

WLC REF: MIRQ0012

NB SUBMISSION MADE BY E-MAIL FROM [REDACTED]

Dear West Lothian Council

I am writing in response to the consultation on the *Main Issues Report for West Lothian* with particular focus on the conflict between housing proposals (E01-0168) and the plan to enhance the environmental protection for the southern fringe of Linlithgow.

In summary:

- I object to the inclusion of the proposed housing development site E01-0168 off Deanburn Road at the southern fringe of Linlithgow and request that this site is rejected and removed before it gets published in the Draft West Lothian Local Development Plan.
- I fully support the West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review which proposes to increase the environmental designation of this land at the southern fringe of Linlithgow from an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) to a Core Special Landscape Area (SLA) within the Bathgate Hills and its foothills.

The West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review is a well-researched, comprehensive report into a wide range of landscape assessment criteria including scenic beauty, rarity, habitat and social amenity etc. Page 74 of the report shows a map (Figure 7.6) which outlines the boundary of the Bathgate Hills Candidate Special Landscape Area (which mimics the current AGLV area). This clearly includes the large field off Deanburn Road.

The landscape report lays out a detailed characterisation of particular areas and scores them against set criteria. The results of the scoring is that this area attains the second highest designation in West Lothian for environmental qualities and importance out of about 26 areas that were assessed. It also recommends it as one of just five proposed core SLAs. Moreover, the report on the Bathgate Hills area states that the edges will come under particular pressure and asserts that the Council should resist such forces to prevent 'uphill creep to key skylines' such as Cockleroy which sits just to the south of this site.

The conflict arises in another part of the report which promotes this same field (E01-0168) for housing development on the Housing List, albeit only "part-preferred".

So, there is a fundamental conflict between the well-researched environmental report and the rather ad hoc call for development proposals.

I recognise that there is a need for housing in the West Lothian area and each sub-area is therefore expected to contribute a proportion to that total. However, there seem to be plenty of other areas proposed (and indeed some de-listed!) which would have far less visual, environmental and social impact and would still meet the Councils commitment to housing numbers - in short you don't need this field to achieve housing numbers – it's a drop in the ocean and would be at the expense of land you seek to protect through AGLV and SLA designation.

Indeed, the thought of destroying a beautiful open rolling field that provides incredible views both into and from Cockleroy and has been specifically noted as having such environmental significance in the council's own landscape report seems very wrong.

Other negative aspects of a development in this field include:

- Additional traffic burden onto Preston Road in the already congested period during school drop-off and pick-up times – which is already a considerable health and safety risk
- Whilst I appreciate that there are plans to reduce the burden on Linlithgow Academy by building a new high school at Winchburgh, this would not help with the localised pressures on Linlithgow Primary School which I believe is at capacity (as is Linlithgow Bridge PS and Low Port PS).
- It would also have an impact on the overall visual approach to Linlithgow from the west side of town as this field is very prominent and would show an increasing urban sprawl eating into the foothills of the Bathgate Hills.
- The houses at the bottom of Deanburn suffered from flooding issues when Donaldsons was built a number of years ago and it is likely that this issue would require significant consideration and infrastructure upgrades to prevent further urban drainage problems due to the increase in impermeable land created by such a housing development.
- The land, is a haven for wildlife including birds of prey, swifts, bats and small mammals and provides a valuable natural ribbon at the town's boundary.
- The land contains a public right of way and is bounded by roadside footpaths that are enjoyed by walkers, dog-walkers, joggers and cyclists.

On a personal level, one of the key reasons we decided to move to Deanburn Road was that it was on the edge of town and had such an open outlook and feeling of space. Being boxed in by a housing estate would have a massive impact on our lives.

At a neighbourhood level, I have been in discussion with a number of local residents who are all, not surprisingly, horrified at the thought of housing in this field. It's open rolling outlook and seasonal crop is one of the key features that defines the neighbourhood - people enjoy walking round the outskirts of Deanburn - it is the countryside on our doorstep.

I fully understand the farmers' desire to profiteer from the sale of his land and how attractive it would be for the house builders to be able to charge a premium price for new houses in this prime location. But I trust the council will take a more strategic socially acceptable view for the good of the environment, the existing residents of Deanburn and the wider Linlithgow community when coming to a judgement.

Yours sincerely

