

Representation on Main Issues Report (MIR) / Local Development Plan (LDP) for West Lothian

Submitted by Tom Hardie, Hardie Planning Consultancy, on behalf of [REDACTED]

Representation refers to Blackridge – Settlement Map 9, page 128 regarding Site Reference E01-0008

1. Through this representation, Sibbald Ltd wishes to restate the case they made during the Call for Sites process for their site, E01-0008, the southernmost site within the Blackridge Training Centre area, to have future LDP status for additional Use Classes, 5 and 6 to be assigned to it. This is in addition to Use Class 4 as currently shown in the Development Proposals (table at page 128) of the Main Issues Report (MIR).

2. These additional uses would be in line with wider LDP objectives of promoting and maintaining the employment base at Blackridge and improve further the training and education capacity for trainees and building apprentices. It would also allow Sibbald Ltd to diversify some of their land holding to create 'enabling' income which would, in turn, be ploughed back into the development of the Training and Educational Centre, already successfully established; a use and activity that provides a very important economic benefit in the wider area.

3. My client would like to have the opportunity to diversify and have one or two new buildings on the site (site 2 on the map with area of 1.77ha) that could be used for both general industrial (UC5) and storage (UC6) purposes, and be developed for their new interests in renewable energy and manufacture and storage of new materials for the building industry. A more flexible LDP designation for this site would allow their businesses to diversify and grow.

4. Such uses would have little or no impact on neighbours. The site at Blackridge already benefits from ease of access as the site is only a 7-10minute walk to the railway station along the footpath already provided on the Glasgow Road (A89) and then south into the station area within the village itself, a distance of 0.6 mile or 900 metres. A wider Use Class designation for site E01-0008 (a brownfield site) would also meet and reflect other objectives in the LDP/MIR as follows:

Page 11 - Vision: For a more diversified local economy;

Page 13 – Community Regeneration: Promote community regeneration through the development of brownfield sites and create local opportunities;

Page 14 – Para 2.12, “Outwith the growth areas employment development will be limited to those which address specific regeneration aims, i.e. site is acceptable in terms of scale, fits into character of the settlement, has no significant environmental impact and any infrastructure commitment can be met”;

Page 17 – Para 3.11, “The emphasis will be on ensuring that existing employment allocations are serviced effectively to enable them to come forward early and new sites are brought on stream. This would allow a more flexible approach to economic development and job creation in order to attract investment and

secure jobs”;

Page 19 – Para 3.22, Flexibility within employment land allocations. “The types of uses permitted within employment areas are business uses, general industrial and storage and distribution – classes 4, 5 and 6 of the UCO (Scotland) 1997.

Additional flexibility in the permitted range of uses within these areas would be promoted where appropriate to their location, function, amenity and general character to allow for wider flexibility”;

Page 19 – Para 3.23, “Such an approach could also assist in regenerating older and vacant sites. Other considerations would be the ease of accessibility to these sites including by public transport and pedestrian access”.

5. Regarding ease of access, we pointed out in our previous submission dated 28th March 2011 at paras 5.2 /5.3 that:

- Any further increase vehicular traffic at the junction with the A89 would be assessed through a Transport Assessment;
- The proposed site, to the east of Blackridge railway station, would be no more than 10 minutes walk to Blackridge station via the A89 footpath. Another potential footpath access may also be possible from the site to the station at Blackridge by a more direct route (as shown previously in layout plan attached to the call for sites statement). Public transport (bus) is also available at A89 access junction point to the wider catchment.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Although on the rural edge of Blackridge, the Sibbald Training Centre is an established employment and trainee site in the area and has been established there for 10 years. A new walkway link is thus proposed from the site in question (site 2) to the station allowing pedestrian access.

6.2 It is imperative that the owner and entrepreneur who set up the Training Centre has the flexibility to diversify. This would enable Sibbald Ltd to grow their business interests and allow them to invest in the future of the site for the benefit of future trainees and the local community over the lifespan of the LDP. The Council should support this objective.

6.3 It is not asking too much for his site 2, therefore, which is tucked away at the southern end of this area of land, to have additional Use Classes 5 and 6 assigned to it in the LDP and added to the UC 4 already assigned in the MIR. This would be in line with wider economic goals and objectives of the LDP as set out at page 19 of the LDP’s written statement by promoting “additional flexibility in the permitted range of uses where appropriate to their location, function, amenity and general character”.

6.4 Sibbald Ltd accept a UC 4 only on their site 1 to the north, adjacent the A89, but would ask that the Council planners reconsider the case for a more diversified designation for site 2 (E01-0008) located at the southern end.

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7. We hope that this representation will be positively taken on board in the finalisation process of the LDP. Sibbald Ltd looks forward to further involvement in the finalisation process of the LDP.

Tom Hardie (Agent)

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