

# Linlithgow Planning Forum

## Draft Minutes of a Meeting with Craig McCorrison (WLC) held in the Canal Tea Room on Thursday 26 Sept 2013 at 4:30pm

**Present:** John Kelly, Chair (L&LBCC), John Aitken (LCT), Clive Dyson (L&LBCC), David Tait (LBA, L&LBCC, VWL, Black Bitch Mag), and Craig McCorrison (Head of WLC Planning and Economic Development Services).

**Apologies:** Ron Smith (BB, LCT, LCDT) and Iain Paton (LCT)

**Purpose:** The purpose of the meeting was to continue the dialogue between the Planning Forum and West Lothian Council Planning Services.

**Consultation:** There was some discussion on the statutory consultation of community councils.

Craig explained that West Lothian Council believed that providing the Weekly List of registered planning applications discharged their statutory duty. Some officers consult some community councils directly on some planning applications but this is not a regular or consistent service and should not be relied upon. He agreed that some thought should be given to improving consultation, particularly in relation to Major planning applications. An improved web access module is planned for installation in Q1 2014 and that might be followed later by improvements that included the GIS location of applications on a map.

The Community Council does not appear in the list of consultees posted with each application and that this had led to confusion. Other statutory consultees also have to rely on the weekly list although case officers may ask for a specific response e.g. in the case of water and sewerage.

It was generally felt that the Weekly List does not constitute effective consultation but we should accept it as the status quo and refer to it regularly. The 14 day period for representations begins on registration (acceptance of the application by WLC) and applications normally appear on the WLC Planning website the next day and on the next Weekly List. Requests for a short extension (e.g. 2 weeks) to give sufficient time for a response will normally be granted.

Anyone who makes a representation, whether in favour or against, should be notified of the outcome. This seemed not to have happened in respect of the Residential Canal Moorings application, which has been passed.

**SESPlan** The SESPlan housing requirement still requires to be split between local authorities and then allocations made within each authority. West Lothian may acquire to construct 2,130 additional houses on top of the 12.5K existing provision. The call for sites had identified the potential

for 30K additional units, including some unsuitable sites but omitting some possibilities.

- Local Plan:** The target for the Major Issues Report is now November 2013.
- Social Housing** There has been virtually no new social housing constructed in Linlithgow since 1975. Of the 856 council houses, over 500 have been sold. There are over 300 on the waiting list with a first preference for Linlithgow and only about 30 units per annum becoming available.
- Planning use classes only include one “housing” class, which does not permit land to be specifically classified for use as “social housing” or “affordable housing”. On new developments, in the case of the 15% social housing allocation, West Lothian Council’s policy is to acquire the land and construct homes. They aim to use council owned land for all social housing developments. Small developments (less than 20 units) do not make economic sense. It is intended to build some social housing in every ward, but some wards have greater needs than others.
- There was discussion on the need for affordable housing in Linlithgow and on the role of housing associations. WLC will give preference to social housing and landowners are not likely to release additional land to housing associations for affordable housing when they can get higher values for mainstream housing development.
- Infrastructure** No new infrastructure is currently planned for Linlithgow, although making better use of existing facilities is being pursued. WLC’s aim is for economic growth to be the main driver.
- Bypass** A Linlithgow bypass to the north would probably cost in the region of £6M, which would need to be mitigated by a large number of houses (e.g. 2,000). A relief road to the south, linking Edinburgh Road to Riccarton Road, might be more feasible.
- Other Issues** Health centre capacity, High Street congestion, air quality and schools were also briefly discussed.
- Next Meeting** It was agreed to continue this useful dialogue on planning issues and a meeting was arranged on 31<sup>st</sup> October at 4:30pm in the Canal Tea Room.