL 12)**

Having attended the councils drop-in open day to review and discuss the Local Development Plan with the council's representatives I write to register my objections to the proposed rezoning of Preston Farm Field, Linlithgow from prime agricultural land and an 'Area of Great Landscape Value' to an area designated for housing.

This submission represents my own personal views as long-time resident of Lithgow with a concern for building a stronger and more cohesive community and preserving our natural and beautiful environment. This is the first time I have made a written submission on the proposed plan.

In summary my objections are as follows:

Firstly, the proposed building site destroys a picturesque rolling field on the town's southern boundary which is of significant scenic amenity and value to the community. It cuts into an area of the Bathgate hills long recognised by the council as an 'Area of Great Landscape Value', with its ancient woodlands, biodiversity and views of Cockleroy, particularly from the canal and western approaches to the town. In my opinion the area should be protected for all the reasons argued in the Council's own Environmental Department's report and would be a serious and permanent loss to the town if built on.

Secondly, the proposed rezoning destroys the setting of Preston House, a Grade A Listed Building of national architectural importance located on the southern boundary of the field, formerly part of its estate, with commanding views over the town. Both the Scottish Government and Historic Scotland are sensitive to the need to preserve the setting of Grade A buildings even when they fall outwith the boundary of the monument itself and are clear in their legal guidance on this issue.

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WL/LDP/PP/0284

Thirdly, on a similar note, the proposed rezoning would have an adverse impact on the western approach of the Union Canal a 'Scheduled Monument' of significant scenic amenity and value to the town attracting many visitors and bringing life to the town. A development on the proposed scale would spoil the tranquil beauty of the setting of the southern boundary of the town.

Fourthly, the development being so far from the centre of town and public transport can only add to the serious congestion already being experienced on our local roads, including Preston and Riccarton Roads (with their road calming measures and parked cars lining Preston road) increasing the risks to the safety school children; the existing bottleneck at the Manse Road canal bridge, and the western approach through Stockbridge Retail Park which is already heavily congested at several times of the day; and the high street with its own difficulties and concerns over the quality of the air reaching unsafe levels. Congestion is likely to drive consumers out of town destroying the amenity of the High Street.

Fifthly, I understand that there is little to no capacity at Linlithgow Primary School and the Health Centre is already struggling with capacity issues. It would seem to make more sense to locate new development in areas where the appropriate infra structure exists or can be provided.

Sixthly, the area supports significant biodiversity including a number of protected species which have been sighted along the affected canal bank – these include badgers, bats and kingfishers.

Finally, the proposed development at Preston Farm Field makes only a small contribution to the overall numbers for West Lothian at a disproportionate cost to the town in terms of loss of amenity and quality of life for many residents and visitors.

In terms of housing, I believe the town needs more social and affordable housing close to the town centre to provide housing for our children and not just their comparatively rich parents. My own children have had to relocate to other towns and villages to find affordable accommodation. Over time, this trend is, I believe, weakening our community and its social cohesion with predictable and undesirable outcomes.

Yours sincerely



Norman Elliot Aitken