

WLC REF: MIRQ0165

FTAO Mr Tony Irving
West Lothian Council
Development Control Unit
County Buildings
Linlithgow



1st June 2009

Objection to Planning Permission at Five Sisters Business Park, Westwood, West Calder, EH55 8PN
Application Number 0358/P/09

Dear Mr Irving,

We are writing to formally object to the above proposed development for the following reasons:

1. The West Lothian Local Plan lays out detailed scope for what is acceptable and unacceptable in the Westwood area. This Planning Application is contrary in particular to paragraphs 2.25, 3.16, 3.28, 3.63 and 3.94 of the plan. All of these relate directly to the private dwellings part of the application.

The Plan then goes on to describe that the Five Sisters bings are a Scheduled Monument (Appendix 4.3) and that Oakbank Cottages have built heritage and townscape value (P283). With this in mind I would consider it unacceptable to build the noted 8 cottages and 16 rural houses as detailed in the application

2. We moved to Oak Bank Cottages in 2004 to live in the country. At that time we checked for proposed developments and obtained a copy of the West Lothian Plan. At that time the plan detailed the 5000(max) houses at Gavieside and showed that the Breich Water was the boundary extent for any future development (see attached plan). The proposed development to the south of Oak Bank Cottages is on a Greenfield site, the field is in active use (cattle every year) and was not considered suitable for development in the plan.
3. The Master Plan Dwg 08053/P(2)-01 appears to be promoting an Environmental development, but there are substantial flaws in this rationale and further queries raised on this drawing as follows:
 - I. There is no guarantee that any items on the list of "Ecological Aspects" would be used with this development
 - II. 3 number wind turbines are located around the foot of the bing. From experience in the design of windfarms, the locations are not suitable for the generation of substantial wind power, in particular the 2 number windfarms on the east side of the bing and therefore sheltered from the predominant westerly wind. There is no detail on the size of these turbines and whether the ground conditions within a previous mining area are suitable for the dynamic load effects. In addition there are several buzzards and kites in this area and the turbines would risk bird strike

- III. There are currently no facilities or bus routes in the Westwood area and each proposed house would typically result in a further 2 cars
- IV. The “Reed beds and Wildlife Area” to the east of the business park may result in odours from the sewage treatment process (and it is not clear on the extent of the properties feeding into this reed bed). The existing Oak Bank Cottages are located on the other side of the railway embankment, but the prevailing westerly winds will carry this smell to the houses and the gardens. No information on how maintenance of reed beds would be undertaken
- V. The “Design Concept” notes “with the hope of home grown produce for sale and low scale activities being introduced by the crafting this would create growth of both heritage and a community for the area” – these are unrealistic aspirations and would appear to be trying to promote a crofting community to try and comply with West Lothian Council Rural Development policies
- VI. The “Design Concept” notes “And these uses will give appropriate management to the trees and landscape, encouraging wildlife visitors will enhance the area” – it is extremely unlikely that a few more trees will bring in so many wildlife visitors into a housing estate. Conversely if the extremely unlikely scenario arises, the additional visitors may endanger and cause pedestrian erosion of the Fiver Sisters bing and cause parking problems if additional visitors walk the 2 mile circular Forestry Commission path at Easter Breich (north of Oak Bank Cottages).

4. Further comments on Master Plan Dwg 08053/P(2-)01 are:

- I. Our understanding is the 16 houses are on large plots due to being built on a Greenfield site, fields in active use and to try and comply with crofting policies. By applying the same logic, only 1 house would be feasible to the south of Oak Bank Cottages
- II. The Planning Application and plan refers to 8 cottages, but the plan appears to show 6 cottages. This raises the question of where, if at all, the further 2 cottages will be located. There are also no guarantees that the location of the houses shown would be the actual location, should the development proceed
- III. A hammer head is shown at the entrance to the new cottages – it does not state whether this is to maintain farm access into the fields or is for future development
- IV. The access road to the 8 cottages is extremely close to a blind corner (travelling east) and over the bridge. There have recently been 3 road accidents on the B7015 and this entrance would further increase the risk of accidents. The sightlines are below standard for a new development. A 20mph limit has also just been enforced outside Oak Bank Cottages, however this would appear to give more of a challenge to irresponsible drivers as they approach the bend (heading east) prior to the bridge
- V. There is no mention of how the sewage from the cottages will be treated and whether the intention is to connect into the existing Oak Bank Cottages septic tank. It is unlikely that there is sufficient capacity in the existing tank for 8 more cottages

- VI. The most easterly cottage is shown located on contours with a 4m level drop. It is unlikely to locate the cottage at this location and hence the point in (ii) above regarding fixing the cottages location
 - VII. The extent of the proposed cottage gardens are not shown nor are any parking areas or garages for the new cottages. We therefore consider the Masterplan Drawing to be incomplete
 - VIII. Drainage problems are already evident on the B7015 at the corner to the north of the entrance to the Cemex factory. The increase in hard landscaping may result in additional flows to this drainage network and further exacerbate the situation
5. The New Entrance Dwg 08053/P(2-)03 details "Potential Spaces for Bus Stops". There is currently a 7.5T mgw weight limit on the bridge to the east of Oak Bank Cottages and this therefore negates the possibility of a bus service, unless the bridge is upgraded to full 40T HA load capacity. In order for buses to enter Livingston from the compound at the "Works" (Dwg 08053/P(2-)02, under "C"), the buses currently have to head towards Stoneyburn , back to West Calder and then on to Livingston. As a result of the weight restriction and the removal of the buses and lorries to the Cemex factory have made a substantial improvement to the noise pollution at Oak Bank Cottages.
- The plan would appear to suggest that vehicles will access the site from Stoneyburn, but again there are no guarantees that this would be the case. This further increases the risk of heavy traffic passing Oak Bank Cottages and endangering the Health and Safety of the residents, including at least 15 resident children. We formally request that it is made a Planning Condition that any vehicles above 7.5T enter the proposed new units (and the proposed Waste Transfer Station) from the Stoneyburn end of the B7015.

I trust you will consider these objections and seek to repel this application.

Yours faithfully



BEng(Hons) CEng MICE