# NORTH BERWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESPONSE

The Community Council has been asked by East Lothian Council to seek the views of the community on the new sites for employment use proposed for development in the North Berwick area and their appropriateness for inclusion in the Draft East Lothian Plan.

To this end, the Community Council arranged a public meeting in the Hope Rooms on Thursday 2nd June which was attended by 25 people (including 8 community councillors). It was chaired by the Community Council’s planning liaison officer, Gordon Moodie. East Lothian Council’s Principal Planner, Policy & Projects, Paul Zochowski and Planning Officer Emma Taylor were in attendance. The press was also present.

Mr Zochowski explained that the draft East Lothian Local Development Plan had been approved by the Council on 17th November 2015 subject to further technical analysis of sites and their cumulative impact.

North Berwick apparently has the least amount of land for employment use in the East Lothian clusters. Because of the growth of the town over the coming years and the resultant likely demand for employment space, Cllr Berry (seconded by Cllr Day) had proposed an amendment to the Development Plan for further sites for land for employment to be allocated in North Berwick to which the Council had agreed. An impact assessment was being carried out.

Six sites had been identified namely South Mains Farm, Haddington Road East, Heugh Road West, East Imperial Car Park, Ferrygate East/Williamstone and the Old Gasworks.

A number of those present asked what evidence the Council has that further employment land is required given that there already is provision for employment land in the North Berwick Trust development at Mains Farm, the Mccarthy & Stone development on the old Ben Sayers site and the Tantallon Road/Heugh Road development. It was explained that apparently the Council’s Economic Development team had commented on the sites suggested and advised that there was a demand for small industrial units and small scale office space in the town. It was felt a proper audit of what was currently available should be carried out before consideration is given to further sites.

There was discussion on possible ‘brown field’ sites such as the Council site at Lime Grove (an ideal location for community workshops), the old post office and the police station. Although the guidelines would indicate that the Lime Grove site would be suitable for this purpose, the town centre sites would come under a different classification [class 1/2] but could be brought forward.

Mr Zochowski confirmed that the employment uses for the proposed sites would be class 4 [offices, research, & light industry – offices in this class do not include financial, professional or other services or betting offices as these would be appropriate to a town centre]; class 5 [general industry] and class 6 [storage or distribution].

*South Mains Farm:* The proposed site is an extension to the employment hub for which provision has already been made in the planning application for the North Berwick Trust land. It encroaches into the designated parkland over the ridge and development of this site in the near future is unlikely to be acceptable to the Trustees. It would also have a negative impact on the approach to the town from the south. However, providing such development is sympathetic to the landscape, there was reasonable support for it as a suitable site for a new health centre, care home, nursery or some other community resource which would not only create employment opportunities but free up sites for further development in the town.

*Haddington Road East:* The proposed site’s proximity to North Berwick Law, with the Council required to consult with the National Trust for Scotland under a Conservation Agreement before any development could be considered, means any development would be detrimental to the landscape and amenity of the area and would detract from the visual dominance and focal point of the Law. Its proximity to and impact on the primary school would also have to be considered.

*Heugh Road West:* This proposed site produced by far the most comment. Surprise was expressed that it is included at all as, when it was appraised by the Council on 2014, it was not included in the Main Issues Report nor promoted as a preferred option in the Draft East Lothian Development Plan, not least because of its importance as a landscape setting for the Law and its previous SSSI status. Angus Bell’s detailed Commentary on behalf of the Heugh Road residents to the proposed site raises the following points –

* changes to the distinctive character of the town;
* the impact on the amenity for walkers and climbers and the huge range of fauna and flora;
* the effect of water run-off from the hillside;
* the requirement for a full environmental impact and health assessment;
* the long term employment strategy for the town particularly as the old Ben Sayers site is being developed for residential use because it was deemed to be no longer required for industrial use; and
* traffic calming measures at the east end of the town as a result of increased traffic flow.

The detailed Commentary is attached as an Appendix to this document.

*East Imperial car park:* It was generally agreed that this proposed site was a non-starter given the ongoing parking problems in the centre of the town and the disruption which would be caused during construction.

*Ferrygate East/Williamstone:* Access to this proposed site would be a problem as Gasworks Lane is a private road though this could be addressed in the planning application for the housing development.

*Old Gas Works:* The same would apply to this proposed site.

The consensus seemed to be not to recommend any of these green field sites for development and to request that East Lothian Council conducts a full analysis on the potential brown field sites around North Berwick linked to a coherent economic and employment development strategy.

North Berwick Community Council supports this view.

***Kathryn E Smith***

***NBCC Secretary***

***7th June 2016***

Planning Service Manager

East Lothian Council

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Your ref: ELLDP/CONS/PP 9th June 2016

Dear Sir

**Draft East Lothian Local Development Plan**

Further to Paul Zochowski’s letter of 12th May regarding potential sites in North Berwick to be allocated for employment use, in view of the short deadline for responding given to us, the Community Council organised a public meeting on 2nd June to seek the views of the community. The matter was further discussed at our monthly meeting on 7th June.

I enclose herewith our response to the proposals from which you will note that the consensus is not to recommend any of the green field sites for development and to request the Council to carry out a full analysis on potential brown field sites linked to a coherent economic and employment development strategy.

We look forward to hearing from you further in due course.

Yours faithfully

**Kathryn E Smith**

**Secretary**