

Johnston, Charles

From: Richard Heggie, Urban Animation
Sent: 03 March 2014 09:59
To: localplan
Cc:
Subject: LDP Representation
Attachments: MIRStatement.pdf

Dear Local Plan Team

On behalf of our Clients, Crummock (Scotland) Ltd, I am writing with comments on the Council's Proposed LDP. These comments relate to the site north west of Deanfoot Cottage, as indicated in the attached document, which was previously submitted as a representation to the Main Issues Report.

Could you please acknowledge receipt of this message? :

COMMENT 1 : VISION, AIMS AND SPATIAL STRATEGY

Para 3.6 (page 16) states that the economic downturn presents challenges to housing completion rates. There is an opportunity to focus housing land allocation on settlement where there is clear market demand, such as West Linton.

The Proposed Local Development Plan (LDP) commits to strategic housing development elsewhere in the Scottish Borders and that approach is broadly sensible in respect of the potential arising from planned investment such as the reopening of the Waverley rail line. However, it is widely recognised that Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) throughout Scotland have failed to deliver housing at the anticipated rate, if at all. That scenario was evident during the boom years and is especially relevant in the current era, where the housing market remains generally depressed.

The Scottish Government's planning and sustainable economic growth policies seek to increase the rate of housing completions and support the beleaguered construction industry. There is a growing realisation that simply allocating housing sites will not achieve this, unless the sites are attractive to the market and deliverable. The site owned by our clients at Deanfoot Road in West Linton meets these criteria to a greater degree than many others within the Council's SDAs.

The attraction of West Linton to potential house purchasers is well established, with continuing evidence of ongoing demand and price stability. The LDP proposes housing development at sites TWL8B and AWEST009 in West Linton. These sites already have detailed planning permission and are owned by housing developers Springfield. Despite the fact that development of these sites has not yet begun, Springfield already have 10 of the available 62 properties reserved by purchasers (see www.springfield.co.uk).

It is very likely that these sites will be completed and sold ahead of the schedule identified in the Council's 2012 Housing Land Audit (HLA), which anticipates the last completions on these sites during 2017. Other than a small housing site TWL15B for 10 homes (programmed in the HLA for completion in 2017-18), there is no other housing land supply for West Linton.

The Proposed LDP should take greater account of deliverability in its housing land allocations in order to meet its house completion targets and its statutory obligation to provide an effective 5 year housing land supply throughout the Plan period. The Deanfoot Road site owned by our clients provides an attractive option for market housing and a high level of demand can be anticipated, should the LDP include it as a housing allocation. It is well placed to provide an effective housing site as part of the 5 year supply over the latter part of the Plan period.

COMMENT 2 : FURTHER HOUSING LAND SAFEGUARDING

Policy HD4 (page 81) allocates sites for longer term housing development to meet recognised need as it emerges over the latter part of the Plan period.

This is sensible approach which is also used by a number of other planning authorities in their LDPs. However, it is noted that there are no longer term sites in the LDP's Northern Area. The Deanfoot Road site at West Linton, owned by our clients, can provide a supply of longer term housing land.

Appendix 2 'Meeting the Housing Land Requirement' explains the Council's approach to land allocation, stating "In the Scottish Borders there is a substantial surplus of identified land for housing, along with clear mechanisms to augment any potential shortfall through the identification of areas for potential longer term development."

In the Northern Area and at West Linton in particular, there is no such provision, despite the wide appreciation that West Linton is a location which is attractive to the market for new and resale housing.

The LDP should look to the longer term - in accordance with its statutory housing land supply function - and allocate land for housing to meet emerging demand in West Linton over the latter period of the Plan.

COMMENT 3 : SETTLEMENT PROFILE, WEST LINTON

The West Linton Settlement Profile provides a very useful statement of physical place-related characteristics and opportunities and the Council's approach sets an example of best practice which other planning authorities should follow. It also sets out helpful information on infrastructure and developer contributions.

Previous representations to the Council (at the MIR stage) in support of land at Deanfoot Road, West Linton, owned by our clients, have taken account of these factors and much of the material previously submitted remains relevant. It should be read in conjunction with this latest representation.

The site remains an ideal candidate to accommodate future expansion at West Linton. As well as housing development, the site owners have suggested that other uses such as affordable business space or community allotments could be accommodated. This is considered to be an appropriate means of enabling the village to grow as an integrated, well-serviced entity, offering local benefits beyond new homes. A finer grain approach to land allocation at West Linton along these lines would be an appropriate means of addressing any concerns over West Linton's role as a commuter settlement, by introducing new employment and community uses.

A restrictive policy on housing development will not help reduce commuting - quite the opposite. In fact, it is far more likely that a restrictive policy will drive up house prices in a constrained market, pricing local people out of housing opportunities. This is counterproductive and is likely also to drive out local services and facilities which depend on a vibrant and active local population for support.

The Council should recognise that the LDP is the statutory document with the scope to address local spatial and functional issues which are apparent in West Linton and other settlements. It should use the LDP to apply settlement specific policy and land allocations to address known issues such as over reliance on commuting at West Linton.

There does not appear to be any other mechanism available to the Council which can address such issues. The LDP makes a commitment to respond to the Scottish Government's National Outcomes, the Single Outcome agreement and specific Council activities relating to economic development and life improvement. These commitments are not fully served through what is a relatively simplistic land zoning approach at West Linton.

Allocation of the Deanfoot Road site can provide a tailored response to known issues at West Linton, meeting functional, social and community needs, whilst also compatible with the physical place-making context set out in the West Linton Settlement Profile.

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RTPI Planning Consultant of the Year 2009



**LAND AT DEANFOOT ROAD, WEST LINTON
REPRESENTATIONS TO MAIN ISSUES REPORT**

Prepared by  Urban Animation
June 2012



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1.0 Introduction

This Representation to the Scottish Borders Council Main Issues Report consultation has been prepared by Urban Animation on behalf of the owners of land to the north east of West Linton.

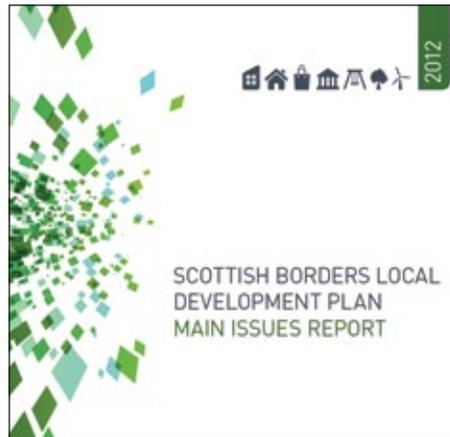
The document responds to a number of questions posed in the Main Issues Report and proposes the allocation of an additional site for housing, at Deanfoot Road in West Linton.

It also explains how the location and characteristics of the site can accommodate a development which would achieve an organic expansion of West Linton. It illustrates how the development can achieve a high standard of buildings and layout, well related to neighbouring streets and buildings and integrated into the landscape.

The Statement has been prepared using guidance set out by the Scottish Government in :

- Planning Advice Note 68, 'Design Statements';
- Planning Advice Note 83, 'Master Planning';
- Designing Streets.

It also takes full account of Scottish Borders Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance, particularly 'Placemaking and Design'.



2.0 Specific Main Issues Report Questions

The following comments are offered in direct response to specific questions raised in the Main Issues Report. However, the full response is contained in this document as a whole.

Question 7: Do you agree with the preferred option for the scale of additional housing land in the LDP? Do you agree with the alternative option? Or do you have another alternative option?

Don't agree with preferred option. Agree with alternative option, but distribution of sites should not be focused so intently on SDAs, allowing other towns and small settlements to accommodate more organic growth. Sites must be chosen to reflect local circumstances and proactively resolve known issues. See the Planning Context section of this document for full comments.

Question 8: Do you agree with the preferred options for additional housing sites in the Appendix A? Do you agree with any of the alternative options? Or do you have other alternative options?

No. West Linton has been ignored and there is very little sign of any meaningful settlement planning, beyond the allocation of housing land for the 2011-2018 period. Restricting new housing development is suggested as a means of limiting commuting but does nothing to address any existing issue. The LDP should be used as a tool to foster positive change, by creating the conditions for enhanced local services, business opportunities and community enterprise. This will provide employment opportunities for residents of West Linton, reducing the need for commuting. The housing site proposed in this document at Deanfoot Road, West Linton, should be allocated to provide choice, competition, realistic land supply and a means of achieving a critical mass of population at West Linton.

Question 9: Do you agree that the baseline requirement for affordable housing should continue at the level of 25 per cent? Do you agree with the alternative option? Or do you have other alternative options?

The baseline requirement is acceptable provided that there is flexibility where local circumstances dictate. Where infrastructure or abnormal development costs are excessive, a lower level of contribution may be appropriate. More creative approaches to developer obligations should be considered, such as the provision of affordable business space (see Preliminary Proposals section in this document).



3.0 The Site

The site is located at the north east of West Linton, adjacent to the settlement boundary. It extends to approximately 5.0 hectares/12.5 acres. There are two topographically distinct parts to the site, each of which amounts to broadly half of the site area.

The first lies to the south east and is a low lying , relatively level area adjacent to Deanfoot Road.

The second, northern area features some significant slopes across an undulating higher area with some level pockets, with one large specimen tree located centrally towards the south and another two at the northern edge, where there is a boundary fence.

The Dean burn runs down the western side of these two parcels of land, in few metres of steep cut towards the north of the site and at ground level towards the south. There is little sign of a water channel over most of the length of the Dean, with the exception of the southern area, where a narrow channel has formed as water accumulates at the culvert under Deanfoot Road. It is possible that drainage and water management changes upstream in the Dean catchment have been the cause. There are no known flooding problems.

Access is available at the south of the site from Deanfoot Road and there is a footpath on the north side of the carriageway which terminates close to the south west corner of the site. All mains services appear to be available locally. No information on ground conditions is available at this time. It is understood that there is adequate services and drainage capacity to serve additional development at West Linton, although any upgrading would be the responsibility of the developer.

The site is enclosed at the south east by existing development and trees, which provide significant enclosure. Trees across Deanfoot Road to the south of the site also provide screening for views towards the site from the open valley areas beyond. There is a well established tree belt beyond the western boundary of the site, which was planted when the adjacent housing site was developed.

4.0 Planning Context

The current development plan covering West Linton consists of the Scottish Borders Structure Plan 2001-2018 and the Scottish Borders Consolidated Local Plan, adopted in 2011. SESplan, the emerging strategic development plan for South East Scotland, will replace the Structure Plan in due course and the 'Proposed Plan' has now been published.

The Structure Plan identifies a Strategic Development Area (SDA) around the six central Borders towns (Galashiels, Melrose, Kelso etc) and two SDAs around the Eyemouth/Duns area and the Peebles/Innerleithen corridor. Since West Linton lies out with these hubs in the Western Borders sub area, 'substantial' development is discouraged, particularly where it would result in a significant increase in commuting.

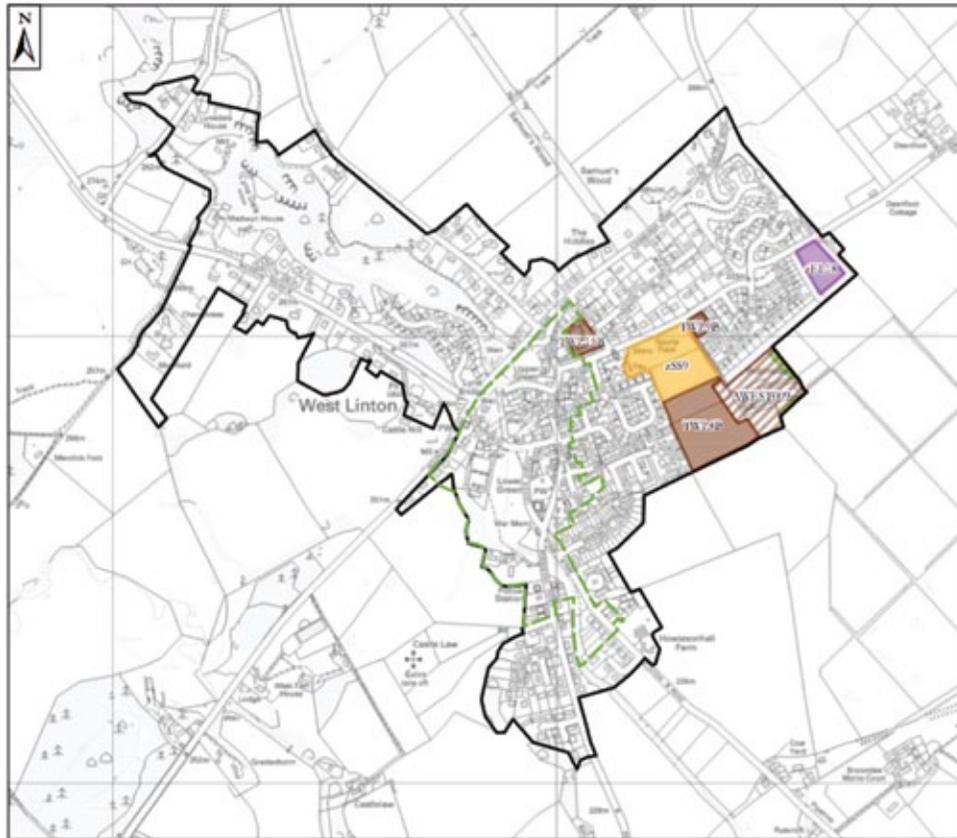
The emerging SESplan Proposed Plan supports the established Structure Plan position in terms of SDAs for the Scottish Borders. However, the Main Issues Report acknowledges that the housing land allocation strategy set out in SESplan has come under scrutiny and that additional land allocations may be required to meet the terms of Scottish Planning Policy, statutory requirements and Scottish Government guidance on development plan preparation. In that event, it is suggested that this site should be allocated as a means of meeting the additional supply requirement.

In accordance with the Structure Plan, the Local Plan does not propose strategic expansion at West Linton, although it does allocate some housing land, providing for approximately 100 houses. Additional primary school capacity is required to meet the requirements of this new development and the Council is proceeding with construction of a new school, supported by contributions from housing developers.

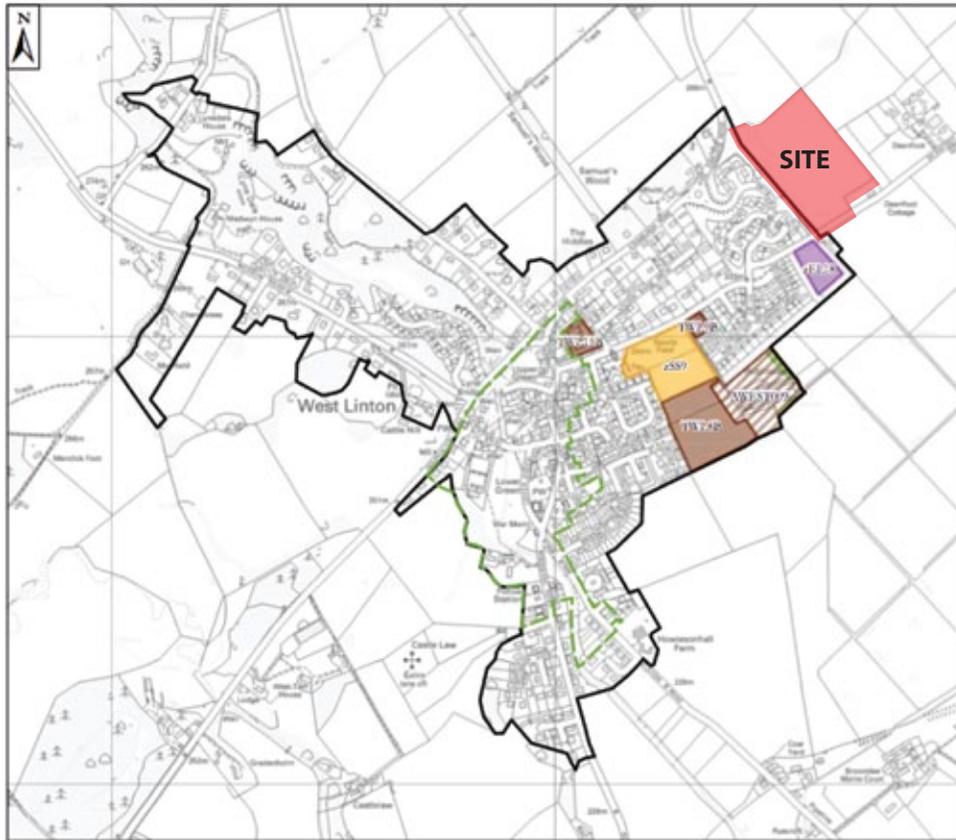
One allocated housing site, the Eildon site at St Mungo's Brae, has already been developed for six houses. The current Primary School site, at School Brae, is allocated for 10 houses, which will not be developed before the new Primary School is completed.

Two additional sites at Robinsland (TWL8B and AWEST 009) form a package which is allocated for 86 houses. A previous planning application (ref 11/00677/FUL) was submitted for 82 houses on this land but this has been refused by Scottish Borders Council and at appeal. It is understood that a revised planning application is soon to be submitted and that this is more likely to meet the Council's requirements.

This amounts to a total housing provision of 92-96 units at present. The Main Issues Report notes this supply is intended to cover the Local Plan period to 2018. SESplan identifies a need for a further 50 units in the Scottish Borders Council area, outwith the SDAs, in the 2019-24 period. The imminent submission of a revised planning application for the only large housing site allocated at West Linton suggests the developers are convinced that early construction of houses here is a viable proposition, even in the current market.



extract : consolidated Scottish Borders Local Plan



consolidated Scottish Borders Local Plan extract showing site

It is not unrealistic to suggest that all available housing land at West Linton may be developed by 2018 - the Local Plan provides for that event. Assuming this scenario arises, there will be no allocated housing land available at West Linton over the 2019-2024 period. This is contrary to SESplan requirements, Scottish Government guidance, Scottish Planning Policy and planning statutes. More land should be allocated for housing at West Linton to resolve this anomaly.

It is clear from statements made in the adopted Development Plan and SESplan that West Linton is a popular settlement with a relatively vibrant housing market and demand for new homes. Whilst this is partly a reflection of its proximity to the Edinburgh employment market, it also has good provision of local shops and services serving a rural hinterland, a high quality historic core and an attractive landscape setting. Categorisation as a commuter settlement is a simplistic analysis of its attraction as a place to live and work.

In any event, if there is a commuting issue at West Linton, the LDP should tackle it with positive proposals, rather than simply preventing development. There is a counter intuitive argument that achieving a critical mass of population will support the expansion or development of local services: unless a threshold is reached, some businesses and services will not be viable at West Linton. The LDP should make provision to support business growth at West Linton, beyond simply allocating a site for this use. The Council's Economic Development Service and the local community should seek creative solutions. The Preliminary Proposals section of this document suggests one means of encouraging new businesses.

There is no doubt that smaller settlements increasingly depend upon achieving a critical mass of population to sustain services and retail options, particularly since supermarket and online retailing increasingly drains local spend. The continuing trend towards smaller household sizes and the difficulty younger people and low earners have in finding local housing is placing increasing pressure on communities.

There is an alternative scenario to the early development of the main allocated site at West Linton and the shortfall in housing land that would create : the danger that the existing allocated housing site will not be developed for the foreseeable future. It is not unknown for housing companies to seek to increase the value of their asset base through the gain of planning permission, in order to support lending for developments elsewhere. Equally, there is no guarantee that the prospective developers will make an early start on the site assuming planning permission is granted - and development may proceed at a slower rate than suggested in the Council's Housing Land Audit.

Introducing competition into the local housing market would help to ensure the required number of houses is delivered effectively, as well as providing choice for local people and those relocating to West Linton. The allocation of this site would achieve that choice and competition, removing reliance on a single large site. The rate of house construction could be phased over both sites to ensure a more appropriate and organic rate of development.

The adopted and emerging Development Plan commits to strategic housing development elsewhere in the Scottish Borders and that approach is sensible in respect of the potential arising from planned investment such as the reopening of the Waverley rail line. However, there is a widely acknowledged danger that SDAs in Scotland have failed to deliver housing at the anticipated rate, if at all. That scenario was evident during the boom years and is especially relevant in the current era, where the housing market is depressed.

The Scottish Government's planning and broader policies seek to increase the rate of housing completions and support the beleaguered construction industry. There is a growing realisation that simply allocating housing sites will not achieve this, unless the sites are attractive to the market and deliverable. The site addressed in this document meets these criteria to a greater degree than many others within the Council's SDAs.

5.0 Preliminary Site Analysis

The site is generally south facing and is therefore ideal for development which can maximise passive solar gain.

The Scottish Borders Council Development and Landscape Capacity Study notes that the existing trees at the south east corner of the site act as an arrival point to West Linton on approach from the east. The Study also highlights the distant view across the site to the Strath beyond, from the A702, although this is available along only a short stretch of the road due to the height of the existing stone wall at the roadside. The Study highlights the southern half of the site as suitable for development.

The adjacent plan indicates the extent of screen planting and the broad topography across the site. It is immediately apparent that the southern half of the site can accommodate standard housing development (and potentially some business space as previously discussed) with convenient access from Deanfoot Road. Good screening is provided by existing development and houses, surrounding topography and adjacent treebelts.

The northern half of the site could provide opportunities for larger houses on generous plots, exploiting distant views to the south. However, houses would need to be sited sensitively and it would be important to provide appropriate tree planting to screen buildings and provide a setting for development. Advance planting may be advisable.

There is convenient pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to the village centre and existing / proposed school sites along Deanfoot Road. West Linton is not particularly well served by bus stops. There may be a case for improved stops serving the whole village as housing development proceeds on allocated sites. A new footpath connection from this site to the A702 Carlops Road via the treebelt at the western boundary and on to Robinsland / Dryburn Brae would improve accessibility.





6.0 Preliminary Proposals

It is proposed that the emerging Local Development Plan should allocate the southern part of the site for housing use, to provide choice in the local market, support the delivery of housing completions and meet the longer term needs of the village.

This area is suitable for general purpose housing, including affordable homes. The western part of the area could form a landscaped corridor with planting and paths running along the Dean burn. The net site area at the southern half of the site, excluding this strip, is approximately 1.65 hectares. At an indicative density of 25 dwellings per hectare, approximately 40 houses could be constructed on this area.

The northern half of the site could accommodate low density housing on large plots, with generous planting and open space ensuring new buildings are attractively set in the site and surrounding landscape. Excluding the Dean burn area, the net site area of this part of the site is approximately 1.69 hectares. The number of houses to be constructed on this area may be in the region of 5-10. However, this would require detailed assessment, taking account of landscape capacity, topography, visual impact, plot size, house design and screen planting opportunities.

The site is deliverable with immediate effect and its allocation would introduce choice into the local market, where there is only one significant housing site allocated at present, in single ownership.

Alternatively, it could be allocated as a longer term housing site which can meet need over the SESplan period as it materialises. Should housing completions at West Linton proceed quickly, the site could be brought forward. This may also be appropriate in the event that delivery of house completions elsewhere in the Scottish Borders, including the growth hubs, does not occur as quickly as the Council envisages. Equally, should the allocated site at West Linton be developed more quickly than anticipated, this site can provide subsequent capacity for new housing.

Affordable business space might also be provided, with the cost offset and directly linked to affordable housing requirements. An agreed amount of low cost business space could be provided and marketed for an agreed time period. If it cannot be successfully filled, the building could revert to affordable housing use. There are no insurmountable design issues in this approach and evidence elsewhere (see award winning scheme at Rothienorman), suggests small business space is a viable proposition in small settlements.

Finally, the site owner would be willing to consider allocating part of the site for allotment use, assuming there is local demand.

7.0 Initial Design Considerations

The Scottish Borders Council has provided excellent Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to 'Placemaking and Design'. The site provides an opportunity to meet the ambitions of this Guidance and the Scottish Government's 'Designing Streets' policy statement.

A number of key design and layout principles can be established, although these would be subject to detailed discussion with the Council's Planning Department prior to the submission of any planning application :

1. Frontage to Deanfoot Road

Houses should front Deanfoot Road, exploiting views to the south, maximising passive solar gain and enhancing the eastern gateway to the village. The existing stone wall at the southern boundary of the site should be retained. The existing footpath on the north side of Deanfoot Road should be extended to serve the development and this could be located on the north side of the wall.

2. Public Space at the Dean

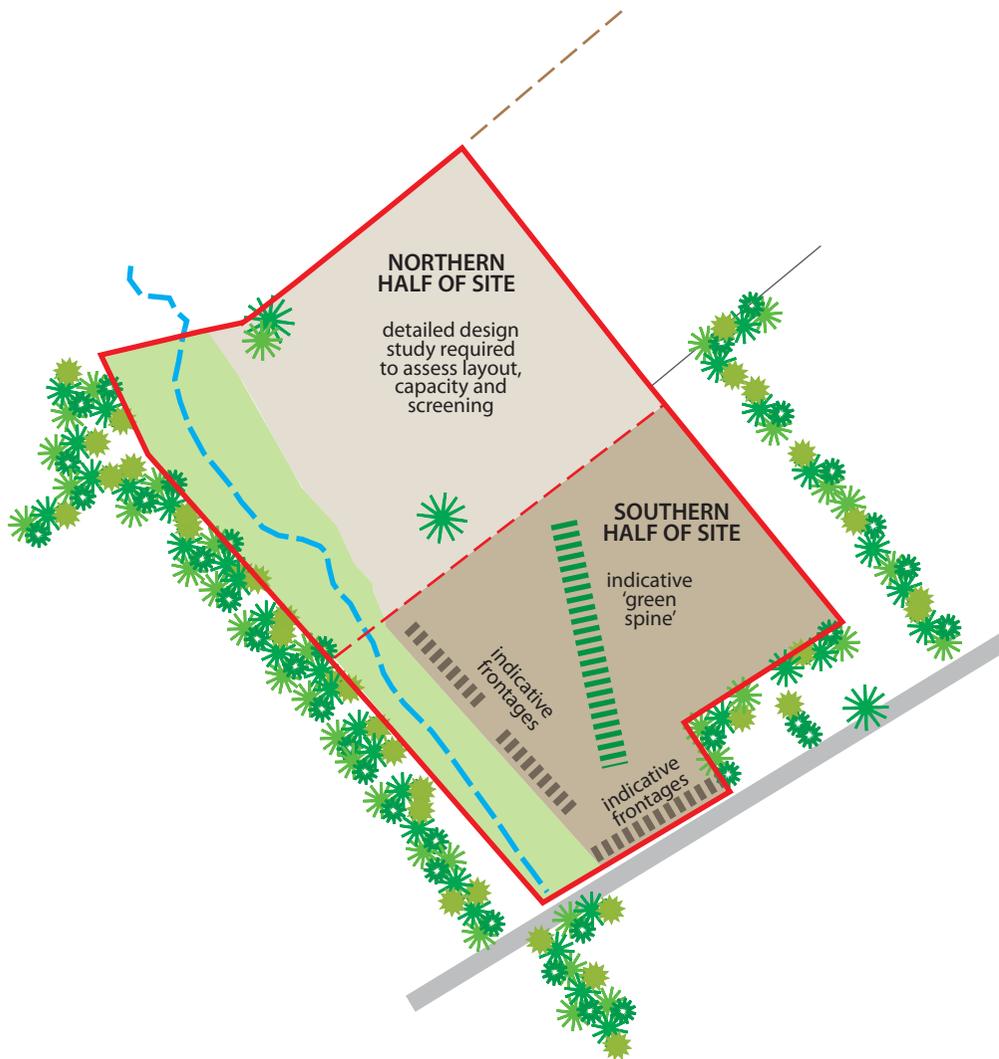
A green corridor could be established, along the route of the Dean burn. This could provide a setting for development, with houses ideally fronting onto the open space. This is a feature of open spaces elsewhere in the village. The open space could be designed as a natural space, perhaps with pockets of more formal planting and play provision towards the southern end. A footpath connection to Robinsland / Dryburn Brae would improve accessibility to bus stops and help to create a network of walking routes.

3. A Green Road Corridor

It is important that the layout provides a well defined structure of building frontages, routes and spaces. A road route will be required through the southern third of the site to access the central third. This could act as a green spine, with public space fronted by houses, tree avenues and planting, small pockets of sheltered open space and seating, and small scale play opportunities. This 'spine' could link with a Dean burn path.

4. Layout Form

The layout should not revert to the default solution of suburban culs de sac, which has been adopted throughout Scottish towns and villages for some years. Recent refusal of the Robinsland application illustrates the Council's firm commitment to design driven by local character and identity. There are abundant design and layout references within the original village which could provide inspiration for a form and layout of development which is in context but does not seek to mimic the past.





Dean 'burn', west edge of site



Rear fencing at Deanburn Road

The photo top left shows the existing cottage to the south west of the site. It will be important to ensure adequate privacy to this property, which is located very close to the site boundary.

The photo top right shows the existing development constructed in recent times to the west of the site, on the north side of Deanfoot Road. High rear garden fences are presented to Deanfoot Road and the houses all face away from the route. New development should avoid this approach.

The photo lower left shows the view at the south of the site, further to the east. The stone wall should be retained and houses should front Deanfoot Road. A new footpath could be located on the northern side of the wall, to enhance road safety and provide an attractive pedestrian route in front of the new houses.

The photos lower centre and right show terraced and grouped buildings in the village centre, with shared surface routes used by both pedestrians and vehicles. Design references in the village should inform the character and sense of place of the new development, but it should not aim to recreate the past.



Stone wall at Deanfoot Road



Shared surface 'lane' at village



Grouped buildings at village