



Our Ref : DL/JL/1404

17 October 2014

Development Planning
West Lothian Council
County Buildings
High Street
Linlithgow
West Lothian
EH49 7EZ

Dear Sir / Madam,

**REPRESENTATION : WEST LoTHIAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN MAIN ISSUES REPORT
BALLENCRIEFF TOLL, BATHGATE**

Following the recent publication of the West Lothian Local Development Plan Main Issues Report, we write on behalf of our clients, Kayclair LLP, to provide comment in relation to a site at Ballencrieff Toll, Bathgate.

The site subject to this representation is bound to the north by existing farmland, to the east and south by existing residential properties and to the west by the B792 (see **Appendix 1**). In all regards it should be noted with some significance that a larger site was suggested earlier in the Local Development Plan process (at the Expression of Interest stage) and as such the reduced site now submitted takes account of comments received to the previous submission from West Lothian Council. Indeed the site subject to this representation takes account of the previous assessment undertaken and as such will ensure any development is compatible in landscape and visual impact terms and will result in the consolidation and round off of the Ballencrieff Toll settlement.

Upfront and for the avoidance of doubt, it is submitted that in order to maintain an effective five year housing land supply at all times an increased supply of land for housing should be allocated within the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan. In this regard it is submitted that the site in question at Ballencrieff Toll should be identified and zoned in the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan for residential purposes and indeed, more specifically, for elderly / retirement housing.

At the outset it should be noted that the preferred housing strategy, as detailed in the West Lothian Local Development Plan Main Issues Report, is welcomed. It is however submitted that the strategy should go further and allocate a greater number of sites for residential

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purposes in order to provide an increased and truly generous supply of land for housing to maintain an effective 5 year housing land supply at all times.

Indeed the content of Scottish Planning Policy (2014) should be considered with some significance. It states :

“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.”*

Furthermore, in relation to providing a generous housing land supply, Scottish Planning Policy continues and states :

*“Within the overall housing supply target, plans should indicate the number of new homes to be built over the plan period. This figure should be **increased by a margin of 10% to 20%** to establish the housing land requirement, in order to ensure that a **generous** supply of land for housing is provided.”*

In this regard it is submitted that although generally welcoming the preferred strategy (for housing growth in West Lothian identified in the Main Issues Report), it is submitted that additional (particularly smaller and effective) housing sites should be allocated and zoned in order to provide a generous housing land supply which will in turn help to encourage development, and help ensure that at least a 5 year effective housing land supply is available at all times. The allocation of an increased generous supply of housing land (particularly small and effective housing sites) will in all regards maximise flexibility and help to deliver units on the ground at a time when the housing building and development industry is under extreme economic and market pressures.

In light of the above it is submitted that an increase in the number of allocated housing sites within the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan will help increase the flexibility available to housebuilders and developers and will in turn encourage development.

In this regard it is submitted that the site in question at Ballencrieff Toll should be identified and zoned in the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan for residential purposes.

Furthermore, it is submitted that consideration should be given to allocating the site within the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan for use as specific retirement / elderly housing. Indeed, in this regard it is significant to note that recent discussions with local estate agents has identified a demand for such housing within the local area. In this regard the following comment from a local estate agent relates to the demand for small single storey homes for retiring buyers :

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“The demand for smaller, affordable, single storey properties in West Lothian is very high and is increasingly growing. Many retiring buyers are faced with the prospect of leaving a larger family home of 3-4 bedrooms with the only option of an affordable next purchase being an apartment. Few people are ready or need to make such a larger step and most would still like to have a front and back door and small outside space rather than taking the step into an apartment block. The problem is that there are very few properties / products available on the open market to fill this gap, particularly the significant demand from the sector of the market who have purchased an ex local authority property some years ago as a family home and the property is either (a) too big for them now and/or (b) they are unfit to manage a 2 storey property with large gardens. The average ex local authority in West Lothian and more specifically in Bathgate can range anywhere between £110k-£140k and people selling these properties are often unable to afford the small number of bungalows that come to market. For this reason, I am very confident that any new small development of single storey properties within a price range below £150k would have a very strong appeal anywhere in West Lothian and would bridge the gap for this sector of the market who are not yet ready to move to an apartment or sheltered housing. This, in turn would of course free up the valuable ex-local authority properties to the next generation of family buyers who are perhaps “second time buyers” taking the next natural step on the property ladder.”

In addition recent press articles highlighting the lack of elderly/retirement homes should also be considered with some significance (see Appendix 2).

The identification of the site at Ballencrieff Toll for residential purposes, and more specifically for elderly / retirement housing, will help to provide a truly generous housing land supply while also enabling existing larger housing units to become available. In this regard and in terms of an affordable housing contribution, the site developer would be willing to discuss the possible provision to West Lothian Council of an agreed number of the retirement / elderly housing units for an agreed period of time at an agreed discussed rent.

It is submitted that the site could accommodate approximately six single storey bungalows for the elderly / retirement market or two 1½ storey larger family homes (as per the surrounding residential properties). Recent discussions with local estate agents have identified the need for such housing within the local area.

In assessing the site at Ballencrieff Toll, Bathgate for inclusion as a housing site within the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan, the effectiveness criteria as stated within Planning Advice Note PAN2/2010 entitled ‘Affordable Housing and Housing Land Audits’ should be considered with some significance. In this regard PAN2/2010 advises as follows :

“The effectiveness of individual sites should be determined by planning authorities in the light of consistent interpretation of the following criteria and through discussions with housing providers. The aim is to achieve a realistic picture of the available effective land supply which

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can contribute to the housing requirement so that the level of additional housing, and therefore land needed to meet the overall requirement, can be established. To assess a site or a portion of a site as being effective, it must be demonstrated that within the five-year period beyond the date of the audit the site can be developed for housing (i.e. residential units can be completed and available for occupation), and will be free of constraints on the following basis:

ownership : *the site is in the ownership or control of a party which can be expected to develop it or to release it for development. Where a site is in the ownership of a local authority or other public body, it should be included only where it is part of a programme of land disposal;*

physical : *the site, or relevant part of it, is free from constraints related to slope, aspect, flood risk, ground stability or vehicular access which would preclude its development. Where there is a solid commitment to removing the constraints in time to allow development in the period under consideration, or the market is strong enough to fund the remedial work required, the site should be included in the effective land supply;*

contamination : *previous use has not resulted in contamination of the site or, if it has, commitments have been made which would allow it to be developed to provide marketable housing;*

deficit funding : *any public funding required to make residential development economically viable is committed by the public bodies concerned;*

marketability : *the site, or a relevant part of it, can be developed in the period under consideration;*

infrastructure : *the site is either free of infrastructure constraints, or any required infrastructure can be provided realistically by the developer or another party to allow development; and*

land use : *housing is the sole preferred use of the land in planning terms, or if housing is one of a range of possible uses other factors such as ownership and marketability point to housing being a realistic option."*

In all regards, given the above, it is submitted that the site at Ballencrieff Toll, Bathgate can be positively considered against the terms of the aforementioned criteria. Indeed, the following comments relate to each of the noted criteria :

ownership : the site owners are committed to bringing the site forward for development or release to others for development.

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physical : the site is considered to be capable of being free from all physical constraints (as identified in PAN 2/2010).

It is considered relevant to note that the site is smaller than that previously submitted to the West Lothian Local Development Plan "Expressions of Interest" exercise which was undertaken in January 2011. The reduced area focuses the site on the lower half of the slope while the proposal relates to the development of approximately 6 single storey bungalows, thus enabling the proposed development to be appropriately sheltered and screened. Indeed, recent discussions with a landscape architect have confirmed that the site in question is capable of being sensitively developed for residential purposes and would represent a fit (in landscape and visual impact terms) within the landscape. In all regards the West Lothian Council assessment also confirms such a landscape fit. The assessment states that the *"lower half of site more sheltered and screened"*. In light of the above it is submitted that the proposed development is capable of positive consideration in relation to the landscape and visual impact and the landscape fit.

In terms of access, the site would be accessed from the B792 and as such an appropriate access point was previously approved as part of planning application 0115/03. It is submitted that this access point could also provide access to the proposed site and in addition could be altered to widen the roadway etc. to allow for the development proposed by this representation. In this regard the consultation response from Highways in relation to application 0115/03 notes the potential of further development and states *"access arrangements may have to be altered if there is potential for more units to be constructed to the north"*. It is therefore significant to note that it is possible to undertake the appropriate alterations to the access to enable the proposed development to be suitably accessed.

deficit funding : deficit funding is not considered to be required to allow the development to progress.

marketability : the site is considered a highly marketable housing site and in all regards recent discussions with local estate agents have identified demand for elderly / retirement housing and as such this specific type of housing is considered to be highly marketable in the local area.

infrastructure / contamination : the site is considered to be capable of being free from infrastructure / contamination constraints.

land use : the site is suitable for residential use and as such it is submitted that the site should be identified as being suitable for elderly / retirement housing.

In all regards, given the above, it is submitted that the site at Ballencrieff Toll, Bathgate can be positively considered against the terms of the aforementioned criteria. In this respect the site is under the control of a party which can be expected to develop it or release it for development, is capable of being free of constraints, does not require deficit funding and is

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considered highly marketable. The site is therefore considered to be an effective housing site and it is submitted that it should be allocated within the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan for residential purposes.

It is significant to note that the site to the south of the representation site was granted planning consent (0115/03) in October 2003 for the erection of two houses and garages and associated access road, provision of footpath and landscaping. In all regards it is submitted that the proposed development site subject to this representation can be accessed, will fit into the landscape and would enhance the area as a whole, rounding off the existing unplanned developments in the surrounding area and creating a clear and defensible settlement boundary at Ballencrieff Toll.

In all regards it is significant to note that there has been no planned expansion of Ballencrieff Toll and as such West Lothian Council have reacted to housing proposals generated by market interest. It is submitted that the proposal subject to this representation will round off the existing unplanned developments in the surrounding area and create a clear and defensible settlement boundary at Ballencrieff Toll.

In terms of community facilities, the site is well placed to take advantage of local retail facilities at Hopetoun Street (approximately 1 mile walk) and local transport facilities at Bathgate Railway Station (some 1.3 mile walk from the site). Bathgate Sports Centre and Balbardie Park of Peace Golf Course are also located nearby and are within 0.3 mile walk of the site. In addition local bus services are accessible within acceptable walking distances.

In all regards it is submitted that the site is capable of positive consideration against relevant aspects of national planning policy.

In light of all of the above it is significant to note the following :

- This representation seeks allocation / zoning of the site at Ballencrieff Toll, Bathgate allocated for residential purposes in the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan and more specifically for elderly / retirement housing.
- The proposal relates to the lower part of a previously submitted site and would be sheltered and screened therefore having a minimal effect on the landscape.
- Discussions with a landscape architect have confirmed the acceptability in landscape terms of development of the site for residential purposes.
- The site can be appropriately accessed.
- The proposed development would enhance the area as a whole, rounding off the existing unplanned surrounding developments and creating a clear and defensible settlement boundary.

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- ❑ Discussions with local estate agents have identified the demand which exists for elderly / retirement housing in the area.
- ❑ Elderly / retirement housing would enhance the local area and help increase the availability of other house types.
- ❑ The proposed site is considered to be an effective housing site and is within easy reach of a variety of local facilities / services.

Given all of the aforementioned, it is submitted that in order to maintain an effective five year housing land supply at all times an increased supply of land for housing should be allocated within the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan. In this regard it is submitted that the site in question at Ballencrieff Toll should be identified and zoned in the emerging West Lothian Local Development Plan for residential purposes and indeed, more specifically, for elderly / retirement housing.

Yours sincerely,



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Enc :

Appendix 1 : Location Plan

Appendix 2 : Newspaper Article re Retirement Homes

**Appendix 1 :
Location Plan**



Appendix 2 :
Newspaper Article re Retirement Homes



Government must build more OAP-friendly homes for ageing population

A GENERATION of pensioners could be left to cope in unsuitable, large family homes because Britain is not building enough retirement housing for a rapidly ageing population.



Less than three per cent of housing being currently built takes into consideration the elderly [GETTY]

Just 2.8 per cent of all new homes currently under construction in the UK are being built with the elderly in mind, found the latest Retirement Housing report from consultants Knight Frank.

And with people aged over 65s making up nearly 23 per cent of the population in the next 20 years, this lack of supply will force younger families searching for bigger homes to either pay a premium as demand builds or raise their children in cramped homes.

Steve Wilkie, managing director of retirement specialists Responsible Life, said: "This is another issue associated with an ageing population that's

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At the end of the day, if the numbers don't stack up for developers, then the government needs to step in

Steve Wilkie, Responsible Life

"The incentives for developers to build retirement properties are clearly not attractive enough if there are so few new homes being built to service the elderly market.

"At the end of the day, if the numbers don't stack up for developers, then the government needs to step in. This shouldn't be simply about profit margins."

A quarter of those aged 55-plus say they are likely to consider relocating to a retirement village in the future - suggesting that at least 4.4m people would consider buying or renting a purpose-built retirement property.

Grainne Gilmore, head of UK residential research at Knight Frank, said: "Building more homes suitable for older people in their retirement means that downsizing or moving may become a more attractive

option.

"This, in turn, will help free up family housing, which will benefit all homeowners and the wider housing market.

"There's no doubt that potential demand for these types of property is large, and is only set to grow.

"The housing wealth held by older generations is sizeable, and has been boosted by a near tripling in house prices over the last 20 years - downsizing to realise this wealth amid longer retirements is set to gain momentum."

Experts also pointed to the part practical homes can play in helping to mitigate the care burden on both residents and their families.

Ensuring older people have access to support and the level of care they need as they age can not only enhance living standards, but can cut care bills later in life as fewer acute services are needed.

In many cases, living in suitable housing can ensure people stay in their own home for longer.

However Jane Slade, editor of Retiremove.co.uk, a specialist website for older people looking for properties, said: "The market is particularly poorly catered for at the middle and lower end as the profit margins are much smaller for developers.

"These developers also provide fewer facilities and often no on-site care so older people moving here will have to move again if they need nursing help.

"These schemes don't necessarily solve the loneliness problem among older people either as many don't offer communal facilities."

At the beginning of the 20th century, those aged 65 or over made up five per cent of the population, in 20 years' time, this proportion will rise to around 18 million, according to the Office of National Statistics.

Across the globe the number of those aged over 60 will nearly triple by 2050, rising to 2.4 billion, up from 894 million in 2010.

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OAP homes crisis as government fails to build suitable elderly housing | UK | News | Daily Express
to pick up in the years to come.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/522321/Shortage-of-pensioner-homes-in-UK>

Data from Glenigan, the construction analysts, shows that the number of elderly housing units awaiting planning consent is more than double the number currently being built.

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