

SECTION 4

SITE
ASSESSMENT



SITE ANALYSIS: HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site is located on the edge of a relatively recently developed part of Livingston with the fields formerly comprising part of the Westfield House and Farm ownership. As noted on the mid-nineteenth century OS map extract below, the strong shelter belt pattern between Murieston House and Westfield House is visible south of the small settlement of Bellsquarry.

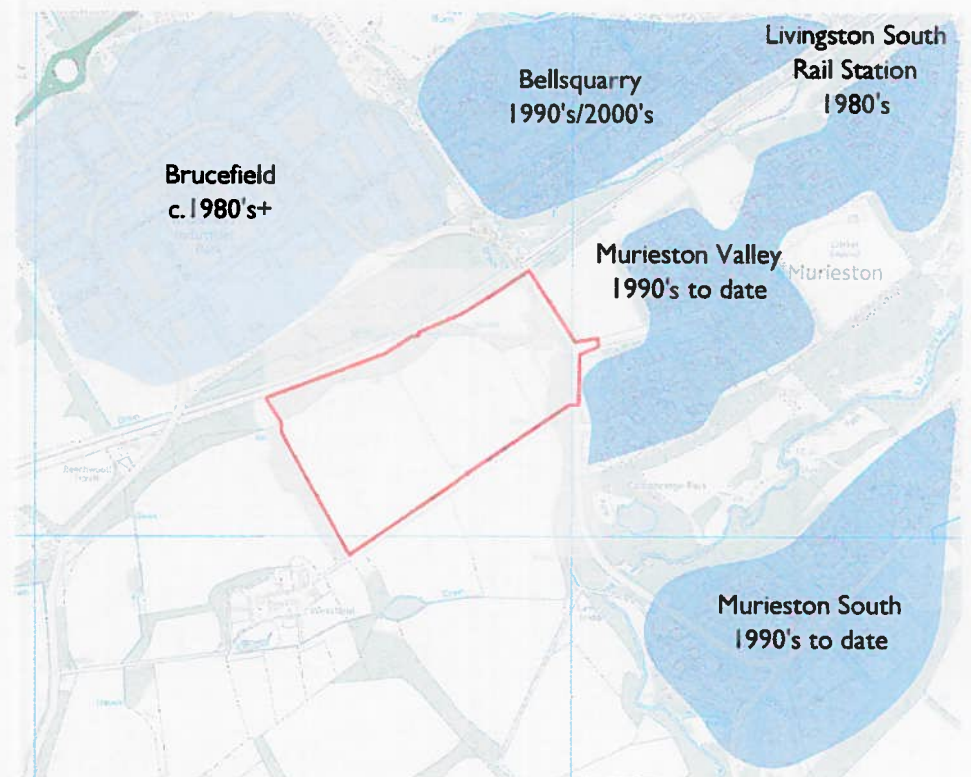


The OS map extract from c.1900 illustrates Westfield Mine and associated rail siding from the main-line crossing the north-east corner of the site.

As illustrated on the plan below, urban growth of Livingston (south-westwards from the town centre) since the 1980's has included the development of Brucefield Industrial Park and housing plots south of Bellsquarry and either side of the Murieston Water valley.

The proposal continues this pattern of residential growth set within the established pattern of shelterbelt planting allowing for linkage of greenspace.

OS extracts courtesy of NLS maps



SITE ANALYSIS: CONNECTIONS

Services, Amenities & Employment Centres

The Murieston site benefits from close proximity to a range of services within reach by varying modes of transport for potential residents. This includes:-

- Murieston Village/Bankton Centre within 1600-1700m (20 min walk / 5 min cycle) including Livingston South rail station, local supermarket, medical centre, local restaurant.
- Murieston Water parkland extends from south-east of site with cycle/footpaths to local centre and wider town network
- Bellsquarry Primary School within 1100m (15 min walk / 4 min cycle) and The James Young High School within 2km (7-8 min cycle)
- Brucefield employment site within 500m (5-6 min walk)
- Bannatynes health centre within 2000m (7 min cycle / 25 min walk) and cricket club within 600m (7 min walk)
- Almondvale Centre shops and services within 3.5km (10-12 min cycle and on direct bus route)

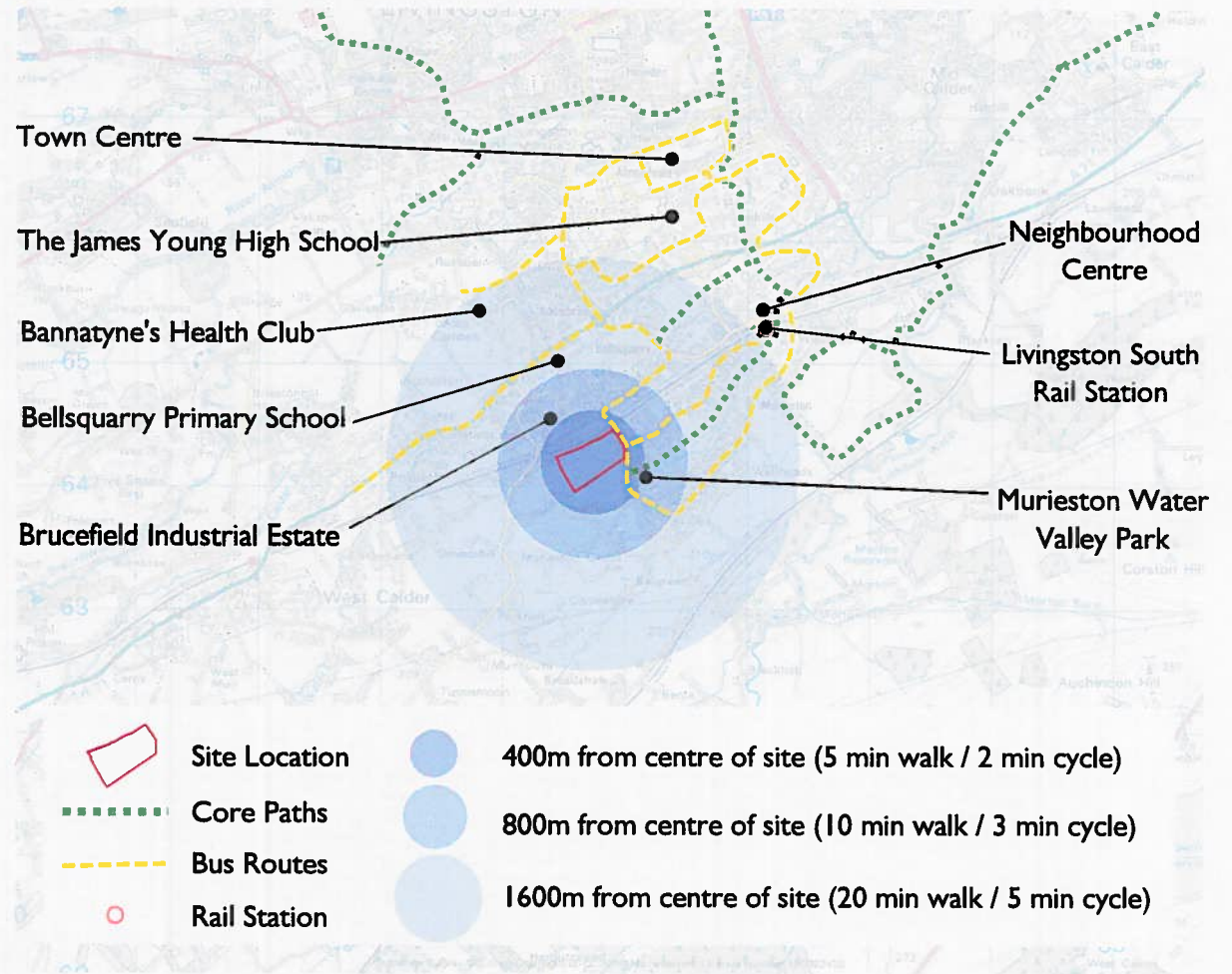
Public Transport

Services 404/405/406 run along Murieston Road on the eastern edge of the site, linking the town centre, Livingston South rail station and onwards connections.

Livingston South rail station (20 min walk or 5 min cycle) is accessible via Murieston Valley either along the residential road or parkland cycle/footpath, providing regular frequency service to Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Cycling & Walking

The adjoining Core Path WL14 (Murieston Trail) links site with wider Livingston network.



Connections

SITE ANALYSIS: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Landscape Context

The site, as with LDP MIR preferred sites, is located within the Harburn/Harwood Fringe Landscape Character Area (LCA), as defined by the *West Lothian Landscape Character Area Classification* (August 2014). One of the main characteristics is that of shelter belts which has been retained in the growth of Murieston with pockets of residential development set amongst woodland belts. The site offers scope to continue this landscape and urban pattern.

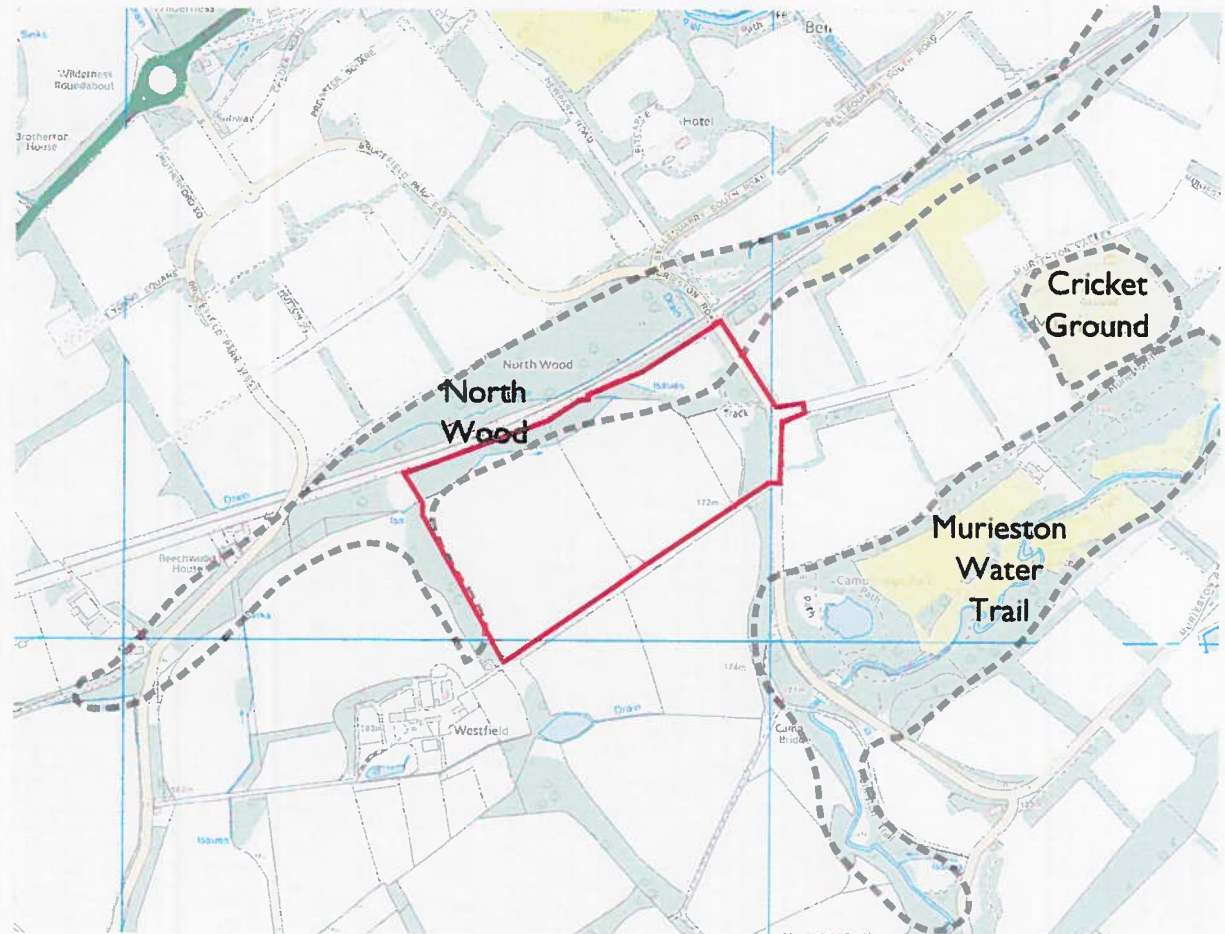
As noted within the *West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review* (2013), this LCA has “**no core areas which would potentially merits SLA (Special Landscape Area) designation**” with ‘low’ rarity value and more of a relationship with the existing settlement at its northern edge, i.e. in locality of the site.

The site therefore is **not subject to specific landscape restrictions** and existing shelter belt planting can be utilised to minimise any perceived impact. Intrusion into the countryside is minimised with the site forming a natural extension of Murieston with defensible boundaries formed by existing mature tree belts to north and west and a tree-lined track to the south.

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment supports the application which provides detailed landscape assessment.

Greenspace Linkage

The site provides the potential for cycling/walking access to link the North Wood and Murieston Water Trail and onwards to the wider open space and paths network. The shelter belts and established woodland pattern provide a strong framework within which to improve biodiversity, ecological and access linkage.



Greenspace Context

SITE ANALYSIS: BUILT ENVIRONMENT & CHARACTER

As illustrated within the supporting diagram, the site is located within an area of transition between urban growth and countryside. Built form comprises transport infrastructure (Edinburgh-Glasgow rail line, the A71 and local distributor roads), industrial units (Brucefield), modern residential development (Bellsquarry and Murieston Valley) plus the traditional pattern of dispersed country houses and farms to the west.

The site itself is bound by the rail line and local distributor road to north and east with the original access track to Westfield Farm/House bounding the south. As such, the site is defined by man-made boundaries.

The design solution must connect the existing urban growth with the country 'edge' location and therefore boundary and greenspace treatment is crucial to the creation of a successful place.

Surrounding built form is predominantly low-rise, detached housing with medium density housing (mainly detached, smaller plots) at Murieston Valley, low to medium density housing (larger woodland plots) at Bellsquarry and very low density housing (semi-rural plots) on Murieston's southern edge. The built form character is defined by the landscape/woodland structure in this location.

The nearest higher density 'centres' are located at Bellsquarry to the north and the modern neighbourhood centre adjacent to Livingston South rail station to the east.

The proposed site forms a logical urban extension of Murieston (as indicated within the LDP MIR Site Assessment) and has the potential to replicate the landscape structure that gives the area its character whilst bringing in a more connected, traditional built form than the 'cul-de-sac' style of the 1980's/90's.

As such, new development should allow for connected greenspace and streets to define building blocks and allow for a range of housetypes.

