

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Residential Development

Land at Main Street, Dechmont

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On Behalf of the Mr John MacFarlane &
Mr Colin MacFarlane

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Application for Planning Permission

Supporting Information



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is prepared on behalf of Mr. John MacFarlane & Mr. Colin MacFarlane as part of an application for outline planning permission. The current and anticipated shortage of residential dwellings in the Edinburgh and surrounding Lothian areas require a review of development options. The proposed site in Dechmont is to the south of Main Street and west of the A899. The purpose of this study is to provide guidance to the client and Local Planning Authority on perceived impacts of the proposed development on the landscape and visual resources of the site and its surroundings.
- 1.2. The report will examine the nature and extent of the development and measure, as appropriate, the magnitude and significance of the proposed housing on the landscape and visual receptors within the visual envelope of the site. From this, an evaluation of landscape capacity can be made. Ultimately, the report will provide a professional opinion on the suitability of the development within the particular landscape context. The site occupies an area of 6.2 hectares or 15 acres and is located on the eastern edge of Dechmont, within the M8 corridor immediately north of Livingston. Vehicular access is currently from Main Street to the north of the site.
- 1.3. The study has been undertaken by Tim Reid, a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, with 11 years of experience in landscape planning, construction and environmental consultancy. It has been carried out in accordance with the 3rd edition of the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (2013) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

2. Methodology

- 2.1. This report studies the effects on (i) the landscape character and resources and (ii) visual amenity. Landscape impacts describe the effects of the proposals on the physical character and quality of the landscape. Visual impacts describe the effects of the development on visual receptors such as existing local residents, walkers and road users.
- 2.2. It should be borne in mind that there is a degree of professional experience and judgement exercised during the LVIA process. Professional opinions are given within the framework of “clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others.” (p. 21, GLVIA, 2013)
- 2.3. To assess the significance of landscape and visual effects of the proposed residential development, the receptor’s sensitivity to change and magnitude of change are described and evaluated. Sensitivity explores the capacity of a given landscape to accommodate change, while magnitude assesses size and duration of the effect on the landscape.
- 2.4. In quantifying an identified landscape or visual effect, the following scale is used to describe sensitivity to change:

- High: landscapes or receptors which are highly sensitive to change, with particularly distinctive characteristics
- Medium: landscapes or receptors which are potentially tolerant of change which have less obvious, or partially degraded, characteristics
- Low: landscapes or receptors which potentially have the capacity for significant change

- 2.5. In quantifying an identified landscape or visual effect, the following scale is used to describe magnitude of change:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| High adverse > | Medium adverse > | Low adverse |
| No change | | |
| High beneficial > | Medium beneficial > | Low beneficial |

- 2.6. This scale’s criteria are based on an assessment of the size, scale and duration of change which the development is anticipated to cause within a given landscape.

- 2.7. The overall impact is calculated by combining the sensitivity of the landscape or receptor and the magnitude of change to landscape character or visual resource. These can be either positive or negative. Again, professional judgement is used to determine the overall anticipated impact and are classified as follows:

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------|---------|------------|
| Substantial > | Moderate > | Minor > | Negligible |
|---------------|------------|---------|------------|

3. Planning Context

National Context

Scottish Planning Policy

- 3.1. National planning policy provides the framework within which planning authorities are to assess development proposals and are key material considerations, as detailed within National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2; Scottish Government, 2009) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP; Scottish Government, 2010). Whilst both these policy documents are currently being reviewed, existing policies set the context for regional and local planning in Scotland.
- 3.2. NPF2 highlights the need to implement a development strategy which supports growth of existing communities and creates sustainable patterns of travel and land-use, whilst balancing existing character, built and natural assets. This need is at its greatest in East Central Scotland, with NPF2 highlighting the need to “accommodate a substantial growth in the number of households in the Edinburgh city region” (paragraph 189).
- 3.3. This approach is reiterated by SPP Paragraph 70, which states that “the delivery of housing through the development plan to support the creation of sustainable mixed use communities depends on a generous supply of appropriate and effective sites being made available to meet need and demand”.
- 3.4. A fundamental requirement underpinning the implementation of NPF2 and SPP is the provision of a generous supply of housing land with a minimum 5 year effective land supply to be maintained at all times by local authorities (SPP para.75).
- 3.5. Government design policy contained within *Creating Places* (2013) and *Designing Streets* (2010) provide a strong emphasis on the creation of successful places at the forefront of Scottish planning policy and practice. Government policy supports the creation of places that provide a sense of identity and make best use of resources. This is achieved through sensitive utilisation of existing shelter and the integration of built and natural features, unified by a well-connected street network.

Local Context

Development Plan

- 3.6. The Development Plan covering the Application Site is the approved Strategic Development Plan for Edinburgh and South East Scotland (“SESplan”, approved June 2013) and the West Lothian Local Plan (adopted 2009) which was produced to conform to the now superseded Edinburgh and Lothian’s Structure Plan 2015.

SESplan Strategic Development Plan (2013)

- 3.7. The site is currently Greenfield land with no previous development. The SESplan policy on development of ‘Other Countryside Designations’ (Policy 13) states that local development plans should “review and justify additions or deletions to other countryside designations fulfilling a similar function to those of the Green Belt as appropriate. Opportunities for contributing to the Green Network proposals should also be identified in these areas”.

- 3.8. “The scale of the housing requirements for West Lothian in the periods 2009 to 2019 and 2019 to 2024 will be determined by the supplementary guidance to be prepared under Policy 5 and implemented through site allocations in the LDP. Such allocations will be focused in sustainable locations where infrastructure is either available or can be provided and in locations where there are no environmental constraints.” (p.20, para.90)
- West Lothian Local Plan (2009)*
- 3.9. “The development site falls under the ‘Countryside Belt’ category, which is governed by Policies ENV 22-23.”
- 3.10. “West Lothian will continue to prosper as a place to live and work. Demand for housing and employment growth will be met in a way which minimises the environmental impact of growth and brings positive benefits through improved opportunities for those currently and doing business in West Lothian, and those who seek to do so in the future.” (p.1, para. 1)
- 3.11. “The plan identifies a number of core development areas (CDAs) in which growth is focused to 2015 and beyond at Armadale, Livingston and the Almond Valley, Winchburgh, East Broxburn and Uphall. Meeting development requirements in these CDAs whilst minimising the adverse impacts of growth, is a key objective of this local plan. The CDAs will be the focus for major development over the lifespan of the local plan, although, where appropriate, modest development opportunities are also identified within existing communities, through land allocations in this plan. Others will emerge as windfall developments throughout the plan period.” (p.2, para.3)
- 3.12. “Edinburgh is recognised as an economic and cultural hub, and west Edinburgh is the main gateway to Scotland’s capital. As such, the area is recognised as offering significant development potential, especially linked to the opportunities arising from the expansion of Edinburgh Airport.” (p.4, para.1.17)
- 3.13. Dechmont currently has a substantial allocation of 500 units at the Bangour Hospital site west of the village. Given the number of issues associated with this site including the requirement to retain and convert 13 category A listed buildings and the lengthy delays in bringing the land forward for development, there appears to be a significant requirement to allocate additional, deliverable sites within the Dechmont area. There is scope therefore for land at Dechmont to contribute to this emerging strategic allocation within the pre-2019 period.
- 3.14. “Outwith the CDAs, the local plan identifies a number of new housing allocations, accommodating around 3,000 houses, to provide local opportunities where these would support local communities and services, and [were] acceptable in terms of the environment and infrastructure capacities. These sites are a combination of sites benefitting from planning permission, brownfield opportunities, sites conforming to policies HOU8 and HOU9 of the structure plan and sites brought forward through the council’s Open Space and Sports Facilities strategies. Accordingly, the complete supply of sites established in this local plan, including the CDA allocations, can accommodate 23,410 houses.” (p.7. para 2.12)
- 3.15. “The strategic objectives of this local plan are to....conform to the principles of sustainability by...promoting development in accessible locations which will encourage trips by sustainable modes of travel.” (p.10, para.2.25)

- 3.16. “The strategic objectives of this local plan are to:
- Protect and improve the built and natural environment by:
- a. Conserving and enhancing green spaces, rivers, the coastline and water features and promoting the principles of biodiversity;
 - b. Protecting habitats, landscapes, archaeological features and the built heritage from damaging development;
 - c. Re-habilitating the environment where it has been scarred by precious industrial and development activities;
 - d. Improving and, where appropriate, managing native and mixed woodlands; and
 - e. Improving public access to the countryside, coastline and heritage features, in a manner that preserves the quality of those features (p.11, para.2.25)
- 3.17. “The strategic objectives of this local plan are to...promote a development strategy that... identifies housing sites to meet the overall strategic target requirements.” (p.11, para.2.25)
- 3.18. “A key priority of this local plan is to ensure that sufficient land is available to meet identified housing requirements. This requirement must however, be consistent with the broader aims of the plan regarding urban renewal, protection of the built and rural environment, the principles of sustainable development and the need to ensure that infrastructure is available to support housing development.” (p.83, para.6.1)
- 3.19. The local plan is under review and, in June 2014, West Lothian Council approved a Local Development Plan Main Issues Report for public consultation (set to be August to October 2014). This includes the Main Street site as a preferred housing site and therefore provides support in principle for the proposal, subject to detailed design and further consultation.

4. Baseline studies

Topography

Refer to Figure 1: Topography

- 4.1. Dechmont is positioned within the West Lothian plateau area described as ‘lowland plateau’ (The Lothian’s Landscape Character Assessment, ASH Consulting Group, 1998, p.64). The site sits between 130m and 140m AOD on “A heavily-modified lowland plateau landscape which shelves gently eastward to merge gradually with the farmland plain of the lower Almond.” (Ibid.)
- 4.2. The landscape is dominated by tributaries of the River Almond including “Linhouse Water, Breich Water, Murieston Water and West Calder Burn. These form narrow and deeply-incised features which link the upland fringe of the Pentlands to the Lowland Plain” (Ibid.) The river valley itself “barely registers as a topographic feature in this broadly undulating and predominantly open terrain.” (Ibid.)
- 4.3. The post-industrial landscape “is formed of folded sedimentary rocks of Carboniferous age, holding extensive oilshale and coal bearing measures”. To the east “igneous intrusions create a strongly rolling terrain which peaks at Dechmont Law (217m) to the north of Livingston.” (Ibid.)

Landscape Character

Refer to Figure 2: Landscape Character

The Lothian’s Landscape Character Assessment, ASH Consulting Group (1998) (p. 64-65)

- 4.4. The study area falls into the Lowland Plateau type, Character area: 19 “West Lothian plateau.” The landscape character is one “almost entirely of improved pasture, divided by a mixture of fences, thin fragmented hedgerows, small shelterbelts and broken lines of hedgerow trees. Woodland is generally scattered and small to medium-scale, comprised of coniferous, broadleaved and deciduous species.” (Ibid. p.64)
- 4.5. “Stretches of wetter, less cultivable land throughout the valley support rough grasses, scrub and marshy hollows.” (Ibid.)
- 4.6. There are many signs of a post-industrial landscape, with oil shale bings visible to the east, and degraded farmland all around, the result of previous coal mining activity. The Ash assessment relates “The powerful influence of extensive industrial and residential developments from the 19th and 20th centuries has pervaded the agricultural plain.” (Ibid.)
- 4.7. “The minor roads and access tracks which once served the area have been overlain by a highly prominent and often visually intrusive transport and communications network consisting of parallel and intersecting major roads, a railway line, the M8 motorway and associated structures and pylon lines.” (Ibid. pp-64-5)
- 4.8. “The effects of the last two centuries, due to large-scale industrial and residential development, have heavily modified the agricultural landscape, through degradation of farmland and engulfment of older settlements. Despite being an open landscape, the visual horizon is often dominated by modern architectural or infrastructural features.”

- 4.9. The Ash Character Assessment describes the positive attributes of the West Lothian plateau as being:
- Matrix of productive agricultural grassland and scattered woodland, shelterbelt, and hedgerow features;
 - Localised areas of valuable semi-natural habitats. (Ibid. p.65)

Meanwhile the negative attributes include:

- Open, gently undulating, visually sensitive terrain;
 - Major transport and communications corridor with continuing pressures for expansion;
 - Significant urban/rural fringe conflicts;
 - Need for renewal and re-integration of land used by previous industry. (Ibid.)
- 4.10. A key strategic aim is stated: “In accordance with the Central Scotland Forestry Strategy, fundamental restructuring is required through a range of measures to increase woodland cover and create a new landscape framework of sufficient scale to accommodate continuing development pressure.” (Ibid.) Guidance follows suggesting that “Work towards the creation of a new large-scale woodland framework through strengthening existing features including: river and stream valleys (in particular, the Almond valley corridor), relict shelterbelts, derelict sites, and the tree belts associated with more recent developments.” (ibid. p.65)

Landscape Character Field Assessment

- 4.11. The site is partially bordered to the south and west by the residential developments of Dechmont, Craiglaw and Badger Wood respectively. The residential edge of Craiglaw is set back some distance from the site, with open green space between the project site and the village as plate 1 shows. The properties of Badger Wood along the western boundary back on to the site, with the garden fences providing a clear boundary.



Plate 1: Undeveloped land, South of development site



Plate 2: Boundary hedge along Main Street

- 4.12. The north and east field boundaries have a continuous Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) hedge running parallel with the adjacent roads of Main Street and the A899, the latter also with occasional Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) riven through it. Along the northern boundary, the hedge seen in plate 2 is well maintained allowing views into site and open views to the north including Binny Craig.

- 4.13. The boundary to the east along the A899 in addition has roadside tree planting including *Sorbus sp.*, Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) planted at 2-3m centres.
- 4.14. To the south and south-west of the site, mixed species young woodland acts as a visual buffer to the busy junctions including the M8 slip road. Self-seeded species including Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), multi-stem Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Hawthorn and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*). Ten mature beech trees sit on the boundary line of the site in the south-west corner, lining the man-made earthworks formed by the old Bangour railway and are shown in Plate 3. The majority are approximately 80-100years old, with two around 150 years old. The latter were most probably part of Haggis wood, with the younger ones planted alongside the Bangour Railway servicing the hospital village, which opened to serve the hospital in 1905. The station and line were closed by the North British Railway in 1921. The line carried all the supplies for the hospital, but quickly became redundant when road access improved throughout the area. See the Ordnance Survey 1915 edition in plate 4 for details.



Plate 3: Mature Beech, development site South-East corner



Plate 4: Ordnance Survey 1915 Edition

- 4.15. The site falls away from Main Street down to a shallow ditch running from west to east, the water from which flows into a large pond some 800m². The terrain then rises again to dry ground towards the south of the site which is now occupied by grasses, scrub and remnants of the shelter belt formerly known as Haggis Wood. The higher sections of ground support animal grazing with common field grasses, where the lower points of the site range from occasional wet sections to permanent bog with associated flora. The presence of Soft

rush (*Juncus sp.*) defines the poorly drained areas of site and the ditch margins. The pond margins are characterised by Soft rush, Bull rush (*Typha latifolia*), Hawthorn, Elder, Gorse, Rosebay willowherb (*Epilobium angustifolium*) and Downy birch (*Betula pubescens*). The 1915 Ordnance Survey shows the pond being used for recreation as a curling pond. See Plate 4.

- 4.16. Along the northern site boundary, adjoining the road, a derelict bungalow is situated, surrounded by a small garden and several ruined or partially-ruinous outbuildings. See Plate 5. Typical garden species have been planted in the garden, with 2nr. large Lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) at the rear of the property. With the lack of maintenance, the garden is reverting to type and is of low horticultural value. There is evidence of contamination on site, with smashed asbestos roofing now lying at ground level.



Plate 5: Derelict bungalow on Main Street

- 4.17. Further along Main Street another slightly larger bungalow of similar style is inhabited and in better overall condition. The property also has an outbuilding which appears to be in need of maintenance but remains structurally sound.
- 4.18. A network of footpaths and cycleways connects much of the local area. See West Lothian Core Paths Map in Figure 3 for details. As part of the field survey, the routes in close proximity to Dechmont were surveyed to assess the potential for any landscape or visual impact from the proposed development. A small section of the WL10 Bathgate to Newbridge Cycle Path runs below the site along the A89 and is well screened by Dechmont village and the existing woodland scrub on site. A footpath connecting Uphall with East Broadlaw was also surveyed as it was presumed that the rising hillside would offer views across towards the Dechmont site. However, these views were not available as the Horse Riding Centre, field boundary and road-side planting provide an effective screen. It is considered that there will no landscape or visual impact from development upon the local public rights of way with the exception of the footpath surrounding Binny Craig. See Viewpoint 9 and paragraphs 6.33 - 6.35 for further details.
- 4.19. In summary, the site is comprised of some reasonable grazing land, but a significant portion to the south will suit non-residential uses such as amenity, habitat improvement and woodland. Views to the east, south and west are characterised by well-established hedge and avenue tree planting, wetland scrub and residential development. To the north, good quality views exist up the hillside over agricultural grazing, occasional farms and over towards the prominent local landmark of Binny Craig (200m AOD). The man-made geometry presented by the local road network, coupled with the residential accommodation to the

south-west and west, afford the site a semi-rural character. The agricultural landscape is prominent to the north, but is offset by the omni-present flow of traffic around the site and the adjacent housing.

Village Character

- 4.20. The village is predominantly comprised of residential accommodation which used to serve the mining community. 19th century Ordnance surveys show small rows of terraced cottages along the north-side of Main Street. Of those which remain, they are of masonry construction, single-storey, with pitched roof and chimneys. The Dechmont Post Office and General Store is a two-storey building, with a good quality, dressed masonry frontage. Collectively, these Victorian and Edwardian buildings add significantly to the cultural heritage of the village.
- 4.21. The development of Dechmont from a small hamlet into a village took place post-World War II along with the addition of the A89 located due south of the village. Aerial photography from the 1950s shows the village spreading mainly along the south side of Main Street. A series of cul-de-sacs characterise Dechmont's post-war accommodation with a mixture of detached and terraced properties. Most of these buildings are of brick and render construction.
- 4.22. The area of the former Bangour Hospital site is accessed from the A89, a short distance west of the village. It is a designated conservation area with several listed buildings. The site is heavily screened from the village by woodland which surrounds the entire estate.

Physical Connectivity

- 4.23. The site is located in close proximity to public transport connections in the form of both bus and rail. A regular bus service runs on the adjacent Dechmont Main Street, linking the village with the adjoining conurbations of Livingston, Uphall and Broxburn and in the wider area with Edinburgh, Bathgate and Linlithgow.
- 4.24. There is a regular Edinburgh-Glasgow rail service accessed at Uphall Station via the A899 and road connection under the M8 - this is around 1800m away and within an easy cycle ride. There is potential for a future commuter shuttle bus services to be developed to cater for wider developments in the area.
- 4.25. Strategic road connections are in close proximity including Junction 3 of the M8 immediately to the south; the A89 between Bathgate and Newbridge to the south and the A899 between Broxburn and Livingston to the east. All of these routes offer not only car access but also scope for improved and express bus services over time.
- 4.26. Local services include Dechmont Main Street itself within a 5 minute walk, Uphall within a 5 minute cycle, Broxburn within a 10 minute cycle and Livingston town centre within a 15 minute cycle. There is an Infant school on Main Street, but other local primary and secondary schooling is located within Uphall, Broxburn and Livingston. Additionally, leisure facilities can be found within a 10 minute walk at Deer Park and Houston House Hotel.
- 4.27. Employment centres within a short cycle include Deer Park and adjoining business park, Houston Industrial Estate and Livingston town centre itself. The Local Plan allocated business/industry (Class 4, 5 & 6) sites between the A89 and M8. There is also provision for a park-and-ride facility within 500m of the proposed site. (Dobbies Garden Centre has recently been constructed on part of the site).

Visual Connectivity

- 4.28. There is a high level of connectivity to the north, connecting the site within the West Lothian plateau with the rising farmland borders. Multiple farms sitting on the rising plain are highly visible within the local landscape directly north and towards the east of the site.
- 4.29. Visual connectivity to the south and west is limited to the immediate backdrop of Craiglawn and Badger Wood developments. The ground rises behind to the south-west towards Dechmont Law and is covered with predominantly coniferous woodland, which totally screens views of the M8 Motorway.

Local Landscape Designations

Refer to Figure 4: Landscape Designations

Gardens and Designed Landscapes

- 4.30. There are no designed landscapes within 2km of the proposed development, therefore it is considered that the development will not affect any of those further afield including Hatton House, Dalmahoy, Millburn Tower, Newliston, Dundas Castle, Hopetoun House and House of the Binns.

Scheduled Monuments

- 4.31. There are 15 monuments which lie within a 5km radius of the proposed development. These are considered below.

1. *Carledubs unenclosed settlement*

The monument comprises the remains of an unenclosed prehistoric settlement visible as cropmarks captured on oblique aerial photographs. The settlement is likely to date to the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age. The cropmarks indicate the presence of three roundhouse structures, a possible sunken-floored building, a round barrow and a number of pits. The settlement is on locally high ground at 125m above sea-level and commands extensive views in all directions, but particularly along the Forth Valley and across the Lothians. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

2. *Faucheldean Shale Bing Winchburgh*

Consisting of a well-preserved, flat-topped shale bing. The waste heap composing of residue from the destructive distillation of shale to extract oil is irregular in shape, and measures about 820m by 210m. The monument is of national importance as one of the very few intact spent-shale Bings left in central Scotland. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

3. *Greendykes Shale Bing Broxburn*

The monument consists of a large oil shale bing. The scheduled area is irregular in shape, measuring about 920m by 580m. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

4. *Niddry Farm Enclosure*

The enclosure comprises the remains of an enclosed settlement of prehistoric date represented by cropmarks visible on oblique aerial photographs. The monument lies in arable farmland at around 95m AOD and comprises a sub-circular enclosure some 90m in diameter, defined by a 6m ditch. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

5. *Union Canal – River Almond to River Avon*

The section of the Union canal comprises a stretch of inland waterway, 13 miles long. This section runs from the west end of the Lin's Mill Aqueduct over the River Almond to the east end of the aqueduct over the River Avon. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

6. *Almondell Footbridge and Aqueduct*

The aqueduct comprises a cast-iron trough aqueduct of 25m clear span. It is 1.8m wide and has a height of 3.55m at the centre. The trough has a cast-iron walkway and was built c.1821 to feed water from a weir upstream. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

7. *Gala Braes Standing Stone*

The monument comprises of a standing stone of Later Neolithic or Bronze Age date. The stone occupies a conspicuous position on the summit of a ridge at around 265m AOD. The existence of this second stone lies some 70m to the west but this appears to have been moved from its original position. The standing stone represents the remains of a prehistoric ritual site. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

8. *Raven Craig Cairn*

The monument comprises a burial cairn of Bronze Age date surviving as a grassed-over stony mound. Occupying the summit of Raven Craig, a rocky hillock at around 290m AOD, it comprises a substantial cairn some 9m in diameter by around 1.5m high. The cairn is defined by a series of large boulders, of which six remain in situ, while others appear slightly displaced. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

9. *Windywa's Silvermine*

Comprising the remains of a silver mine, first worked in the early-17th century with later workings towards the end of the 19th century. Silver was first discovered at Hilderston in 1606. Sir Thomas Hamilton of Binny and Monkland, the King's Advocate, took a lease from James VI in 1607 to work the mine, but it was taken over by the King in 1608, the mine being described then as 'apparently inexhaustible'. Later workings proved to be unprofitable however and the mine was abandoned in 1898.

The monument is of national importance as a rare example of an early 17th-century silver mine which has strong links to the Scottish Royal Family and has the potential to greatly enhance our understanding of early mining of precious metals in Scotland. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

10. *Cairnpapple Hill – Prehistoric Ceremonial Complex*

The monument comprises a ceremonial complex of prehistoric date on the summit of Cairnpapple Hill. Occupying the summit of Cairnpapple Hill, lying in improved pasture at around 310m AOD it comprises a henge, or ritual enclosure, of Neolithic date, within which limited excavations have uncovered a sequence of burials ranging in date from the Neolithic period to the Iron Age. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

11. *Craigmailing Cross Slab*

Forming part of a medieval boundary round the priory the stone of refuge is now set in a stone dyke. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

12. *South Mains Homestead*

The remains of a homestead moat of medieval date surviving as a raised area in an arable field and visible on oblique aerial photographs. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

13. *Cockleroy Fort*

The fort or 'walled' enclosure consists of a heavy, ruinous stone wall and presence of four ring ditches. Evidence of defensive banks is still visible. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

14. *Broomy Knowes Cairn*

The monument comprises the remains of a burial cairn of Later Neolithic or Bronze Age date, surviving as a grassed-over, stony mound. It survives as a grassy mound some 11.5m in diameter with several large stones clearly visible on the surface. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

15. *Peace Knowe Fort*

The monument is the site of a former hill-fort, comprising triple ramparts on the south and west and double ramparts on the east. The entrance lies on the west and the inner mound and surrounding bank are more recent features. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

Listed Buildings

4.32. There are a number of listed buildings within the 3km boundary shown on Figure 3. These are assessed in further detail below:

1. *Thomson of Binny, Mausoleum Binny Policies*

Category C listed building dating to 1843. Small Gothic revival in style and built into a hollow in rock with ashlar frontage and vaulted interior. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

2. *Binny House and Doocot*

This early 19th century building is Category B listed. The two-storey Georgian building has a Greek Doric style porch flanked by projecting bays. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

3. *Middle East Lodge, Binny Policies*

Category B listed building of early 19th century. The single-storey Georgian property has a piend slated roof and Tuscan style porch. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

4. *Smiddy Cottage*

The 18th century cottage is traditional in style and is a Category C listed building. It is a single-storey cottage of random rubble, with skew gabling and a pantiled roof. It is not considered a landscape receptor.

5. *Ecclesmachan Kirk (St Machan's)*

Originally Medieval but much altered in 1710, 1822, 1908 the kirk is Category B listed. Oblong in shape with coursed rubble, skew-gables, slated roof and round-headed windows. It remains in ecclesiastical use. It is not considered a landscape receptor.

6. *No. 47 Ecclesmachan Road Upper Hall*

The single storey rubble building is a Category C building of 19th century origin. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

7. *Uphall Old Manse*

Category C listed Uphall Old Manse dates to 1695. The two-storey building is altered by significant later additions front and rear. Originally called Uphall House it was built for Katherine, Dowager Lady Cardross, replacing the Old Manse demolished in the late 18th-century. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

8. *Uphall Kirk*

The Category B listed building of late 12th century has seen significant alterations. It originally consisted of only an aisle-less nave and chancel. The chancel was extended in the 15th-century and belfry added in 1878. The lower part appropriated as burial place of the Earls of Buchan. It remains in ecclesiastical use. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

9. *Nos. 25,27 & 29 Ecclesmachan Road, Upper Hall*

Category C listed buildings include two rubble single-storey cottages. No 25: 19th century. Numbers 27 and 29 are 18th century. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

10. *Nos. 28 & 30 Ecclesmachan Road, Uphall*

It is a Category C listed single-storey building of 19th-century origin on Crossgreen Farm. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

11. *Crossgreen Farm, 26 Ecclesmachan Road Uphall*

The 19th century two-storey farmhouse is Category C Listed. The building is empty and neglected. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

12. *Oatridge Hotel East Main Street*

It is a category B listed, 18th-century Georgian building. It is a two-storey building, comprising a garret with three-bay frontage and slated roof, a projecting central bay and pedimented with a wide elliptical-arched entrance. It is named after Oatbridge Farm (Ecclesmachan). This is not considered a landscape receptor.

13. *Middleton Hall*

The hall is a Category C listed property built around 1700 but largely reconstructed by J. MacIntyre Henry around 1900. It was built for Rev. George Barclay who lived there after retirement from ministry of Parish 1710, until his death in 1714. It passed to David Erskine, 11th Earl of Buchan. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

14. *No. 41 West Main Street, Uphall*

The four-bay single-storey building is Category C listed. Built in 1886, the half-timbered and boarded house is said to be a former exhibition pavilion, possibly from the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1886. First owned by Thomas Johnston, the building, known as Castlehill was first used as a mission hall and was later converted to a private dwelling, remaining in the Johnston family for a number of generations. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

15. to 18. *Houstoun House*

The Category A listed building and assemblage including Coach House & Stables, Doocot and Sundial was originally built in 1600 as an L-plan mansion. The four-storey building was constructed for Sir John Shairp, advocate, who had acquired the lands of Houston 1569.

The Coach House & Stables known as The Dower House are Category B listed. The Houstoun Doocot and Sundial are both Category C listed. The building assemblage is now a Hotel and spa, with extensive woodland surrounding the 22-acre site. It is not considered a landscape receptor.

16. *Craigbinning House*

This Victorian Category C listed property sits above Dechmont. However its grounds are framed with woodland and therefore it is not considered a landscape receptor.

20. – 34. *Bangour Village Hospital: several buildings including dormitories, memorial church, recreation hall, administration block and power station*

The Bangour Village Hospital was built between 1898 and 1906, originally serving as a psychiatric hospital. The Renaissance style detached hospital villa situated on a raised site within the large rural hospital complex is the best surviving example in Scotland of a psychiatric hospital created in the village system of patient care.

The buildings sit within their original park setting and remain largely externally unaltered although many are in a state of disrepair. Built by the well-known Edinburgh architect Hippolyte J. Blanc as a result of a competition begun in 1898 it was the first of the new thinking in psychiatric provision to be conceived in Scotland.

The Edinburgh Lunacy Board had concluded that a new psychiatric hospital was required to cater for the increasing numbers of patients from Edinburgh and the hospital was opened in 1906. It was designed with no external walls or gates.

The hospital was commissioned by the War Office in WWI for wounded soldiers and extra temporary structures were erected, most of which were dismantled after the War although some timber ones were retained by the hospital.

Due to the parkland setting and obvious design intentions to screen the former psychiatric hospital from its neighbours, the complex is not considered a landscape receptor.

35. *Knightsridge House*

This Category B listed property dates from 1851 and was built for Alexander Gray of Heiff, replacing the former mansion which stands 100 yards to the north east. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

36, 37 & 38. *Moss Houses*

These Category B listed 18th-century cottages are traditional in style. The single-storey buildings are built from random rubble and gabled with pantiled roofs. They are not considered landscape receptors.

39. *Newyearfield Farmhouse and Steading*

These 18th-century Category B listed buildings are grouped around a yard. The house is L-shape in plan with two-storeys, of random rubble construction, partly harled and gabled. The Steading is single-storey with an additional loft built from rubble and partly lime-washed. This is not considered a landscape receptor.

5. Development Proposals

See Figure 5 for Indicative Framework Plan and Figure 6 for Indicative Layout Plan

- 5.1. The gross site area is approximately 6.2 hectares (15.36 acres) with the proposed development area being approximately 4.4 hectares (10.29 acres). The proposal is to construct 120 dwellings.
- 5.2. The linear street layout is broken up by 2 central open green spaces. A further significant open amenity area on the southern portion of the site will provide suitable play/activity space and a sustainable drainage scheme. This landscape framework is augmented by additional planting to the wooded area on the south-eastern corner of the site to provide further screening from the M8 corridor. It will also serve to prevent a sense of coalescence, promoting the development as an extension to Dechmont village rather than Livingston.
- 5.3. The internal street layout is intended to create a traditional form of built frontage and plots of varying sizes to allow for a range of house types (mainly in the form of terraces and cottage apartments rather than detached units) and ensure permeability between areas and access to services, open space and transport.

6. Assessment of Effects

Landscape Effects

Landscape Character & Setting

- 6.1. As a greenfield site, the development proposals will of course present considerable change to the Dechmont environs. The character of the area surrounding the site is described as semi-rural in the Baseline assessment (see p. 9). The area is currently in a degraded state, with the derelict bungalow, overgrown garden, dilapidated outbuildings, rusting cars and machinery, poorly maintained fencing and badly drained, marshy grazing land. The adjacent busy transport corridors of the M8, A89 and A899 also detract from a sense of tranquillity and there is no sense of wildness, with development and traffic visible all around. However, the fields do currently provide the village with an arrival point, marking the transition to the urban environment. The established field boundaries currently form a green buffer between Dechmont village and the surrounding towns and villages.
- 6.2. The site currently benefits from some useful mature wildlife habitat and informal recreational amenity in the south-east corner. The old curling pond, marshy wetland, ditch and associated free-flowing stream provide useful wildlife habitat and introduces water to the landscape, which has been part of the site's character and history since the early-1900s. The historic quality of this recreation space is worth retaining while considering the development potential for the broader area.
- 6.3. The field boundaries are generally in good condition, with hedging well-maintained and avenue trees in good condition. These will continue to provide a visual buffer to Dechmont and help retain the semi-rural character of the area. These can be strengthened at key points such as Craiglawn, Badger Wood and around the north-east corner of the site adjacent the mini-roundabout.
- 6.4. Due to its location, the site currently has low scenic value but the views out from the site, northwards towards Binny Craig are worth retaining to anchor development and create a sense of place. In terms of the proposed development's impact on the landscape resource, it is considered to be low beneficial. It is anticipated that the removal of unsightly elements and improvement to the built environment will provide welcome interventions in an already much-altered landscape.

Village Character

- 6.5. Historical mapping demonstrates how the original hamlet of Dechmont has grown appreciably since World War II. The historic expansion of Dechmont has branched from the central spine of Main Street, forming a principally ribbon development. It is considered that these proposals are in-keeping with this pattern.
- 6.6. The land currently doesn't directly serve the local community as it did historically with the creation of the curling pond, except for the small pocket of undesignated recreation space in the south east corner. It is considered that the proposed new housing, and associated open green space improvements, have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the overall function and character of the area.
- 6.7. There is little homogeneity to the current housing stock and the character is similarly disparate. It is considered that the introduction of new modern elements would not detract from the overall townscape and would simply provide the next architectural layer in an

evolving urban environment. As long as a sensitive approach is adopted, there is scope to improve the character of the village, through strengthened soft landscape interventions and an improved sense of arrival on entering the village. Therefore, in terms of impact on the townscape resource, it is considered that it will be moderate beneficial.

Effects on Landscape Designations

- 6.8. There are no anticipated landscape effects on any Scheduled Monuments or Gardens and Designed Landscapes in the vicinity of the development.
- 6.9. The listed buildings of Bangour Village Hospital form part of an existing HOU1 residential allocation within the West Lothian Local Plan. See figure 7 for details. Additionally, the site is effectively self-contained on account of the seclusion afforded by its heavily-wooded boundary. So even at such short distance from the village, this building assemblage is not considered to be affected by these residential proposals.
- 6.10. Any other listings within the 2km radius are considered to be either a sufficient distance, or totally hidden, from view by other development, local topography or woodland. It is therefore considered that proposal will not have any effect on the landscape resource.

Landscape Effects Table

	Landscape receptor	Sensitivity to change	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect
Landscape Character	Site & environs	Low	Slight	Low beneficial
Townscape Character	Dechmont Village	Low	Medium	Moderate beneficial

Visual Effects

Receptors types

- *Road users along Main Street, the A899, Craiglaw and Burnhouse Road*

These are described as car or lorry drivers, bikers and cyclists. The speed limits in place are between 30 and 40mph for all of these roads. Slow-moving traffic down Main Street and along the A899 to the east of site will glimpse the site as they travel past. Many of those travelling down Main Street will be local residents however and will have more time and inclination to take stock of the changed views around the area. These principal routes experience frequent traffic, particularly at peak times. However, traffic along Craiglaw and Burnhouse Road are more infrequent, but again chiefly comprising local residents who will have a partial view of the site.

- *Local residents of Badger Wood, Craiglaw, Law Farm and East Bangour*

This group represents all the residential receptors living in property with a view into the development site. These include residents of Badger Wood to the west, Craiglaw to the south-west and two farmhouses to the north and north-east.

- *Pedestrians, Main Street, Core path Along A89*

The group is described as pedestrian users on the surrounding footpaths, including Main Street, the A899 (without a designated footpath), Craiglaw and the Core path (no number) running along the A89.

- *Recreational users, Binny Craig*

This receptor type is confined to walkers using the public footpath network that leads to the top of Binny Craig (220m AOD). The recreational route affords panoramic views including much of West Lothian.

Viewpoints

See Figures 8-17 for reference

Viewpoint 1 - Junction of Main Street and A899, north-eastern corner of site (image taken from central island)

- 6.11. The majority of receptors along this route will be road users with occasional pedestrian traffic. The viewpoint depicts what road users will see as they approach the junction of Main Street and the A899, when they will be travelling at relatively low speeds.
- 6.12. The development will be visible through the site boundary due to the permeability of the screen created by the hedging and avenue of trees, particularly in winter as the viewpoint photo shows. The view can be considered as partial as half the site benefits from this good quality screen.
- 6.13. The viewpoint shows the north-eastern corner of the site, which is currently fenced but does not have any hedge along this corner section. The open grazing dominates the middle ground, with the residential development of Craiglaw in the background.
- 6.14. As the majority of receptors will be vehicle drivers, their susceptibility to change is gauged as low. There will be an appreciable change to the view across the field however, so the magnitude of change would be medium. The proposed development will bring the housing closer to the road, and reduce the views to the lower forested sections of Deer Hill (193m AOD) to the south. However, with housing already in view to the south and to the west from this viewpoint, the overall visual impact is judged to be minor adverse.
- 6.15. Although the impact is not considered to be significantly adverse, some soft landscape intervention would mitigate some of the perceived loss of visual amenity. These could include the continuation of hedging and avenue tree planting around the corner and along Main Street. This would draw the receptor's eye down Main Street instead of across the proposed housing area.

Viewpoint 2 - A899 Southbound carriageway to east of site

- 6.16. This view will be experienced by the same receptors as Viewpoint 1, predominantly road users. There is an informal footpath down the east roadside verge suggesting some pedestrian receptors also. Road users at this point are likely to be travelling at speeds up to around 40mph, so the view will become glimpsed, as their attention is focused on slowing

down for the roundabouts at each end of this section of the A899. The impact of development is anticipated to be similar to that of Viewpoint 1 due to the length of the viewing window whilst travelling along the A899. Again the view will change according to the level of screening provided by the Maple trees which form the avenue.

- 6.17. Due to the vehicle user's inherent transient nature, and their partial view of the site, it is anticipated that the receptor's sensitivity to change is low. New development will bring the built environment closer to the receptor, but the existing housing at Craiglaw and Badger Wood already strongly influences the overall visual amenity. The magnitude of change is anticipated to be medium and the overall significance of effect is considered to be moderate adverse.

Viewpoint 3 - Craiglaw in front of residential property

- 6.18. This image shows the view taken across the proposed site from the Craiglaw housing area. There will be vehicular receptors also but the principal receptors here are the local Craighall residents. By nature of their proximity to the proposed development and their permanence of view, they have a high susceptibility to change. The image was taken from 1.8m above ground level and the view from 1st floor windows will look down across the site increasing the perceived magnitude of change from the development.
- 6.19. The view looks across the proposed development site to the rising farmland beyond. The Badger Wood housing area is in view, and the A899 trunk road carries a high level of traffic throughout the day. There is some unmanaged wasteland in the foreground and the deserted bungalow and associated outbuildings detract from the area's scenic value.
- 6.20. The housing proposed would interrupt the existing residents' views across the shallow valley towards the farmland to the north. The magnitude of change is therefore considered to be high. It is anticipated that the development will also remove some of the unsightly elements within the visual resource, such as the bungalow, as well as reduce the continuing visual impact and noise associated with the traffic along Main Street and the A899. There will be a loss in the rural setting of the village from this viewpoint, but overall the significance of effect is anticipated to be moderate adverse. Partial screening of the development along the south-west boundary would help incorporate the new housing with its surroundings and compensate for the loss of visual amenity.

Viewpoint 4 - Badger Wood looking east through gap in housing

- 6.21. The receptors along Badger Wood are predominantly residential and mostly have gardens that back directly onto the site. The views that residents currently have across the site will be excluded by the proposed housing resulting in a loss of the rural setting. This viewpoint is not particularly representative of the general condition however as this view depicts the only gap in the existing housing layout. The remainder of the cul-de-sac is closed off with only views from the first storey accommodation offering broader views to the east. The number of residents therefore experiencing this selected view is confined to those on the opposite side of the street. There are six houses which are located to the west of the proposed development site whose visual amenity will be impacted: four on Badger Wood and two at the east end of Main Street.
- 6.22. It is considered that the local residents' sensitivity to change is high and that the magnitude of change will be high also. Like Viewpoint 3, the foreground is dominated by unimproved scrub with views towards the derelict bungalow and ruinous outbuildings. However, the views out over open farmland towards the tree-strewn grounds of Houstoun House will also be

largely interrupted. It is considered therefore that the visual impact of the development will be moderate adverse for the local residents along the village's eastern edge. Mitigation is recommended to compensate for the perceived diminution of the visual resource, but which does not create visual separation which would truncate the proposed development from the rest of the village.

Viewpoint 5 - Travelling East on Main Street

- 6.23. Although there is a pavement along the southern side of Main Street, the majority of receptors on this section of road are motorists and cyclists. The receptor's view at this point will be glimpsed as they leave the village heading east and their susceptibility to change is considered to be low. A well-maintained hawthorn hedge dominates the foreground, with the Craiglawn housing and more distant views towards the Pentlands visible to the south-east. The M8 slipway and the A89 trunk road are both well-screened from this viewpoint.
- 6.24. The magnitude of change is anticipated to be medium on account of the existing urban edge condition. The view towards the Pentlands will largely be lost to the motorist, but the visual amenity will benefit from the removal of the bungalow and the dilapidated outbuildings. The overall effect of the development on the visual resource is therefore anticipated to be minor adverse.

Viewpoint 6 - Travelling south on Burnhouse Road

- 6.25. This view will be experienced by the road user predominantly as there is no pavement on either side of the road or a public right of way in the vicinity. The montage in Viewpoint 6 shows the expansive view as the receptor travels down the hill towards Dechmont. Much of the Pentland Hills Regional Park is visible due to the viewpoint's elevated location. Dechmont is visible in the foreground, with the wider built environment of East Livingston and the corrugated roofs of Houstoun industrial estate in the middle-ground. The industrial estate in particular juts-out from woodland and draws the eye to the area behind the proposed development.
- 6.26. The rooftops of the new Dechmont residential expansion will be visible from this point. It is considered that they will not seem out of place, fitting in with the broader building assemblage. Therefore the magnitude of change is considered to be low.
- 6.27. The receptors will glimpse this view as they travel down the winding, narrow road with blind corners and hidden entrances. Their susceptibility to change is therefore considered to be low. The views beyond would remain fully intact, with little or no loss of visual amenity. It is considered that the overall significance of effect on the visual resource will be minor adverse.

Viewpoint 7 - East Bangour Farmhouse

- 6.28. The receptors from this viewpoint will be the residents of the farmhouse and farm workers only as there are no adjacent public rights of way. The location offers an expansive view across to the south-east over the West Lothian plateau towards the Pentland Hills. The foreground depicts the relatively flat farmland extending down to Main Street and the A899 running east-west. Riding and livery stables sit in front of the large roof structures of the Houstoun industrial estate which again dominates much of the visual field in this direction.
- 6.29. On the other side of the montage, Dechmont Law frames the right hand side of the viewpoint. Predominantly evergreen woodland is located along the rising topography of the Law. The

village of Dechmont meanwhile sits comfortable beneath this wooded hillside. The proposed development is therefore considered to fit seamlessly into the existing pattern of the built environment. As a consequence, it is anticipated that the magnitude of change will be low.

- 6.30. As a residential receptor, their susceptibility to change is high, but it is considered that the relatively small scale of the development, and its location along the valley bottom, there will only be a slight diminution of the visual resource as the expansive views and much of the surrounding landmarks will remain fully intact. It is therefore anticipated that the overall visual impact will be minor adverse.

Viewpoint 8 - Law Farm, in front of two cottages to south

- 6.31. The view affords the receptor an expansive view across the Pentland Hills Regional Park. The view comprises farmland, Houston industrial estate and the residential areas of Dechmont and Livingston. The proposed development area will erode the rural setting of Dechmont with its land-take but it is considered that it will also appear as a logical extension to the existing settlement pattern of the village.
- 6.32. The receptors of this viewpoint will be the residents of the two cottages and farm workers. Development in this area will serve to bring the built environment into the central field of view in the foreground. However, the expanse of landscape in the distance – particularly across horizon presented by the Pentlands - will be unaffected. It is considered the receptors sensitivity to change is high, but that the magnitude of change is low. The overall visual effect of the development is therefore considered as minor adverse.

Viewpoint 9 – From the Summit of Binny Craig 220m AOD

- 6.33. This viewpoint offers expansive views over the West Lothian plateau. The view is dominated by the agricultural land in the foreground and the darkened horizon created by the Pentland Hills in the background. While Houston Industrial Estate looms large once more, overall the built environment of Livingston and its surroundings recede. The village of Uphall is also visible on the left hand side of the panorama. Dechmont can just be made out nestled into the valley bottom.
- 6.34. The receptors of this viewpoint will be exclusively recreational users of the footpaths leading to the top of Binny Craig. At 220m AOD, this volcanic outcrop is the highest point in the area and offers 360° panoramic views.
- 6.35. As a recreational user, the view can be absorbed over a longer timeframe and it is therefore a full and direct view over the site. However, at a distance of 2.5km from the proposed development, it is considered that the receptor's sensitivity to change will be low. Due to the proposed site area's location at the bottom of the valley, the magnitude of change is considered to be low also. Consequently, it is anticipated that the overall significance of effect on the visual resource will be negligible.

Visual Effects Table

Item	Receptor type	Receptor Location	Sensitivity to change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
VP1	Motorist/Cyclist/Pedestrian	Junction Main Street/A899	Low	Medium	Minor adverse
VP2	Motorist/Cyclist/Pedestrian	A899	Low	Medium	Moderate adverse
VP3	Resident/Pedestrian	Craiglaw	High	High	Moderate adverse
VP4	Resident/Pedestrian	Badger wood	High	High	Moderate adverse
VP5	Motorist/Cyclist/Pedestrian	Main Street	Low	Medium	Low adverse
VP6	Motorist/Cyclist/Pedestrian	Burnhouse Road	Low	Low	Minor adverse
VP7	Resident/Worker	East Bangour Farm	Medium	Low	Minor adverse
VP8	Resident/Worker	Law Farm	Low	Low	Minor adverse
VP9	Recreational user	Binny Craig	Low	Low	Negligible

7. Mitigation & Enhancement

Recommended Mitigation Measures

- 7.1. Where the overall landscape or visual impact is anticipated to be substantial or moderate, this report is recommending that a form of mitigation is undertaken and incorporated into the scheme design. It is anticipated that many of the following measures can be absorbed into the overall layout without creating a negative impact on housing allocation. The intelligent and sensitive integration of landform, greenspace design and structure planting can serve to ameliorate landscape or visual impacts whilst creating an attractive, practical and appropriate setting for the proposed residential dwellings.
- 7.2. There are several factors to consider during the landscape design process, which are often in competition with each other. Therefore, the following mitigation measures are intended to offer broad principles for consideration during the overall scheme design.

View 1 – Junction of Main Street & A899

- 7.3. The visual impact from this receptor location is minor adverse and we would not recommend that landscape interventions are necessary to offset the perceived impact in this location. However, the following measures could be incorporated within the landscape scheme design which would ensure that the housing development was well integrated with the existing townscape. These measures are also in accordance with the ASH guidance to strengthen existing landscape features mentioned in 4.9 - 4.10 above.
- 7.4. The north east corner of the development would benefit from infill hedge planting, marrying the disparate sections of hawthorn hedge on Main Street and the A899. Tree planting, using similar species to those already used along the A899, would also serve to create a strong sense of place and enhance the landscape character of Dechmont's eastern edge. It would also improve the arrival experience as one enters the village from the Uphall direction.

View 2 – from the A899 southbound carriageway

- 7.5. The visual impact assessment has identified that the proximity of housing to the road will detract from the visual amenity causing a moderate adverse impact. It is recommended that the housing is set back from the road as far as possible, with tree and shrub woodland planting used to break up the visual impact of the housing frontages when seen from this oblique angle. It is also recommended that all the spaces in the existing hedge are gapped-up to provide a continuous screen along this section of the A899.

View 3 – From Craiglawn Road and Residential Properties

- 7.6. With the interruption of the view north to the rising farmland and Binny Craig, and the corresponding loss of visual amenity, it is recommended that this is offset by creating a partial tree screen along the southern boundary. This will afford the Craiglawn housing area some privacy and help foster the semi-rural character of the area. A partial screen is recommended so as to encourage spatial linkages between existing and proposed developments and help engender a stronger community.

View 4 – From Badger Wood looking East

- 7.7. To offset the loss of the view east towards the wooded grounds of Houstoun House and the overall rural landscape, it is recommended that a partial tree screen is created. Additionally, housing is recommended to be offset from the western boundary, with the back gardens creating landscape separation between the proposed and existing developments. Care should be taken not to truncate the new housing from the rest of the village, as mentioned in the mitigation proposed for View 3.

8. Public Engagement

- 8.1. A first formal pre-application community consultation was undertaken on the 13th of February 2014 at Dechmont Memorial Hall between 4 and 8pm, in accordance with the Proposal of Application Notice submitted to West Lothian Council. The event had been advertised in the West Lothian Courier on the 6th of February coupled with the circulation of approximately 400 flyers posted through local residents' letterboxes on the same date.
- 8.2. The event outlined the background to the application, the planning context, the wider design, landscape considerations and an indicative design framework.
- 8.3. The event was attended by members of Clarendon Planning & Development and approximately 70 members of the public. Discussion focused on the principle of Green Belt release, access/transport issues and level of development.
- 8.4. Questionnaires were made available on the day for comments and the exhibition material was posted on the Clarendon website with online access to the questionnaire. Eight members of the public were sent copies of the questionnaires or presentation boards, with an additional 30 questionnaires sent to the local Post Office with a scaled copy of the presentation boards for people to view in the shop.
- 8.5. The majority of those who attended the consultation were in favour of the proposed development. Only 14 questionnaires were completed but some useful feedback was gained. The local residents comments regarding changes to the indicative layout included 'the extension of the footpath from the riding school all the way along the A899 to Dobbies Garden Centre' and providing a 'safe area for children'. Other significant considerations raised by local residents included: access, amenities, larger homes, education, road congestion and the impact on adjacent towns.
- 8.6. It was stressed that the proposals were at the early stage, and given the 'in principle' nature of the application, the detailed design is still subject to further consultation and development.
- 8.7. A second pre-application consultation was undertaken on 11th June at the same venue. This provided an opportunity for the local community to view an indicative layout plan (see figure 5) as well as updates on the application and supporting studies.
- 8.8. Again, this was attended by members of Clarendon and approximately 40 members of the public along with the local community council. The event allowed for more detailed discussion with regard to the potential design of the site including boundary treatment, open space, access and housing positioning and numbers.

9. Summary and Conclusions

- 9.1. The proposed development area sits on the edge of an existing settlement, which offers a good level of spatial and landscape connectivity suitable for creating an integrated, thriving village community. The site benefits from being located within a shallow, open valley, which is in terms of the visual envelope is well-contained by Dechmont Law and the rising farmland to the north.
- 9.2. No significant impacts – landscape or visual - have been identified which would undermine the development proposals or require a high level of mitigation or landscape compensation.
- 9.3. It is considered that the development proposals are in tune with existing semi-rural landscape character of the village and that the scale and layout of the development would be in keeping with the existing townscape. On a broader scale, it is anticipated that the development would also be in keeping with the overall pattern of development within the West Lothian plateau: it would offer sufficient spatial separation between it and other nearby conurbations, thereby preventing a sense of coalescence. It would also provide a sustainable location transport-wise for regular commuting to Livingston, Edinburgh and Glasgow, with its easy access to cycle paths, the M8 motorway, bus routes and Uphall train station.
- 9.4. Good quality views north towards the rising farmland and Binny Craig will be eroded, but with good quality master planning and detail design, these views can be identified, channelled and used to anchor the development area to its surroundings and create a strong sense of place. It is anticipated that the loss of visual amenity experienced by residential receptors can be compensated for with suitable landscape interventions which provide screening, landscape structure, improved recreation space and footpath connections.
- 9.5. Finally, there are aspects of site which will be improved such as the recreational amenity associated with the historic curling pond and the informal play space in the south east corner. Existing degraded elements, which currently detract significantly from the scenic quality of the area (such as the agricultural fencing, poorly drained ground, the derelict bungalow and associated ruinous outbuildings) will be removed and replaced by the proposed development. It is considered that these proposals, if carefully integrated into the existing fabric of the village, have the potential to improve the overall visual resource and enhance the landscape character of the village.

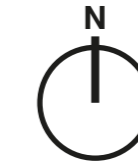
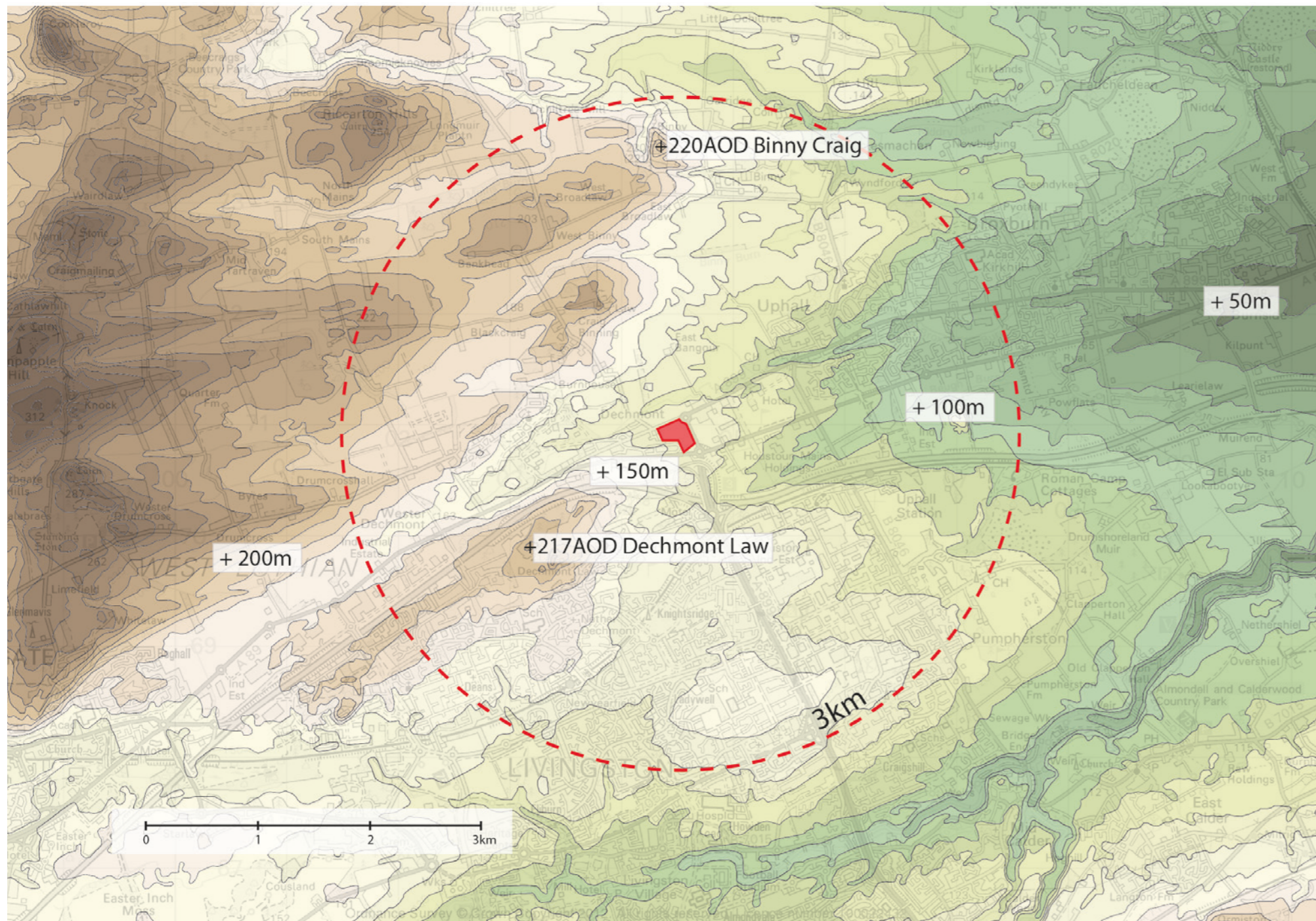
Application for Planning Permission
Supporting Information

Figures - Folder 1

Figures 1 - 3



Clarendon Planning and Development Ltd
Exchange Place 2, 5 Semple Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8BL



Not to Scale

Key:

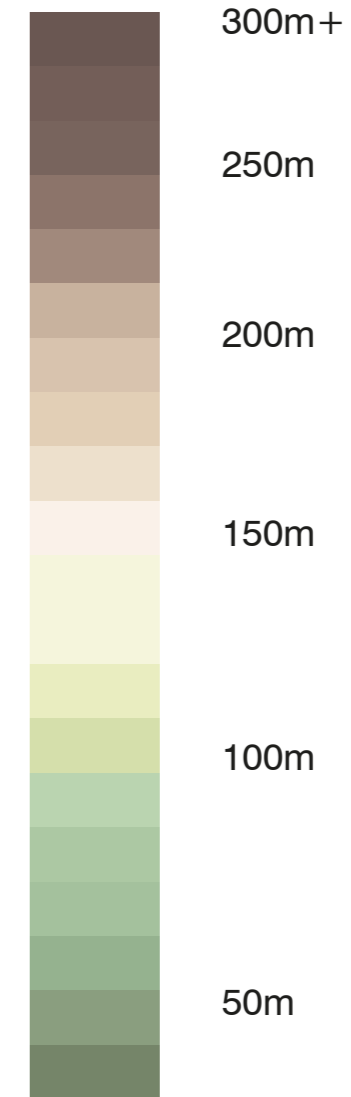
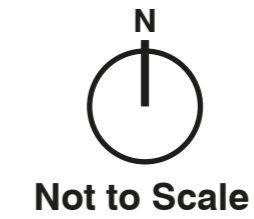


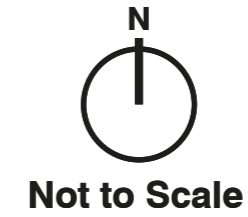
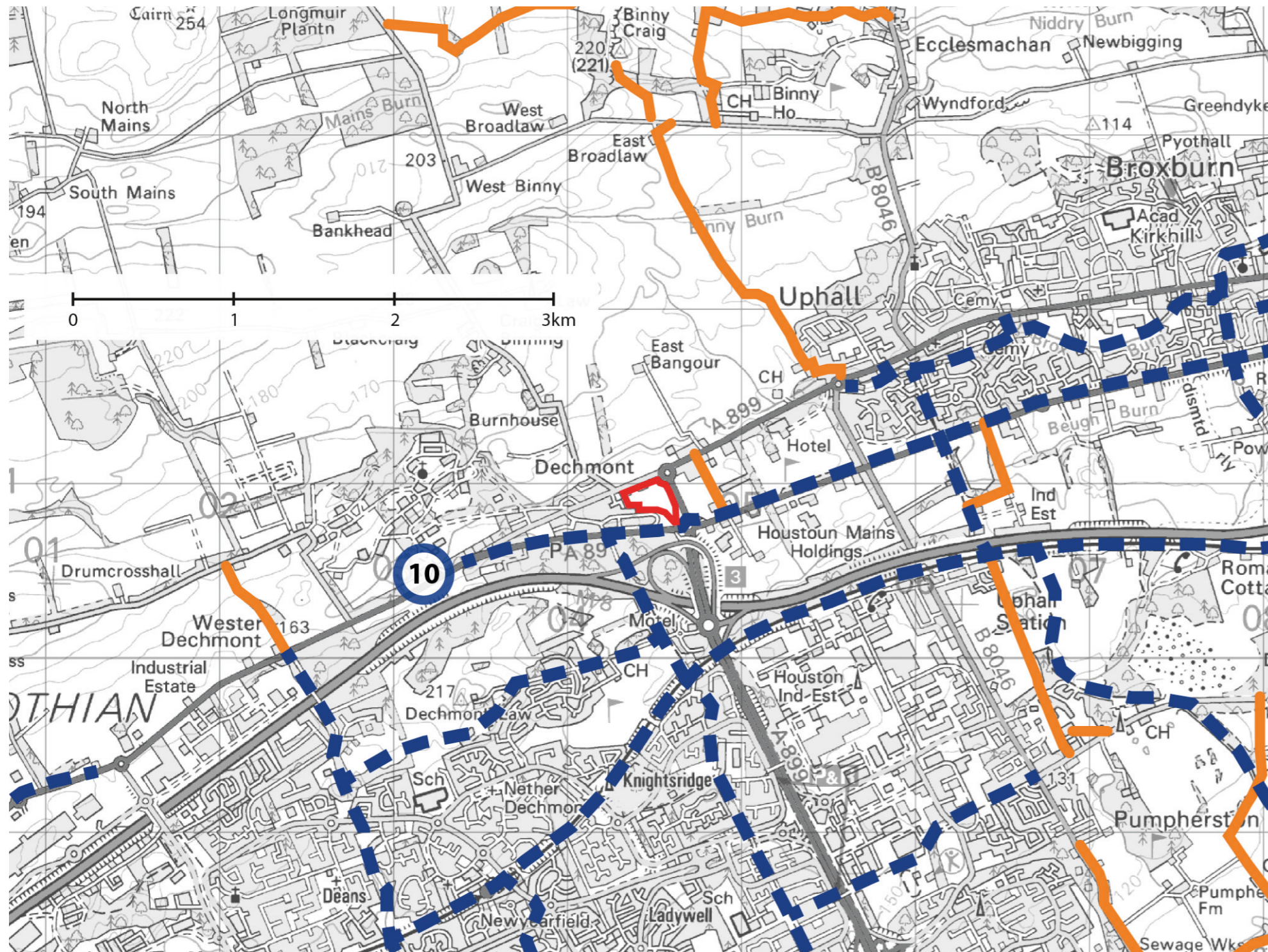
Figure 1 : Topography



Key:

- Urban settlement
- Woodland
- Farmland
- Wetland species
- Roadside greenspace
- Site Boundary
- Gradient
- Water course/Ditch
- Highest point of Site
- Culverted ditch

Figure 2: Landscape Character



Not to Scale

Key:

- Core Path
- Public Right of Way

Information derived from
West Lothian Core Paths Plan

Figure 3: Public Rights of Way