

23rd November 2025

Graeme King

Midlothian Planning Dept.

Fairfield House

Dalkeith

Dear Graeme,

Damhead & District Community Council Objects to the planning application

25/00521/DPP for the A701 relief road for the following reasons:

Please note that these comments are in addition and further to those in the first part of our objection sent on 3rd November 2025.

Just to reiterate:

The DDCC objects to the road proposal based on the points submitted previously, the points below, and any that may yet be submitted.

We strongly object to the current EIA being used to inform planning decision on the application 25/00521/DPP.

The EIA needs to be withdrawn immediately, and should not be used in its current state. It is incomplete and misleading. It is not robust as follows:

- There are missing essential surveys - not yet carried out
- There are gaps in information - surveys have been carried out but no information then given
- There are errors in text, numbers, drawings and maps including those of the site boundary
- There are unsubstantiated statements
- There are statements that seem speculative - they are selective and do not give the full picture which precludes other possible outcomes
- There are significant and crucial errors in the way the methodology has been applied.
- Some parts are out of date

Our conclusion is as the EIA stands now it is not ready and incomplete. This must be addressed, but first, it must be withdrawn.

This letter provides additional points in support of our objection. I have also attached an updated copy of the GAP Analysis to include comments on the Appendix 7c Badger. Please note that each point in the GAP Analysis, across all of the worksheets is an integral and essential part of our objection, as are all the other attachments (Cultural Heritage Charter, Damhead Profile, a document on road runoff contamination and a document containing all the comments to date from the Petition in support of the objection). The Local Place Plan is not attached as it is on Midlothian's website already.

1. We fully support and agree with all the points made by SPOKES in their letter of objection 7 Nov. The lack of consideration of induced traffic is a very serious omission, the failure to meet the priorities in the National Transport Strategy and that the cycling community see no value and much detriment in this proposal.
2. Wardell Armstrong incorrectly state that " The principle of the road is already established through the adopted local development plan". In the absence of an adopted MLDP2, the NPF4 supersedes the MLDP. NPF4 states that the approach should be to avoid development in areas of flood risk as a first principle, rather than to mitigate (Policy 22). This application fails to take this approach and no detailed flood risk assessment has been made available. A decision can not be made safely until this information has been received and made available for comment to all. We would also note that this development is a "local scale development" and not considered by the council to be of national importance.
3. Wardell-Armstrong state that at the community consultation events many asked when the route of the road had been changed (it changed even between the online and in-person consultation events). Their written response (Community Consultation Report 13 Oct 2025) was that "The route has not changed since the conclusion of the STAG phase. The STAG phase is a process commonly used in road developments to select an optimal route, weighing financial, environmental and safety impacts and benefits amongst other considerations."
 - a. The STAG 1 report states that at the time it was written they did not have the data to assess the A702T, as the original EIA site area no longer covered all the routes proposed. Examinations of that section of the relief road were therefore deferred to the STAG 2 report.
 - b. Despite written requests for the STAG 2 report from members of the DDCC and road subgroup, this has not been provided. It is therefore not possible to see the decision-making process on this section of road. We also note that this does not allow the DDCC to assess the data used to

claim an economic benefit from this "relief" road or the safety implications. This lacks transparency.

- c. We also note that they incorrectly state that "The EIA includes an assessment of noise and vibration. " as vibration was scoped out of the EIA on the grounds that MLC would maintain the road to prevent vibration **(21/00516/SCO)**
4. Wardell Armstrong received a number of Freedom of Information requests including one that included a breakdown of total estimated costs but refused. Under environmental legislation this information should be provided under an FOI regardless whether or not it is a consideration for planning.
5. The route has been developed with no regard for high pressure gas main or the Flotterstone to City of Edinburgh water main suggesting a lack of consultation prior to the submission of this planning application.
6. We note that the West Straiton development was advised to consult with the City of Edinburgh Council due to the proposed drainage connection into Burdiehouse Burn **(21/00831/SCO)** and that the EIA should consider the impact of Burdiehouse Burn as it goes through Edinburgh. There is no evidence that this advice has been applied to this application despite the drainage connections into Pentland Burn and onwards into Burdiehouse Burn.
7. The areas of land required for construction areas are not included in the EIAR and it is suggested that they lie out with the development area and will require separate planning/possible compulsory purchase orders. The total effect of the construction phase must be assessed in the EIAR in order that an informed decision can be made.
8. The biodiversity chapter of the EIA is incomplete and misleading; it needs to be withdrawn and should not be used in its current state. Detailed comments are in the Gap Analysis, but key points to note are:
 - a. By destroying important areas of peatland, woodland and grassland with their associated species, the road proposal contravenes NPF4 Policies 1, 2, 3b and 4a.
 - b. By supporting the application for this road, Midlothian local authority will be in contravention of their duties under the [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#) to further the conservation of biodiversity.
 - c. Essential survey data required in order to complete the EIA is missing or has not been received/gathered e.g.:
 - Local wildlife records have been requested but not received (including data for badgers) and so are not included in the EIAR

- Wintering bird survey has not been undertaken, so bird analysis is incomplete
 - Great Crested Newt survey is incomplete/inadequate
 - Incorrect assumptions are made about GWDTE habitats, without supporting hydrological survey information.
9. The majority of the biodiversity receptors assessed in the EIAR have been given a low magnitude of impact. Low level impacts are for “localised and **temporary** impacts and for minor shifts from baseline”. As habitat will be *permanently lost* when the road is built, the magnitude of the impact on the receptor cannot be said to be “low”. A shift from semi-natural vegetation to a road is not a minor shift from baseline; it is a permanent and significant change. Such a shift should be assessed as a “high” magnitude of impact to reflect the permanent nature of the impact and the major alteration to baseline conditions. Consequently, it is our view that most of the biodiversity receptors have been wrongly assessed.
10. Mitigation measures are, for the most part, not specified. Mitigation measures are an essential part of the planning application and must show how each impact will be mitigated and what residual effect on the receptors will remain after mitigation. This has not been done. Also, it should be noted that no amount of mitigation implemented along the road corridor can actually mitigate for the total loss and destruction of natural habitats and protected species across Damhead.
11. Damhead has a large area of peat and peaty soils which supports an extensive area of wetlands, ponds, marshy grassland and associated and protected species. These irreplaceable habitats will be seriously impacted by the road. These areas form a core part of the Damhead Nature Network. Despite the EIA finding an area of peat 2.35m deep, no peat and peat volume survey has been undertaken. Such soils are important carbon sinks. Climate legislation and policy is relevant and needs to be upheld.
12. We object to the loss of a key Core Path that runs through Damhead, connecting the Pentland Hills with settlements of Loanhead, Bilston and Roslin. This safe path is used by many residents and visitors including young, elderly and disabled. It is used for recreation, accessing services, especially buses on the A701, local people getting to work and local businesses, and children getting to school in Bilston. We absolutely do not want the Council to remove this path. It is an essential community asset. We believe the Disability and Equality Legislation applies here as does the Convention of the Child.

13. We object to the conclusions in the Climate Chapter which state that the road will contribute towards Midlothian's tackling of the Climate Emergency and towards Scottish Government's climate targets. This is disingenuous and false. Some reasons: No road can be carbon neutral in its construction no matter how green and sustainable the materials. No new road will ever reduce traffic levels because it is widely confirmed that all new roads create induced traffic in a one-to-one relationship. A key argument in the EIA is that currently cars on the A701 are idling their engines in queues or driving slowly releasing "avoidable" greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The proposed solution is to move these cars to the new A701 Relief Road where they can drive faster with lower GHG emissions. As a key plank in the climate benefit argument of Midlothian Council this is false. Especially given that Scottish ministers have stated they expect most cars will be EVs within a relatively short period of time. EV cars are more efficient at lower speeds, thus less energy is used in recharging. This, along with a necessary reduction in overall car numbers will result in an additional reduction in GHG emissions even if the current A701 was the route used. This is in complete contrast to the argument put forward by the EIA, because if the new relief road is used by EVs driving at 60mph and with the increased induced traffic, this will lead to an overall increase in GHG emissions compared to current and modelled traffic emissions in the EIA.

14. We object to the encroachment of the road on Old Pentland Cemetery a site of outstanding heritage value. The proximity of the road risks both the quiet nature of the site, precludes the formation of a shelter belt and risks permanent and irreversible damage. It fails to meet the NPF4 requirement for a sound evidence base.

15. We also object to the fact that the EIA did not consider the following community documents which include information about the cultural heritage, the health and wellbeing of the community, the sense of place and identity, biodiversity, livelihood, jobs, contribution to Midlothian economy and the expressed aspirations of the community:

- Local Place Plan 2024 – essential to inform MLDP2 including policies such as roads
- Neighbourhood Action Plan 2015 – even 10 years ago objected to the road
- Damhead Community Cultural Landscape Charter 2025 – with reference to MLDP2 and any planning applications that will affect the cultural heritage of our community
- Damhead Community Profile 2025 – refers to the thriving, resilient living landscape that is Damhead

All of the above are material considerations and should have been examined by the EIA process. This is a fundamental omission and a serious flaw. These documents need to be brought into the decision-making process.

We believe that the planning application and supporting documents do not uphold the following legislation:

- NPF4 2023 – Scotland’s statutory development plan
- The EIA Regulations
- The Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) 2004
- The Climate Change Scotland Act 2019 - and Public Bodies’ Duties
- Disability legislation and the Equality Act 2010 – young, elderly and disabled residents and visitors use the core path which is being removed, and no replacement or safe crossings are designed in
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2022

We ask that the Planning Staff make note of these points and consider their ability to make a robust, accountable decision that upholds their duty. We are also seeking legal advice about our deep and highly pertinent concerns.

As part of our objection, please see attached GAP Analysis for further and more detailed comments.

Yours sincerely

Constance Newbould

Chair, Damhead & District Community Council