

## WLC REF: MIRQ0215

With reference to sites E01-0038 and E01-0040 identified in the WLC Main Issues Report 2014 we would like to make the following comments.

We consider that these sites should not be used for housing development for the following reasons:

1. *Green Network.* cf West Lothian place-based Green Networks. West Lothian Local Development Plan: background paper Plan 1&2:
  - Both sites are adjacent to and impose on an existing 'Blue Infrastructure asset'. The opportunities for enhancement of this path identified by WLC include an additional access point and biodiversity improvement through riparian planting
  - The path from Oakbank Cottages on B7015 to the Almond River currently links to Seafield and follows a 2 mile circular route following the Breich burn back to Oakbank Cottages. There are links to Livingston and Kirkton en route. This path is used widely by walkers, cyclists and horse riders, it provides a rural experience in an area which is close to the major urban centre of Livingston. The amenity value of the path would be greatly decreased if housing developments were to be implemented. The path has recently been substantially improved. Litter picking to conserve the area is regularly undertaken by members of the local community.
2. *Biodiversity:*
  - The sites are adjacent to the confluence of the River Almond and Breich burn - this is an important riparian habitat.
  - The fields and wooded areas provide significant wildlife corridors linking fragmented areas of woodland.
  - Site E01 0040 is a nesting site for large numbers of lapwings in Spring (personal observation). Lapwings are on the RSPB Red list for conservation importance.
  - Otters and kingfishers have been sighted in this area of the Breich Burn. European otters are 'near threatened' on IUCN Red List and kingfishers are on the RSPB Amber list for conservation importance.
  - Tawny owls inhabit the woods.

Housing would result in widespread loss of habitat and possible degradation of further areas of this rich and ecologically diverse area and might result in the loss of the species mentioned in this locality.

3. *Agriculture:* the land is actively farmed and produces annual crops and should be retained for agricultural use

### **General Comments on Development sites**

In the general area of Blackburn and Seafield there seem to be many derelict brownfield sites which would benefit from reclamation and if rendered safe, could be used for development. cf West Lothian Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental report.

Bordering Simpson Parkway, West of Livingston, there are many commercial properties that have been unoccupied for years and yet areas of new build are planned. It would be more sustainable to either upgrade and use these numerous buildings or demolish the buildings and re-allocate the land for housing.

Plans by WLC to undertake tree planting in many areas are excellent but also planning for a sustainable future it is essential that existing mature woodlands and belts of trees are maintained and that building developments do not further fragment existing woods.

