

REPORT TO NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL ON THE NORTH LANARKSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN MODIFIED PROPOSED PLAN EXAMINATION

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Site at Whitehill Farm, Stepps

80. Representation 225-300 regarding the site at Whitehill Farm, Stepps is also recorded in issues 1, 4, 28 and 31. My conclusions here take into account the whole of the representation.

81. A request for further information was issued on 8 December 2020. It sought clarifications regarding the boundary of the site at Whitehill Farm. The council replied on 18 December 2020. The representor replied on 8 January 2021. I have noted the content of the replies.

82. The representation seeks removal of the representation site's green belt designation. The site should be allocated for a residential development of approximately 400 houses.

83. With regard to housing land supply, in issue 4, we conclude that the modified proposed plan identifies housing sites in the Cumbernauld housing sub-market area sufficient to meet the housing land requirements specified in Clydeplan. Paragraph 117 of circular 6/2013: Development Planning makes clear that the scope of this examination is to ensure that the plan's approach is both sufficient and appropriate. There is no imperative for us to consider allocating further housing sites in the Cumbernauld housing sub-market area to ensure the plan is sufficient in regard to its provision of housing land.

84. The south boundary of the representation site adjoins the Cumbernauld to Glasgow railway line. The south-east boundary adjoins the edge of the built-up area along Whitehill Farm Road and Bothlin Drive. The site extends across Lenzie Road to take in a parcel of land on the east side of that road. The north-west boundary of the site follows the line of the Garnkirk Burn. Map SM020 in the council's site map booklet shows a slightly smaller site.

85. In the current, adopted local plan and in the proposed plan, the site is designated as part of the green belt.

86. The representation says that development on the representation site could form a natural settlement expansion and infill between the existing settlement edge and the Garnkirk Burn. Land beyond would act as a new settlement edge and buffer to the M80. The existing settlement edge adjacent to the land at Whitehill Farm is poorly defined and does not form a robust and defensible long-term edge to the green belt. The site is in a low-lying position below the M80. It is not highly visible. It could accommodate development without significant adverse landscape impact.

87. The representation goes on to say that vehicular access could be taken from Lenzie Road and Whitehill Farm Road. Pedestrian connections should be possible from multiple points. A successful planning appeal at Hornhill Farm, which sits to the east and in similar relationship between the existing settlement and the M80, establishes a clear precedent for development being accepted between the M80 and the existing settlement edge of Stepps. The representation site is identified as being potentially affected by surface water flooding on the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's Flood Map. This only impacts small parts of the site

and could be allowed for in the site layout. If allocated for development, the site would be effective.

88. I find that reference to infill between the existing settlement edge and the Garnkirk Burn suggests that the Garnkirk Burn is a defining feature in the landscape. From my site inspection, I note that hereabouts the Garnkirk Burn is flowing across ground that is relatively flat. The burn is inconspicuous in the landscape. I find that the north-west boundary of the site is not defined by a clearly identifiable visual boundary marker based on landscape features such as rivers, tree belts, railways or main roads (Scottish Planning Policy, paragraph 51).

89. From my inspection, I note that the existing green belt boundary on the south-east side of the site is clearly defined by the built-up area on one side and by undeveloped ground on the other side. This clarity is not diminished by the mixture of building forms. The presence of hedging and trees is a positive feature. I find that the existing green belt boundary is satisfactory.

90. I accept that the low-lying nature of the main part of the site adjacent to Whitehill Farm means that development here is not likely to have significant adverse landscape impact, but the fact remains that much of the new green belt boundary envisaged in the representation would lack definition in the landscape.

91. The representation makes reference to other matters, including access and an appeal decision relating to a site at Hornhill Farm. These matters are separate from whether the site should or should not be within the green belt.

92. With the foregoing considerations in mind and in the context that there is currently no imperative to identify additional housing land in this area, I am satisfied that the site's green belt designation is appropriate. My conclusion is that the proposed plan need not be altered.

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Site at Dorlin Road, Stepps

31. Representations 215 and 258 relate to the site at Dorlin Road, Stepps. Representation 258 is also included in issue 17. All matters raised in representation 258 are taken into account here.

32. The representations object to the green belt designation of the Dorlin Road site. The site should be allocated for residential development. The site extends to about 15 hectares and could accommodate 300 to 350 dwellings. The representations include the following points. The proposed plan fails to identify sufficient land for new residential development. On three sides, the site is adjacent to existing residential development. The site makes no significant contribution to green belt objectives. There would be a strong and robust green belt boundary on the south side of the site. Access is available. Close by are Stepps and its facilities.

33. With regard to housing land supply, in issue 4 we conclude that the modified proposed plan identifies housing sites in the Cumbernauld housing sub-market area sufficient to meet the housing land requirements specified in Clydeplan. Paragraph 117 of Circular 6/2013: Development Planning makes clear that the scope of this examination is to ensure that the

plan's approach is both sufficient and appropriate. There is no imperative for us to consider allocating further housing sites in the Cumbernauld housing sub-market area to ensure the plan is sufficient in regard to its provision of housing land.

34. With regard to the green belt, the site provides a pleasant setting for and an open outlook from the adjacent urban area. During my inspection, I noted that the site was used by persons out walking.

35. The representations refer to a number of other matters, including access and availability of local facilities. These matters are separate from whether the site should or should not be in the green belt.

36. My conclusion is that the site makes a positive contribution to the function of the green belt in this locality. I am satisfied that the green belt designation of the site is appropriate. In these circumstances and in the context that there is no imperative to identify additional housing land in this area, the proposed plan need not be altered.

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Garnkirk Estate, Stepps

49. Representation 264 says that the site at Garnkirk Estate, Stepps, should be removed from the green belt and allocated for housing. The site occupies land between Mount Harriet Drive and the M80. The site covers 34.4 hectares. It should be allocated for around 600 dwellings, along with associated open space, infrastructure, community facilities and a new primary school.

50. The representation says that additional housing land allocations are required to meet housing land requirements. Development would rationalise the urban form of the northeastern edge of Stepps. It could improve the transition between the settlement and the countryside. The existing green belt boundary on the north side of Stepps is weak, being largely formed by rear garden fences. The proposed green belt boundary would be strong and robust.

51. I note that, in the current, adopted local plan, the north-east end of the site is identified for transport development. The remainder of the site is in the green belt. A strip of land along the Garnkirk Burn is identified as a site of importance for nature conservation. The proposed plan contains similar provisions.

52. With regard to housing land supply, in issue 4 we conclude that the modified proposed plan identifies housing sites in the Cumbernauld housing sub-market area sufficient to meet the housing land requirements specified in Clydeplan. Paragraph 117 of Circular 6/2013: Development Planning makes clear that the scope of this examination is to ensure that the plan's approach is both sufficient and appropriate. There is no imperative for us to consider allocating further housing sites in the Cumbernauld housing market sub-area to ensure the plan is sufficient in regard to its provision of housing land.

53. With regard to the green belt, I do not accept that the green belt boundary on the north side of Stepps is weak. Most of this boundary where it adjoins the representation site is

defined by Mount Harriet Drive and not by rear garden fences. Houses on the south side of Mount Harriet Drive face north, towards the green belt. There are trees along the north edge of the road. As noted on page 7 of the Development Framework Report, the representation site “slopes upward to the south with a ridgeline formed along Mount Harriet Drive”. I find that the ridgeline is a significant topographical feature and lends robustness to the green belt boundary. Combined with the outward-facing houses and element of tree-screening, I find that the green belt boundary is satisfactory.

54. During my site visit, I noted that, in general, the M80 carriageways are not visible from the representation site. Despite this, the whole site was pervaded by traffic noise. I note the reference to noise mitigation. It is not clear how effective this might be. As it is, I find that the green belt between the M80 and Mount Harriet Drive is of particular benefit to the setting of Stepps in that it acts as an area over which traffic noise is attenuated before the urban area is reached.

55. From the foregoing I find that the M80 would be a much less satisfactory green belt boundary than the existing boundary on the south side of the site.

56. I note the other matters raised in the representation. These matters are separate from whether the site should or should not be in the green belt.

57. My conclusion is that the site makes a positive contribution to the function of the green belt in this locality. I am satisfied that the green belt designation of the site is appropriate. In these circumstances and in the context that there is no imperative to identify additional housing land in this area, the proposed plan need not be altered.

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Transportation Opportunity site at Hornhill, Stepps

Land at Hornhill Farm Road, Stepps (Map Book 7.2)

8. The suitability of the land for allocation as a motorway services station adjacent to the M80 was assessed during the examination of the North Lanarkshire Local Plan (AD 53 & AD54). That assessment took account of the presence of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation along the Garnkirk Burn adjacent to the site’s southern boundary, but did not find that this should preclude its allocation for the development of a motorway services area.

9. Scottish Planning Policy requires the planning system to protect and enhance ancient semi-natural woodland as an important and irreplaceable resource, together with other native or long-established woods, hedgerows and individual trees with high nature conservation or landscape value.

Policy PROT A Natural Environment and Green Network Assets of the modified proposed plan provides for safeguarding of natural heritage interests. Ancient Woodland lies within Category 2 National designations for protection. In relation to ancient woodland, the policy notes that applicants should adhere to the Scottish Government’s Control of Woodland Removal Policy with regard to any development.

10. The degree of overlap between the allocated transportation opportunity site and the Site of Importance for Nature Conservation is relatively small and located to the south of the site. The representor has indicated that it could advise at application stage on measures to avoid adverse impact on the woodland, including identification of suitable buffer areas.

11. Given the location and extent of the woodland in relation to the site as a whole, and the protective policies in place for ancient woodland, I am content that the proposed use as a motorway service station can be accommodated without harm to the woodland and hence no modifications are required to the modified proposed plan.

Reporter's recommendations: No modifications required.