

Education Impact Analysis

Seafield Road

Blackburn, West Lothian

Application Reference 0704/P/12



Introduction

This Education Impact Analysis (EdIA) has been produced in response to the refusal of planning application No. 0704/P/12 by West Lothian Council, one of the grounds for which was stated as being that:

“The proposal is contrary to policy HOU 6 of the approved Edinburgh & the Lothians’ Structure Plan 2015 and policy IMP 3 of the adopted West Lothian Local Plan in that there is a lack of educational capacity at Bathgate Academy and at St Kentigern’s Academy to support the scale of windfall housing development proposed.”

Response

The Education Authority, in response to a request for an impact assessment of the site by West Lothian’s Planning Authority, provided information on 5 April 2013 concerning this application. The content of that letter was used by members of the Planning Authority as the basis upon which they considered the potential impact of the application on the local schools estate, with no site visit to the schools themselves having taken place and therefore a limited degree of interrogation of the school capacity or roll projection figures being possible by the planning committee.

This is unfortunate as the very first page of that letter contains erroneous information which is subsequently used to build the case against the application.

On the first page of this letter, under *“Catchment Area, School Capacities and School Rolls”*, Education Services claim that the 2012 start of session roll (SSOR) of Bathgate Academy was 890 pupils and that the corresponding figure for St. Kentigern’s Academy was 1215. These figures do not correspond to those statutorily submitted by the Education Authority to Scottish Government in the annual school census for 2012, which were 901 and 1218 pupils respectively for Bathgate Academy and St. Kentigern’s Academy.

Given the care which West Lothian Council normally takes to produce accurate figures, and the very small margins of error that it claims is a result of its detailed analysis of school capacities, rolls and their projections it is unfortunate that discrepancies of more than 1% appear in the very first year of the forecast, as this error can only be compounded in all succeeding years.

This is particularly unhelpful for the assessment of this planning application as the figures involved are well within what could be the margin of error in the council’s projected school rolls. Clearly the projection given for the two secondary schools will have to be revised in the light of the altered roll figures for 2012.

Detailed Argument

Bathgate Academy

It can be seen from WLC's own roll projection figures in the Forecast Update submitted to the Council (and appended to this paper for ease of reference) as part of its consideration of the planning application and shown below, that the extension of Bathgate Academy to a 1320 pupil capacity school will be sufficient to accommodate the housing programmed into the Housing Land Audit, from 2019 onwards.

| Bathgate Academy | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| S1 Intake (220 limit) | 152 | 169 | 175 | 180 | 180 | 196 | 221 | 205 | 234 | 211 |
| Total Roll Current Capacity 1210 pupils | 825 | 793 | 806 | 839 | 875 | 914 | 966 | 994 | 1046 | 1068 |

WLC then questions its own figures in the papers for that same meeting to discuss the application suggesting that the base line data upon which its roll forecasts are constructed isn't accurate.

WLC indicates in a note appended to these roll forecasts that the degree of uncertainty inherent in its data is such that it suspends its normal practice, which it has used in the past to justify refusal of even single house applications and single placing requests in the associated primary schools, and uses a forecast range instead.

WLC Note on its Forecast Update

"The current base school roll forecasts are drawn from 2011 data and were approved by the Education Executive on the 9th October 2012. The executive were advised that the data feeding into this forecast may well be at its most negative point. There are indications in more recent data that the trend in school rolls is less negative; e.g. analysis of the 2012 primary school census and more current catchment statistics show that the 2019 S1 intake will be 10 pupils above current S1 capacity, could be 19 to 39 pupils above capacity, based on pupils current school attendance."

It is noted that this unprecedented degree of uncertainty is also a feature of WLC's denominational secondary forecasting in this area, where it has an even more pronounced affect – more on this below in the section on denominational schools.

What does this mean in practical terms?

As the WLC Note is so unclear we can only interpret the figures based upon experience of previous forecasts and have therefore assumed that the 19 to 39 pupils above capacity actually means above the current roll projections. A literal interpretation of this sentence would indicate a projected roll of 1229 – 1249 for 2019, which is clearly way beyond any previous expectations.

The amended Bathgate Academy roll forecast taking account of the change to the data, or rather the possible range of the changes, provides new base line figures, upon which we can then add the impact of new housing which has not been included in the Start of Session Rolls (SoSR) for the period up to 2022, as follows;

| Bathgate Academy | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| S1 Intake (220 limit) | 152 | 169 | 175 | 180 | 180 | 196 | 221 | 205 | 234 | 211 |
| Revised S1 intake | | | | | | | 230 | 214 | 243 | 220 |
| Effect on total roll | | | | | | | +9 | +18 | +27 | +36 |
| Total Roll Capacity 1210 | 825 | 793 | 806 | 839 | 875 | 914 | 966 | 994 | 1046 | 1068 |
| Lower limit based on +19 | | | | | | | 985 | 1022 | 1083 | 1095 |
| Upper limit based on +39 | | | | | | | 1005 | 1042 | 1103 | 1115 |

The amended base line school roll at 2022 is therefore between 1095 and 1115 pupils and it should be noted that these figures do not yet include the impact of new housing, either in the pre- or post-2022 period.

The WLC paper indicates on page 2 that the number of houses to be built within the Bathgate Academy catchment area before, and then after, 2022 is as follows;

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----------|
| Houses not included pre-2022 | 367 | 63 pupils |
| Houses to be constructed post 2022 | 301 | 51 pupils |

Therefore the **total number of pupils projected to be in the Bathgate Academy catchment area from planned housing sites** during the entire forecast period = 1209 – 1229 pupils.

Now if we add the 30 pupils arising from this development in the long run then we can see that the roll of Bathgate Academy, on WLC's own figures, will be between 1239 & 1259 pupils, which is well below the 1320 extended capacity of the school.

It can therefore be seen that the extension to Bathgate Academy will easily be large enough to incorporate the pupil product arising from this site and that the council quotes an education contribution figure of £2,437 per residential unit to support this move.

Note from WLC paper:

“To support the development strategy of the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2015 (E&LSP) and the West Lothian Local Plan (WLLP) (as adopted 13 January 2009), the Education Executive approved an extension to Bathgate Academy on the 16 June 2008. Contributions of £2,437 per residential unit are being requested from all developers with applications within the Bathgate Academy catchment area. This contribution to be indexed to the RICS Building Cost Information Service Tender Price Index 2nd quarter of 2008.”

Denominational Provision

St. Kentigern's Academy

It is noted that the projected denominational, secondary pupil product from the development site is only 7 pupils (0.06 x 120 units) and when set against the scale of the issue which West Lothian Council now faces in this sector this is a statistically inconsequential figure, well within the margin of error of the roll projections and the much larger scale problem which the authority faces.

Taking the 2012 base roll projections from WLC's documentation, both St. Kentigern's (RC) Academy and its sister school St. Margaret's (RC) Academy, will experience rolls that will be far in excess of their current, or even planned capacities. This demands a solution of a scale that far exceeds any issues raised by the application site, one which will create enough school capacity to easily accommodate the pupil product from the proposed housing.

St. Margaret's is projected to have a roll of 1702 (1248 pupils in the system plus an additional 454 arising from the Housing Land Audit) with an extended capacity of only 1320. Similarly, St. Kentigern's

with a capacity of 1430 pupils will not be large enough to accommodate its projected roll of 1,685 – a combined shortfall of some 637 places across the RC secondary sector by the end of the plan period.

The combined projected roll is therefore well in excess of the combined capacity of these two schools which jointly serve the West Lothian area, as detailed below:

| | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------------|
| Combined roll | 1702 + 1685 | 3387 |
| Combined capacity (after St Margaret's extension) | 1320 + 1430 | 2750 |
| | shortfall | 637 pupil places |

In response to these challenging circumstances, and in recognition of its statutory duty to make provision for the education of pupils in its area, WLC has indicated that it will either extend St. Margaret’s (RC) Academy or construct a new RC High School at Winchburgh, and then undertake a catchment review across the whole of its RC secondary provision. Either of these options will create more than enough capacity to accommodate the relatively small number of pupils arising from the application site.

A number of other options are also open to the council for dealing with this shortfall, including the phasing out of ND placing requests into these RC schools, the realignment of denominational secondary provision across the boundary between WLC and CEC or, and this is an increasingly discussed option across Scotland in light of Curriculum for Excellence, a senior years college either as a stand alone or in partnership with West Lothian College.

As indicated above, rather than rebalance its RC high schools by phasing out placing requests made by parents of Non-Denominational pupils (which historically have accounted for roughly 50% of the total school roll in both cases), WLC plans to construct a new RC high school at Winchburgh, on the administrative border with the City of Edinburgh. This raises a number of questions as regards the council’s approach to the policy tests of the relevant Circular, 3/2012, as follows;

- It is not clear whether the council’s approach to the provision of places in the RC sector fully meets the reasonableness tests of the Circular, given that a significant percentage of places are taken up by Non-Denominational pupils
- Given that the council is already committed to delivering a new RC high school, the relative impact of 7 pupils arising from this particular development falls well within the margin of error for projecting the new school’s roll
- The lack of any meaningful discussions between West Lothian Council and the neighbouring authority in the City of Edinburgh, over the re-alignment of secondary school capacities does not rule out that option in the future

Clearly, any of these options will require a significant effort, and consequential resource, which will simply dwarf the numbers of denominational secondary pupils projected to arise from this particular development. Whichever solution the council adopts will provide enough capacity to accommodate these 7 projected pupils.

It is therefore submitted that there is no real education constraint so far as this school sector is concerned and this part of the council's case against the application falls.

Summary

In the non-denominational secondary sector around 30 pupils are projected to arise from this development. The relative impact of this small number, when taken against the need for a more comprehensive solution to a much larger problem which the council has allowed to develop, is marginal and can certainly be accommodated as an integral part of the wider solution, i.e. the programmed extension to Bathgate Academy.

This relatively small number of ND secondary pupils, when taken over the lifetime of the development, i.e. 5 years or more, would result in an increase of 6 pupils per school session, or an average of a single pupil for each of the high school year groups. This minor addition to the high school roll will be easily accommodated in the extended Bathgate Academy which the council requires to construct regardless of this development coming forward.

In the RC sector, the number of pupils arising from the application site lies well within the margin of error of WLC's own forecasting methodology, and any solution to the much wider problem will be able to easily accommodate the pupils from the application site. Similar to the ND sector, the number of pupils arising from this site is around 1 per year group, which is well within both the margin of error for forecasting but also within the normal ebb and flow of pupils in and out of a school each year.

It is therefore submitted that there is, or shall not be, any education constraint in relation to either Bathgate Academy or St. Kentigern's (RC) Academy as regards this site.

Phil Brown BSc, MSc, MEd

Phil has extensive experience as an Education-Planning Officer with both a large Regional and a very active unitary council in central Scotland. Phil developed the methodology for and provided the statistical analysis and roll projections upon which one of the country's largest school building programmes was constructed. This work involved the rationalisation of the schools estate, along with the required catchment area reviews and the defence of his strategy at the Local Plan Inquiry.

Ross Martin BSc (Hons), PGCE

Ross has worked with public and private sector clients all across Scotland since establishing the TPS education-planning consultancy 10 years ago, following a decade in senior roles in local government, including a period as national spokesperson on education and also advising the Minister in the early years of the Scottish Parliament. Ross, originally a high school teacher, has appeared as an expert education witness at a number of local plan inquiries and application appeals, and also advised a number of local authorities on their education-planning strategies.

See appendix below

|

TPS Education

June 2013

Appendix 1 – WLC Education Service Response



West Lothian Council
Development Management
County Buildings
Linlithgow
EH47 9EZ

West Lothian
EH54 6FF
05 April 2013

Planning Officer:
Tony Irving

Education consultation on application 0704/P/12 at land at Redhouse for planning permission in principle for the erection of 6.5Ha residential development with associated landscaping, roads and ancilliary works at land at Seafield Road Blackburn.

Catchment Areas, School Capacities and School Rolls

| | School Name | School Capacity | Future Planned Capacity | 2012 Start of Session Roll | Classes in Stage Full |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ND primary | Murrayfield | 306 | | 254 | Reserved Places P7 |
| RC Primary | Our Lady of Lourdes | 171 | | 148 | 2 spaces P1-P6 |
| ND Secondary | Bathgate Academy | 1210 | Extend to 1320 | 890 | Reserved Places S3-S4 |
| RC Secondary | St Kentigerns Academy | 1430 | None Planned | 1215 | Reserved Places S2-S4 |

Schools over capacity at the time of consultation

Our Lady of Lourdes' pupil roll tends to follow the class organisation of 6 classes, mainly composite classes, giving a maximum roll of 150 pupils. During the school session it is typically unlikely to have places except from waiting list.

Council approved Base 2011 forecasts for the period 2013 to 2022 approved Education Executive 9th October 2012 (Start of Session School Rolls)

Murrayfield Primary School

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Cap | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| 306 | 279 | 283 | 279 | 276 | 275 | 270 | 265 | 274 | 273 | 274 |

Assumptions:

Stage migration: 1.0028

Child per house: 0.316 (average West Lothian)

Houses predicted for construction between 2013-2022 = 53

Houses predicted for construction post 2022 = 70

Houses not included in Start of Session School Rolls above = 99 (31 pupils)

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Cap | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| 171 | 139 | 144 | 141 | 143 | 144 | 142 | 144 | 147 | 150 | 152 |

Assumptions:

Stage migration: 0.95

Child per house: 0.0927 (average West Lothian)

Houses predicted for construction between 2013-2022 = 164

Houses predicted for construction post 2022 = 963

Houses not included in Start of Session School Rolls above = 1016 (94 pupils, note that this includes 950 units at Gavieside Farm, part of the Livingston and Almond Valley core development area.)

Bathgate Academy

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|------|------|------|
| Cap | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| S1 | 152 | 169 | 175 | 180 | 180 | 196 | 221 | 205 | 234 | 211 |
| 220 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 825 | 793 | 806 | 839 | 875 | 914 | 966 | 994 | 1046 | 1068 |
| 1210 | | | | | | | | | | |

Assumptions:

P7_S1 Transfer Rate: 0.95

Stage migration: 0.95

Child per house: 0.1710

Houses predicted for construction between 2013-2022 = 847

Houses predicted for construction post 2022 = 301

Houses not included in Start of Session School Rolls above = 367 (63 pupils)

Total Associated Primary School Roll Forecast for Bathgate, 2012-2022

Start of Session Rolls

| | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | Total |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 2011 | 201 | 185 | 185 | 178 | 168 | 152 | 128 | 1197 |
| 2012 | 245 | 202 | 182 | 185 | 177 | 170 | 150 | 1309 |
| 2013 | 228 | 243 | 200 | 181 | 185 | 177 | 170 | 1384 |
| 2014 | 261 | 225 | 239 | 198 | 180 | 184 | 176 | 1463 |
| 2015 | 230 | 256 | 221 | 235 | 196 | 178 | 182 | 1497 |
| 2016 | 242 | 227 | 252 | 218 | 233 | 195 | 178 | 1546 |
| 2017 | 248 | 240 | 226 | 251 | 217 | 232 | 195 | 1610 |
| 2018 | 249 | 245 | 237 | 224 | 247 | 215 | 230 | 1646 |
| 2019 | 253 | 246 | 242 | 235 | 222 | 245 | 212 | 1655 |
| 2020 | 254 | 251 | 244 | 240 | 233 | 221 | 243 | 1685 |
| 2021 | 257 | 252 | 248 | 242 | 238 | 231 | 219 | 1685 |
| 2022 | 255 | 254 | 249 | 245 | 239 | 235 | 229 | 1705 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|------|------|------|
| Cap | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| S1 | 209 | 202 | 219 | 215 | 226 | 244 | 269 | 235 | 243 | 244 |
| 260 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 1183 | 1160 | 1149 | 1148 | 1158 | 1189 | 1250 | 1282 | 1312 | 1334 |
| 1430 | | | | | | | | | | |

Assumptions:

P7_S1 Transfer

Rate: 0.97 Stage

migration: 0.9770

Child per house:

0.06

Houses predicted for construction between 2013-

2022 = 4749 Houses predicted for construction

post 2022 = 5855

Houses not included in Start of Session School Rolls above = 6432 (386 pupils).

Total Associated Primary School Roll Forecast for St Kentigern's, 2012-2022

Start of Session Rolls

| | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | Total |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 2011 | 243 | 224 | 210 | 216 | 198 | 202 | 191 | 1484 |
| 2012 | 266 | 242 | 226 | 207 | 216 | 202 | 199 | 1559 |
| 2013 | 229 | 265 | 241 | 225 | 207 | 216 | 202 | 1585 |
| 2014 | 238 | 229 | 265 | 241 | 224 | 207 | 216 | 1619 |
| 2015 | 233 | 236 | 227 | 264 | 239 | 223 | 206 | 1629 |
| 2016 | 242 | 232 | 234 | 227 | 263 | 239 | 223 | 1661 |
| 2017 | 250 | 242 | 233 | 235 | 228 | 264 | 240 | 1691 |
| 2018 | 256 | 250 | 242 | 233 | 235 | 228 | 265 | 1708 |
| 2019 | 262 | 256 | 250 | 243 | 234 | 235 | 230 | 1709 |
| 2020 | 265 | 263 | 258 | 252 | 245 | 237 | 238 | 1757 |
| 2021 | 271 | 267 | 265 | 259 | 254 | 247 | 239 | 1802 |
| 2022 | 277 | 272 | 268 | 266 | 261 | 256 | 249 | 1849 |

Implications of application 0704/P/12 on Educational Planning

The applicant has indicated that 120 new houses are proposed. If the general forecast ratios above are applied this gives the following pupil components by sector:

Non-denominational primary school:

38 pupils Denominational primary

school pupils: 11 pupils

Non-denominational secondary school: 21 pupils (likely to rise to 30 pupils as primary school pupils become secondary age)

Denominational primary school pupils: 7 pupils (likely to rise to 9 pupils as primary school pupils become secondary age)

This assumes that the same pattern of attendance continues in West Lothian and that this is also representative of Blackburn. The ratio also assumes that the proposed development will reflect

the predominant housing mix in West Lothian, ie 78% of property being 4 habitable rooms or less. If the housing mix in the development has a lower percentage of 4 habitable rooms then the number of pupils will be greater than that stated above.

Forecast Update

The current base school roll forecasts are drawn from 2011 data and were approved by Education Executive on the 9th October 2012. The executive were advised that “the data feeding into this forecast may well be at its most negative point.” There are indications in more recent data that the trend in school rolls is less negative; eg, analysis of the 2012 primary school census and more current catchment statistics show that the 2019 S1 intake, 10 pupils above current S1 capacity, could be 19 to 39 pupils above capacity, based on pupils current school attendance.

This actual data would therefore suggest that forecast trends shown above undercount pupils already in the system. The tables for the Total Associated Primary School Roll Forecast for Bathgate Academy and St Kentigern’s Academy illustrates the increase in primary school rolls across the forecast time period, 2012- 2022. In both cases, the primary school rolls which are starting to feed through at the end of the forecast will result in secondary school capacity being exceeded. Effectively, the slow down in the economy is only delaying the point at which school capacity is exceeded and depending on the timeline, ongoing demographic changes either delay or bring forward the event.

School Implications

Current data shows that the school roll at Murrayfield will reach capacity, although potentially outwith the forecast time period. It is likely that the proposed development would require a full range of additional accommodation - school extension to support an additional 2 classes, together with commissioning, and any other capacity requirements eg general purpose accommodation, ancillary accommodation, playground space, access arrangements, all in accordance with statutory guidance.

The class organisation at Our Lady of Lourdes is based on 6 classes. This effectively means that when the school is under placement pressure that the P1-P6 classes will typically be composite, in 5 classes, all full at 25 pupils. The P7 class may be a standard class (33 pupil potential) but is unlikely to be much more than 25. Maximum school roll is thus unlikely to be much above 150 pupils in practice (6*25 pupils), 21 pupils below the stated capacity. The proposed development would thus require additional accommodation to facilitate a capacity increase that would also support an increase in the class organisation, as a minimum 1 class together with any other capacity requirements (commissioning/ancillary/regulatory).

It is likely that there would need to be an increase in pre-school accommodation to accommodate the proposed development. This may not be possible without extension works.

Altering primary school catchment areas would prove difficult given the geography and the fact that adjacent catchment schools may also be at or close to capacity. As existing housing tends to have lower child per house ratios than new, the scale of such a change would be disproportionate – ie 3-400 houses.

Available forecast school roll information indicates that Bathgate Academy will exceed current capacity, with pressure on the school from 2019 onwards (or sooner if there is a greater level of economic recovery). The planned extension to provide a 1,320 pupil capacity, 240 S1 intakes, may also be exceeded. The council has also recently undertaken a major school consultation on primary to secondary school transfer arrangements in this part of West Lothian that involved 4 non-denominational secondary schools – Armadale Academy, Bathgate Academy, Deans Community High School and Linlithgow Academy to alleviate the potential of over capacity.

It is anticipated that by 2019 that the council will have committed to either an extension at St Margaret's or the first phase of a new secondary school at Winchburgh – given the forecast pressure on school places. It should be noted that a further extension at St Margaret's would not facilitate additional development in the St Kentigern's Academy catchment area. It should also be noted that the new secondary school in Winchburgh would require a school consultation in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 to determine its catchment area and also its location. **Note that the outcome of a school consultation under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 cannot be pre-empted.** The SPG for denominational education applies. The SPG is council wide and as such the denominational sector school consultation will involve Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School.

Conclusion

The proposed development is a windfall site as defined by the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan (ie it is a site which is not identified through the forward planning process). Education Planning take the view that windfall sites can only be supported if there is reasonable expected capacity within schools to accommodate the windfall development plus development which is already committed and development sites which are allocated in adopted or emerging development plans.

Education Planning note that there is an expression of interest on this site which is presently under consideration. This is however a substantial site and while there is the possibility of expansion at Murrayfield and Our Lady of Lourdes (developer funded) there would be additional costs for the council in bussing children to Bathgate Academy. There is a significant amount of housing due to come forward at secondary level and a number of schools within the Bathgate are forecast to reach and/or exceed available capacity. This in time will feed through to catchment secondary schools and is why extensions and or/new arrangements are proposed. Current capacity and any future capacity is required for the new children from approved and/or local plan sites. Therefore at this point in time Education Planning would recommend an objection to the development of this site.

Education Contribution

Education Planning advise that this site will require to contribute to the following should it gain consent. As of 21st of August 2012 Council agreed at Council Executive Committee that starting immediately residential developments consisting of units of less than three habitable rooms would be exempt from all developer contributions for Education Infrastructure. All contributions

listed below are calculated appropriately.

Murrayfield and Our Lady
of Lourdes

As stated above, if this application were to be granted, additional school development would be required. Capacity feasibility would need to be undertaken at Murrayfield to determine the scale of works involved to increase the schools capacity and also the cost. If the council was minded to support the application it would be appropriate to attach a planning condition that prevented any house occupations in advance of the schools being extended to support the development, including funding for the required feasibility study and also forward funding of the extensions. This should also include any additional pre-school capacity required.

Bathgate
Academy

To support the development strategy of the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2015 (E&LSP) and the West Lothian Local Plan (WLLP) (as adopted 13 January 2009), the Education Executive approved an extension to Bathgate Academy on the 16 June 2008. Contributions of £2,437 per residential unit are being requested from all developers with applications within the Bathgate Academy catchment area. This contribution to be indexed to the RICS Building Cost Information Service Tender Price Index 2nd quarter of 2008. (754200-94130)

Denominational
Secondary School

£1,983 per residential unit. This is in line with para 12.17 policy IMP2 of the WLLP and the issuance of the SPG "Developer contributions to the provision of a new denominational secondary" PP&R Committee May 2005 which was subsequently updated on 29th of June 2010 by Council Executive. This payment to be index to the RICS Building Cost Information Service Tender Price Index with the 1st quarter of 2010 forming the base date. (754200-94136)

Interested parties are advised that contribution payments are normally formalised via section 69 or section 75 agreements agreed in conjunction with the planning application process. Parties wishing to discuss legal arrangements should contact our

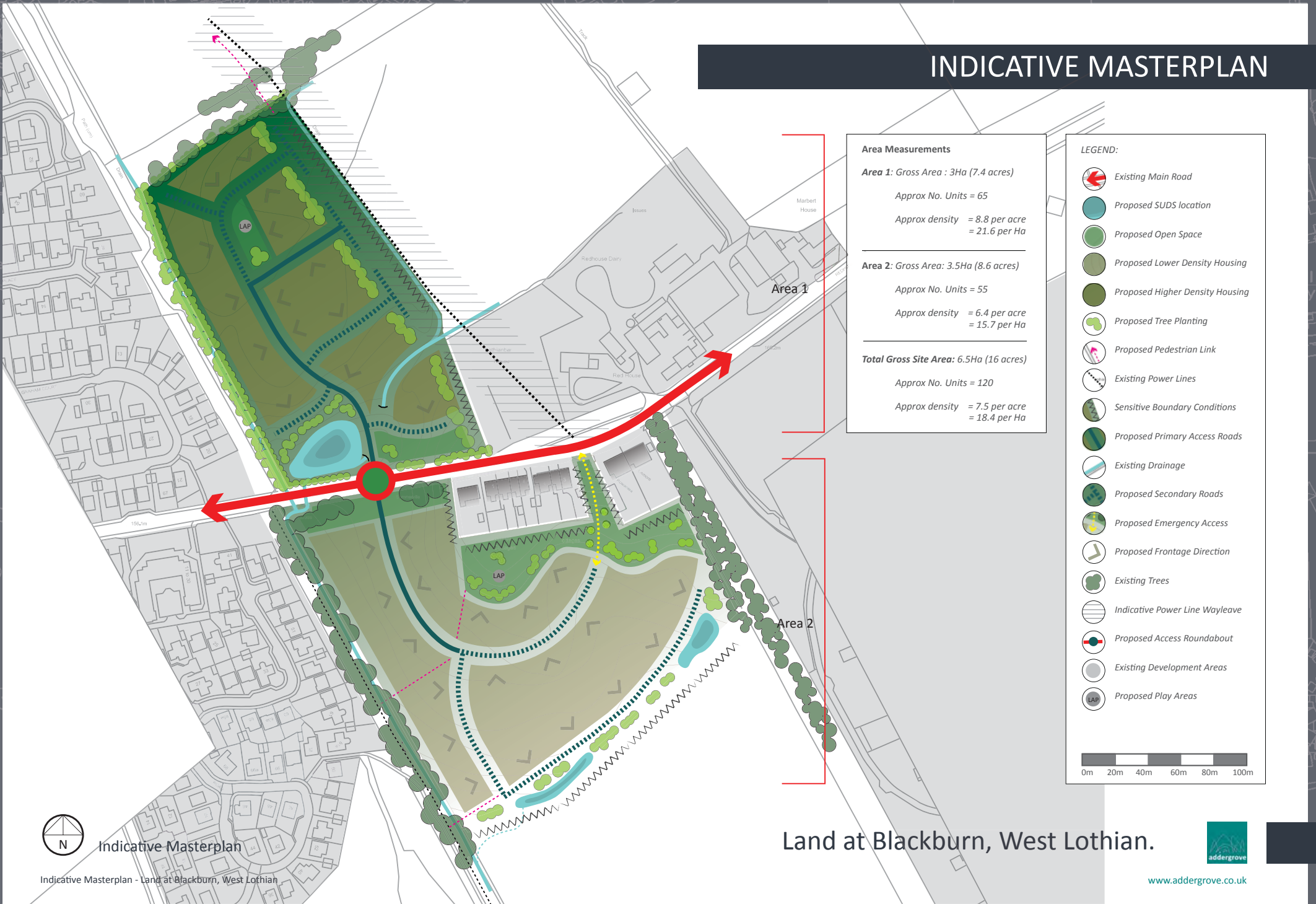
senior solicitor Tom Duncan on 01506 281596
(thomas.duncan@westlothian.gov.uk). For further information on Education issues please contact either

Mark Brooks on 01506 281855 mark.brooks@westlothian.gov.uk) or Sharon McCawley on 01506 281859

(sharon.mccawley@westlothian.gov.uk).

End

INDICATIVE MASTERPLAN



Indicative Masterplan

Indicative Masterplan - Land at Blackburn, West Lothian

Land at Blackburn, West Lothian.



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Landscape and Visual Appraisal
Proposed Residential Development Sites at Blackburn, West Lothian
Job No. 0749



For: Hallam Land Management
2nd October 2012

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1.0 Introduction

Brindley Associates Ltd, Landscape Architects and Environmental Planners, were commissioned by Hallam Land Management to provide a landscape and visual appraisal in support of a planning application for a proposed residential development on land lying to the east of Blackburn in West Lothian. (See Figure 1)

This appraisal assesses the existing landscape features; considers the constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed development sites and, based upon the findings of the landscape appraisal, it presents a landscape strategy which is capable of delivering an appropriate framework for development in this area, minimising identified residual landscape and visual effects and identifying opportunities for landscape improvements associated with the development.

2.0 Methodology

A preliminary appraisal of the baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the site and its surroundings were carried out through a desk study covering an area extending to 1km from the site boundaries. In addition two site visits were undertaken in April 2012 by Ross Wilkie, a Chartered Landscape Architect. During the site visit both sites and all site boundaries were walked, roads within the study area were driven; important landscape features on and around the sites were recorded and photographs were taken from specifically identified viewpoints. A number of general photographs were also taken to record the key features of the sites and the surrounding study area in order to inform the landscape and visual appraisal.

This report is not intended to be a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; however it has been prepared with reference to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment Second Edition.

3.0 Site Description and Setting

The wider land holding comprises two parcels of land lying on the eastern boundary of the settlement of Blackburn in West Lothian. The two parcels are separated by the A705 with the larger site (Site 1) lying to the immediate north of the A705 with the smaller (Site 2) lying to the south. Within these two sites there are two smaller parcels of land adjacent to the A705 which are now being progressed as planning applications by Hallam Land Management Ltd. (See Figure 1).

Within the general location of the land holding there is a complex mosaic of landuses including:

- The traditional urban cores of the mining settlement of Blackburn and the small village of Seafield, both of which have seen considerable post war and late 20th Century expansion;
- A mix of pasture and arable agricultural land;
- Remnant historic landscapes at Blackburn House;
- Low density housing;
- The River Almond corridor;
- The M8 road corridor and associated road infrastructure;
- Visually prominent former mining landscapes;
- Previously exploited peat bog now regenerating to semi-natural landscapes; and
- Relatively small areas of woodland often as narrow shelterbelts or as small, linear riparian woodlands.

Both areas of the land holding comprise rolling agricultural land currently under a mix of arable production and improved pasture.

Site 1 falls generally to the north and contains a weak landscape structure of declining hedgerows with trees, remnant shelterbelts and under grazed former hedgerow trees in open pasture.

The northern boundary is with the former peat extraction site at Seafield Moss, which now comprises a mosaic of remnant bog, wet grassland scrub and woodland habitats. The boundary is visually open, being defined by a post and wire fence and some small areas of scrub within Seafield Moss.

The western boundary entirely comprises recent residential development on the edge of Blackburn, predominantly of 1.5 – 2 storey housing. A remnant hawthorn hedgerow separates the site from the rear fences of these properties.

The southern boundary mainly comprises the A705 road corridor and is defined by remnant hedgerows, a partially derelict farm steading, post-war farmhouse, an area of mature woodland and declining shelterbelt. In the south eastern corner the site boundary is defined by the rear boundaries of four existing residential properties which front onto the A705.

The eastern boundary comprises a recent mixed broadleaved woodland shelterbelt which provides enclosure and screening of the site from the east.

Site 2 falls from the A705 towards the River Almond and comprises a single rectangular field, currently in arable production, with a further area of unmanaged grassland lying on the southern boundary of Blackburn. The site is generally open in character.

The northern boundary of site 2 comprises an over mature hawthorn hedgerow adjacent to the A705 road corridor and the rear boundaries of a row of single storey mainly cottage style residential properties fronting onto the A705.

The western boundary comprise recent residential development on the edge of Blackburn, which is partially screened by hedgerow with mature trees and a recently established shelterbelt which lies on the sites north western boundary and which bisects the southern component of the site.

The southern boundary comprises a narrow strip of mature riparian woodland on the northern bank of the River Almond.

The eastern boundary comprises another recently established broadleaved woodland shelterbelt which partially screens the site from the adjacent low density 'urban crofting' residential development.

4.0 The Proposed Development

Hallam Land Management are proposing a phased development of approximately 120 1.5 to 2 storey residential units with associated structural landscape, open space and road improvements, focussing the proposed development on the smaller sites within 6.5 Hectares as shown of Figure 1, following the completion of the various technical studies, market appraisal and community consultation. The purpose of this appraisal has been to inform the indicative masterplan through an iterative process.

5.0 Planning Policies

The proposed development lies within the Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan 2015; and the West Lothian Local Plan 2009.

5.1 Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan

Within the current Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan the following policies may be of relevance to the landscape and visual appraisal of the proposed residential development:

- Policy HOU 3 – Strategic Housing Allocations: Land will be identified to meet housing land requirements;
- Policy HOU 8 – Development on Greenfield Land: presumption against development in the on greenfield sites;
- Policy HOU 9 – Settlements in the West of West Lothian: In the town of Bathgate new land allocations will be brought forward; and
- Policy ENV 1F- Environmental or Biodiversity Assessments: Development affecting designated sites requires an appropriate level of assessment. Where development is permitted, proposals must include measures for mitigation and, where appropriate, enhancement to reduce any adverse impact.

5.2 West Lothian Local Plan

Within the current West Lothian Local Plan the following policies may be of relevance to the landscape and visual appraisal of the proposed housing development:

- Policy ENV 21 – Areas of Special Landscape Control: Will be protected from intrusive development in order to retain their landscape character;
- Policy ENV 22 – Countryside Belts: Opportunities to protect and enhance the landscape of Countryside Belts will be sought and enhanced as part of the Central Scotland Forest initiative;
- Policy ENV 23 – Countryside Belts: Development that will lead to coalescence between settlements will be resisted; and
- Policy ENV 35 (I) – Land Suitable for Very Low Density Housing: The density of residential development shall not exceed 10 houses per hectare.

6.0 Effects on Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Designations

The land holding is located on the boundary of the existing urban area of Blackburn and lies within a transitional area where open countryside meets urban and peri-urban landuses. (See Figures 2 & 8)

One major local landscape character area (West Lothian Lowland Plateaux) in the 1km study area has been identified with reference to site work, Ordnance Survey mapping and the Lothians landscape character assessment (ASH Consulting Group 1998. The Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 91) (See Figure 2).

One local landscape designation has been identified in the study area with reference to the West Lothian Local Plan (13 January 2009), this 'Area of Special Landscape Control' broadly follows the alignment of the River Almond through the study area and encompasses part of Site 2 (See Figure 2).

6.1 West Lothian Lowland Plateaux LCA

The West Lothian Lowland Plateaux comprises a heavily-modified lowland plateau landscape which shelves generally eastward to merge gradually with the farmland plain of the lower River Almond and comprises generally undulating and predominantly open terrain.

A number of the Almonds tributaries, including the Linhouse Water, Breich Water, Murieston Water and West Calder Burn form narrow and deeply-incised features which link the upland fringe of the Pentlands to the Lowland Plain.

The plateau is underlain by Carboniferous rocks which have been historically exploited to extract both oilshale and coal. To the east of the LCA, igneous rock creates rolling terrain rising to 217m at Dechmont Law to the north of Livingston.

The land cover of the LCA consists largely of improved pasture (although the sites being considered also contain arable land). Fields are typically divided by a mixture of fences, fragmented hedgerows, small shelterbelts and declining lines of hedgerow trees. Woodland is generally scattered and small to medium-scale, comprised of coniferous, broadleaved and deciduous shelterbelts and riparian woodland strips with larger areas of amenity woodland established around Livingston. Stretches of wetter, less cultivable land throughout the valley support rough grasses, scrub and marshy hollows and historically comprised mosses.

The legacy of the extensive industrial and mining land uses is still prominent within the plain, both in terms of the distribution of settlements and extant remnant features such as the prominent Five Sisters Bings at West Calder, now designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Expansion of settlements and the creation of Livingston New Town in the 19th and 20th centuries have also eroded the traditional agricultural character.

Transport infrastructure is also locally prominent, overlaying the historic landscape structure and now incorporating several major roads, a railway line, the M8 motorway and associated structures and pylon lines.

The effects of the last two centuries, due to large-scale industrial and residential development, have heavily modified the traditional agricultural landscape, through degradation and loss of farmland, engulfment of older settlements and fragmentation of landform. Despite being an open landscape, the visual horizon is often dominated by modern architectural or infrastructural features.

The land holding is in most respects typical of this LCA description inasmuch as mining legacy is prominent as is settlement expansion and gently rolling terrain. Site 1 in particular has a declining landscape structure and Site 2 has minimal historic landscape structure with recent shelterbelt planting being the only feature of note within the site, although mature riparian woodland associated with the River Almond is present adjacent to the southern boundary.

Positive Attributes defined by SNH include:

- Matrix of productive agricultural grassland and scattered woodland, shelterbelt, and hedgerow features; and
- Localised areas of valuable semi-natural habitats.

Negative Attributes defined by SNH include:

- Open, gently undulating, visually sensitive terrain;
- Major transport and communications corridor with continuing pressures for expansion;
- Significant urban/rural fringe conflicts; and
- Need for renewal and re-integration of land used by previous industry.

The Key strategic aim identified by SNH for the LCA is:

'In accordance with the Central Scotland Forestry Strategy, fundamental restructuring is required through a range of measures to increase woodland cover and create a new landscape framework of sufficient scale to accommodate continuing development pressure.'

Development of the whole site will result in the direct loss of a small component of the West Lothian Lowland Plateaux LCA which will be replaced by residential land uses. Where the proposed development is visible it will be seen in the context of the existing built form of Blackburn and Seafield and the adjacent prominent Urban Crofting residential development.

The component of the LCA that will be affected by the development is small in relation to the total extent of the LCA and is affected by proximity to existing and prominent residential edges. The landscape mitigation proposed below will ensure that the area converted to residential land use is contained and visually separated from the greater component of the LCA. There will be locally substantial effects in the immediate area that is directly affected by the proposed development but it is not considered that there will be substantial effects upon the broader characteristics of the LCA. There are opportunities to create a new, robust landscape framework to contain development and provide an appropriate urban/rural transition in support of the strategic aims of the SNH guidance.

6.2 River Almond Area of Special Landscape Control

The River Almond Special Area of Landscape Control is a local planning policy in place to identify and protect 'landscapes of character and of local importance'.

Policy ENV 21 of the West Lothian Local Plan states that:

'The council will protect the six Areas of Special Landscape Control shown on the Proposals Map from intrusive development in order to retain their landscape character.'

'The council will promote opportunities to enhance the six Areas of Special Landscape Control and their accessibility to the public in a manner that does not undermine their landscape character and biodiversity value.'

The site lies partially within the boundary of this designation (see Figure 2) in an area enclosed by recent residential development to the immediate west and recent low density residential development to the immediate east.

The designation boundary in and adjacent to the site does not relate to any extant landscape features, boundaries, development patterns or topography and therefore in plan and on the ground appears somewhat arbitrary in its alignment. The development would, if sensitively designed, present an opportunity to:

- Implement a robust landscape framework to provide a meaningful and long term defensible boundary to the ASLC;
- Enhance biodiversity by appropriate woodland planting to the edge of the settlement, relating to and expanding the existing riparian woodland;
- Improve public access to the River Almond.

7.0 Discussion of Visual Effects

Visual effects relate solely to changes in available views of the landscape and the effect of these changes on visual receptors. Hence this visual appraisal is concerned with:

- The direct impact of development of the site upon views of the landscape;

- The reaction of viewers who may be affected; and
- The overall impact on visual amenity, which can range from degradation through to enhancement.

Eight photographic viewpoint locations have been identified close to the site or on its boundaries in order to inform a visual analysis of the land holding, comprising an understanding of key elements visible within and adjacent to the site. Key views into, across and from the site have also been identified. The locations of these viewpoints are shown on Figure 2. As the viewpoints are in the main on or adjacent to the boundaries of the land holding, the sites themselves are dominant in the majority of the viewpoints, however this appraisal is intended to inform the development of an appropriate masterplan by understanding the nature of the sites and to identify the constraints and opportunities that are present. It is not a full LVIA and identification of significance of effect with reference to GLVIA methodology is therefore not considered appropriate in this instance.

7.1 Viewpoint 1 – A705, Edge of Blackburn (See Figure 3)

This view of the northern site is taken from the site boundary with the A705 on the eastern fringe of Blackburn.

Summary of visual characteristics:

- Representative of road users and residents in the adjacent recently completed residential developments;
- Open visibility across rolling pasture;
- Relatively few hedgerow trees and declining, gappy or unmanaged hedgerows, lending the site an open and unstructured character;
- Close visibility of recent residential development adjacent to site western boundary;
- Visibility of 20th century residential blocks at Rowan Drive;
- Visibility across the site to low lying Seafield Moss grassland and scrub woodland; and
- Visibility across the site towards the Bathgate Hills and prominent settlement at Boghall.

The site, in this view, has little defined character and no structure of its own. It is generally looked across rather than at. There are no specific visual foci on the site in this view, other than the occasional hedgerow trees.

7.2 Viewpoint 2 - A705 looking north (See Figure 4)

This view of the northern site is taken from the site boundary with the A705 adjacent to a cluster of roadside residential properties located between Blackburn and Seafield.

Summary of visual characteristics:

- Representative of road users and residents in the adjacent roadside residential properties;
- Open visibility across rolling pasture to prominent residential edge of Blackburn;
- Relatively few hedgerow trees;
- Poor condition and declining former field boundary hedgerows;
- Pasture succeeding to rushes in wetter areas;
- Hawthorn scrub expanding from boundary with A705;
- Lending the site an open and unstructured character;
- Visibility across the site to low lying Seafield Moss grassland and scrub woodland;
- Locally prominent overhead lines following the route of a drainage ditch; and
- Visibility across the site towards the Bathgate Hills.

The site, in this view, has little defined character and no structure of its own. It is generally looked across rather than at, with the current residential edge of Blackburn being the dominant focal element of the view. Visual foci within the site tend to be negative, comprising overhead lines and the foreground derelict hedgerow.

7.3 Viewpoint 3 - A705 looking south (See Figure 5)

This view of the southern site is taken from within the site boundary adjacent to the rear of the cluster of roadside residential properties located between Blackburn and Seafield.

Summary of visual characteristics:

- Representative of residents in the adjacent roadside residential properties;
- Elevated and panoramic visibility across arable and pasture land in the Almond Valley towards the distant Pentland Hills;
- Visibility of the River Almond riparian woodland adjacent to the sites southern boundary;
- Visibility of prominent residential development on the southern fringes of Blackburn, partly integrated into the view by a recently established shelterbelt;
- Internal site structure limited to the recent shelterbelt;
- Visually prominent five sisters bing dominates the horizon;

The site, in this view, has little internal structure as it comprises a single field. It falls away from the viewpoint location and is therefore looked over rather than at in this location. The key element of this view is the panoramic visibility across the Almond Valley towards the low horizon of the distant Pentland Hills. The Five Sisters bing and the roofs of the adjacent recent residential development are visually dominant.

7.4 Viewpoint 4 - A705 Redhouse Road - looking north (See Figure 6)

This view of the northern site is taken from within the shelterbelt adjacent to the A705 between Seafield and Blackburn.

Summary of visual characteristics:

- Representative of roadusers on A705, who will experience filtered views through the declining shelterbelt adjacent to the road;
- View dominated by close visibility of arable and pasture fields;
- Declining field boundary hedgerow with trees visually prominent;
- Visibility across the site towards the Bathgate Hills and prominent settlement at Boghall;
- Visibility across the site to Seafield Law;
- Distant visibility of recent residential development on the edge of Blackburn; and
- Recent shelterbelts on eastern boundary provide some screening and containment.

The site, in this view, has some internal structure comprising remnant hedgerows with trees, remnant shelterbelts and more recent shelterbelt planting. The land falls to the north and more distant views towards the Bathgate hills are available. The key element of this view is the close hedgerow trees, which simply due to their proximity to the viewpoint are visually dominant.

7.5 Viewpoint 5 - A705 Redhouse Road near Seafield - Looking north (See Figure 7)

This view of the northern site is taken from near the eastern boundary of the proposed development site and is located adjacent to a group of roadside residential properties adjacent to the Redhouse Road.

Summary of visual characteristics:

- Representative of road users and residents in the adjacent roadside residential properties;
- View dominated by close visibility of extensive arable field;
- Declining field boundary hedgerow with trees visually prominent, filtering visibility of the residential edge of Blackburn;
- Visibility across the site towards the Bathgate Hills and prominent settlement at Boghall;
- Visibility across Seafield Moss towards the M8 corridor structural landscape and industrial/commercial units to the north of the M8; and
- Recent shelterbelts on eastern boundary and offsite provide some screening and containment.

The site, in this view, has some internal structure comprising remnant hedgerows with trees, remnant shelterbelts and more recent shelterbelt planting on and near the eastern boundary. The viewpoint is slightly elevated and there is therefore visibility across the site to landscape elements to the north. The view lacks a strong visual focus with the remnant hedgerow trees providing the main focal element from this location.

7.6 Viewpoint 6 - Southern site, within site boundary (See Figure 8)

This view of the southern site is taken from near the site's western boundary and is located on an elevated area of disturbed land immediately to the south of the current residential edge of Blackburn.

Summary of visual characteristics:

- Representative of close views from the River Almond Area of Special Landscape Control;
- View dominated by close visibility of unmanaged grassland succeeding in lower lying areas to rushes;
- Overgrown field boundary hedgerow with trees and recent supplementary shelterbelt planting is visually prominent, bisecting the site;
- Visibility across the site towards existing low density residential settlement immediately east of the site boundary;
- Recent semi-natural woodland planting filters views of existing properties on Redhouse Road.

The site, in this view, has some internal structure comprising remnant hedgerows with trees, remnant reinforced by more recent shelterbelt planting. The viewpoint is low lying and visibility to the north is limited by the higher land upon which the A705 is constructed. The view lacks a strong visual focus with the distant Pentland Hills being prominent in clear weather.

7.7 Viewpoint 7 - Minor Road south of River Almond - looking north (See Figure 9)

This view of the southern site is taken from open farmland lying to the south of the site boundary and is located on an elevated area of mainly pasture land near the River Almond; the viewpoint is located within the Area of Special Landscape Control.

Summary of visual characteristics:

- Representative of close views to the site from the River Almond Area of Special Landscape Control;
- View dominated by rolling agricultural land;
- Recent residential development on the edge of Blackburn and other development on Redhouse Road (A705) is prominent on the skyline;
- Low density residential development on the land to the immediate east of the site is prominent on the land sloping to the River Almond;
- Blackburn House is visible but not prominent on the skyline;
- The Bathgate Hills are visible as the distant horizon;
- Riparian woodland associated with the River Almond visible in the foreground of the view; and
- The site is visible as an area of pasture and an area of unmanaged grassland bisected by a declining hedgerow reinforced by recent shelterbelt planting.

The site, in this view, is framed to the east and west by existing and visually prominent residential developments with the riparian woodland providing foreground screening. The viewpoint is at a similar elevation to the site and shows the exiting residential areas to the north of the River Almond as prominent but distinct from the agricultural land.

7.8 Viewpoint 8 - Public Footpath on Seafield Moss looking south (See Figure 10)

This view of the northern site is taken from a footpath within Seafield Moss which is close to the site boundary.

Summary of visual characteristics:

- Representative of recreational users on the footpath and the Moss;
- View dominated by extensive low-lying arable farmland;
- Visibility of recent residential development on the western boundary of the site;
- Remnant hedgerow trees within site visible across the low lying foreground;
- Distant visibility of the Pentland Hills seen across the site; and
- Foreground comprises regenerating scrub associated with Seafield Moss.

The site, in this view, has little defined character with some internal structure comprising remnant hedgerow trees and a remnant shelterbelt. It is generally looked across rather than

at. There are no specific visual foci on the site in this view, other than the remnant hedgerow trees. Marbet House and Pates Hill windfarm form visual foci on the horizon line outwith the site.

8.0 Landscape and Visual Appraisal Summary

The findings of the appraisal are that:

- Site 2 is partially covered by the local landscape designation Area of Special Landscape Control in association with the riparian zone of the River Almond on its southern boundary;
- Landscape character effects are predicted to be limited to the immediate vicinity of the sites, with the West Lothian Lowland Plateaux LCA experiencing localised effects in an area currently affected by its proximity to residential development;
- Visual effects are considered to be restricted to close receptors, with the sites either not prominent in longer views or seen in the context of prominent existing residential developments;
- Sites 1's western boundary is well defined by existing residential development of Blackburn;
- Site 1's northern boundary is poorly defined by a visually permeable derelict hedgerow and wetland scrub associated with Seafield Moss;
- Site 1's eastern boundary is well defined by a remnant hedgerow and young shelterbelt planting creating visual and physical separation of the site from Seafield while the southern boundary is defined by declining shelter belt and remnant hedgerow along Seafield Road/ Redhouse Road;
- Site 2's northern boundary is defined by over mature hedgerow and rear boundaries of the properties at Marbet House;
- Site 2's eastern boundary similarly to Site 1's eastern boundary is well defined by a remnant hedgerow and young shelterbelt planting creating visual and physical separation of the site from the adjacent urban crofting development;
- Site 2's western boundary is defined by recent residential development and recent structure planting which divides the south western corner of the site from the remainder of the site; and
- In all views from the south and the east from which the site is visible it will be seen in the context of existing residential development which has an abrupt transition to the adjacent rural areas.

In the broader study area it is considered that due to the screening provided by adjacent development and the fact that in more distant views the sites will be seen in the context of the existing built form of Blackburn and Seafield development of the site for residential uses will have generally negligible effects upon the landscape and visual resource.

There are opportunities to create a new, robust landscape framework to contain development; improve the poor internal landscape structure and provide an appropriate urban/rural transition to integrate the urban edge of Blackburn more successfully with the adjacent agricultural land.

9.0 Landscape Mitigation Proposals

Based upon this landscape and visual appraisal a landscape strategy has been developed to mitigate against the identified adverse landscape and visual effects. The landscape strategy will provide an appropriate landscape setting for the proposed new development which will also result in habitat creation and local biodiversity gains.

The main elements of the landscape strategy include:

- Provision of appropriate new roadside planting along Seafield Road / Redhouse Road to define the road edge character;
- Retain, protect and manage the northern boundary of Site 1 with Seafield Moss to enhance biodiversity value and promote public access opportunities;
- Develop an open space strategy which relates to the remnant landscape structure to meet the needs of the new development in line with PAN 65;
- Retention and enhancement/ expansion of the existing remnant shelterbelts where appropriate in line with policy ENV 22 to create layers of landscape structure and screening;
- Reinforce the riparian zone on the southern boundary of Site 2 with the Area of Special Control with an area of appropriate landscape structure adjacent to the River Almond;
- Provide new tree, hedge and shrub planting within the development site and the open spaces using locally appropriate species to further integrate the development into the landscape;
- Housing layout and house types to be designed to respond to and respect the local landform and surrounding properties using materials appropriate to the local area; and
- Use of a range of locally appropriate plant species that will create new habitats, enhance local biodiversity and create wildlife corridors linking with existing vegetation.

A sketch showing the Landscape Mitigation Strategy has been developed with the design team, see Figure 14. This landscape strategy shows in broad brush terms the landscape structure that will be created in association with the development.

10.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is considered that landscape and visual effects associated with residential development at the land held by Hallam Land Management Ltd will be largely contained within the close vicinity of the site due to the screening provided by existing and mainly residential developments in close proximity to the site boundaries.

Throughout the broader study area the effects upon landscape and visual amenity are considered to be generally negligible as the sites are seen as a small and not significant addition to broader views containing prominent areas of residential development.

Potential adverse effects, which have been identified, relate to those experienced close to the proposed development site, these close receptors are predicted to experience limited effects as the proposed development does not introduce a new element into either views or the landscape character.

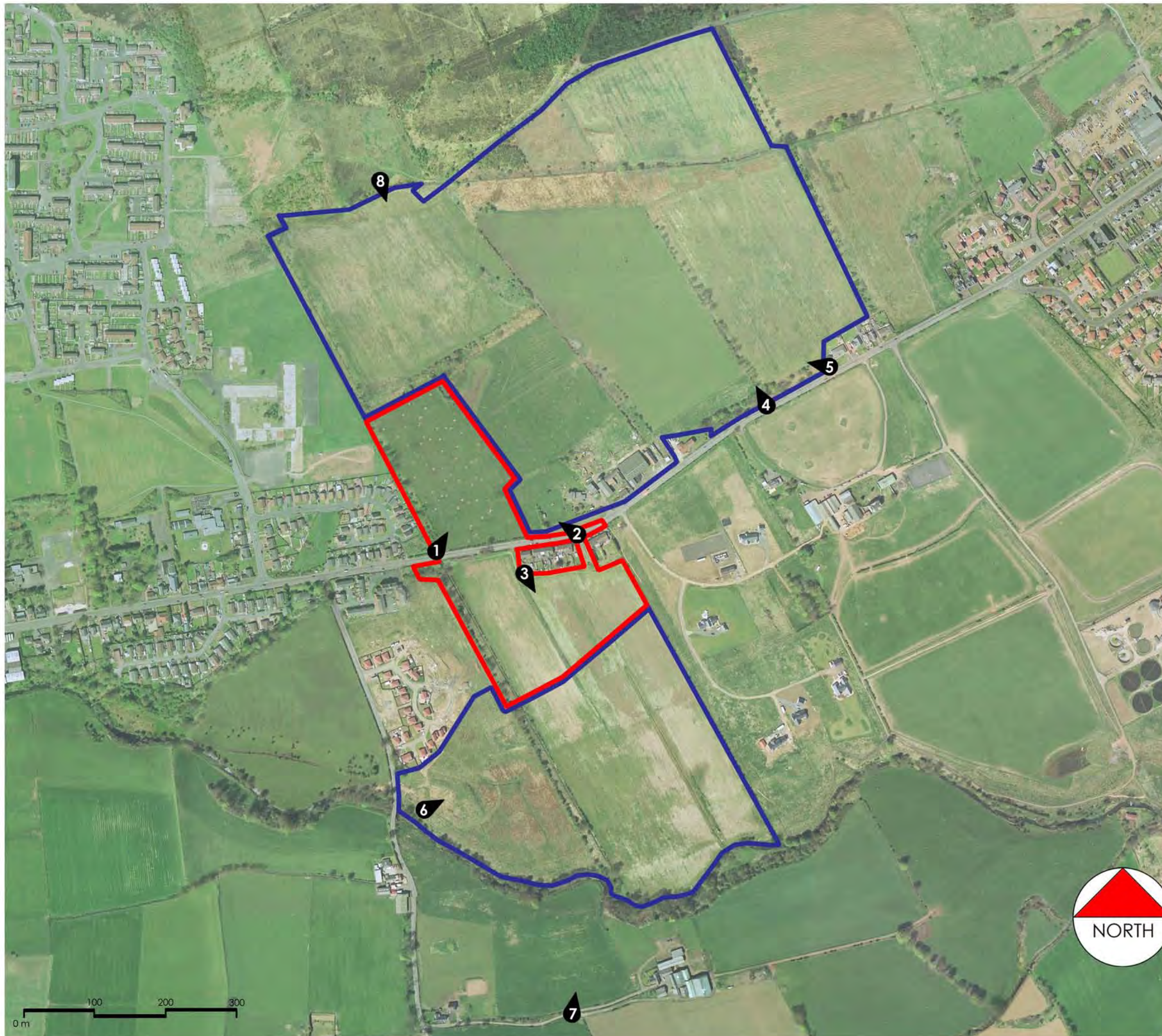
Appropriate structure planting can be incorporated on the site boundaries to provide visual integration and a more robust boundary between the urban areas and the adjacent agricultural land than that which currently exists and allow a mature setting for the land holding.

11.0 Bibliography and References

Edinburgh & Lothians Structure Plan (2015).

West Lothian Local Plan 2009.

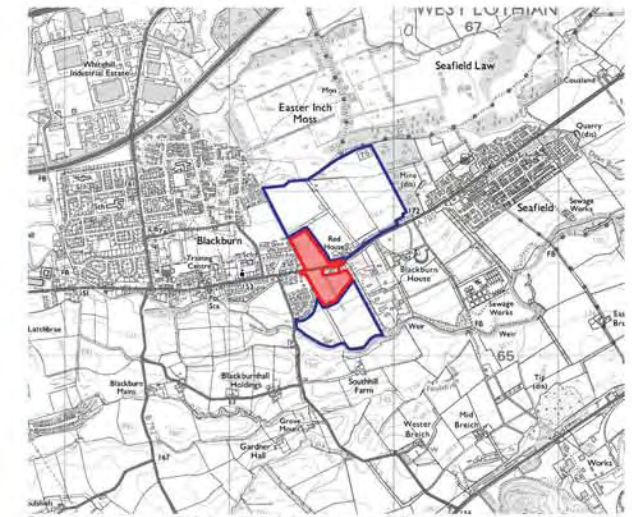
Lothians Landscape Character Assessment (No.91) by ASH Consulting Group on behalf of SNH (1998).



Legend

-  Application Sites
-  Total Land Holding Assessed
-  Viewpoint Locations

Site Context Plan









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Aerial photography extracted from Google Earth

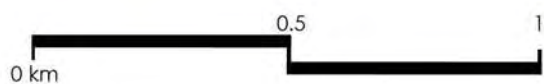
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| drawing title: Site Location Plan and Photographic Viewpoint Locations | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 1 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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Legend

-  Application Sites
-  Total Land Holding Assessed
-  1km study area
-  SNH Landscape Type: West Lothian Lowland Plateaux
-  Urban areas
-  River Almond Area of Special Landscape Control

Aerial photography extracted from Google Earth



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| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Landscape Character Areas and Policy | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 2 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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Remnant hawthorn
hedgerow

New housing on edge
of Blackburn

Visually prominent residential
blocks at Rowan Drive

Seafield Moss

Improved pasture

Remnant hedgerow
with trees

Elevated housing
at Boghall

Bathgate Hills

Overhead line



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| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Viewpoint 1 Photograph | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 3 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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Hawthorn scrub adjacent to Seafield Road

Remnant hedgerow on edge of settlement

Remnant hedgerow

Visually prominent residential edge of Blackburn

Overhead line
Housing blocks at Rowan Drive

Remnant hedgerow with trees

Bathgate Hills



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| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Viewpoint 2 Photograph | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 4 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Viewpoint 3 Photograph | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 5 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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Residential edge
of Blackburn

Improved pasture

Remnant hedgerow
with trees

Elevated housing
at Boghall

Bathgate Hills

Arable land

Seafield Law

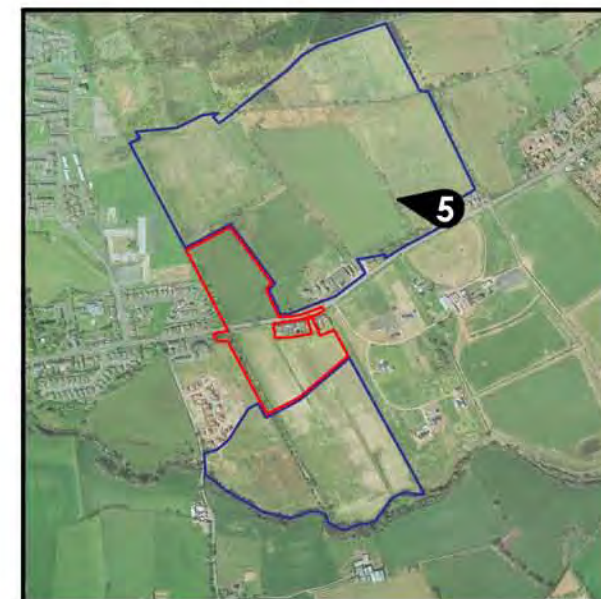
Site boundary
shelter belt

Existing residential development
on Seafield Road

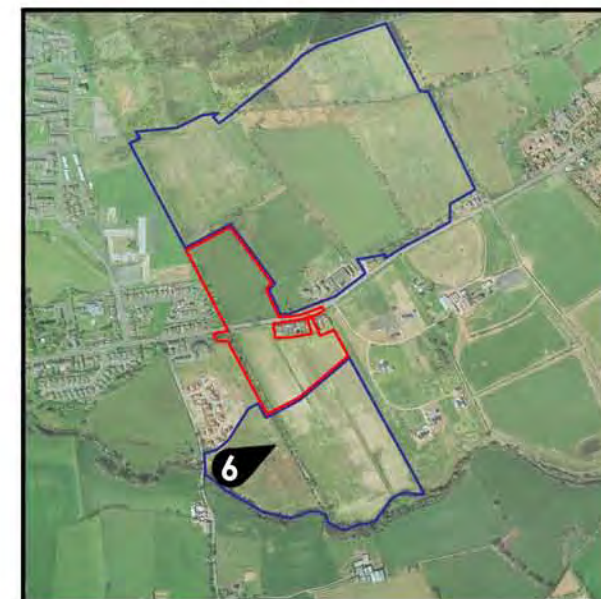
Remnant shelter belt
to Seafield Road



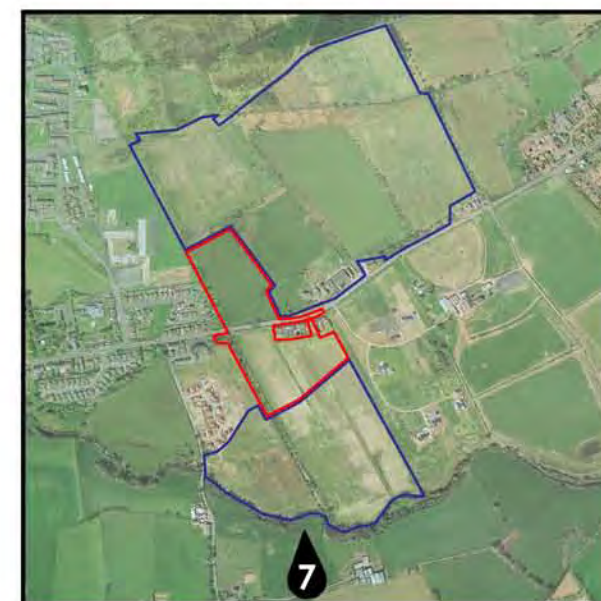
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| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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| drawing title: Viewpoint 5 Photograph | |
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| drawing number: Figure 7 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Viewpoint 6 Photograph | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 8 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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| | |
|--|--|
| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Viewpoint 7 Photograph | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 9 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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Marbert House

Remnant shelter belt on site

Pates Hill Windfarm

Residential edge of Blackburn



| | |
|--|--|
| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Viewpoint 8 Photograph | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 10 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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A705 between Blackburn and Seafield



A705 corridor



Blackburn House - visual focus



Derelict Farmstead on Redhouse Road



Shelterbelt to east of site



Five Sisters Bing - visual focus



Internal structure of roadside shelterbelt

| | |
|--|---|
| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Landscape Character Illustrative Photographs (1 of 2) | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 11 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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Recent housing development edge of Blackburn



Urban Edge of Blackburn from Area of Special Landscape Control



Urban crofting landscape



Seafield Moss



Seafield Road, Edge of Blackburn



River Almond corridor



Pasture south of Almond River

| | |
|--|---|
| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Landscape Character Illustrative Photographs (2 of 2) | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 12 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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Legend

-  Views
-  Visual focus points
-  Urban areas
-  Farm buildings on site
-  Footpaths
-  Hedgerow
-  Remnant woodland
-  Young shelter belt planting
-  Wooded areas along river
-  Slopes

Aerial photography extracted from Google Earth

| | |
|--|--|
| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Landscape Analysis | |
| scale: NTS | date: 28 / 09 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 13 | |
| drawn by: G Barcroft | checked by: R Wilkie |
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Legend

-  Existing remnant woodland
-  Existing young shelterbelt planting
-  Burn
-  Proposed structure planting
-  Proposed trees
-  Proposed hedgerow with trees
-  Proposed public open space
-  Proposed SUDS
-  Proposed play area
-  Proposed entrance feature
-  Proposed areas of development
-  Housing fronting onto and overlooking open spaces and footpaths
-  Views over open space and SUDS feature
-  Overhead power line wayleave
-  Footpaths
-  Emergency access

Aerial photography extracted from Google Earth

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| site: Land at Blackburn, West Lothian | client: Hallam Land Management Ltd |
| drawing title: Landscape Strategy | |
| scale: NTS | date: 02 / 10 / 12 |
| drawing number: Figure 14 | |
| drawn by: S Cochran | checked by: J Dobson |
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