



Development Planning and Environment

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

AREA: 0.60 hectares

EXISTING USE:
Various public uses (i.e. former library, 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 would be acceptable and are likely to comprise a mixed use development. Potential uses include:

- Residential
- Commercial / retail
- Health care facility
- Tourism facilities
- Employment – office/business; small workshops
- Community events, outdoor space

PLANNING POLICY

LOCAL PLAN:
West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP, October 2018)

KEY POLICIES:
DES 1 Design principles
EMP 7 Tourism
HOU 3 Infill/ windfall housing development within settlements
TRAN 3 Core Paths and Active Travel
TCR 1 Town Centres
TCR 2 Town Centres First Sequential Approach
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
ENV 34 Art and Development
NRG 1 Climate Change and Sustainability
EMG 2 Flooding
EMG 3 Sustainable Drainage
WMG 4 Air Quality
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 will be required to address significant issues related to the:

- Historic Town Centre and site history
- Linlithgow Palace and Peel
- Linlithgow Loch – nature conservation, biodiversity, water environment
- Urban Form - integrate this key town centre location into the traditional 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 inform the development of land/buildings which have been declared surplus to the council's requirements. 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 for the redevelopment of the site 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, that part of the Vennel covered by this Planning Guidance is currently under-used.

Refurbishment of County Buildings to form a new Partnership Centre for Linlithgow (Tam Dalyell House) was completed in Winter 2017-18 with re-location of the library and public toilets thus making existing buildings on the site surplus to requirements.

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

While the parkland between the High Street and the loch is not part of the site, consideration will have to be given to the relationship between the site and the parkland/loch, the surrounding historic environment and other surrounding uses.

Historic Environment: 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 ENV25 of the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan states: “*There is a presumption against development which would have an adverse effect on the amenity, outlook, character or setting of the Palace and Peel at Linlithgow. Developments within 800m of the Palace and Peel will be assessed for their potential effects.*”

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. 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 crowstepped, 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 requirements will be an important stage in the progress of any design proposal.

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

Interested developers should refer to the Historic Environment Scotland guidance: *New Design in Historic Settings* (2010) to inform successful design development of proposals.

A historical analysis of historic townscape and a Heritage Statement will be required to inform future design and to accompany any forthcoming planning application for the site.

Urban Design

This planning guidance is drawn up as an Urban Design Framework to inform any proposals for the re-development of The Vennel and former Watergait area of central Linlithgow.

Key urban design aims for the masterplan to be prepared by interested developers 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 Safer Places* (March 2006)

Interested parties will be required to submit a Visual Impact Analysis for any proposals with potential to impact on the palace, church buildings, loch and conservation area.

Development Approach

A variety of uses would be considered appropriate for 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). The site would also be suitable for the provision of healthcare facilities. A mixed-use proposal is anticipated where an acceptable level of residential amenity could be achieved. Demolition to accommodate new build is anticipated.

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

Massing – new development will require to be stepped to protect important views of the palace, church and loch and their settings. Three storey development may be acceptable on the High Street frontage, with one and two-storeys in height beyond this.

Pedestrianisation and Circulation Space

The ancient desire lines for the existing Vennel walkway and the former Watergait, which connected The Cross to the loch, underpin the historic street plan. Improved and barrier free circulation between The Cross, loch, High Street and existing Vennel flats area will be required. 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.

Public Transport, Cycling and Electronic Vehicle charging

With a town centre location, The Vennel site is well served by public transport with a main line train station a short walk away and regular local and regional buses available on Linlithgow High Street.

Electric vehicle charging points will be required in line with the requirements set out in [Supplementary Guidance Residential Development Guide](#) and [Planning Guidance Air Quality](#)

Vehicular Access

Access is envisaged from the existing access point on the High Street. A further access point is provided off The Cross, providing access to the Vennel car park.

Parking

The site is being marketed for a variety of proposed uses for which parking standards vary. Interested parties are therefore advised to consult with the council's Roads and Transportation Service on requirements. The council's residential parking standards are available on the council's web site and in the [Residential Development Guide](#). Other parking standard requirements will be assessed against specific proposals.

Public Art

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.

Landscape / Greenspace / Open Space

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.

A tree survey will be required to inform any future development of the site. A detailed landscape plan is also required which should include a plan at 1:500 scale and a planting schedule and include consideration of replacement community flowerbed.

Housing / Education

For residential proposals the terms of the council's [Residential Development Guide](#) would apply.

For any housing, the site would be regarded as a windfall housing site and thus not allocated for development in the development plan. Consultation with the council's Education Planning Officer will be required to determine available capacity within the catchment schools and may require any residential development to be phased.

Site Development

Appropriate regulations and standards for site development will be incorporated in any planning consent as planning conditions. Other council services and regulatory bodies will be consulted and additional consents are likely to be required. An archaeological assessment will be required as part of any planning application to re-develop the site.

Sustainable Urban Drainage/Flood Risk

A Flood Risk Assessment to include a site-specific assessment, sound design and construction will be required and interested parties will be expected to demonstrate this to WLC Flood Risk Team. Early engagement with Scottish Water and SEPA will be required to ensure best practise is applied. Interested parties must submit a Pre-Development Enquiry (PDE) form found at www.scottishwater.co.uk

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 contributions will be assessed against current information at the time of any application.

Should residential development be proposed the following supplementary guidance would apply: Education, Affordable Housing, Cemeteries, Public Art and potentially others according to proposal requirements, details can be found on the council's website at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/44259/Planning-guidance-and-background-information-supporting-the-West-Lothian-Local-Development-Plan-LDP->

Planning Applications

Interested parties should 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