

19 November 2015

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

Dear Sir / Madam

WLC Local Development Plan – Response to consultation

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed rezoning of Preston Farm Field, Linlithgow (H-LL 12) from an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) to an area designated for housing in the West Lothian Local Development Plan. The field should instead be given the status of core Special Landscape Area (SLA) as proposed by the Councils own environmental department in their LLDP environmental report.

The key areas of concern include:

- Unnecessary rezoning of the Area of Great Landscape Value / core candidate Special Landscape Area.
- Impact on biodiversity and specifically 2 protected species (Bats and Badgers)
- Proximity and impact on the setting of a Grade A Listed Building (Preston House)
- Proximity and impact on a Scheduled Monument (Union Canal)
- It is an isolated site far away from the town centre and public transport links
- No ability for a developer to improve local roads networks – (both Preston Rd and Manse Rd are major bottlenecks) and potentially increasing the risk to child safety near the Primary school.
- Loss of prime agricultural land
- Numerous other factors which will detrimentally impact the local community (see photos)
- From our investigations residents uncovered a proposal from Cala Homes which seems to be very mature and the council have redrawn the town boundary and cut across an AGLV to perfectly mimic the Cala Homes proposal. This indicates an unhealthy level of collusion between the Council and the Developer.
- The Council have completely ignored and grossly simplified / misrepresented over 35 valid objections from local residents at the Main Issues Report stage but sided with a single positive supporter of the site – Cala Homes

As you can see, It is not just one issue that could maybe be worked around, it is the compound effect of multiple issues that makes this site wholly inappropriate for rezoning for housing.

I have also done a review of the policy statements contained in the LDP and have shown that Preston Field proposal fails 11 policy areas (see Appendix A).

A number of residents felt compelled to research and compile a Technical Dossier of information providing evidence relating to our key areas of concern. I have previously sent this Technical Dossier to the various relevant elected representatives and to the Council Planning Department (email dated 14 November) and I trust this will be taken into account. We have had to take this action because our previous objections at the MIR stage were so poorly represented in the "Consolidated Summary of Representations" that no one in a position of authority could possibly have known the solid reasons for objection we had even at that stage – and now we have even more.

I have noted with interest and relief that the Linlithgow Planning Forum document entitled "Plan for the Future" specifically removes this field from the housing plans and focuses development to the south east of Linlithgow where infrastructure gains can be achieved. The LPF plan still manages to achieve and exceed the housing numbers being required by the WLC to achieve their overall target number. This is a positive document highlighting key infrastructure issues within Linlithgow as a whole and proposes some realistic ways forward to tackle the problems. I fully support the LPF Plan for the Future.

I will be paying very close attention to how the evidence provided here and in the Technical Dossier is scrutinised and represented given the previous lack of consideration and dismissive comments.

Yours faithfully
Robert Stewart

Appendix 1: Review against LDP Policy statements

<i>Policy Ref</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Policy Extract</i>	<i>Comment</i>
DES 1	<i>Design Principles</i>	When assessing development proposals, the developer will be required to ensure that: b. there is no significant adverse impact on landscape character, built heritage, habitats or species including European sites, biodiversity and Protected Species nor on amenity as a result of light, noise, odours, dust or particulates;	We realise this is for actual planning applications – but this will never be achievable given the technical info we have provided. Every one of these items would fail – so no point in zoning it
HOU 1	<i>Allocated Housing Sites</i>	The sites listed in Appendix Two of the Plan and shown on the Proposals Map are allocated as housing sites which contribute to meeting housing land requirements to 2024, as required by the Strategic Development Plan (SDP1) and are compliant with the spatial strategy set out in this plan. But Clause 5.2 of The Spatial Strategy states. Sustainability factors have been integral to determining the spatial strategy, as well as individual decisions on the development sites which have been identified where the aim is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote development in the most sustainable locations where its impact can be minimised; • reduce the need to travel; • prioritise sustainable transport modes; • maximise the use of brownfield land; and • conserve and enhance environmental resources. 	This site fails the sustainability factors of the Spatial Strategy – poor sustainable transport modes, use of greenfield/AGLV and impact on protected species etc
HOU 3	<i>Infill / windfall Housing Development within settlements</i>	new housing development will also be supported on sites within settlement boundaries provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the development will be in keeping with the character of the settlement and local area; e. the site benefits from good accessibility by public transport and active travel to shopping, education, recreational and other community facilities; f. existing physical infrastructure, including roads, drainage, sewage 	This is outwith the current settlement boundary. It is not in keeping with an open field with rich biodiversity on the fringe of the town and in the Bathgate Hills AGLV. Fails guideline assessment of proximity to town centre, train station and buses are very infrequent, schools have no capacity, previous comments from SEPA and WOSAS indicate risk of flooding

		<p>capacity, and education have the capacity to accommodate the proposed development;</p> <p>h. the site is not at significant risk of flooding in the terms of policy EMG 2 -Flooding;</p> <p>Proposals for development within or adjacent to sensitive locations such as Special Landscape Areas (SLAs), Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Historic Battlefields, Conservation Areas or affecting the appearance, character and setting of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments and any other historic or archaeological asset will be subject to additional scrutiny and may require to be supported by the submission of additional information. In these circumstances, there is an expectation that the standard of design will be higher than in less sensitive locations.</p>	Preston Field has a lot of these special factors
ENV 1	<i>Landscape character and special landscape areas</i>	<p>Development will not be permitted where it may significantly and adversely affect local landscape character.</p> <p>Within the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) shown on the proposals map there is a presumption against development which would undermine the landscape and visual qualities for which the areas were designated. Development proposals 'outwith' these areas which would affect its setting from strategic viewpoints will be subject to detailed visual appraisal and will not be supported if it adversely affects the designated area.</p>	<p>See most of our points on the landscape value. It has been a longstanding AGLV.</p> <p>Visual impact will be massive. The redrawing of the boundary to suit the Cala Homes proposal is completely ridiculous as if having a line on a map translates into some sort of visual barrier in a large open field and won't therefore impact on new SLA. See photos of aspects from the western approach, Braehead and views from Deanburn towards Preston House with Cockleroy in the background</p>
ENV 4	<i>Loss of prime agricultural land</i>	<p>Development will not be permitted where it results in the permanent loss of prime agricultural land as defined by the James Hutton Institute Land Capability</p> <p>Classes 1, 2, and 3.1 unless it can be demonstrated that:</p> <p>a. the development forms a key component of the spatial strategy set out in the LDP or the site benefits from planning permission; and</p> <p>b. the proposal is necessary to meet locational need, for example for essential infrastructure; and</p> <p>c. there are no other suitable sites available; and</p> <p>d. the proposal is for small-scale development directly linked to a rural</p>	<p>Preston Field is Class 3.1</p> <p>As we have shown above, the site fails multiple criteria in relation to the spatial strategy – particularly the sustainability factors – so the only one that might have justified its inclusion item (a) actually fails</p>

		business; and e. the proposal provides for the generation of electricity from a renewable source or the extraction of minerals where this accords with other LDP policies.	
ENV 12	<i>The Union Canal</i>	Conservation, recreational and economic proposals associated with the Union Canal will be supported, especially at Linlithgow, Broxburn and Winchburgh, provided they: a. sustain and enhance the natural and built heritage of the canal in its setting; b. allow opportunities for access and biodiversity promotion and improvement along the canal and the emerging CSGN green network as a whole;	This development would grossly overshadow with domineering houses and fences for a long stretch of the canal as you enter Linlithgow from the west just after the golf club – instead of the open agricultural field.
ENV 20	<i>Species Protection and Enhancement</i>	Development that would affect a species protected by European or UK law will not be permitted unless: a. there is an overriding public need and there is no satisfactory alternative; b. a species protection plan has been submitted, which is based on survey result, and which includes detail of the status of the protected species on site and the possible adverse impact of development; c. suitable mitigation is proposed and agreed; and d. if it is established that European protected species are present, the development is not detrimental to the maintenance of European protected species at a favourable conservation status.	We have done a bat survey (EU Protected) which found 4 of the 8 species of bat in the UK – one of which is very dependent on dark sites for their habitat. We also have results of previous badger surveys (along with multiple resident sightings) – see report
ENV 28	<i>Listed Buildings</i>	In considering proposals for development within the vicinity of listed buildings, the council will have particular regard to the setting of listed buildings . The layout, design, materials, scale, siting and use of any development which will affect a listed building or its setting should be appropriate to the buildings character, appearance and setting. Additional controls (such as Article 4 Directions removing permitted development rights) will be introduced to protect the setting of listed buildings where such buildings are under threat from development	We have done quite a bit of work on this in the technical dossier report – Council please note!
ENV 33	<i>Scheduled Monuments</i>	There is a presumption against development which could have an	Canal Society angry about the thought of houses

		adverse impact on a scheduled monument, or the integrity of its setting. Where appropriate, the council will introduce special controls such as Article 4 Directions removing 'permitted development' rights to protect scheduled monuments and their settings from unsympathetic development.	at the skyline of the view from the canal and the towpath at the Brig and also houses or fencelines domineering over the canal – big impact on setting
EMG 2	<i>Flooding</i>	Development will specifically not be supported in: a. locations identified as being at medium to high flood risk, unless it accords with the flood risk framework set out in SPP2014; or b. where it would lead to an increase in the probability of flooding elsewhere.	Not clear – but historical flooding events noted in Deanburn after construction of Donaldsons school and steep slope in field mentioned by SEPA
EMG 4	<i>Air quality</i>	Development will not be supported where it is not possible to mitigate the adverse effects of that development on air quality effectively	Compound impact on air quality in town due to increase in car traffic as too far away from town centre to walk – thus car journeys

Appendix 2: Key Photos

Photo 1: View from the North West residences around Mains Road, Linlithgow. Preston Field forms a natural town boundary with Cockleroy behind, defining the character of the town.



Photo 2: Showing the field as a natural town boundary, defining the character of the town. View taken from the Western approach road to the town



Photo 3: Again showing the field as a natural town boundary, defining the character of the town. View taken from the Western approach road to the town.



Photo 4: Historic setting of the Grade 1 listed building of Preston Hall. The image shows Preston House, field, woods & Cockelroy - all elements of the 1844 Preston Hall Estate which swept down to the Union Canal



Photo 5: Lower Preston Field with Cockelroy peak above provides the first pastoral vista beyond the town's Western edge when viewed from Towpath and Canal.

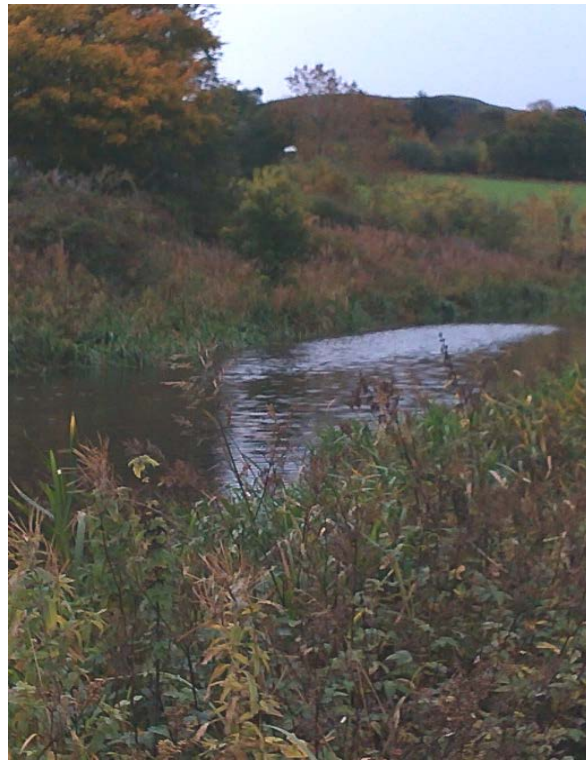


Photo 6: View of Preston House from the North West right of way at Katie Shaw's Brig and Union Canal. Housing would change the character and views from these local amenities.



Photo 7: The Upper Union Canal Bank at Katie Shaw's Brig is high and steep. Any building overbearing the bank would be insensitive to the canal as both a national monument and local amenity.

