



West Lothian Council

Development Planning and Environment

(Draft) PLANNING GUIDANCE

THE VENNEL, LINLITHGOW

Urban Design Framework for The Vennel & former Watergait re-development area

SITE INFORMATION

LOCATION: The development site is centrally located in Linlithgow on the north side of Linlithgow High Street in close proximity to Linlithgow Palace and Loch.

OWNERSHIP:
All owned or under the control of West Lothian Council

SITE AREA: 1.10 ha

EXISTING USE:
Various public uses (i.e. library, youth club, public conveniences), retail units, parking, road access, green areas with mature trees, footpaths and public spaces.

PROPOSED USES: town centre uses which contribute to the vitality and well-being of Linlithgow are sought and are likely to comprise a mixed use development. Potential uses include:

- Residential – subject to access, parking, education constraints
- Commercial / retail
- Tourism facilities
- Employment – office/business; small workshops
- Community events, outdoor space

PLANNING POLICY

LOCAL PLAN:
The West Lothian Local Plan (WLLP, 2009)

West Lothian Local Development Plan *Proposed Plan* (LDP, October 2015)

KEY POLICIES:
 HOU 6 & other relevant housing policies
 HER 12-14, 24 *Scheduled monuments, Linlithgow Palace and Peel*
 HER 17-20 *Conservation Areas*
 TC 7, 12, 13 *Town centre and retailing policies*

DES 1 *Design principles*
 EMP 8 *Tourism*
 HOU 3 *Infill/ windfall housing development within settlements*
 TRAN 3 *Core Paths and Active Travel*
 TCR 1 *Town Centres*
 TCR 2 *Location of New Retail and Commercial Leisure Developments*
 TCR 3 *Commercial Entertainment and Hot Food Premises*
 ENV 1 *Landscape Character and Special Landscape Areas*
 ENV 23 *Conservation Areas (Designations)*
 ENV 24 *Conservation Areas (Demolitions)*
 ENV 25 *Linlithgow Palace and Peel and High Street Rigs*
 ENV 28 *Listed Buildings*
 ENV 33 *Scheduled Monuments*
 NRG 1 *Climate Change and Sustainability*
 EMG 5 *Noise*

Other development plan policies may apply dependent upon development proposals which may come forward.

PREVIOUS PLANNING PERMISSIONS:

There is a long history of town centre uses however there are no current planning consents which directly apply.

SPECIAL STATUS:

The site is in a highly sensitive location in the historic town centre near Linlithgow Palace and Loch with important views both into and out of the site. Any re-development proposal coming forward will be required to address and analyse significant issues related to the:

- Historic Town Centre and site history
- Linlithgow Palace and Peel
- Linlithgow Loch – nature conservation, biodiversity, water environment
- Civic design - a rare opportunity to better integrate this key town centre location into the urban fabric
- Usage of the site area by the local community and increasingly wider visitor interest
- Vehicular circulation, access and parking
- Pedestrian access and circulation routes

DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

Purpose of the Guidance

This guidance is intended to guide the development of land/buildings to be disposed of by the council. Its purpose is to identify key design, environmental and infrastructural requirements. The council is committed to creating high quality environments by raising design standards across all forms of development and retaining/safeguarding any specific items of special merit.

Any proposals submitted by the developer will be subject to the normal requirements of the statutory planning system and will be subject to any relevant new policy guidance, which may emerge between the issuing of these guidelines and the submission of a planning application. The guidance provided is without prejudice to any further comments and decisions that may be made by the council on any formal consideration of a planning application to develop the site.

Site Context

The area from The Cross west to and including the three blocks known as The Vennel flats was part of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme in the 1960s and 70s to re-use former industrial areas and provide post-war housing. As a result of this re-development a historic pedestrian route from The Cross to Linlithgow Loch – the Watergate/gait – was lost and the new Vennel route was re-configured as a pedestrianised street with many level changes. Consequently, The Vennel route is under-used while The Vennel Car Park is in heavy demand and occupies a strategic and attractive site in the town centre.

Refurbishment of County Buildings to form a new Partnership Centre for Linlithgow is anticipated for completion in Summer 2017 and re-locates the library and public toilets thus making existing buildings on the site surplus to requirements.

The site area comprises the library, shop units, toilets, parkland, car park, circulation, landscaping and green space.

There are many mature trees in the parkland between the car park and Linlithgow Loch as well as incorporated into the design of The Vennel walkway, car park and social housing scheme. To achieve improved circulation in the site area a balance will require to be struck between soft landscaping and new build.

Linlithgow Loch / Linlithgow Palace and Peel / St Michael's Church and Cross House / Conservation Area

Linlithgow Palace, Peel and Royal Park– is a Scheduled Monument for which Historic Environment Scotland’s (HES) schedule includes a Statement of National Importance, and a description giving the following spatial characteristics, which is pertinent to any proposed development in its vicinity:

The monument comprises Linlithgow Palace and the core of the Royal Park, including Linlithgow Loch, the ground beneath St Michael's Church and the church burial ground. The palace was built between 1424 and 1624 and is the largest non-defensive royal residence in medieval Scotland. The monument includes the upstanding palace buildings, as well as earthworks and buried archaeological remains in the surrounding parkland that preserve evidence both for early occupation of the site and for activity contemporary with the palace. The monument lies immediately north of the medieval town of Linlithgow, between the town and Linlithgow Loch. The palace stands at 60m above sea level on a natural hill of glacial drift, giving it a commanding position overlooking the loch. The monument was last scheduled in 1994, but the documentation does not meet modern standards: the present rescheduling rectifies this.

Policy HER 24 of the adopted West Lothian Local Plan states that: *there is a presumption against development which would have an adverse effect on the amenity, outlook, character or setting of the Palace and Peel, Linlithgow.* These policy principles continue to apply in the council’s emerging Local Development Plan.

Linlithgow Loch - is part of the scheduled area for Linlithgow Palace and is administered by HES. Other designations with corresponding policy support include: Area of Great Landscape Value / Special Landscape Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Conservation Area status and Geodiversity (BGS). The loch is encircled by a protected path. It is anticipated that a buffer zone will require to be agreed with HES and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) with respect to heritage protection and water quality issues. For geodiversity the loch is a ‘kettle hole’ being a remnant of the former course of the River Avon. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) manages the SSSI and consent may be required for any nearby operations such as changes to tree and woodland management, drainage, construction etc. against which proposals would be assessed.

St Michael’s Church and Cross House – St Michael’s Church is an iconic building with its distinctive modern steeple and will require inclusion in the visual impact assessment work for any proposal. The church is described on the HES / CANMORE web-site as *‘perhaps the finest parish church in Scotland’*.

Cross House forms the northwest corner to the town’s Cross and is an historic building with some residential accommodation. The well-used church hall is located in an extension to Cross House and is accessed off The Vennel Car Park. The CANMORE catalogue citation for Cross House (circa 1700) states that it is the:

Town house of Andrew Crawford of Lochcote, framing the ceremonial entrance up to the palace. Three-storey, white-harled and crow stepped, dominated by baroque doorway; geometric plasterwork within. Swelling 18th-century bow-windowed extension to the west, the upper room having a rococo ceiling.

Conservation Area - the site area is completely contained within the Linlithgow Palace and High Street Conservation Area. There are many Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments within the Conservation Area including those by The Cross and Kirkgate. Meeting Historic Environment Scotland’s views will be an important stage in the progress of any design proposal.

A range of heritage and environmental policies will apply as appropriate to proposals coming forward.

Urban Design

This planning guidance is drawn up as an Urban Design Framework to inform a forthcoming masterplan for proposed re-development of The Vennel and former Watergait area of central Linlithgow.

The town centre is experiencing a renewal with several large properties nearby recently redeveloped, in the process of renovation or subject to planning application including The Cross well.

Key urban design aims for the masterplan are:

- barrier free disabled & multi-user access through improved levels and integration

- improved access between The Cross, High Street and loch
- protection of and enablement of views in, out and across the site
- improved definition of public-private space gradient i.e. sensitive treatment of the spaces around and amenity of existing residents
- integration with local and historic townscape context
- sustainable buildings and design
- integrated soft and hard landscaping to retain and improve the leafy environment with semi-formal planting and a well-designed landscape treatment

Design proposals should demonstrate the six qualities of successful places and be:

1. Distinctive
2. Safe and Pleasant
3. Welcoming
4. Adaptable
5. Resource Efficient
6. Easy to Move Around and Beyond

(*Scottish Planning Policy 2014*, paras 36 – 46)

Consideration should be given to the urban design aims above. The council will seek to ensure that proposals reflect the Scottish Government's Principle Policies of 'Sustainability' (SPP 2014, paras. 24 – 29) and 'Placemaking' (SPP 2014, paras. 36 – 46). Further relevant national guidance is found in:

- *Creating Places*: A policy statement on architecture and place for Scotland (June 2013)
- *Designing Streets*: A policy statement for Scotland (March 2010)
- Planning Advice Note 77 (PAN77) *Designing Safe Places* (March 2006)

Development Approach

A comprehensive urban design scheme is sought which offers a contemporary redevelopment of the site befitting its historic and town centre location. Demolition to accommodate new build is anticipated.

A variety of uses would be considered appropriate to a town centre location. In addition, local employment opportunities are sought within the town, which would arise from new retail provision, a tourism or leisure facility, or small business/es. A mixed-use proposal is anticipated where an acceptable level of residential amenity could be achieved.

Design/ Materials – high quality design and materials which support local aesthetics.

Massing – new development will require to be stepped, of one and two-storeys in height, to protect important views of the palace, church and loch and their settings.

Pedestrianisation, Circulation Space & Public Art

The desire lines for the existing Vennel walkway and the defunct Watergait are illustrated on the site plan. Improved and barrier free circulation between The Cross, loch, High Street and existing Vennel flats area is sought. Where vehicular access and circulation may clash, 'traffic calming' type design solutions are sought for which reference should be made to Scottish Government's *Designing Streets* guidance.

There may be opportunities for the integration of craftwork and design with street engineering such as innovative lighting schemes to support the night-time economy and security by design. The recently refurbished Burgh Halls has successfully married historic architecture with contemporary design and quality materials.

The re-development of The Vennel area incorporated fragments of historic stonework from some of the buildings which were lost as well as new works such as the metal mural adjacent the library entrance. A conditions survey of these works on site is required to consider their conservation and relocation.

Vehicular Access

Access to the site exists from The Cross to the two-storey car park, Cross House and existing flats which front on to the High Street. Currently, the only means of access to The Vennel Car Park is via The Cross. Further access to the site exists off the High Street 150m to the west with limited parking for local residents, library and visitors. Opportunities should be explored to improve vehicular access whilst respecting requirements of existing residents of The Vennel flats. Two options arise:

Option 1– utilise and improve existing access points.

Option 2 – a one-way traffic system starting at the lower access and exiting at The Cross subject to transportation requirements and successful demonstration through feasibility study. Central Linlithgow lacks parallel back lanes due to the pinch point between the loch and Victorian rail embankment.

Parking

The site is being marketed for a variety of proposed uses, parking standards vary. Interested parties are therefore advised to consult with Roads and Transportation Service on requirements. The council's parking standards are available on the council's web site at <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/downloadoc/1799594/1842713/Parking>

Any loss of parking spaces by potential development of car park land would need to be re-provided with no overall reduction of car parking spaces. Regard also needs to be had to parking arrangements for residents of The Vennel flats and local users, notably of Cross House facilities.

Landscape / Greenspace / Open Space

The site contains significant green space with existing landscaping and many mature trees. Due to the incorporation of mature trees within the car park complex and in close proximity to buildings it is accepted that there will be tree loss to support redevelopment of the area. A tree conditions survey with accurate plans is required to assess potential impacts on existing arboriculture assets.

Design proposals will require detailed Landscape Plans including a strategy to demonstrate how new trees and other planting is to be integrated into redevelopment of the area. Semi-formal planting style appropriate to an urban location between town centre and loch is preferred.

For specific residential or other urban proposals, internal open space and communal landscaping are encouraged. However, such areas should be kept to the minimum and should be simple, durable and easily maintained. The developer, in liaison with the council's Development Management Unit, must establish a maintenance agreement and transfer of funds either to an approved maintenance agent or to the council.

Housing / Education

For a residential proposal not exceeding 10 units Supplementary Planning Guidance: *Single plot and small scale infill residential development in urban areas* will apply. Where a residential proposal exceeds 10 units then the terms of the council's *Residential Development Guide* would apply.

For any housing, the site would be regarded as potential windfall housing site and thus not allocated for development in the development plan. Education Planning has indicated that there is no scope for windfall residential development in Linlithgow at this time due to capacity constraints at various secondary and primary schools. This position is likely to remain in place for the medium to long term. Retirement accommodation or one-bedroom flats could however be considered.

Site Development

Appropriate regulations and standards for site development will be assessed for planning conditions. Other council services and regulatory bodies will be consulted and additional consents are likely to be required.

Developer Contributions

The council has identified a series of additional contributions which developers of new sites are now required to provide. These fund infrastructure for additional housing as identified for particular settlements and school catchment areas. In so far as this particular site is concerned, contributions would be assessed as part of the planning application process based upon the proposed usage and dwelling numbers. Details of developer contribution policies can be found at: <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/1210/161/205/207>

Should residential development be proposed the following supplementary guidance would apply: Education, Affordable Housing, Cemeteries, Public Art and potentially others according to proposal requirements. For the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP), further planning guidance will be refreshed and prepared in due course to underpin the new plan.

Planning Applications

Please be aware that the accompanying plans and boundaries are indicative and should not be scaled. Exact boundaries must be agreed at the time of any planning application and disposal agreement.

Developers must satisfy themselves in all matters relating to the site including ground conditions, and are strongly advised to contact the council's Development Planning, Transportation Planning and Development Management and Building Standards units to discuss proposals prior to making an offer for the site. The above guidance is provided without prejudice to any further comments or decisions that may be made by the council on formal consideration of a planning application to develop the site.

Application forms, neighbour notification procedures and fee scales are available from the Development Management Unit, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston EH54 6FF, planning@westlothian.gov.uk or contact: 01506 280 000. Alternatively, forms can be downloaded from the council's web site at www.westlothian.gov.uk

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