

## PROFILE

- 32.1 Whitecross has a population of about 780 and lies on the eastern edge of the Council area. It is a fairly compact settlement, situated between the line of the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway and the B825 Avonbridge to Linlithgow Bridge road. The village consists predominantly of two-storey local authority housing and contains a limited range of facilities.
- 32.2 The previous Local Plan allowed for a limited expansion of the village to the south and the site identified has been developed.

## KEY LOCAL ISSUES

- 32.3 The key issues for the village are:
- The need to encourage new housing development, as a stimulus to regeneration;
  - The need to find alternative uses for the Manuel Works site, which will create new jobs for the area;
  - The need to ensure that physical and social infrastructure is provided to serve new development;
  - The need to ensure that new development integrates successfully with the existing village; and
  - The need to protect and enhance the natural environment around the village.

## LOCAL PLAN SUMMARY

- 32.4 The Local Plan proposes the following key provisions for Whitecross:
- Identification of an area for a new settlement encompassing the Manuel Works and the existing village, comprising housing, business, leisure and community uses, subject to the provision of the necessary physical and social infrastructure and a range of masterplanning criteria; and
  - The protection and enhancement of existing natural and built environment as an integral part of the development of the new settlement.

## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

- 32.5 The proposed new settlement will radically change the environment of the village and its surroundings. Through the masterplan and supporting studies, the area's key environmental assets will be identified and safeguarded, as identified in paragraph 32.11 below. This will include features such as Haining Wood, Almond Castle and the Union Canal.

## SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES

### Whitecross New Settlement

- 32.6 Following the closure of the large Manuel Works site to the west of the village in 2001, proposals have been put forward for a new community encompassing the site, the existing village of Whitecross and the surrounding land. The Structure Plan endorses the principle of significant development in this location, by identifying Whitecross as a Special Initiative for Residential-led Regeneration (SIRR), and the Manuel Works site as a Strategic Development Opportunity.
- 32.7 The Local Plan supports the concept of a new, mixed use settlement based around the existing village, the Manuel Works site and the land between. The boundary identified for the SIRR on the Proposals Map identifies the area within which the new settlement should be masterplanned. It is envisaged that between 1000 and 1500 units could be accommodated in this area, together with a significant amount of employment land, leisure and community uses, and open space.
- 32.8 The Council's overall objective is the creation of an integrated new community, which is an exemplar of sustainable development, contributes significantly to the economy of the area, and improves the quality of life of the people of Whitecross. A masterplan will be required for the whole site, which will be developed in partnership with the Council, the local community and other relevant agencies. This will have to address a wide range of complex site constraints; major physical and social infrastructure requirements; design, landscape and sustainability objectives; and phasing issues.
- 32.9 New infrastructure will have to be developer-funded, and will include a new access from a roundabout on the A801, local road improvements, a new school and improved sewerage, drainage and water supply. Constraints include existing areas of nature conservation and heritage value, such as Haining Wood, the Union Canal and Almond Castle, and pipeline consultation zones which cross the site where restrictions on development will apply.
- 32.10 Careful phasing will be necessary to ensure that all the required infrastructure is in place and that a suitable mix of land uses is delivered at every stage of the development. Accessibility, particularly by public transport, will be a critical factor in the acceptability of any proposals.
- 32.11 In developing the masterplan, a wide range of objectives and requirements associated with the creation of such a community will have to be addressed, as noted below:

#### Land Use

- The overall scale of the community will be of the order of 1000-1500 houses depending on detailed assessment of landscape capacity and other constraints to include a full range of housing types and tenure, and including affordable housing to buy or rent.
- At least 12 hectares of land and buildings for employment uses will be required, with the type of provision being informed by a full market assessment. Speculative development will be required with the early phases of development.
- A new local centre should be provided, located so as to be accessible to all housing and business areas to include shops and other community facilities.
- School provision to be upgraded through the provision of a new two stream primary school (minimum site size 2.4 hectares), together with community facilities/health clinic/community education provision. Contributions may be required to any necessary upgrading of denominational and high school provision (see Policy SC14).
- Open space will be required at a rate of 2.8 hectares per 1000 population. This should include formal civic spaces, a new public park, other greenspace for passive recreation, and playing fields/play areas (including upgrading of existing playing fields). The design and location of the open space should be integrated with strategies for urban and landscape design, biodiversity, and surface water management. There should be robust arrangements for future management and maintenance (see Policy SC13).
- Provision of canal-related facilities on the Union Canal will be required, including a mooring basin, slipway, amenity block and other appropriate facilities as agreed with British Waterways (see Policy EP17).
- Land should be safeguarded and prepared adjacent to the existing cemetery for a cemetery extension.
- The constraints imposed by the two pipelines should be built into the development so as to meet the requirements of the Health & Safety Executive and the pipeline operators (see Policy EP18).
- The potential for an extension of the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway to a new terminus, within or adjacent to the development, should be investigated, and land safeguarded, if appropriate, for such facilities.

### Design/Environment

- The development will be required to achieve a high standard of design quality and demonstrate compliance with the principles of sustainable design outlined in the Local Plan (see Policy EQ1).
- A full landscape/visual assessment and strategy will be required to define development areas, and to show how development will be integrated into the countryside, whilst respecting natural landforms and features. Extensive new planting will be required to provide structure and definition for the development areas (see Policies EQ4 and EQ22).
- A clear urban design strategy will be required, articulated through a fully developed design concept statement, to provide a legible and well structured urban form, with a coherent and attractive hierarchy of streets and public spaces. Layouts should be based around street blocks rather than cul-de-sacs, and street frontages should be presented to all public spaces (see Policies EQ3 and EQ4).
- Existing woodland and hedgerows should be retained and brought under management, especially the ancient woodland of Haining Wood, except for the minimum area needed to form an access road (should a northern access option be chosen) (see Policy EQ26).
- The rural setting and amenity of the Union Canal should be respected (see Policy EP17).
- Protection and enhancement of Almond Castle and its setting (see Policy EQ16).
- Opportunities to promote biodiversity should be maximised as part of any new development and incorporate and protect existing features (see Policy EQ25).
- An assessment of the potential for renewable energy and energy conservation measures should be carried out and implemented (see Policy EQ6).
- A full Environmental Impact Assessment will be required, appropriately scoped in consultation with the Council and other relevant agencies.

### Transport/Infrastructure

- A full Transport Assessment and Travel Plan will be required, appropriately scoped in consultation with the Council (see Policy ST7).
- A new access via a roundabout from the A801 will be required. Options are to be evaluated, prior to selection of the preferred route.
- Improvement of Myrehead Road will be required, including upgrading of the railway bridge, the road itself, and the junction with the A803.
- Mitigation of impacts on Junction 4 of the M9 may be required, with signalisation of certain arms the most likely solution.
- Other road improvements and traffic management measures will be required as highlighted by the Transport Assessment.
- A comprehensive network of convenient pedestrian and cycle routes will be required linking the housing areas, the school, community facilities, public transport nodes, the Union Canal, and connecting to existing routes in the wider countryside access network (see Policies ST1 and ST2).
- Land should be safeguarded for a potential future railway station. This should be landscaped and used for recreation in the meantime.
- Improvement of bus services will be required through the provision of quality bus infrastructure and financial support to services. All housing should be within 400 metres of a bus stop. Contributions to increased school transport costs may be required (see Policy ST3).
- Sewerage and water supply infrastructure will require to be assessed and upgraded where necessary (see Policy ST12A).
- A drainage assessment will be required and appropriate SuDS designed to serve the total development (see Policy ST11)
- Ground condition and land contamination issues should be addressed and appropriate remediation undertaken.
- In assessing the likely impact of the development, consideration should be given to transport impacts within the West Lothian Council area, and to means by which such impacts can be mitigated as appropriate in consultation with West Lothian Council.

32.12 The provisions of the Local Plan are intended to support a regeneration strategy for Whitecross, however, the land use proposals must be part of a wider partnership approach. The development of this broader strategy could be taken forward through the community planning process, and involve the Council, the local community, and community planning partners. These groups would work together in preparing and implementing a vision for the community.

## 32.13 Housing - Proposals and Opportunities - Opportunities (SIRR)

### 32.13.1 H.WHT01 Whitecross New Settlement

<b>Site Area:</b>	Unknown
<b>Capacity:</b>	1000 - 1500
<b>Developer:</b>	Private
<b>Status:</b>	Opportunity - SIRR
<b>Comments:</b>	See paragraphs 32.6 - 32.11.

## Recreation and Community Facilities

32.14 At present the village has a recreation area and open space around the primary school. There is also a health clinic, centre for community use and the primary school itself.

32.15 The proposed settlement would require a major enhancement of recreation and community facilities as described in paragraph 32.11 above. A new two stream community primary school will be required. This should be located centrally within the overall development and be capable of being accessed via safe routes for walking and cycling. A replacement health clinic will also be required. It may be possible to locate this within the new primary school.

32.16 Enhanced recreation provision will also be required. This will range from play areas throughout the development catering for a range of ages to football pitches and sports areas with all-weather surfaces for community use. Many of these will be relatively informal, however more formal facilities which will require booking and payment such as 5-a-side football pitches, badminton courts, etc. could be incorporated into the community school for out of school hours use.

32.17 The existing cemetery is nearing capacity and land will have to be identified and prepared for an extension.

32.18 Whitecross lies close to the Union Canal which is an important recreational resource for walkers and cyclists. This recreational potential should be utilised and enhanced in association with the new settlement. There will be scope not only for opportunities on and adjacent to the canal itself, but also to link access routes from the canal into the development.

## 32.19 Recreation and Community Facilities - Proposals and Opportunities

### 32.19.1 RC.WHT01 Whitecross New Settlement

<b>Opportunity:</b>	Community/Recreation Facilities
<b>Agency:</b>	Falkirk Council/Private
<b>Comments:</b>	Provision of a range of developer-funded community and recreational facilities to serve the proposed new settlement. Requirements set out in paragraph 32.11.

## ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

- 32.20** A key element of the new settlement will be the provision of business space as part of the overall development, giving local people the opportunity to work locally. At least 12 hectares of land should be safeguarded and developed for business uses. Such areas should be attractive and integral parts of the development and not on the periphery, unless they are intended to house potentially problematic or 'bad neighbour' uses. Phasing will ensure that business areas are developed in tandem with residential areas and community facilities.
- 32.21** New shopping facilities and services such as a pub/restaurant to serve the village will provide further employment opportunities. There may also be scope for tourism and recreational opportunities, possibly in association with the Union Canal. Other appropriate tourism and recreation uses will be encouraged in the area, subject to compliance with other relevant policies.
- 32.22** A recently constructed abattoir and meat plant to the north of Whitecross at Myrehead will provide further employment in the area.

### 32.23 Economic Development - Proposals and Opportunities

#### 32.23.1 ED.WHT01 Whitecross New Settlement

**Opportunity:** Business/Industrial Development

**Developer:** Private

**Comments:** Provision of a minimum of 12 hectares of business/industrial land required as part of new settlement. Requirements set out in paragraph 32.11.

## SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE

- 32.24** Located off the B825 and some way from the A803, the village is accessed along narrow country roads, which also have restrictions in terms of narrow and low railway bridges with poor visibility. Accesses will have to be significantly upgraded before any further significant development can take place.
- 32.25** The main requirements in respect of the new settlement have been identified in paragraph 32.11 above. A full Transport Assessment will be required in advance of the determination of any planning application and this will confirm the extent of road infrastructure works.
- 32.26** The promotion of sustainable transport options such as public transport, cycling and walking will be critical if the Council's aspirations for the new settlement are to be realised. The key measures have been identified in paragraph 32.11 above, and will be confirmed in more detail through the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan
- 32.27** Sewerage and water supply infrastructure will require to be addressed and upgraded where necessary.

