

Issue 13	Rural South (Lower Braes) Housing Sites	
Development plan reference:	<p><u>Chapter 4 Settlement Statements</u> Rural South (pages 40 – 41) <u>Appendix 1 Site Schedules</u> Housing – Rural South – California (page a1-09) Housing – Rural South - Shieldhill (page a1-10) Mixed Use – Rural South – Whitecross (page a1-14) <u>Appendix 2 Strategic Growth Area Guidance</u> Whitecross (page a2-11) <u>Proposals Map 5: Grangemouth, Polmont, California, Old Polmont, Shieldhill, Skinflats and Whitecross</u></p>	Reporter:
Body or person(s) submitting a representation raising the issue (including reference number):		
<p>Mr Colin McCulloch (01206) Mr John Welsh (01209) Mark Agnew (00835) Sophie Mitchell (01099) Ms Sara MacAulay (01189) Hamilton & Kinneil Estates (00784) Mr Neil MacAulay (01190) Ms Irene Fotheringham (00782) ESSR Oil (UK) Ltd (01180) Joanne Mitchell (01043) Mr and Mrs Alistair Mitchell (00760) Fiona Tierney (00858) Mr Robert Tierney (00859)</p>	<p>Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone Community Council (00426) Ms Sandra Hill-Smith (01125) Carol Anderson (01274) Scottish Canals (00516) Claire Blakeley (01044) Ms Nicola Welsh (01210) Maria Montinaro (00303) S Singh (00397) Calum Tierney (01296) Lorna Robertson (01276) Mr Peter McCulloch (00962) + Hillcrest Objectors (Annex 1) Hillcrest Supporters (Annex 2)</p>	
Provision of the development plan to which the issue relates:	The allocation of specific sites for housing in California and Shieldhill and references to Whitecross, as identified in the Rural South Settlement Statement, and detailed in Appendices 1 and 2.	
Planning authority's summary of the representation(s):		
<p><u>Allocated Housing Site H69– Hillcrest, Shieldhill</u> Carol Anderson (01274/2001/001); Mr Colin McCulloch (01206/2001/001); Mr John Welsh (01209/2001/001); Sophie Mitchell (01099/2001/001); Ms Sara MacAulay (01189/2001/001); Mr Neil MacAulay (01190/2001/001); Joanne Mitchell (01043/2001/001); Mr and Mrs Alistair Mitchell (00760/2001/001);</p>		

Fiona Tierney (00858/2001/001); Mr Robert Tierney (00859/2001/001); Claire Blakeley (01044/2001/001); Ms Nicola Welsh (01210/2002/001); Calum Tierney (01296/2001/001); Ms Irene Fotheringham (00782/2001/001); Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone Community Council (00426/2002/001); Ms Sandra Hill-Smith (01125/2001/001); Maria Montinaro (00303/2001/001); S Singh (00397/2001/001); Mr Peter McCulloch (00962/2001/001); Hillcrest Objectors (see Annex 1):-

Objection is made to the site at Hillcrest, Shieldhill (H69) for one or more of the following reasons:

- Coalescence with Reddingmuirhead. There will be coalescence between Shieldhill and Reddingmuirhead leading to loss of village identity.
- Impact on Recreation Space. Development of the site will lead to loss of popular local recreation space and there is no other comparable facility within reasonable walking distance.
- Inadequacy of Local Infrastructure. The proposed development would place an increased burden on local infrastructure including sewage, community, health facilities and schools, and in an area which has seen a disproportionate amount of growth since 2000. The MIR describes Shieldhill as having limited services (CD13).
- Impact on Local Road Network. There are serious concerns about increased traffic leading to road safety issues.
- Potential Access Issues. As noted in Technical Report 2 (CD21), appropriate visibility from the access may be difficult to achieve.
- Impact on Wildlife. Development of the site will have a detrimental impact on wildlife and valuable habitat. The Environmental Report accompanying the SEA notes potential adverse affects on an area of high ecological value (CD17).
- Visual Prominence of Site. Prominent location will lead to adverse landscape impacts.
- Drainage. The site suffers from extremely poor drainage which would be exacerbated by further development on the site.
- Development of Greenfield Site. Brownfield land should be developed in preference to greenfield sites.
- Exposure to High Winds. The site is in an exposed position and there is concern about exposure to high winds. All 10 houses at Hillcrest Square suffered serious storm damage in 2007 resulting in the fitting of new roofs.
- Planning History. Previous planning applications for housing in this area have been refused and the existing development at Hillcrest Square should not be regarded as setting a precedent. Four planning applications in principle for housing development in 2010 were refused (reference P/10/0144-0147/PPP).
- Current Development Plan and MIR Considerations. The allocation is contrary to the current development plan. Information in the Council's Technical Report 2: Site Assessment (CD21) supporting the MIR and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (CD17), hold valuable information as to why the site is unsuitable for housing.
- Desire for Local Community Woodland. There is a strong desire for a rural community woodland on the site which could generate wider tourism and

community benefits and which could be part of the South Falkirk Green Network.

- Location and Boundaries. It has been noted on numerous occasions that the site lies within the boundaries of Reddingmuirhead, Polmont area and Lower Braes Ward and not in Shieldhill, Rural South or Upper Braes Ward.
- Volume of Objections. The large volume of objections at the proposed plan and the MIR stage should be noted.
- Consultation. There are concerns about the consultation process.

Mark Agnew (00835/2001/004):- The third bullet point in the site comments for H69 in Appendix 1 (Site Schedule), which deals greenspace requirements, is overly prescriptive in advance of an appropriate survey.

Mark Agnew (00835/2001/003):- The site at Hillcrest, Shieldhill (H69) is supported.

Hillcrest Supporters (see Annex 2):- The site at Hillcrest, Shieldhill (H69) is supported. The development of the site will allow the provision of much needed housing within the Rural South area for the benefit of the local community.

A number of those submitting objections to the allocation of Site H69 submitted further information in support of their objection. (RD13.2, RD13.3, RD13.4 and RD13.5.)

Non Allocated Site – Redding Muir Farm, California (MIR Ref CAL/B/02)

Hamilton & Kinneil Estates (00784/2001/001):- A site at CAL/B/02, Redding Muir Farm, California, should be allocated for housing. There is insufficient land for housing allocated in the LDP and this approach is contrary to the SPP and the growth requirement identified in the Council's Housing Needs and Demand Assessment. The site is in a good location, is wholly sustainable, deliverable and effective, will round off the northern edge of the village and contribute to the housing land requirement in the short-medium term.

Non Allocated Site – Wesleymount East, California (MIR Ref CAL/B/04)

Lorna Robertson (01276/2001/001):- A site to the east of Wesleymount Farm buildings in California (CAL/B/04), measuring approximately 1 hectare, should be allocated for private housing. A title plan has been submitted for further information. (RD13.1)

Allocated Mixed Use Site M14 – Whitecross

ESSR Oil (UK) Ltd (01180/2001/009):- Reference to Pipeline Consultation Zone should be included in 'site comments' relating to site M14 (Whitecross).

Scottish Canals (00516/2001/009):- The Whitecross site (Proposal M14) should make reference to the scope for developer contributions to canal improvements and surface water discharge into canal if appropriate.

Modifications sought by those submitting representations:

Allocated Housing Site H69– Hillcrest, Shieldhill

Carol Anderson (01274/2001/001); Mr Colin McCulloch (01206/2001/001); Mr John Welsh (01209/2001/001); Sophie Mitchell (01099/2001/001); Ms Sara MacAulay (01189/2001/001); Mr Neil MacAulay (01190/2001/001); Joanne Mitchell (01043/2001/001); Mr and Mrs Alistair Mitchell (00760/2001/001); Fiona Tierney (00858/2001/001); Mr Robert Tierney (00859/2001/001); Claire Blakeley (01044/2001/001); Ms Nicola Welsh (01210/2002/001); Calum Tierney (01296/2001/001); Ms Irene Fotheringham (00782/2001/001); Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone Community Council (00426/2002/001); Ms Sandra Hill-Smith (01125/2001/001); Maria Montinaro (00303/2001/001); S Singh (00397/2001/001); Mr Peter McCulloch (00962/2001/001); Hillcrest Objectors (see Annex 1):- Delete Proposal H69 (Hillcrest, Shieldhill).

Mark Agnew (00835/2001/004):- Amend the third bullet point in the site comments for H69 in Appendix 1 by changing the wording to read: 'Design Statement required to consider how the site will integrate with its surroundings and to demonstrate how access provision and habitat enhancement will be taken into account'.

Non Allocated Site – Redding Muir Farm, California (MIR Ref CAL/B/02)

Hamilton & Kinneil Estates (00784/2001/001):- Insert additional site at Redding Muir Farm, California (MIR reference CAL/B/02) as a housing proposal.

Non Allocated Site – Wesleymount East, California (MIR Ref CAL/B/04)

Lorna Robertson (01276/2001/001):- Insert additional site at Wesleymount East (MIR reference CAL/B/04) as a housing proposal.

Allocated Mixed Use Site M14 – Whitecross

ESSR Oil (UK) Ltd (01180/2001/009):- Amend site comments for M14 in Appendix 1 by including reference to the Pipeline Consultation Zone.

Scottish Canals (00516/2001/009):- Amend site comments for M14 in Appendix 1 to make reference to the scope for developer contributions to canal improvements and surface water discharge into the canal if appropriate.

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 Rural South is outlined in Appendix 2 of Technical Paper 3 (Revised): Housing Requirements and Provision (CD22, pages 28-30). 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 H69– Hillcrest, Shieldhill

Carol Anderson (01274/2001/001); Mr Colin McCulloch (01206/2001/001); Mr John Welsh (01209/2001/001); Sophie Mitchell (01099/2001/001); Ms Sara MacAulay (01189/2001/001); Mr Neil MacAulay (01190/2001/001); Joanne Mitchell (01043/2001/001); Mr and Mrs Alistair Mitchell (00760/2001/001); Fiona Tierney (00858/2001/001); Mr Robert Tierney (00859/2001/001); Claire Blakeley (01044/2001/001); Ms Nicola Welsh (01210/2002/001); Calum Tierney (01296/2001/001); Ms Irene Fotheringham (00782/2001/001); Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone Community Council (00426/2002/001); Ms Sandra Hill-Smith (01125/2001/001); Maria Montinaro (00303/2001/001); S Singh (00397/2001/001); Mr Peter McCulloch (00962/2001/001);

Hillcrest Objectors (see Annex 1):- The Council considers that H69 (Hillcrest, Shieldhill) represents a suitable site for residential development. The site has been subject to site assessment (CD21) and was included as a preferred site in the MIR.

The Council has sought to provide for modest additional housing growth in the Rural South area, in line with the overall housing strategy of the proposed LDP. Shieldhill is the largest village within the Rural South and whilst rapid expansion occurred through the 1980s and early 1990s, there has now been a period of consolidation with limited growth over the last 20 years. The allocation of a limited additional site for housing on the edge of the village is considered appropriate.

The specific points of objection are responded to as follows:

- **Coalescence with Reddingmuirhead.** The requirement for substantial greenspace to be retained within the site, together with existing undeveloped land to the west, north and east of the site, will prevent coalescence and ensure that the communities of Shieldhill and Reddingmuirhead retain their sense of separate identity.
- **Impact on Recreation Space.** It is recognised that the site is used for informal recreational use. The Falkirk Open Space Strategy 2009-2014 (page 79) (CD35) notes that although the majority of people in Shieldhill have good access to public open space, the quality of a number of spaces, e.g. playing fields, is low. However it also notes that Shieldhill has very good access to green corridors and semi natural open space. Significant green corridors exist on land to the north of nearby Belmont Avenue and through other elements of the Green Network, notably proposed opportunities GN16 and GN18 within the Lower Braes Green Network. (Appendix 1 page a1-24). Potential links to these facilities can be investigated at the design stage of any planning application. Moreover, the site comments on H69 in the proposed LDP require

the provision of substantial greenspace within the site.

- Inadequacy of Local Infrastructure. There are no overriding infrastructure constraints which would preclude the relatively modest scale of housing proposed. Shieldhill Primary School has substantial capacity. This scale of development is unlikely to have a significant impact on healthcare services in the area, although any issues would be picked up through proposed Policy INF06 which requires developer contributions to assist in addressing any deficiencies which exist in primary healthcare facilities. Whilst Shieldhill experienced a significant level of growth between the 1980s and early 1990s, since the early-mid 1990s there has been a period of consolidation. The level of services in the village, whilst limited, is typical of provision in the other larger Braes villages, with a school, community hall, village shop and local parks.
- Impact on Local Road Network. Whilst the development of the site would have some impact on both the B8028 and B810 road corridors, which are known to experience peak time congestion, the scale of the proposal is such that this is unlikely to be a critical factor. As any additional development on these corridors would exacerbate congestion, a Transport Assessment may be required to ascertain the level of impact and any required mitigation.
- Potential Access Issues. The proposed access to this site is likely to be taken via Hillcrest Square which is a 5.5m wide adopted road with one 2m wide footway and street lighting provision. This would generally be acceptable from a roads point of view if the visibility splays of 4.5m x 120m can be satisfied. The system of access roads off Hillcrest Square would have to be formed in accordance with Falkirk Council's Design Guidelines & Construction Standards and this should be achievable.
- Impact on Wildlife. The value of the area for wildlife and ecology is recognised, although the site is not covered by any wildlife designation. An initial assessment carried out at the MIR stage reported that much of the site appears to support habitat of rough semi-improved grassland and scrub, which has some ecological value. Further survey and ecological assessment would be required. The site comments acknowledge these points by making reference to the need for substantial greenspace to be retained within the site including extensive tree planting to contain new development, appropriate outdoor access provision and habitat enhancement.
- Visual Prominence of the Site. The site lies on the eastern edge of Shieldhill. Although it is located on the skyline, with potentially significant landscape impacts, the skyline has already been breached through the development of Hillcrest Square, and developing the site could be seen as a consolidation of the existing development at Hillcrest Square and Tappernail Farm. Careful site planning and landscaping would be necessary to mitigate landscape and ecological impacts, and ensure that green network potential is realised. The site comments acknowledge these points by making reference to the need for substantial greenspace to be retained within the site, including extensive tree planting to contain new development, appropriate access provision and habitat enhancement.
- Drainage. There is adequate capacity in the relevant waste water treatment works. Any drainage network issues would be investigated as part of any planning application, with the requirement for a drainage strategy in accordance with proposed Policy INF12.
- Development of Greenfield Site. Whilst the proposed LDP has sought to

maximise the use of brownfield land where possible, the provision of a generous and varied supply of housing land will inevitably require some release of greenfield sites. There are no significant brownfield opportunities within Shieldhill.

- Exposure to High Winds. Factors such as housing layout, height, massing and orientation can respond to climatic factors in a way which can reduce or minimise their impact.
- Planning History. It is acknowledged that the proposed allocation and surrounding area has been the subject of previous refusals of planning permission, the most recent of these being applications for four individual plots submitted in 2010. (P/10/0144-0147/PPP). However, the LDP requires to look afresh at potential new sites for development, in the context of the need to maintain a generous supply of housing land. This process can include sites which may have been previously rejected. In seeking new housing allocations, accessibility and marketability are key factors and the Hillcrest site is located in an area where there is relatively strong market demand.
- Current Development Plan and MIR Considerations. The LDP involves a review of the existing development plan and the potential exists for the allocation of sites which have previously been contrary to the plan. In terms of the information presented within the site assessment, this highlights some issues and potential constraints which the Council considers can be overcome.
- Desire for Local Community Woodland. This is an aspiration for the site and would be dependent upon a number of factors which are not related to its consideration for housing purposes. This includes land ownership and funding issues. The indicative site capacity of 30 units together with the requirement for the retention of substantial greenspace, tree planting and outdoor access provision should ensure that the site's function as a recreation space is retained and that it should be able to link with other adjacent green spaces.
- Location and Boundaries. This is not relevant to the planning merits of the site.
- Volume of Objections. The objections at the MIR and proposed plan stage have been noted. Whilst there is a strong body of opposition to the proposed allocation, there is also a considerable degree of support.
- Consultation Process. The Council has complied with its participation statement and legislative requirements in the manner in which it has consulted local people on the LDP. The large volume of representations and the attendance at the public meeting during the MIR consultation suggest that awareness of the proposal is very high locally.

In summary, whilst it is recognised that there is substantial body of opposition to the proposed allocation, it is considered that careful design will address the concerns which have been expressed and reduce the physical impact of development on the site. It is also considered that development at the scale proposed will not result in significant pressure on existing community infrastructure.

For these reasons, the Council considers the site to be an appropriate allocation and does not agree to modify the plan in response to these representations.

Mark Agnew (00835/2001/004):- The Council considers that the third bullet point

attached to site comments for H69 in Appendix 1 is entirely appropriate and should be retained. This is to ensure that significant factors such as the prominent location of the site, its high visibility, biodiversity value, greenspace value and the contribution that it makes towards maintaining an appropriate separation between Shieldhill and Reddingmuirhead are taken into account at the detailed site planning stage, and that there should be no doubt about the importance of these requirements. For these reasons, the Council does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Non Allocated Site – Redding Muir Farm, California (MIR Ref CAL/B/02)

Hamilton & Kinneil Estates (00784/2001/001):- The Council does not consider the Redding Muir Farm site to be an appropriate housing allocation. The site was subject to site assessment (CD21, site ref CAL/B/02) and was identified as a non-preferred site in the MIR. The site was also considered, and rejected, at the previous Falkirk Council Local Plan Inquiry in 2009 (CD12, page 340).

The site occupies an elevated and highly visible position and development here would result in expansion of the village over the skyline. There are also significant access constraints as access would be from Church Road which itself is a road that does not meet current standards for residential use. At the Local Plan Inquiry (CD12 paragraphs 19.2.10-19.2.15), the Reporters concluded that development of the site would result in the expansion of the village over the skyline and that the housing allocation would represent an inappropriate incursion into the countryside.

The Proposed Plan allocates land for some 95 houses in California over three sites. There is therefore no need to allocate further land to meet housing requirements. The Council considers that its overall housing land supply is sufficient to meet demand over the plan period.

For these reasons, the Council does not consider the site to be an appropriate allocation and does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Non Allocated Site – Wesleymount East, California

Lorna Robertson (01276/2001/001):- The Council does not consider the Wesleymount East site to be an appropriate housing allocation.

The site occupies an elevated position resulting in significant landscape and visual impacts. In addition it is unclear how the site could be accessed and there are already road safety concerns about traffic on Church Road which itself is a road that does not meet current standards for residential use. At the Local Plan Inquiry, the Reporters concluded that development of the site would expand California along the skyline with potential significant landscape impacts and that the housing allocation would represent an inappropriate incursion into the countryside (CD12 paragraphs 19.2.10-19.2.15).

The Proposed Plan allocates land for some 95 houses in California over three

sites. There is therefore no need to allocate further land to meet housing requirements. The Council considers that its overall housing land supply is sufficient to meet demand over the plan period.

For these reasons, the Council does not consider the site to be an appropriate allocation and does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Allocated Mixed Use Site M14 – Whitecross

ESSR Oil (UK) Ltd (01180/2001/009):- The constraint imposed by the pipeline corridor running through the Whitecross site is already acknowledged in Appendix 2 (Strategic Growth Area Guidance) on page a2-11 in the first bullet point under the ‘Constraints’ heading. As such the plan already takes account of the issue and the Council, therefore, does not agree to modify the plan in response to this representation.

Scottish Canals (00516/2001/009):- The Council does not consider it appropriate to require the Whitecross development to make developer contributions to canal improvements. The site abuts the canal for a short stretch north of Kirk Bridge, and at this point links to the canal and appropriate development/public realm to enhance the canal have been built into the masterplan. Appendix 2 (Strategic Growth Area Guidance) for Whitecross requires that the setting and amenity of the Union canal should be safeguarded. It would be inappropriate to require any further contributions. In respect of surface water drainage, whilst the canal may present an option for dealing with surface water, it would be inappropriate for the LDP to insist on this particular solution.

Reporter’s conclusions:

Reporter’s recommendations: