

Planning Statement

Main Street
Dechmont
West Lothian

Prepared by
Clarendon Planning and
Development Ltd

On behalf of
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List of Supporting Documents

- Location Plan
- *Planning Statement*
- Housing Land Assessment
- Education Capacity Overview Statement
- Pre-application Consultation Report
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment
- Archaeology Assessment
- Phase 1 Habitat Survey
- Transport Assessment
- Stage 1 Ground/Services Desktop Study
- Coal Mining Risk Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy
- Design Statement
- Indicative Site Layout

Section I - Background

I.1 Introduction

I.1.1

This Planning Statement supports the **application by John Macfarlane and Colin Macfarlane for Planning Permission in Principle** for residential development at Main Street, Dechmont, West Lothian.

I.1.2

Based on the site area and capacity (over 2 hectares and 50+ No. dwellings), the application is classified as a 'Major' development as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009, with a statutory requirement for pre-application consultation. This process has been undertaken and detailed within the supporting PAC report.

I.1.3

This Statement provides the context and justification for the application in terms of an outline of the proposal, Development Plan and planning policy context and assessment and the key considerations to be taken into account.

I.1.4

The application is supported by the key documents noted on Page 2.

I.2 Description & Location

I.2.1

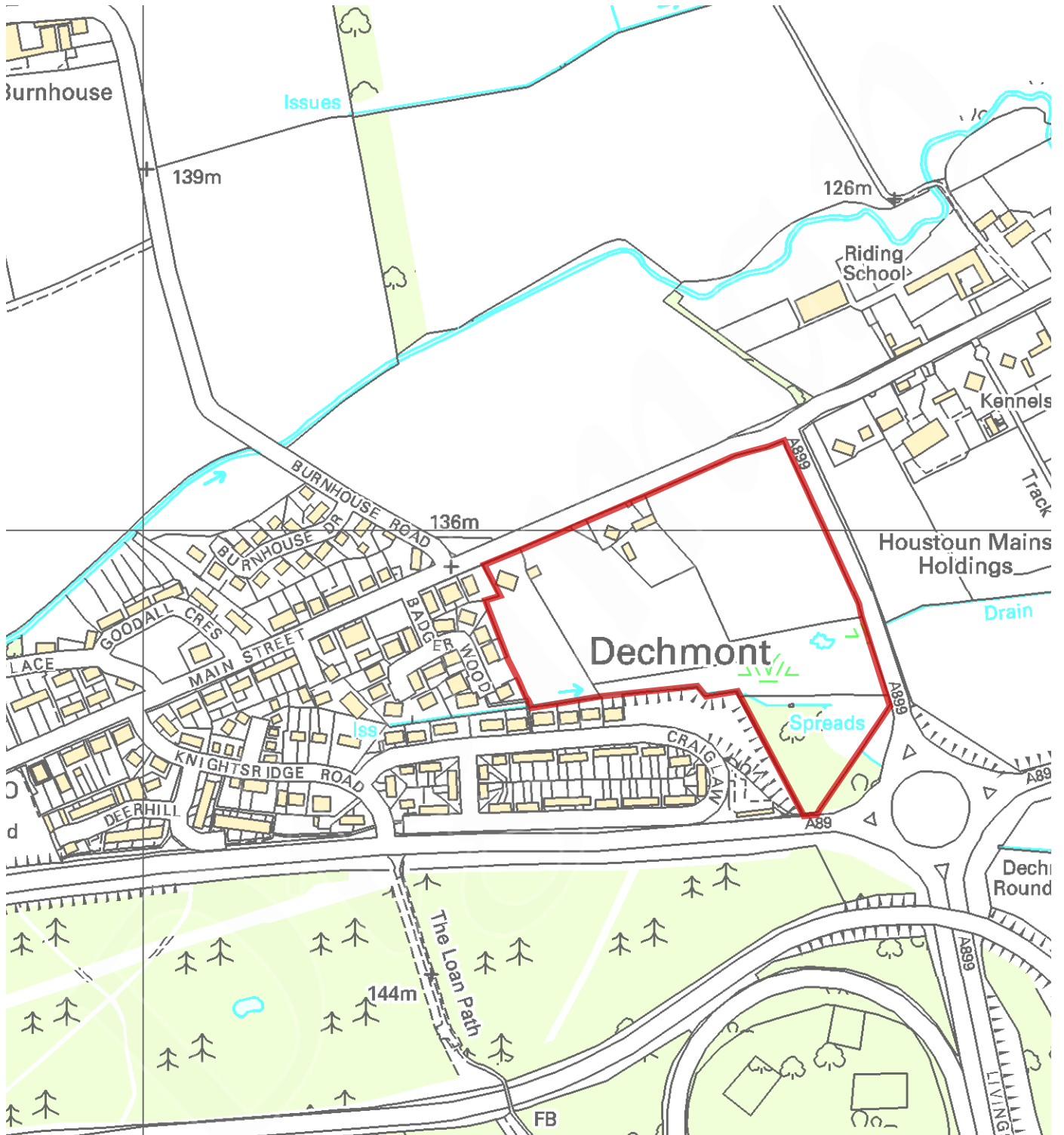
The site is located on the eastern edge of Dechmont, a small town located immediately north of Livingston and the M8 motorway. The site is bound by established housing to the west, a continuation of Dechmont Main Street to the north, the A899 and tree-line to the east and a combination of established housing, mature woodland and the A89 to the south.

I.2.2

The site extends to approximately 15 acres and comprises a mix of grazing land and rough scrubland and woodland. Mature trees and hedgerow bounds the east and north of the site, which create a strong sense of containment.

I.2.3

The undernoted site location plan is provided as part of the application and outlines the general location with the aerial image detailing the site boundaries. The supporting Design Statement provides additional context.



1.3 Application Proposal

1.3.1

The purpose of this application is to seek **planning permission in principle for residential development with associated landscaping, footpaths and roads.**

1.3.2

The proposals were outlined at **pre-application consultation events** in February and June 2014 (as detailed within the supporting PAC report) which set out the planning context for an application at this stage, an initial design context appraisal, design framework along with an indicative site layout at the latter event.

1.3.3

Whilst an application 'in principle', the supporting Design Statement and Indicative Design Proposal demonstrate the design intentions of the proposals. In brief, the application would allow for a development of approximately 120 No. houses (including 15% on-site affordable provision), landscaped open space, retained and enhanced woodland and hedgerow, new public footpath links, a 'gateway' entrance vehicular access onto Main Street and an extended 30mph zone on Main Street.

1.3.4

It should be noted that the western part of the site is actually currently within the settlement boundary of Dechmont in terms of the adopted Local Plan. This is detailed further within the supporting Design Statement.

1.4 Planning History

1.4.1

The applicant is not aware of any previous planning applications relating to the site. However, the subjects have been promoted via the Local Development Plan process with representations submitted to West Lothian Council's 'call for sites' exercise in 2011.

1.4.2

As detailed hereafter, West Lothian Council have prepared the first stage of their new Local Development Plan with the Main Issues Report approved by the Council Executive on 19th June 2014 for public consultation.

1.4.3

In this respect, the site has been included as a 'preferred' housing site and it is the intention of the applicant to work with the Council in terms of a twin-track approach with regard to the application and Local Development Plan. As such, the applicants would welcome the opportunity to discuss and agree a Processing Agreement for the application.

Section 2- Planning Policy Assessment

2.1 National Policy Priorities

2.1.1

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 3 (NPF3; Scottish Government, June 2014)* and *Scottish Planning Policy (SPP; Scottish Government, June 2014)*. Both of these key policy documents have only recently been updated (laid before Parliament on 23rd June 2014) and set the context for regional and local planning in Scotland.

2.1.2

The priorities for Scotland's planning system and its delivery at local level have been significantly influenced by key factors including increased population and household formation and the recent period of economic recession which has impacted upon housing site delivery through restricted access to development finance and readjustment of landowner value expectations. Within this context, NPF3 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 South East Scotland, with NPF3 highlighting the need to **“see greater and more concerted effort to deliver a generous supply of housing land in this area”** (p.13) whilst Livingston is identified as a key employment and service hub and a key strategic growth area (p.14).

2.1.3

This approach is supported by SPP (Para. 28 & 29), stating, **“this SPP introduces a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development”** including supporting the delivery of **“accessible housing development”** (p.9).

2.1.4

The revised SPP (Para. 110) sets out policy principles for ‘enabling the delivery of new homes’ requiring that the planning system should:

- **“identify a generous supply of land for each housing market area within the plan area to support the achievement of the housing land requirement across all tenures, maintaining at least a 5-year supply of effective housing land at all times;**
- **enable provision of a range of attractive, well-designed, energy efficient, good quality housing, contributing to the creation of successful and sustainable places; and,**
- **have a sharp focus on the delivery of allocated sites embedded in action programmes, informed by strong engagement with stakeholders.”**

2.1.5

The emphasis therefore is on development plans to facilitate this growth through allocation of sufficient housing sites, with **constant review of key importance to ensure that existing sites can be delivered within required timescales.**

2.1.6

In terms of how these growth areas are designed, *Designing Places (2001)*, *Creating Places (2013)*, *Designing Streets (2010)* and SPP provide a strong emphasis on the creation of successful places at the forefront of Scottish planning policy and practice. This is elaborated upon within the supporting Design Statement which outlines the approach taken to the proposed extension of Dechmont.

2.2 Development Plan Status and Review

2.2.1

Section 25 of the *Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997* requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As such, 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 Lothians Structure Plan 2015*.

2.2.2

Given the basic requirement for applications to be weighed against the Development Plan, the status and robustness of the current plan framework for West Lothian requires to be taken into account.

2.2.3

In this regard, it is widely acknowledged that the 2004 Structure Plan was approved with the proviso that an early review would occur to address the main issue of housing land supply and to ensure a 5 year effective supply was being maintained. This is confirmed within *paragraph 3.27* of the Structure Plan which states that a review should begin no later than 2006 with the plan replaced by 2008. This clearly did not occur.

2.2.4

Although the approval of SESplan is welcomed, an up to date plan led system is still not in place within West Lothian in terms of a new Local Development Plan to reflect approved SESplan policy.

2.2.5

In approving SESplan, Scottish Ministers supported the independent Reporters recommendations for Supplementary Guidance to be provided to address

housing land supply and demonstrate how demand was to be met by each local authority. Following public consultation, ratification by participating local authorities and submission to the Scottish Government, Ministers issued a letter on 18th June 2014 seeking a modification to ensure the Guidance accorded with SESplan in defining how a 5 year land supply is to be calculated (i.e. based on requirements for 2009-19 & 2019-24 rather than 2009-24 as proposed). It is understood that this modification will be adopted by SESplan, subject to ratification by member local authorities.

2.2.6

West Lothian Council delayed publication of the first stage of the new Local Development Plan Main Issues Report until the SESplan Supplementary Guidance housing land allocations had been confirmed. In this respect, whilst an initial ‘call for sites’ stage was undertaken in 2011, the LDP Main Issues Report was only approved for by Council Executive on 19th June 2014, i.e. 3 years after the review had been initiated.

2.2.7

In this regard, the approval of SESplan housing land allocations and resultant impact on West Lothian LDP timescales has caused a lengthy delay in providing an up to date Development Plan framework.

2.2.8

To illustrate, West Lothian Council’s ‘Local Development Plan Newsletter No.1’ (dated July 2012), anticipated publication of a Main Issues Report in Autumn 2012 and a Proposed Plan in late 2013. Clearly, this programme slipped significantly with the Main Issues Report set to be subject to public consultation between August-October 2014 with a Proposed Plan in Spring 2015.

2.2.9

Given the significant delays in providing an up to date Development Plan, it is now necessary to ensure suitable housing sites are brought forward at the earliest opportunity to meet land supply requirements.

2.2.10

Given that the housing land requirement calculation is 6 years behind schedule, the status of the Development Plan for assessing new housing proposals is highly questionable.

2.2.11

Notwithstanding this situation, the applicant wishes to bring forward the proposed housing site at Dechmont by way of a twin-track approach with a PPP application considered in line with the emerging LDP.

2.3 Development Plan Designation

Approved Development Plan

2.3.1

The site is currently part designated Countryside under Policies ENV22 and ENV23 of the *West Lothian Local Plan (WLLP)*. With regard to Policy ENV22, it is noted that opportunities to enhance existing landscape through additional woodland planting are supported, which form an integral part of the proposal. With regard to Policy ENV23, the proposal would not lead to settlement coalescence due to the strong natural and man-made existing boundaries. In this respect, whilst currently designated Countryside, further policy assessment is required given the wider demands to identify additional housing land.

2.3.2

It is considered that the site offers a contained and natural extension area for Dechmont, where growth is otherwise restricted by virtue of an Area of Great Landscape Value to north-west, west and south-west. A sensitive design in terms of landscape and boundary treatment would ensure the site forms a clearly contained extension of Dechmont, separated from the wider Livingston and Uphall area by the road network and existing woodland.

2.3.3

The site is not subject to any specific protective designations in terms of Policy ENV3 (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas), Policy ENV4 (National Nature Reserve and Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and Policy ENV5 (Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, Peatland and Regionally Important Geological Sites).

2.3.4

Whilst the site is covered by a blanket Class 2 agricultural land classification, in terms of Policy

ENV7, the land is not productively farmed, is in a state of neglect and therefore is not active prime land.

2.3.5

It is acknowledged that designated Countryside provides much the same role as Green Belt and, whilst the impact of development on the site's landscape setting is considered more fully within the supporting Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), the site's contribution to its Countryside designation is summarised below, in terms of SESplan Policy 12 criteria.

- ***Maintaining settlement identity and avoid coalescence*** - development of the site would not be detrimental to Dechmont's character and indeed, would provide a more coherent urban form and gateway approach from the east with existing and enhanced boundary treatment insuring the site forms a strongly contained extension.
- ***Direct planned growth to most appropriate locations and support regeneration*** - wider spatial policy would not be compromised given the site forms a contained urban extension of a settlement within a Strategic Growth Area which will also allow support of local services.
- ***Maintain landscape setting of settlement*** - development of the site can be accommodated without detriment to Dechmont's landscape setting, as addressed in the LVIA and Design Statement.
- ***Provide opportunities for access to open space and the countryside*** - development allows for opening up of new amenity open space and walking/cycling routes on Dechmont's eastern edge.

Emerging Development Plan

2.3.6

As noted above, West Lothian Council approved their *Local Development Plan Main Issues Report (MIR)* on 19th June 2014. This is due to be published for public consultation for an 8 week period from August 2014.

2.3.7

The proposed site at **Main Street, Dechmont is included within the MIR as a 'preferred housing site'** (site re. EOI-0166). This follows promotion of the site via the Council's 'call for sites' exercise in 2011.

2.3.8

Notwithstanding the adopted policy designation, **the site has therefore been considered a suitable housing site by the Council in their assessment of new sites** to contribute to the West Lothian housing land requirement.

2.3.9

It is noted that the MIR refers to a capacity of 30 units on the site. However, this notional capacity is questioned in terms of its validity with particular regard to the MIR's supporting *Strategic Environmental Assessment* which states that, **"land between the edge of Dechmont settlement envelope and the A899 represents a logical area for the village to extend into, with the A899 providing a clear defensible boundary..."**. The assessment goes on to say that, **"this general area, close to Dechmont roundabout on the A89, is already quite urbanised, more so with the recent opening of Dobbies and the justification for sustaining the Livingston Countryside designation here is just that little bit less convincing than it perhaps once was."** Development on the site is then generally supported in this respect and the eastern boundary of the A899 is established as the natural

extent of development. The proposals seek to ensure this eastern boundary is actually enhanced as a long term development limit which will also ensure separation from the wider area.

2.3.10

It is also noted that a second new preferred housing site has been identified within the MIR for Dechmont. However, this second site (Burnhouse Road, site ref. PJ0006, with a capacity of 120 units) compares poorly with Main Street in terms of a practical analysis of the *site-specific Strategic Environmental Assessment* of each site contained within the MIR. In this respect, **Table I** outlines an analysis of both sites in terms of the 9 SEA topics.

2.3.11

It is appreciated that this initial SEA may have been undertaken at the Call for Sites stage in 2011 and more recent information in terms of potential site layout provides more detail in terms of impact. However, overall, it is considered that there is a strong case for Main Street being a more suitable site than Burnhouse Road. Negative assessments for Main Street can all be addressed whilst Burnhouse Road is within protected landscape area, is detached from the settlement, adjoins an inadequate road and has greater flood risk. All these points will be addressed in a response to the Council's LDP MIR.

2.3.12

With regard to the MIR's Transport Appraisal, Table I summarises the findings which rate Main Street superior to Burnhouse Road. This is further assessed within Transport Assessment which supports this application.

2.3.13

Overall, scope exists to promote an application alongside the emerging LDP to demonstrate effectiveness, site capacity and deliverability.

Table 1 - LDP MIR SEA Assessment Criteria	Main Street - SEA Note (Clarendon comment in brackets)	Burnhouse Road - SEA Note (Clarendon comment in brackets)
Site Capacity	30 (no evidence in MIR to justify smaller figure than Clarendon's representation set out)	120 (no representation to Call for Sites exercise – justification to be clarified)
Environmental Summary Comments	logical area for village to extend into - A899 provides clear defensible boundary	site could be developed, but would require sensitive integration into the landscape - site does not relate overly to the rest of Dechmont and would not be seen as an obvious extension
Air Quality	Negative – re distance to public transport & jobs/services (<i>adjacent bus service, nearby rail, Livingston closeby</i>)	Positive (<i>how is this different to Main Street - not on main bus route</i>)
Biodiversity	Part Negative – re habitat impact (<i>proposals retain woodland and avoid SE area</i>)	Positive (<i>site adjoins watercourse with equal or greater scope for habitat</i>)
Climatic Factors	Negative – re energy consumption & flood risk (<i>flood risk allowed for within proposed site layout</i>)	Positive (<i>site adjoins watercourse with SEPA Flood Map showing flood risk</i>)
Cultural Heritage	Positive	Positive (<i>site adjoins Bangour Conservation Area with potential impact</i>)
Landscape & Townscape	Part Negative – re conspicuous location (<i>site is bound by trees on 3 sides - LVIA highlights that development can be accommodated without negative impact</i>)	Part Negative – re conspicuous location & protected landscape (<i>site is within Area of Great Landscape Value in adopted Local Plan and within Special Landscape Area in LDP MIR – site is also part of open countryside with no strong boundary to north</i>)
Material Assets	Negative – re coalescence/settlement identity & greenfield land (<i>proposals will not join Dechmont and Uphall and have strong eastern boundary</i>)	Part Negative – re greenfield land (<i>site should be rated negative for impact on settlement identity as it extends north into open countryside</i>)
Population & Health	Positive	Positive
Soil	Negative – re prime agricultural land (<i>site not actively farmed – Class 2 land designation covers wide area including other non-farmed areas including adjoining golf courses</i>)	Negative – re prime agricultural land (<i>site is currently farmed, i.e. active agricultural land</i>)
Water	Positive	Positive (<i>site adjoins watercourse with SEPA Flood Map showing flood risk</i>)
Transport Appraisal	Scores 28/40 (higher score being better) (<i>supporting Transport Assessment addresses this in further detail</i>)	Scores 22/40 (<i>site clearly has greater impact on local roads with single-track road and narrow bridge to navigate before accessing site</i>)

2.4 Housing Land Strategy

2.4.1
SESplan is based on a development strategy which focusses on “Strategic Development Areas (SDA)”. Dechmont is situated within the M8 corridor which forms part of the West Lothian Strategic Development Area. Therefore, **Dechmont is an established settlement within an overall preferred area for strategic growth.**

2.4.2
As acknowledged by the West Lothian LDP MIR (committee version), West Lothian require to accommodate a significant housing land requirement to support SESplan (Supplementary Guidance) aims. This is detailed further within the **Housing Land Supply Assessment** but essentially, the MIR recognises the restrictions of relying on a small number of large-scale sites. **The MIR preferred strategy now advocates identifying a range of smaller housing sites to support the main growth areas.** This includes the application site in addition to other greenfield sites to the north and south of Livingston.

2.4.3
This **shift in policy is wholly supported as a practical way forward** and now the Council must back up their policy approach by supporting suitable sites to come forward at the earliest opportunity.

2.4.4
In this respect, **SESplan Policy** permits greenfield housing sites to be allocated in Local Development Plans **or to be granted Planning Permission in order to maintain an effective 5 year land supply** subject to satisfying certain criteria. Now that SESplan Supplementary Guidance has been approved, the housing land requirement is known and therefore the Council can take steps to maintain an effective 5 year land supply through the grant

of Planning Permission on appropriate effective housing sites. This can be achieved in line with the emerging LDP with determination of the application following the public consultation period into the MIR which will ensure local community views are taken on board prior to the Council finalising their strategy.

2.4.5
Although the Application Site is currently partially zoned Countryside in the adopted Local Plan, a post-public consultation MIR can be deemed a material consideration when determining an application. This is also supported by SESplan Policy 7 which clearly does not preclude development of greenfield sites for housing provided there is a need for them and that the development in question satisfies certain criteria, as assessed in Section 2.5 below.

2.4.6
With regard to housing land, Clarendon’s supporting **Housing Land Supply Assessment** details the extent of the existing shortfall within West Lothian and the SESplan housing market area as a whole. This demonstrates there is a significant shortfall in the current 5 year effective land supply, extending to around 45% of the requirement.

2.4.7
Notwithstanding the 5 year land supply shortfall, the ability of West Lothian to meet pre-2019 approved SESplan Supplementary Guidance land requirements (11,420 units) will be severely compromised if LDP adoption in 2016 is awaited prior to application approvals. **Bringing forward suitable, deliverable sites, such as Main Street, to meet this identified need can and should be facilitated by SESplan Policy 7, which permits sites to be granted consent to maintain a 5 year effective land supply.**

2.5 SESplan Policy 7

2.5.1

On the basis that there is a clear housing land supply shortfall within West Lothian and a resultant need to grant consent to additional effective housing sites, land at Dechmont can be supported when assessed against *SESplan Policy 7*. Taking the **three criteria** by which such sites are to be considered, the merits of land at Dechmont can be briefly summarised:-

2.5.2

Criteria (a) requires that ‘development will be in keeping with the character of the settlement and local area’. In this respect, the Design Statement and Indicative Design Proposals have been prepared in support of the Dechmont ‘in principle’ application, providing historical and contextual background to the expansion of the village.

2.5.3

This analysis highlights the historic growth of Dechmont with the progressive ‘infill’ between the traditional main street, the Brox Burn to the north and road network to the south. Notwithstanding the original urban form, more recent development has seen more disparate form and style with the site providing the opportunity for a higher quality, connected eastern expansion. The character of the local area can be maintained through careful boundary treatment and street frontage design whilst the retained open area on the south-east of the site can provide access and continuity of greenspace .

2.5.4.

The proposal allows for a range of housing types, as currently found within Dechmont, with the indicative layout demonstrating how a series of linked spaces can provide a higher standard of urban form than the majority of twentieth century growth

nearby. This will also allow for a stronger eastern edge to the settlement and more of an ‘approach’ to the main street through combination of landscaping and set back frontages to the street.

2.5.5

The design framework allows for integration of the fairly fragmented current urban form and will be achieved through a range of densities related to the street network, local squares/open spaces and landscaped open space with new and retained woodland to the east and south-east.

2.5.6

It is considered that the Design Statement and Indicative Site Layout provide an illustrative framework for how the site can be successfully integrated with the existing settlement and actually enhance the character of the local area.

2.5.7

Criteria (b) requires that ‘the development will not undermine green belt objectives’.

The site is not within the Green Belt so will not undermine associated objectives. However, it is recognised that the current Countryside designation provides much of the same role but development can be accommodated without detrimental impact.

2.5.8

As noted in Section 2.3.5 above, it is considered that the proposal would actually enhance settlement character and identity through sensitive, connected design and development would be well contained within natural and man-made boundaries. Development of the site would also not be at odds with spatial strategy given Dechmont is an established settlement within an identified Strategic Growth Area.

2.5.9

As detailed within the supporting LVIA, development can be accommodated without negative impact to the wider landscape setting or key views, whilst the proposals allow for greater access to open space and a wetland/woodland urban/rural edge.

2.5.10

It is considered the proposal will actually allow for a net benefit in terms of a stronger eastern settlement boundary for Dechmont.

2.5.11

Criteria (c) requires that 'any additional infrastructure required as a result of the development is either committed or to be funded by the developer'. The applicant has commissioned supporting reports including a Transport Assessment, which demonstrates that the proposed development can be accommodated within the existing road network, subject to localised improvements including extension of the 30mph limit eastwards along Main Street, localised traffic calming and new path connections to link with the wider path network.

2.5.12

With regard to other key infrastructure, the supporting Education Capacity Appraisal highlights the current situation and proposed approach to ensuring sufficient school capacity can be facilitated including financial contributions from the applicant to West Lothian Council.

2.5.13

It is considered therefore, that the proposal accords with an assessment of SESplan Policy 7 in light of the accepted housing land requirement and identified housing land shortfall.

2.6 Site Effectiveness - PAN 2/2010 Criteria

2.6.1

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and guidance set out in PAN 2/2010 Affordable Housing and Housing Land Audits require that sites allocated within Local Development Plans are effective, being able to contribute completions during the plan period (up to year 10 from LDP adoption).

2.6.2

Cumulatively, a 5 year effective housing land supply requires to be maintained within the identified local housing market area, which should accord with the identified housing requirement, as noted above.

2.6.3

As such, PAN2/2010 criteria for assessing site effectiveness provide a test against which sites require to be gauged with **land at Dechmont considered effective, being free of potential site constraints and able to deliver units within the plan period.** Specifically:-

Ownership - Site is Effective

- The site is owned by a willing seller, who is investing in setting out the planning and design parameters via this PPP application in order for detailed proposals by a housebuilder to be guided to the betterment of the final development at Dechmont. The landowner has received an offer from a national housebuilder who would seek to start construction at the earliest opportunity, following the PPP and subsequent AMC process.

Physical - Site is Effective

- Preliminary investigations (as detailed within the supporting Stage 1 Desk Top Technical

Site Study, Transport Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment/SUDS Strategy and Coal Mining Risk Assessment) identified no significant constraints subject to confirmation via intrusive investigations and implementation of the proposed design framework in accommodating surface water flood requirements.

Contamination - Site is Effective

- The supporting assessments note that the site is considered to have a low risk in terms of contamination and will be confirmed via Stage 2 intrusive investigations.

Deficit Funding - Site is Effective

- The development is to be privately funded, also allowing for required infrastructure upgrades. Delivery of the 15% on-site affordable housing can be agreed with the Council.

Marketability - Site is Effective

- The site is within the wider Edinburgh housing market and is a highly marketable location with demand for both private and affordable units, as confirmed via the SESplan Housing Needs and Demand Assessment. The interest of a national housebuilder in the site also confirms its attractiveness in this respect.
- The **proposed site programming** (see **Table 2 - 'Site Programme'** on page 16 below, allowing for statutory approvals and construction lead-in) is 18 units in 2015/16 (HLA timescales, April to April) with completions of 36-36-30 over the following 3 years with completion in 2019 - estimated capacity of c.120 units with 90 units delivered in current 5 year ELS period (2013 Audit base-date).

Infrastructure - Site is Effective

- Utility connections and water and drainage connections are available to the site with any localised upgrading of capacity able to be met by the developer. Site access can be achieved to allow for development in early course with localised traffic calming and education capacity upgrades to be funded by the applicant.

Land Use - Site is Effective

- Housing (both private and affordable) is the predominant proposed use for the site.

Overall

The proposal can deliver early housing completions and development can contribute to West Lothian's land supply shortfall with housing completions within the SESplan first phase housing land requirement period to 2019. Support for land at Dechmont would not contradict SESplan spatial strategy as the site is within a preferred growth area and offers an opportunity for a suitably scaled urban expansion.

Table 2 - Site Programme Development Plan	Planning Application	Build & Sales Programme
SESplan approval 27 June 2013 & SESplan Supplementary Guidance Approval (with modification) 18 June 2014	PPP submission July 2014	
LDP Main Issues Report Council Exec Approval for Consultation 19 June 2014		
LDP Main Issues Report Public Consultation August-October 2014	PPP approval by WLC November 2014 (post-MIR consultation)	
	Detailed application pre-app discussion (c.2 mths) December 2014/January 2015	
	S.75 Agreement (c.3 mths from Decision) February 2015	
	AMC application February 2015	
	Detailed approval April 2015	Site start April 2015
LDP Proposed Plan Summer 2015 (est.)		1st completions October 2015
LDP Adoption Late 2016 (est.)		Completions 2015-16 onwards 18-36-36-30 (120 units total)

2.7

Detailed Policy Requirements

2.7.1

Whilst the case in support of the principle of housing at Dechmont with regard to its existing designation, Landscape, Location and Site Effectiveness has been justified against both existing and emerging Development Plan policy and national policy material considerations, it is necessary to assess the application against remaining relevant policies to demonstrate that the proposal can holistically meet detailed policy requirements. In this regard, design policies and the Council's Residential Development Guide are addressed within the supporting Design Statement.

Environment & Heritage

2.7.2

WLLP Policy ENV11 / ENV12 / ENV14 (Woodland) -

The proposal retains the existing mature tree line on the site's eastern boundary and retains and enhances the scrub woodland on the south-east boundary. A suitable management plan can be put in place as part of the detailed planning requirements.

2.7.3

WLLP Policy ENV16 (SUDS/Biodiversity) -

The proposal provides a wetland SUDS area which will improve local habitat. The supporting Ecology Assessment notes the existing features and it is considered that the proposal affords an enhancement overall.

2.7.4

WLLP Policy HER16 (Archaeology) -

The supporting Archaeology Assessment confirms that no significant remains exist on site but that should intrusive investigations be required, this can be dealt with by way of planning condition.

Design

2.7.5

WLLP Policy H5 (Open Space Provision) -

Open space proposals are demonstrated within the indicative site layout, which provides for a variety of formal and informal spaces for recreation and general amenity. Reference has been made to West Lothian's *Residential Development Guide (RDG)*, and open space can be addressed in a number of ways:-

- as per the Council's Open Space Strategy, there is a 'neighbourhood' park located within 1km of the site (playing field and play provision adjacent to Dechmont Infant School)- there is scope for use of this amenity with upgrading if required

- general amenity open space in the form of local squares/gardens within the housing

- general/active amenity open space on the south-east edge the proposed housing linked to retained / enhanced woodland and wetland associated with the SUDS

- local play area can be located within this south-eastern area

2.7.6

WLLP Policy H6 (Density) -

The proposal is for a range of housing to meet local and general needs including cottage flats and terraced, linked, semi-detached and detached houses. The proposed density is c.30 units per hectare, as highlighted on the indicative site layout, which accords with the Council's RDG in relation to medium density and public transport thresholds. It is considered that this is an appropriate density for the location, which offers scope for both higher

density in conjunction with the Main Street / public transport corridor frontage and pockets of lower density linked to the landscape/open space proposals.

2.7.7

WLLP Policy H7 (Design & Layout) -

The proposal can meet aspirations for a high quality design for new housing areas. The Design Statement addresses the Council's RDG requirements and provides background analysis of the locality, historic growth and key urban design factors to be addressed within detailed design proposals. The indicative site layout illustrates the proposed approach which incorporates a higher density form than standard suburban late-twentieth century approaches and allows for good connectivity, street design differentiation, housing fronting streets, maximisation of solar gain and incorporation of SUDS and a variety of greenspace.

2.7.8

WLLP Policy H8 (Access & Parking) -

The proposed street network is outlined in the Design Statement and indicative site layout. In this respect, a clear hierarchy between main residential street, lanes and local squares is integral to the design approach with adoption of 20mph speed limit and prioritising of pedestrians and cyclists. Footpath links are indicated both through the site and allowing connection with the adjacent core path network. Extension of the adjacent 30mph limit on Main Street to beyond the site entrance will also assist with safety and allow for a gateway entrance into the site.

2.7.9

WLLP Policy H9 (Residential & Visual Amenity) -

Existing amenity of local residents adjoining the proposed site has been factored into the proposal. The indicative site layout incorporates additional landscaping on the south-west and western site edges to ensure that existing housing is screened from

the development, whilst still allowing connectivity where possible. The south-eastern part of the site is retained as open along with improving the existing woodland on the site edge. The proposed open space will be accessible to local residents and provides for an enhanced local resource.

2.7.10

WLLP Policy H10 (Affordable Housing) -

The proposal allows for the required 15% on-site affordable housing provision. It is the intention that this would be provided as serviced land, in conjunction with an RSL provider or completed by the private developer as part of the overall development for either mid-market rent or discounted home-ownership.

Transport

2.7.11

WLLP Policy TRAN2 (Transport Assessment) -

A Transport Assessment accompanies the planning application, with scope having been agreed with WLC in advance of its preparation. This report outlines the acceptable transport impact of the proposal and notes the mitigation measures proposed including traffic calming. The indicative site layout is based upon a single vehicular access (Main Street) with a secondary access to the A899 being for cyclists and pedestrians only - this approach was agreed with WLC officers.

2.7.12

WLLP Policy TRAN3/TRAN4/TRAN5 (Transport Fund / Improvements / Travel Plans) -

Where deemed necessary to implement the development and as supported by the TA, and associated Travel Plan, the applicant will contribute to measures to promote public transport usage and provide localised traffic mitigation including traffic calming.

2.7.13

WLLP Policy TRAN8/TRANI1/TRANI2/TRANI3 (Other Transport Measures) -

The proposed layout provides a safe and attractive environment for cycling and walking with path connections to public transport stops (detailed measures will be agreed via detailed design). Street design will incorporate 20mph home zones to maximise safety and street useage.

Implementation

2.7.14

WLLP Policy IMP2 (Denominational Schools) -

The applicant notes the requirement for financial contributions to contribute towards required extensions of St.Margaret's Academy or an alternative new-build solution.

2.7.15

WLLP Policy IMP3 (Schools - General) -

The applicant notes the requirement to address Primary School capacity in Dechmont and wishes to work with the Council to deliver a solution including phasing as appropriate. This element is addressed in the supporting Education Capacity Appraisal.

2.7.16

WLLP Policy IMP4 (Water & Sewerage) -

The applicant notes and accepts the requirement for planning conditions or legal agreements as necessary to secure the provision of upgraded water and sewerage infrastructure as required.

2.7.17

WLLP Policy IMP6 (Surface Water Drainage) -

The supporting Outline SUDS Strategy addresses the approach to be taken with the proposed site, which incorporates generous on-site SUDS allowance with connections to local watercourses via the adopted road network to the east.

2.7.18

WLLP Policy IMP7 (Flood Risk) -

The supporting Flood Risk Assessment details the approach to managing on-site flood risk associated with surface water pooling. The site is not at risk from fluvial flooding.

2.7.19

WLLP Policy IMP17 (Planning Agreements) -

The landowner / applicant is willing to enter into an associated planning agreement to secure necessary items as required to implement a planning approval.

2.7.20

Overall, it is considered that the proposal can address all of the detailed planning policy requirements set out above and the Design Statement and indicative site layout demonstrate a sensitive approach to development of the site.

Section 3- Conclusions

3.1

The preceding Statement, in conjunction with the appended supporting documentation, demonstrates the suitability of the proposal in the context of the housing land supply situation within West Lothian and the emerging Local Development Plan.

3.2

The grounds of support specifically relate to the following fundamental factors:

- **The applicant is seeking permission in principle for residential development at Dechmont with scope for approximately 120 units with associated open space, woodland, roads and footpaths**
- **National planning policy is a key material consideration, requiring local authorities to maintain a 5 year effective land supply at all times; this is particularly important for West Lothian, which requires to accommodate substantial growth**
- **The Local Plan does not provide an up to date basis for housing land delivery; SESplan guidance on housing land is approximately 6 years behind schedule and the new Local Development Plan will not be adopted until 2016**
- **West Lothian have now approved a Local Development Plan Main Issues Report for public consultation later in 2014 - the proposed site is included as a preferred housing site**
- **Given the significant 5 year effective land supply shortfall within West Lothian based on the approved SESplan Supplementary Guidance, suitable housing sites require to be brought forward at the earliest opportunity**
- **In this respect, West Lothian Council can utilise SESplan Policy 7 to enable the application to be supported following the public consultation stage of the LDP Main Issues Report - the site can meet the policy criteria and the applicant is willing to work with the Council in terms of a twin-track approach via the application and the LDP**
- **Weight given to existing partial Countryside designation within out-dated Local Plan should be carefully assessed as development would not compromise wider landscape objectives, would accord with strategic locational spatial strategy and would actually enhance Dechmont's character, identity and landscape setting**
- **The supporting reports outline the site proposal which is based on an analysis of the settlement character to enable a positive contribution by way of sensitive design and creation of a more coherent urban form**
- **The proposal can be accommodated within existing roads infrastructure and the applicant's proposed financial contributions can address education infrastructure alongside the proposed strategy**
- **The site compares favourably to the other Dechmont preferred housing site within the LDP MIR at Burnhouse Road**
- **Dechmont is an effective site when assessed against the Government's PAN2/2010 criteria and can provide a**

meaningful contribution to the shortfall within the 5 year land supply given the site's marketability with strong national housebuilder interest due to its proximity to the main Edinburgh market area

- Detailed policy requirements can be met including developer contributions with specifics to be discussed and agreed with the Council during the application process

Overall, Dechmont provides an effective housing site based upon a viable and sensitive proposal which addresses key landscape, infrastructure and design issues whilst providing a much needed range of housing including vital affordable provision in an area of accepted housing demand.

Historic delays to the formulation of housing land strategy to support the Development Plan require urgent action and new effective housing sites to be brought forward in early course.

3.3

On the basis of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the submitted planning application be viewed positively by West Lothian Council.