

WLC REF: MIRQ0092

**WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
MAIN ISSUES REPORT 2014**

REPRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF NETWORK RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE LTD

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Network Rail is the statutory undertaker responsible for maintaining and operating the country's railway infrastructure and associated estate. Network Rail owns, operates, maintains and develops the main rail network. This includes the railway tracks, stations, signalling systems, bridges, tunnels, level crossings and viaducts.
- 1.2 To enable Network Rail to help West Lothian Council achieve the vision of the LDP we strongly request that due consideration is given to the comments provided within this representation.

2.0 Main Issue 3: Housing Growth

- 2.1 The preferred Scenario 3 promotes the provision of more housing than the minimum required by the supplementary guidance required to support the SDP and the LDP should allocate housing land for an additional 3,500 houses above existing committed development. The existing transport infrastructure has clearly been a key consideration in the location of new growth areas. This reflects the aspirations of Scottish Planning Policy which places a strong emphasis on sustainable locations for new development, with good access to public transport an important constituent of this. Network Rail are supportive of this approach provided that due consideration is given to the impacts that substantial new development may have on the existing rail network.
- 2.2 Where growth areas or significant housing allocations are identified close to existing rail infrastructure it is essential that the potential impacts of this are assessed through the development management process. Many stations and routes are already operating close to capacity and a significant increase in patronage may create the need for upgrades to the existing infrastructure including improved signalling, passing loops, car parking, improved access arrangements or platform extensions. This is particularly apparent at Linlithgow.
- 2.3 The likely impact and level of improvements required will be specific to each station and each development. Therefore in order to fully assess the potential impacts and the level of developer contribution required it is essential that where a Transport Assessment is submitted in support of a planning application that this quantifies in detail the likely impacts on the rail network. The Scottish Government document 'Transport Assessment and Implementation: A Guide' stresses the importance of involving public transport stakeholders in Transport Assessments which may require alterations to existing services and infrastructure. We would therefore welcome the opportunity to comment on any planning application and associated Transport Assessment which may affect existing rail stations and services.

3.0 Main Issue 4: Infrastructure Requirements and Delivery

- 3.1 The council's 'Preferred' approach to infrastructure provision is to promote additional growth which can for the most part utilise existing infrastructure capacity, and minimise additional significant new infrastructure requirements over and above existing planned upgrades and requirements. Developer contributions will continue to be sought, the basis for which will be set out in a combination of generic and specific supplementary guidance. Network Rail is supportive of this approach if it includes provision for rail infrastructure improvements.

4.0 Level Crossings

- 4.1 There are a small number of level crossings on the railway within the West Lothian Council area. The safety, reliability and efficiency of the rail infrastructure are of paramount importance to Network Rail and we cannot agree to any proposals which jeopardise these requirements. Level crossings are safe if used correctly. Most level crossing risk has resulted from user error or abuse. We are committed to reducing the risk at level crossings where reasonably practicable and will seek to close and/or divert crossings or enhance their safety through the provision of improved safety features or equipment. We will work with local councils to take a holistic approach to reducing level crossing risk and will encourage planning authorities to co-operate in securing level crossing closures or improvements in connection with new developments. Only in exceptional circumstances will we permit new crossings to be introduced onto the network.
- 4.2 We would encourage the inclusion of a policy statement which makes it clear to developers that no new crossings will be permitted, that proposals which increase the use of level crossings will generally be resisted and where development would prejudice the safe use of a level crossing an alternative bridge crossing will require to be provided at the developers expense.
- 4.3 LDP site assessments must take cognisance of the impact of development proposals on level crossings. Transport assessment and developer contributions policy and supplementary guidance must ensure infrastructure risks are identified and mitigation secured

5.0 Main Issue 7: Climate Change

- 5.1 The range of items covered in Figure 17 – Climate Change Measures of Relevance to MIR are mainly restricted to the location and design of new developments. There are a wide range of fronts upon which climate change can be tackled including the need to protect the existing built environment and broadly adapt to more severe weather events. There are a range of infrastructure (communications, utilities, roads and railways) that is will need to be adapted as a consequence of climate change. For example, works may be needed outwith the railway corridor to protect it and this is type of activity is not explicitly included within the Climate Change Measures of Relevance to MIR. It is recommended that policies which anticipate and support the need to protect the public's significant investment in existing infrastructure in terms of climate change should be provided in the forthcoming Proposed Plan.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 It is requested that the following is included in the Proposed Plan to address the above considerations:

- The Proposed Plan should make it clear that where housing development may impact on the rail network the supporting Transport Assessment should include quantitative analysis of the likely effects. This can then be used to inform any developer contributions which may be required.
- The developer contributions policy and supporting SPG should be supportive of contributions towards rail infrastructure improvements where required.
- It is recommended that policies which anticipate and support the need to protect the public's significant investment in existing infrastructure in terms of climate change should be provided in the forthcoming Proposed Plan.