



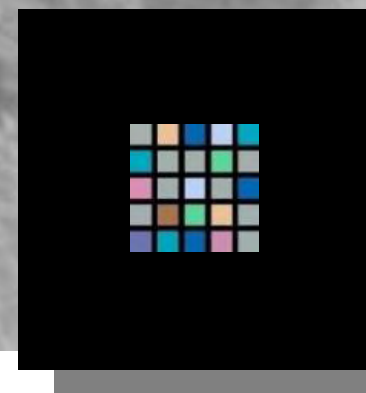
Aithrie Estates and Hopetoun Estate Trust

WHITEQUARRIES AND CRAIGTON

West Lothian

**West Lothian Local Development Plan
Main Issues Report**

Representations - October 2014



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opportunities

The Estate has ambitions to bring to life their aspirations for Whitequarries and Craigton as a tourism and leisure destination. Their intentions are to create a hub on Hopetoun Estate comprising garden centre, farm shop/country estate shop and café, hotel and restaurant, and countryside and leisure activities which would radiate out from the destination.

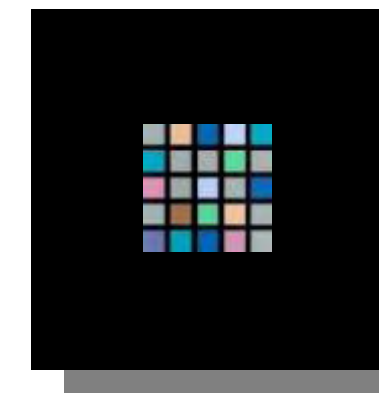
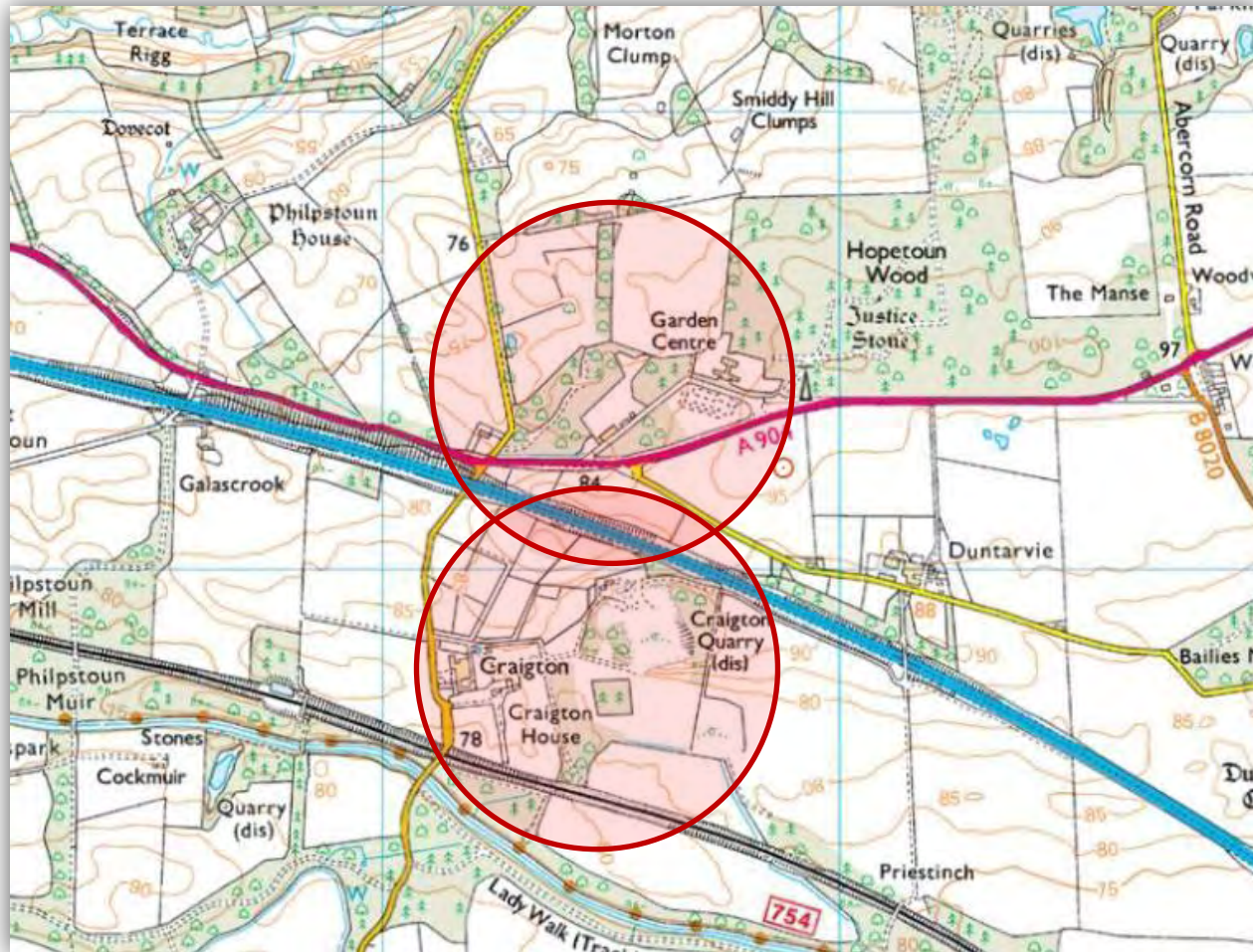
The garden centre and farm shop are already there, and clay pigeon shooting happens in the countryside to the north. These are growing businesses which need certainty on potential for growth to sustain momentum. The Estate would like to expand the clay shooting school in the field to the north of the site and potentially other outdoor activities, and extend the farm shop to provide a café. There are opportunities for siting a hotel lead development at the industrial estate adjacent, the Estate is in negotiation with a Hotel Group to realise this opportunity. This industrial estate is a brownfield site – a former shale mine site and pallet factory.

These activities would include connecting into existing access routes for walking, cycling and riding, including linking into canal towpath to the south (NCR 75) and the NCR 76/John Muir Way to the north along the coast.

The site currently lies within the Designed Landscape and AGLV. Existing woodland areas within the boundary would be safeguarded and enhanced. There is an opportunity to plant additional trees within the Designed Landscape to the north.

Allied to this in the medium term would be the provision of holiday lodge and camping accommodation based around Craigton Quarry and Craigton steading close to the Union Canal and further leisure activities. Craigton Quarry is a brownfield site. This might also encompass in the medium term working with Scottish Canals in the creation of a canal basin by creating a link between Cockmuir Quarry and the Union Canal.

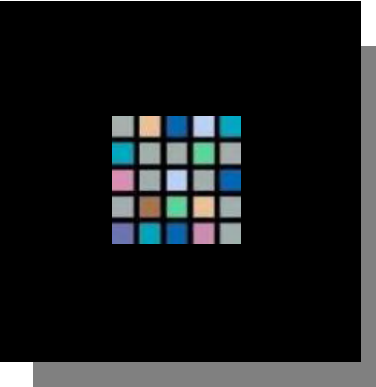
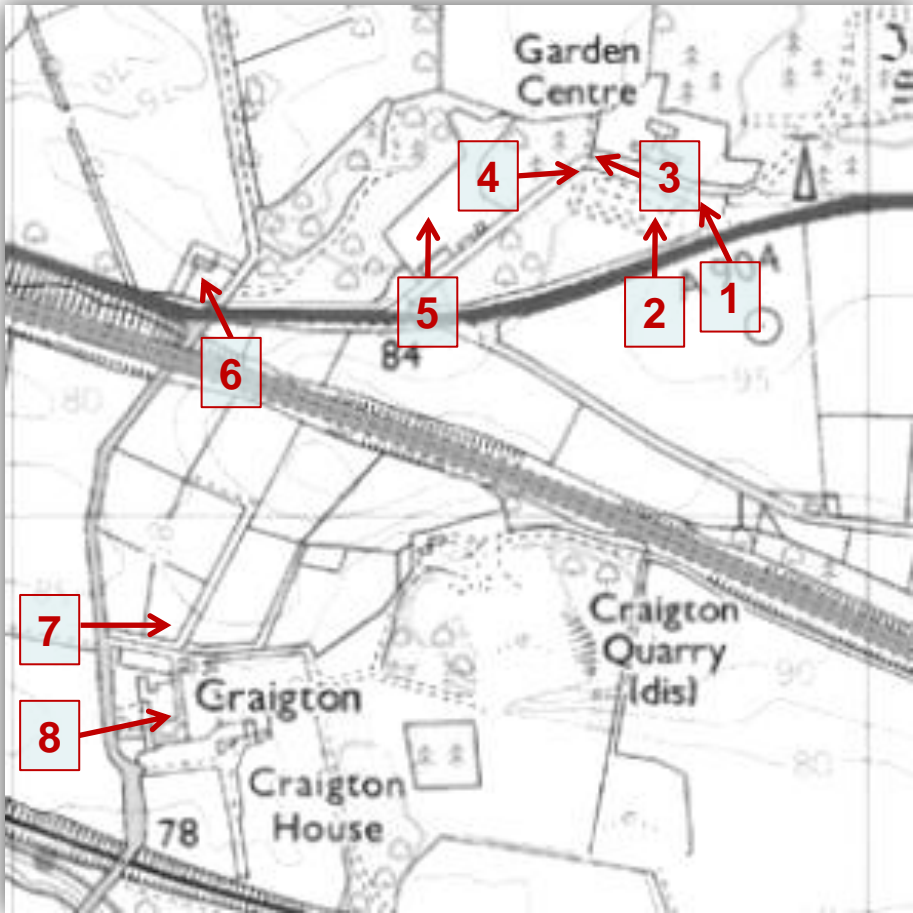
The location is entirely appropriate because of its accessibility off the A904, and close proximity to the new Forth Road crossing road junction at one end and J2 of the M9 at the other end. The proposed area is very well connected by footpaths and cycleways to strategic access routes and the CDA at Winchburgh.



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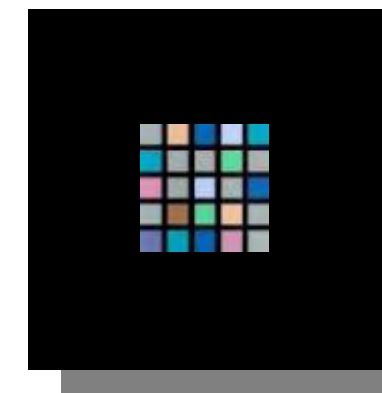
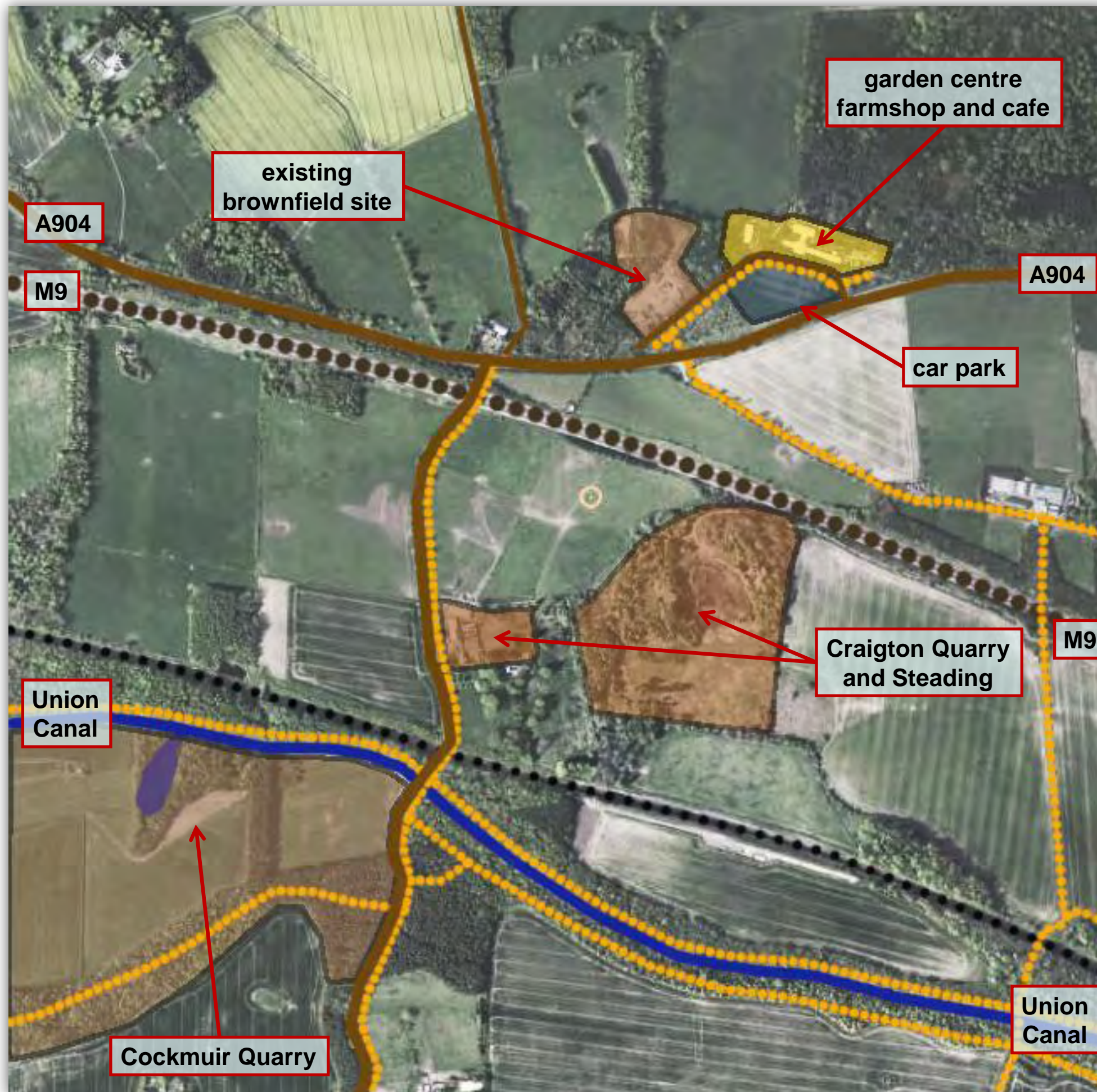
local context



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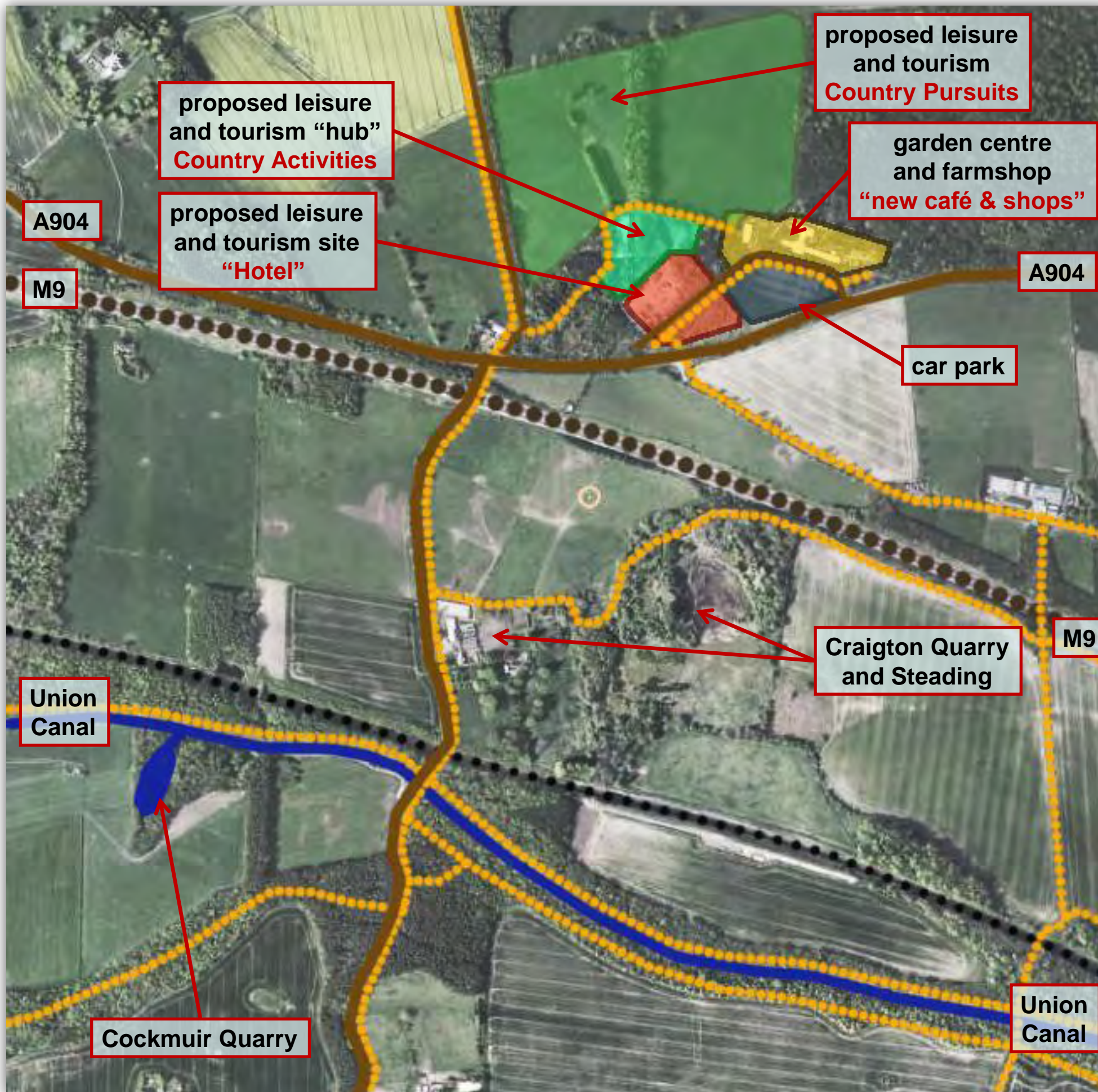
existing situation

- Existing Garden Centre and Car Park at Whitequarries indicated
- Existing Road Network
- Existing recreational routes
- Union Canal

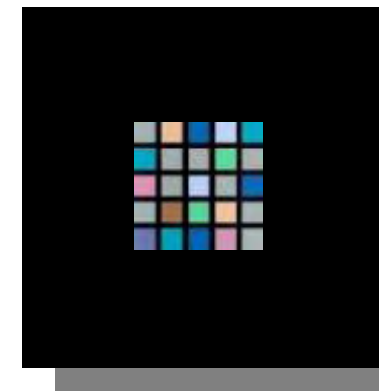


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phase one



- Extend existing recreational routes into Hopetoun Estate and beyond to the John Muir Trail
- Extend existing recreational routes to the south, linking to the Union Canal and to the basin at Cockmuir Quarry
- Existing Garden Centre, farm shop, café to be extended with commercial activities
- Proposed site for Hotel lead Leisure and Tourism Activities
- Redevelop existing brown field site as a "Country Activities Hub"
- Extend existing Country Pursuits Activities in fields to the north
- Extend car park

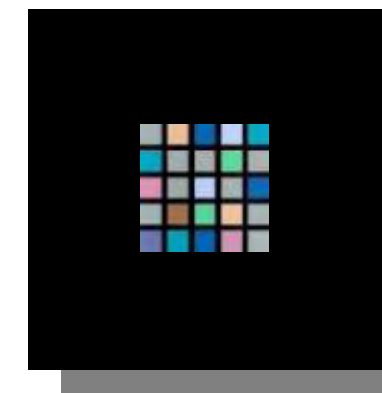
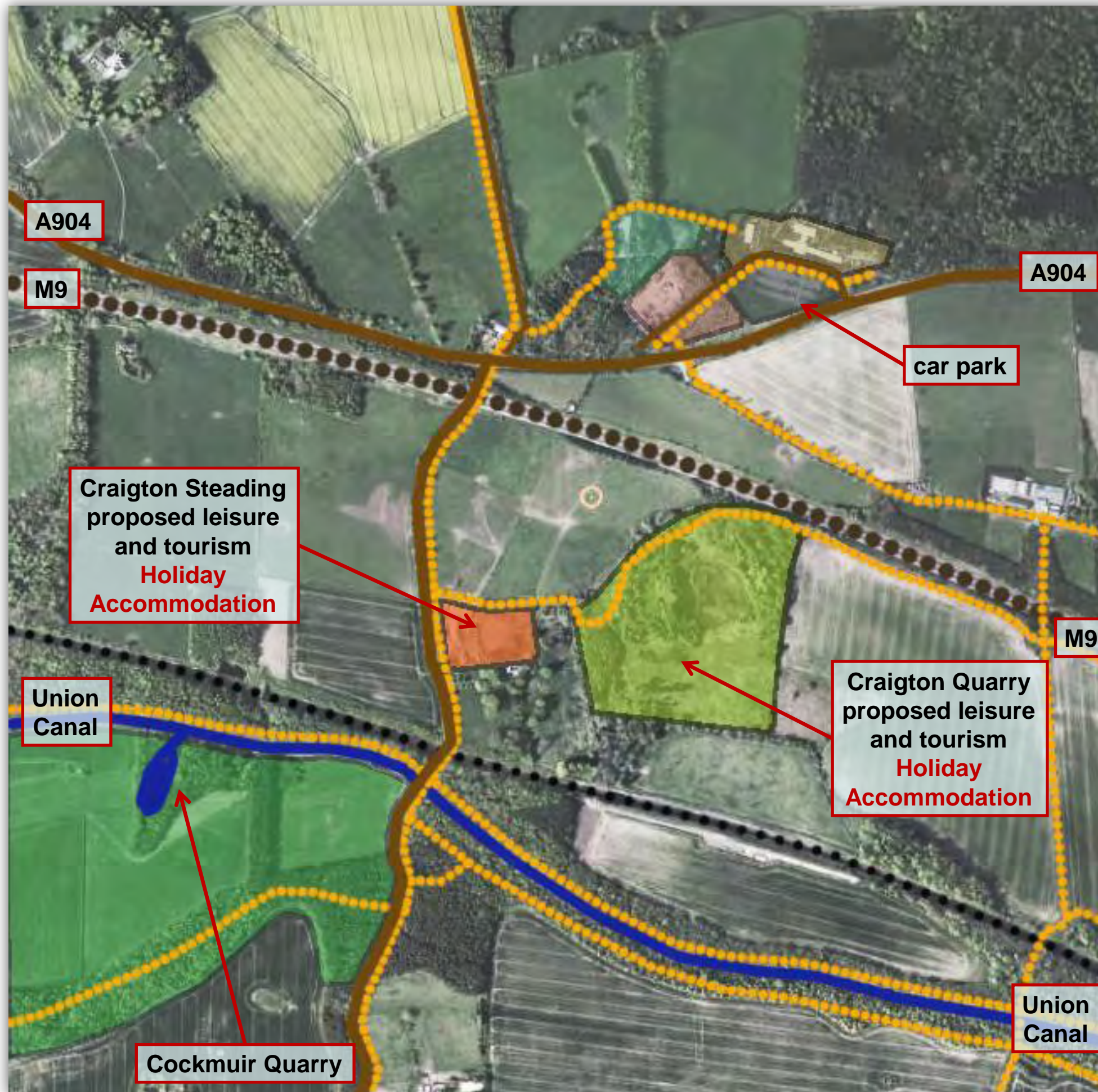


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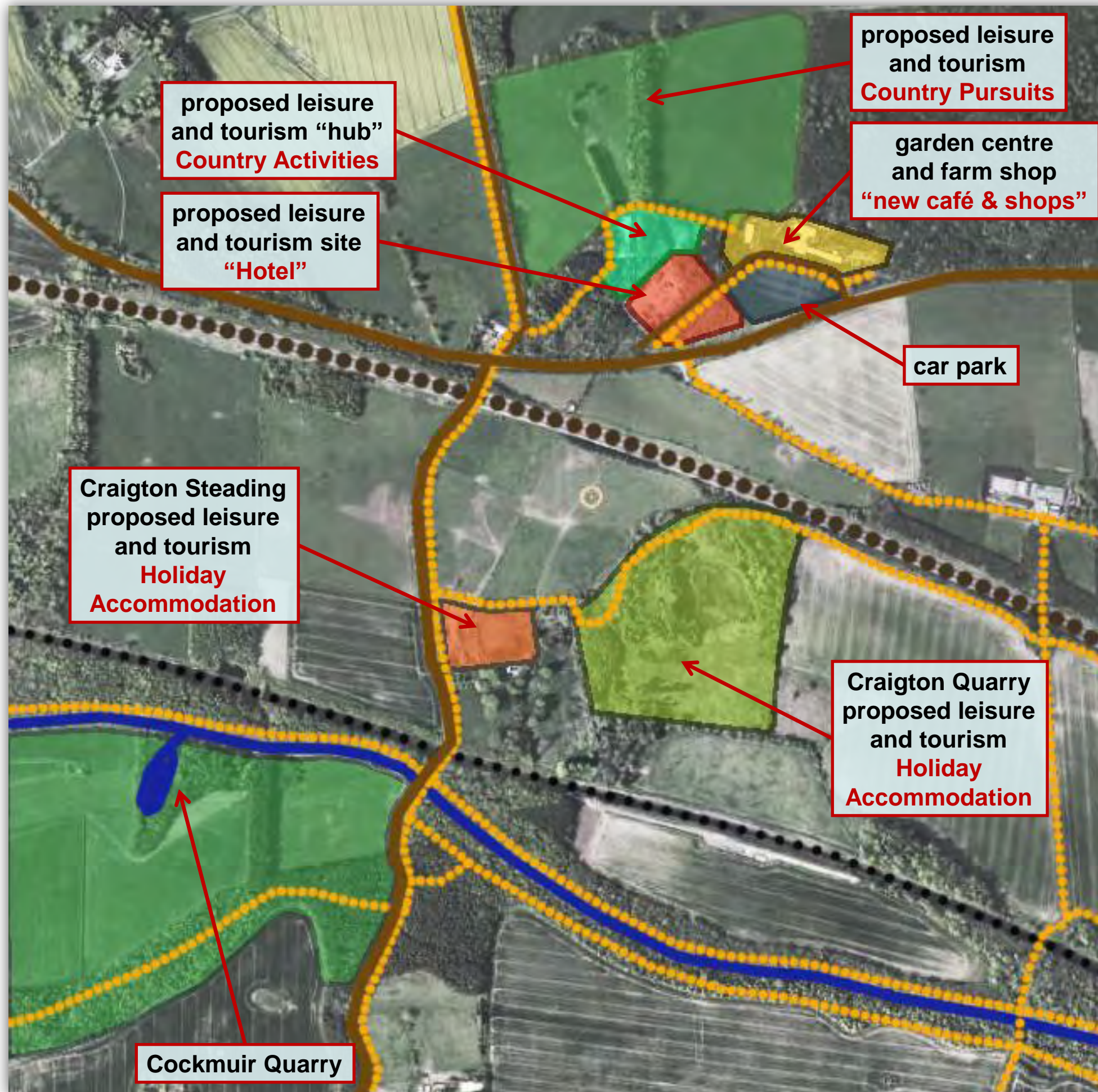
phase two

Part of the Hopetoun strategy involves provision of rural leisure opportunities and accommodation to encourage visitors to visit to area and then to stay there. The area at Craighton Quarry and along the canal running westwards would provide a suitable area for holiday lodge sites and camping with associated canal-side and leisure activities and should be allocated as such. This would help facilitate the restoration of nearby Craighton Quarry. Such uses might also offer the opportunity to connect Cockmuir Quarry to the Union Canal as a small berthing basin.

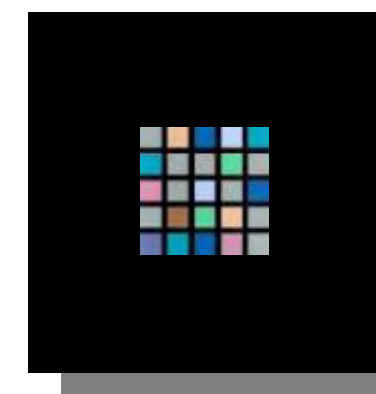
- Extend existing recreational routes to the south, linking to the Union Canal and to the basin at Cockmuir Quarry
- Redevelop existing brown field site at Craighton Quarry for holiday accommodation
- Refurbish and extend existing Craighton Steading for holiday accommodation



combined



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team

Client:

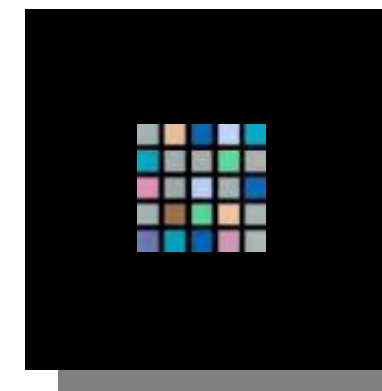
**Donald Noble
Aithrie Estates and Hopetoun Estate Trust
Home Farm
Hopetoun
South Queensferry
EH30 9SL**

Architect:

**J Brian McAllister
Yeoman McAllister Architects
Waterside Studios
Coltbridge Ave
Edinburgh
EH12 6AH**

Planning Manager:

**Justin Lamb
Justin Lamb Associates
2nd Floor
23 Castle Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3DN**



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West Lothian Council – LDP Proposed Plan

Conservation Area at Abercorn / Hopetoun Estate (page 56, paragraph 5.190)

Objection

It is proposed that paragraph 5.190 and policy ENV26 are deleted.

The reasons for this are:

- The inclusion of these sections is pre-emptive : there has been no assessment or consultation as far as aware
- The wording suggests a “fait accompli”
- The general policy is covered by ENV23
- There are already sufficient measures and provisions in place to protect the historic environment
- The historic environment is not under threat (ENV30), but rather actively managed
- Designation would be an unnecessary impediment to existing land use and an obstacle to effective management of the Designed Landscape

Reasons for Objection:

As advised in the reporter’s recommendations for the Finalised West Lothian Local Plan (March 2008), consideration of a particular area for conservation status through the Local Development Plan process requires prior investigation. The definition of the proposed boundaries and such consultation on these can only be achieved after full appraisal has been undertaken, including consultation with relevant statutory bodies, whereby the views of stakeholders can first be taken into account. The process is intended to establish whether and why a conservation area is justified and where its boundaries should be established. In a similar way, SHEP stipulates a “thorough appraisal of an area before designation, to ensure that its character and appearance are properly understood”. Despite almost 10 years passing since the start of the last local plan process, there has been no known material appraisal or consultation by WLC in preparation for consultation through this local development plan and no indication of potential boundaries. Therefore the wording in 5.190 is pre-emptive, and the proposal is not in keeping with the letter or spirit of national policy and advice in respect of promoting conservation areas. As such, the wording in 5.190 should be deleted.

The wording in ENV26 is unnecessary and suggests a “fait accompli”. A specific policy for “Hopetoun Estate and Abercorn Village” is not necessary - policy ENV23 sets out the intention to appraise further areas of special historical and architectural interest and to promote further conservation areas (which might include an area around Hopetoun House), and therefore adequately deals with the policy. Indeed the description in ENV26 of the potential area to be covered is vague and misleading, rendering the specific policy inaccurate and unhelpful and difficult for consultees to make specific comment.

An appraisal process with stakeholders is the most appropriate process for assessing the arguments in favour or against a conservation area on land associated with Hopetoun Estate. However in view

of the fact that the draft Local Development Plan seems to have already pre-judged such an appraisal, there are a number of factors which need to be taken into account in such an appraisal.

There are already significant planning controls in place on the buildings and landscape around Hopetoun House. WLC in its current Local Plan states “Where it is recognised, through appraisal and consultation, that there is a need to preserve or enhance the special nature of these areas and **there are not alternative provisions in place**, then designation as a conservation area will be promoted. Before formal designation the Council will consult on potential boundaries of the conservation area with affected communities and stakeholders, Historic Scotland and national and local amenity bodies”. There is already alternative provision in place. The area is protected by a landscape designation - an Area of Great Landscape Value in current WLLP and Special Landscape Area within the draft Local Development Plan. Other protections include: Designed Landscape designation; Listed Buildings; Scheduled Monuments; Special Protection Area; SSSI; Planning Acts; Forestry Acts; and cross-compliance provisions of Common Agricultural Policy. Therefore it is not clear why such a designation is required when there is alternative provision in place.

Policy ENV30 says that where designed landscape is under threat, the area will be designated a conservation area and additional planning controls introduced as appropriate. It would be a surprise if it were suggested that the Hopetoun designed landscape were under threat. Much effort is put into the preservation and enhancement by the owners, guided by a Long Term Forest Plan, a Conservation Plan and a Scottish Rural Development Plan scheme. The designation has just been reviewed by Historic Scotland. The report comments “The designed landscape at Hopetoun is actively managed by the Hopetoun House Preservation Trust so that the enduring historical integrity of the site is retained and enhanced where appropriate. The condition of the woodlands is good, with programmes of replanting and clearing ongoing across the site.” Has WLC sought the advice of Historic Scotland on a potential designation?

It is understood that conservation area designation requires any work to trees, walls and fences to be notified to the local authority, giving details of work proposed. Whilst there is no detail of the potential boundary of the proposed conservation area nor the features to be included, the designation of a rural area encompassing woodlands and boundaries requiring constant maintenance and management would lead to a disproportionate burden of notification and approval for both occupiers and local authority, with little positive gain bearing in mind the existing provisions for control, the lack of threat and the evidence of positive, planned actions by the occupiers. The resource and time requirement arising from this bureaucracy would remove resources from positive preservation.

PAN71 notes that designation of a conservation area should not be regarded principally as a means of increasing control but rather as a commitment to take positive action to safeguard and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. A partnership approach to preserving and enhancing areas of special historical or architectural interest is recommended.