

Issue 10	Polmont & Reddingmuirhead Housing Sites	
Development plan reference:	<u>Chapter 4 Settlement Statements</u> Polmont Area <u>Appendix 1 Site Schedule</u> Housing – Polmont Area (pages a2-06/7) Economic Development – Polmont Area (pages a1-18) <u>Proposals Map 5</u> Grangemouth and Polmont	Reporter:
Body or person(s) submitting a representation raising the issue (including reference number):		
Eadie Developments Ltd (00774) Network Rail (00493) Muir Homes Ltd (01160) Polmont Community Council (00408) Mactaggart and Mickel Ltd (00011) Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone Community Council (00426) Manor Forrest Ltd (00455) Hansteen Land Ltd (00772) Mr T McCarroll (00883)		
Provision of the development plan to which the issue relates:	The allocation of specific sites for housing in the Polmont area, as identified in the Polmont Area Settlement Statement, and detailed in Appendices 1 and 2.	
Planning authority's summary of the representation(s):		
<p><u>Allocated Housing Site H50 - Whiteside Hotel</u></p> <p>Eadie Developments Ltd (00774/2001/001 & 002):- The allocation of Whiteside Hotel (H50) for housing within the Proposed LDP is supported. However, amendments are sought to the Site Schedule in Appendix 1. The site has an area of 0.87 ha. It is noted that all of the site sizes are to one decimal place and therefore the size of the former Whiteside Hotel site should be 0.9 ha, rather than 0.8 ha as shown in Appendix 1. The capacity of 35 units as stated in Appendix 1 is an underestimate of the site's realistic capacity. The capacity should be 45 units in order to make full sustainable use of this brownfield residential opportunity. A 3rd bullet point should be added to the 'site comments' column as follows: 'Site is suitable to accommodate some three storey flats in addition to two storey housing'.</p> <p>Polmont Community Council (00408/2001/002):- The residents of Whiteside Estate and the Community Council understand that development of the Whiteside Hotel (H50) will go ahead. The proposed site capacity and also the</p>		

requirement that the housing is sympathetic to the existing housing in terms of style and density is welcomed.

Non Allocated Site – Middlerigg, Reddingmuirhead (MIR Ref POL/B/05)

Mactaggart and Mickel Ltd (00011/2004/005):- A site at Middlerigg, Reddingmuirhead (MIR Reference POL/B/05) should be allocated for housing. The site was previously identified as a preferred site in the MIR but has been removed in the proposed LDP. A full submission in support of the site's allocation was lodged to the MIR (RD10.1). This confirms that the site provides an effective development site for 200 units, and that identifiable constraints in terms of education, coalescence and flood risk can be fully mitigated. The site relates well to the wider Polmont area and can take advantage of the social, community, amenity provisions and good transport links that the settlement offers. Mactaggart and Mickel Ltd also submitted supporting information and background to accompany the representation (RD10.1)

Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone Community Council (00426/2002/002):-

The non-allocation of the site at Middlerigg, Reddingmuirhead, which was previously a preferred site in the MIR (ref POL/B/05), is supported.

Non Allocated Site – Polmont Park (MIR Ref POL/B/10)

Manor Forrest Ltd (00455/2005/001):- A site at Polmont Park, Polmont (MIR Ref POL/B/10) should be allocated for mixed use, including housing, a nursing home education facilities, sports and recreation facilities and green network enhancement. It should be removed from the green belt. The green belt boundary is drawn too tightly around Polmont at this location. The site does not have any overriding justification for being part of the green belt. It does not provide any open/green space value and is unproductive and ineffective as green belt land. Development of the site would not affect the landscape setting, set a precedent or result in coalescence of Polmont and Grangemouth. Although the site is in the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site buffer zone, the site would not have any adverse effect on the character or setting of the wall.

Non Allocated Site – Station Road, Polmont (MIR Ref POL/B/11)

Muir Homes Ltd (01160/2001/003):- A site at Station Road, Polmont (POL/B/11) should be allocated for housing, with a notional capacity of 120 units. The site is an attractive, deliverable and effective housing site. It is a more sustainable and appropriate development option compared with the sites in the Polmont area being promoted through the LDP. Development impacts are within acceptable limits and can be mitigated as required. The site is well related and connected to its surroundings, highly accessible and utilises available infrastructure in a sustainable manner. A site plan (RD10.6), a letter of support from Muir Homes (RD10.2), an email relating to school capacity projections (RD10.3) and an accompanying catchment boundary plan for Wallacestone Primary School (RD10.4) were submitted in support of the representation.

Mr T McCarroll (00883/2001/001):- A site at Station Road, Polmont (POL/B/11)

should be allocated for housing. The site plan submitted also shows an additional area of 3 acres to the south of the canal. It is an infill site, which is acceptable in landscape terms, with easy access to Polmont railway station. The site is effective and deliverable, in contrast to other sites allocated in the proposed LDP. MR McCarroll owns sufficient land to provide an access, and is prepared to work with the Council to provide additional parking for the village centre/railway station. A site plan showing the extent of the site including an area to the south was submitted with the representation (RD10.7).

Non Allocated Site - Polmont Junction Yard

Network Rail (00493/2001/002):- A site at Polmont Yard, a former railway yard at Polmont Junction, should be allocated for housing. It is already within the Urban Limit. Given site characteristics and surrounding context, the site has a potential capacity of 20 units, providing flexibility in achieving overall settlement growth aims. It meets the four criteria required of allocations identified at paragraph 3.5 of the Proposed LDP, i.e. it utilises brownfield land; it fits well within an existing settlement and its landscape setting; it maximises the potential for sustainable transport, providing direct access to pedestrian routes to local services and facilities including Polmont Station within very close proximity; and it can easily connect into existing infrastructure. Development has the potential to retain and make accessible part of the woodland within the site and generally to enhance an important boundary with the open space along the Union Canal. Development can also satisfactorily co-exist with the railway as evidenced by numerous other recent residential consents along the railways throughout the Falkirk Council area.

Allocated Economic Development Site ED23 – Gilston

Hansteen Land Ltd (00772/2001/003):- The site at Gilston (ED23) should be identified as a mixed use site, with housing and retail of a scale appropriate to the surrounding uses added to the list of proposed uses. Polmont has high potential for growth, and has excellent transport links. The site is effective, and would form a natural residential extension to Polmont. A mixed use allocation, including residential, will create enabling development to ensure that the job creation potential of the area is realised. Consent was previously granted for 190 residential units but lapsed 10 years ago.

Modifications sought by those submitting representations:

Allocated Site H50- Whyteside Hotel

Eadie Developments Ltd (00774/2001/002):- Amend the site size to 0.8 ha, and the capacity to 45 units in Appendix 1. Add a 3rd bullet point to the 'site comments' as follows: 'Site is suitable to accommodate some three storey flats in addition to two storey housing'.

Non Allocated Site – Middlerigg, Reddingmuirhead (MIR Ref POL/B/05)

Mactaggart and Mickel Ltd (00011/2004/005):- Insert additional site at Middlerigg, Reddingmuirhead (MIR reference POL/B/05) for housing with a

capacity of 200 units.

Non Allocated Site – Polmont Park (MIR Ref POL/B/10)

Manor Forrest Ltd (00455/2005/001):- Insert additional site at Polmont Park, Polmont (MIR reference POL/B/10) for mixed use (nursing home, education facilities, housing, sports and recreation facilities and green network enhancement) with a housing capacity of 20 units.

Non Allocated Site – Station Road, Polmont (MIR Ref POL/B/11)

Muir Homes Ltd (01160/2001/003); Mr T McCarroll (00883/2001/001):- Insert additional site at Station Road, Polmont (MIR reference POL/B/11) for housing with a capacity of 120 units.

Non Allocated Site - Polmont Junction Yard

Network Rail (00493/2001/002):- Insert additional site at Polmont Yard for housing with a capacity of 20 units.

Allocated Economic Development Site ED23 – Gilston

Hansteen Land Ltd (00772/2001/003):- Amend Proposal ED23 (Gilston) to mixed use site, and amend proposed uses to add housing and retail of a scale appropriate to surrounding uses.

Summary of responses (including reasons) by planning authority:

As background to the Council's response on this issue, the general approach to the allocation of housing sites in the Polmont area (which includes Polmont/Reddingmuirhead) is outlined in Appendix 2 of Technical Paper 3 (Revised): Housing Requirements and Provision (CD22, pages 26-27). An update to the existing housing land supply figures in Figure 3.1 of the Proposed LDP, informed by the 2012/2013 Housing Land Audit, has also been undertaken (CD23).

Allocated Housing Site H50 - Whyteside Hotel

Eadie Developments Ltd (00774/2001/001):- The Council accepts that the precise size of the site is 0.89 hectares, and would not have an issue with a correction to 0.9 ha to reflect a rounding up.

With regards to the capacity of the site, the Council considers that the stated indicative capacity of 35 units is appropriate, given the prevailing housing densities in the area. The site has a complex planning history with successive applications having been submitted for flatted development involving capacities ranging from 68 to 56 units. The most recent application (P/11/0258/FUL), for 56 flats was subject to an appeal against non-determination in 2012. The Reporter dismissed the appeal, noting that the three and four storey blocks proposed were inappropriate in relation to the prevailing height and character of the surrounding

housing (CD90). The indicative capacity of 35 units reflects the need to respect the character and density of the surrounding area, whilst offering sufficient flexibility for a range of housing configurations.

For this reason, the Council does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Non Allocated Site – Middlerigg, Reddingmuirhead (MIR Ref POL/B/05)

Mactaggart and Mickel Ltd (00011/2004/005):- The Council does not consider that the site at Middlerigg should be allocated for housing. The site was subject to site assessment (CD21, site ref POL/B/05) and was identified in the MIR as a preferred site. However, following consultation on the MIR, the site was not included in the proposed LDP. The site was considered, and rejected, at the previous Falkirk Council Local Plan Inquiry in 2009 (CD12, page 251, where the site is known as 'Polmont Burn').

At the MIR stage, the Council considered that the site had some merit within the context of a strategy of modest settlement expansion. The site assessment notes that the area could be seen as a rounding off of the urban area, offering reasonable landscape fit. However, it also noted drawbacks, notably issues of coalescence between Wallacestone and Reddingmuirhead, and the potential need to rezone the site to Shieldhill Primary School. Through the MIR consultation, there was widespread opposition to the site from local residents, concerns focusing on the scale of recent and projected growth in the area, and associated infrastructure and greenspace issues. These were encapsulated in Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone Community Council's submission to the MIR (CD91). Taking account of all these issues, it was decided not to take the site forward into the proposed LDP.

In the proposed LDP, the Council's overall housing strategy for the Polmont area is to focus on the existing committed growth area of Overton/Redding, where two major, long-term sites are being developed, and a growth area at Maddiston East, where ongoing and committed developments are augmented by some additional sites. Figure 3.1 (page 10) indicates that existing supply sites will yield some 840 houses over the period 2014-2024, with additional allocations providing an extra 175 houses. This gives a supply for the initial period of the LDP of 1015 units. The figure for the output from existing supply sites has been updated to 969 units based on information from the 2012/2013 Housing Land Audit (CD40), giving a total supply of 1144 (CD23). Extensive provision has been made for housing growth in the Polmont area, and there is no need or justification for significant additional allocations, such as this site.

The Reddingmuirhead/Wallacestone area has been the focus of extensive growth over recent years. Since 2000, over 500 houses have been built at three major sites, whilst over 200 are still to be built at Redding Park (H42). In considering the site at the 2009 Local Plan Inquiry, the Reporters noted that 'it is not an unreasonable approach to allow all the development planned to be completed, then to assess the effects of it on local communities, before considering further options for development in the area'. Having noted the response to community

consultation on the MIR, the Council now considers that this remains an appropriate strategy for the time being.

In terms of education capacity, the site lies within the catchment of Wallacestone Primary School. Historically, this school had severe capacity pressures. It was extended to a three stream school and its catchment area was reduced following the opening of the new Maddiston Primary School. These measures have alleviated the situation, but the school is still operating at a capacity of around 80%, and the allocation of further significant sites in the catchment would put pressure on it once again. The school cannot be further expanded. Pre-zoning of the site to Shieldhill Primary School, which has capacity, is a possible solution, but not an ideal one, as this would mean the community being split between three primary schools. There may also be issues with regard to the capacity of Braes High School which is due to continue at high occupancy levels into the longer term.

In terms of issues of community identity, greenspace and landscape, the site provides a green wedge between Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone. Although the communities have undoubtedly coalesced further east, the site is nonetheless clearly valued as a greenspace by the local community. There are core paths around its periphery. In landscape terms, although the site has an urban edge feel, it also has the character of gently rolling agricultural farmland, particularly to the south and west where it opens out into the wider countryside. Its character is enhanced by the wooded Polmont Burn running through it.

For these reasons, the Council does not agree to modify the Proposed Plan in response to this representation.

Non Allocated Site – Polmont Park (MIR Ref POL/B/10)

Manor Forrest Ltd (00455/2005/001):- The Council does not consider that the site at Polmont Park should be allocated for housing, or the site removed from the green belt. The site was subject to site assessment (CD21, site ref POL/B/10) and was identified in the MIR as a non-preferred site. The site was considered, and rejected, at the previous Falkirk Council Local Plan Inquiry in 2009 (CD12, page 254).

The Council's overall housing strategy for the Polmont area is to focus on the existing committed growth area of Overton/Redding, where two major, long-term sites are being developed, and a growth area at Maddiston East, where ongoing and committed developments are augmented by some additional sites. Figure 3.1 (page 10) indicates that existing supply sites will yield some 840 houses over the period 2014-2024, with additional allocations providing an extra 175 houses. This gives a supply for the initial period of the LDP of 1015 units. The figure for the output from existing supply sites has been updated to 969 units based on information from the 2012/2013 Housing Land Audit (CD40), giving a total supply of 1144. Extensive provision has been made for housing growth in the Polmont area, and there is no need or justification for additional allocations, such as this site, particularly where this would involve green belt release.

The site is an integral and logical part of Polmont-Grangemouth green belt, which has been reaffirmed following a comprehensive review of green belt in the Council area (Technical Report 6). It fulfils the function of green belt, as set out in the SPP (CD01, paragraphs 59 and 60) and the LDP spatial strategy (Policy CG02, page 14) by supporting the settlement strategy, contributing to the landscape setting and character of the setting of Polmont, and preventing the coalescence of settlements. There is extensive provision for public access in the vicinity, particularly in Gray Buchanan Park to the south and the Polmont Burn valley to the east. The current green belt boundary is strong and defensible, in contrast to that proposed by the representation. The green belt in this location is relatively narrow, and any reduction in its extent is likely to threaten its viability

The site does not represent a logical extension of the urban area. Rather it would be a westward projection of the urban area into the green belt, leading to fragmentation of the green belt and partially isolating the important wedge formed by Gray Buchanan Park to the south from the wider Polmont-Grangemouth green belt.

In landscape terms, whilst a degree of enclosure is provided by boundary trees and walls, parts of the site are prominent when viewed from north and south. Development would adversely affect the landscape setting of Polmont.

The site is part of the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site buffer zone. The buffer zone is designed to protect the landscape setting of the Antonine Wall, and was delineated using a robust methodology including detailed landscape assessment and key visualisations. The Council therefore considers that this site forms part of the landscape setting of the Wall. Development of the northern section of the site has the potential to have adverse impact on the setting of the Wall.

For these reasons, the Council does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Non Allocated Site – Station Road, Polmont (MIR Ref POL/B/11)

Muir Homes Ltd (01160/2001/003); Mr T McCarroll (00883/2001/001):- The Council does not consider that the site at Station Road, Polmont should be allocated for housing, The site was subject to site assessment (CD21, site ref POL/B/11) and was identified in the MIR as a non-preferred site. The site was previously considered, and rejected, at the Polmont & District Local Plan Inquiry in 2001 (CD92).

The Council's overall housing strategy for the Polmont area is to focus on the existing committed growth area of Overton/Redding, where two major, long-term sites are being developed, and a growth area at Maddiston East, where ongoing and committed developments are augmented by some additional sites. Figure 3.1 (page 10) indicates that existing supply sites will yield some 840 houses over the period 2014-2024, with additional allocations providing an extra 175 houses. This gives a supply for the initial period of the LDP of 1015 units. The figure for the output from existing supply sites has been updated to 969 units based on information from the 2012/2013 Housing Land Audit (CD40), giving a total supply

of 1144. Extensive provision has been made for housing growth in the Polmont area, and there is no need or justification for additional allocations, such as this site.

The site consists of a wedge of countryside between the Union Canal and the main Glasgow-Edinburgh railway line. It extends into the urban area, but in doing so provides a sense of physical separation between the communities of Polmont to the north and Brightons to the south. This wedge forms an important part of the green network, in landscape, visual and access terms. In particular, it contributes to the rural character and amenity of the Union Canal in this location, the canal network being a strategic tourism asset which the Council seeks to maintain and enhance through the LDP (Map 3.4, page 17 and Policy D14, page 68). This character would be lost if the site were developed, and the development would make no contribution to the canal. The Union Canal is a scheduled ancient monument, and its setting would be adversely affected. The site is also part of the Polmont Burn corridor, which runs across the western part of the site. A core path crosses the middle of the site (CD34, page 41) emphasising its importance for countryside recreation. The value of the site to local landscape and amenity was a key consideration for the Reporters at the Polmont & District Local Plan Inquiry (CD92, paragraph 13.54).

In terms of education capacity, the site lies within the catchment of Wallacestone Primary School. Historically, this school had severe capacity pressures. It was extended to a three stream school and its catchment area was reduced following the opening of the new Maddiston Primary School. These measures have alleviated the situation, but the school is still operating at a capacity of around 80%, and the allocation of further significant sites in the catchment could cumulatively put pressure on it once again. The school cannot be further expanded, so the Council would wish to pursue a low risk strategy with regard to capacity. There may also be cumulative issues with regard to the capacity of Braes High School which is due to continue at high occupancy levels into the longer term (CD25).

The only potential access point to the site would be from Station Road at a section of the road that is narrow, with poor horizontal and vertical alignment, and at a busy shopping area. For these reasons an access at this location may be difficult to achieve and may require upgrading of the existing road, requiring purchase of additional land for visibility purposes. It is not clear whether the developer has control over all the necessary land. Moreover the access will inevitably impinge on the floodplain of the Polmont Burn and will have to cross the watercourse, which is likely to involve culverting. As such, it is likely that the water environment and flooding policies of the proposed LDP.

For these reasons, the Council does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Non Allocated Site - Polmont Junction Yard

Network Rail (00493/2001/002):- The Council does not consider that the site at Polmont Yard should be allocated for housing.

Although the site lies within the Urban Limit, a substantial part of it is wooded. The remainder of the site comprised a storage yard, associated with the railway. In landscape and visual terms, the site would be visually prominent both from the railway to the north, and from the canal towpath which directly adjoins the site to the south. The wooded part of the site contributes to the green corridor formed by the canal and by the railway. It also forms an important landscape buffer. Its loss would therefore not be desirable. The storage area of the site, which is not wooded, if developed alone, would be an isolated development which would not relate well to existing development. A relatively lengthy access would have to be provided from the west, which would be likely to result in tree loss.

For these reasons, the Council does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Allocated Economic Development Site ED23 – Gilston

Hansteen Land Ltd (00772/2001/003):- The Council considers that the current uses proposed for Gilston (ED23) are appropriate, and that residential development should not be included in the list of uses.

The site has a long and complex planning history as a strategic economic development opportunity dating back to the early 1990s. In 2001, outline planning permission was granted for mixed use of the site including Class 4, 5 and 6, a garden centre, visitor/canal related development, a neighbourhood centre and 150 housing units (F/99/0356). This mixed use designation was reflected in the Polmont & District Local Plan 2nd Review in 2001. However, the consent subsequently lapsed.

In March 2009, planning permission in principle was granted on appeal for mixed use development comprising Classes 4, 5 and 6, garden centre, car showrooms, hotel, restaurants, and neighbourhood centre (P/07/0803/OUT) (CD89). Detailed planning permission was also granted for the formation of access to the site (P/07/0802/FUL), works which are now completed. An application for approval of matters specified in Condition 5 of the PPP consent (P/12/0095/MSC) was granted in August 2013. This consisted of the preparation of a masterplan for the site (CD88). The range of uses allowed for in this consent, and included in the masterplan, broadly reflects those allowed for in the current Local Plan (CD10, page 191, site ED.POL01), and in the proposed LDP (ED23), i.e. a range of employment and ancillary uses, but no residential component.

The site was previously considered at the Falkirk Council Local Plan Inquiry where there was an objection to the non-inclusion of housing within the list of uses. This was rejected by the Reporters (CD12, pages 263-267)

The Gilston is an important site in the portfolio of economic development opportunities within the Council area. Its strategic location at Junction 4 of the M9, means that it forms a key part of the Eastern Gateway Strategic Business Location (Map 3.3, page 16). It is also recognised as strategic tourism node, with the potential to accommodate gateway tourism services (Map 3.4, page 17 and

Figure 3.2, page 18). The promotion of residential development as part of the mix is seen by the Council as conflicting with, and constraining the employment potential of the site. The current, recently approved masterplan does not include housing, and it has yet to be demonstrated how residential use could be successfully integrated into the site, without compromising the economic and environmental aspirations for the Gilston development.

The Council's overall housing strategy for the Polmont area is to focus on the existing committed growth area of Overton/Redding, where two major, long-term sites are being developed, and a growth area at Maddiston East, where ongoing and committed developments are augmented by some additional sites. Figure 3.1 (page 10) indicates that existing supply sites will yield some 840 houses over the period 2014-2024, with additional allocations providing an extra 175 houses. This gives a supply for the initial period of the LDP of 1015 units. The figure for the output from existing supply sites has been updated to 969 units based on information from the 2012/2013 Housing Land Audit (CD40), giving a total supply of 1144 (CD23). Extensive provision has been made for housing growth in the Polmont area, and there is no need or justification for additional allocations, such as this site.

In terms of primary school capacity, the site lies within the catchment of St Margaret's Primary School. With the removal of mobile classrooms several years ago, this school is now operating at high occupancy levels, and any significant residential component at Gilston may necessitate an extension to the school. Other infrastructure issues, such as transport impacts, would also have to be re-evaluated.

For these reasons, the Council does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Reporter's conclusions:

Reporter's recommendations: