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**From:** [REDACTED]

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**To:**

**Cc:**

**Subject:** RE: Proposed Local Development Plan Consultation

**Sensitivity:** Normal

**Attachments:**

[REDACTED]

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**CAUTION:** External Email

Please find attached representation on behalf of Rural Renaissance Ltd in respect of land at Earlston.

Please acknowledge receipt.

Kind regards

Philip

**Philip Neaves**

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## Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2 Consultation

### Submission on behalf of Rural Renaissance Ltd

#### Georgefield, Earlston

January 2021

#### 1.0 Background

Felsham Planning and Development is planning advisor to Rural Renaissance Ltd. We are instructed to submit a representation to the Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan consultation in respect of land in their ownership at Georgefield, Earlston.

The subject site is allocated in the Scottish Borders Local Plan for 250 units. The purpose of this submission is to re-iterate the case in support of that allocation and to set out the argument to ensure that this site is developed to its fullest extent as a priority within the Local Development Plan.

The majority of the Earlston site is already allocated. This proposal seeks the allocation of an additional area, outside the development plan boundary but extending the current principles underlying the current allocation. This means extending the allocation to include a further 27 acres and also reviewing overall development capacity to ensure that the most efficient use is made of the site.

The table sets out below details of capacity currently shown in the development plan for Earlston and an indication of further potential capacity.

Site Name	Owner	Option Holder	Option Expiry	Acreage	Capacity	Status
Georgefield Option (i) part 1	GF Partners	MJCP	20th April 2029	198.00	120	LP
Georgefield Option (i) part 2	GF Partners	MJCP	20th April 2029	inc above	400	LP
Georgefield Option (ii)	GF Partners	MJCP	20th April 2029	27.30	150	Outwith development boundary

The site is being developed in 9 phases over 3 periods totalling 15 years. This gives an initial 5 years and two later stages of delivery. The phasing is as follows:

- Phase 1A mixed use
- Phase 1B 50 units
- Phase 2 140 units
- Phase 3 65 units
- Phase 4 90 units
- Phase 5 65 units
- Phase 6 156 units
- Phase 7 130 units
- Phase 8 100 units

This gives a total site capacity of 796 units. Ultimately capacity will be dependent on layout and master plan details but it lies between 670 and 796 units.

We have identified in yellow likely delivery in the first 5 year period, which is estimated to be 255 units. Again this will be dependent on detailed design.

Our previous submissions to various LDP documents have made the argument that the Central Borders Housing Market Area is too large and needs to focus on areas where there is known demand. Allocations need to be in towns that are known to be marketable and need to be well located to the new Borders railway. The land at Earlston fulfils these criteria.

The Georgefield sites lie to the south of the A6105; the high street which runs through Earlston. Earlston itself lies within the primary development hub as defined by the SESPlan Development Strategy. The settlement form is typical of a side valley settlement, extending away from the River Leader and into a valley side along a tributary (Turford Burn).

The allocated Georgefield sites comprise 2 discreet areas; one immediately to the south of the existing High School, consisting in part of playing fields; and in part of mixed open space and pasture (approximately 9 hectares). The other, larger area, occupies land further east, beyond the settlement edge but continuous with the new High School development site. These fields are currently used as pasture and

for growing silage and extend to approximately 35 hectares. The additional 27 acres proposed by this submission extends these development principles eastwards.

Previous submissions made by Rural Renaissance Limited have set out the case to support development in this location. A number of key development considerations have been identified:

- Development to the north of the A6105 would be conspicuous and is therefore not promoted.
- Development below the 125.0AOD contour could be achieved without detriment. The narrow valley would provide a strong defensible edge against any future expansion to the east.
- A strong edge can be created by a belt of new woodland planting, linking established vegetation surrounding Georgefield with trees along the burn to the east.
- Development of a western portion of Georgefield can be developed without significant adverse impact and should be considered as part of any wider redevelopment for the redundant High School site.
- The part of development of the Georgefield sites, situated to the south of A6105 could be accommodated without changing the character of the settlement and will assist integration of the new High School within a more cohesive urban environment.

The area has been judged suitable for development. That allocation should remain. Recognition should also be given to the opportunity to bring forward land identified for later phases earlier than currently envisaged due to the need to maintain a five year land supply and address questions raised by sites not coming forward as quickly as anticipated.

**2.0 Principle of Development**

We believe that a case can be made to show that the site can be satisfactorily developed based upon:

- Well established building groups
- Extension of existing built form
- Good accessibility
- Good existing road structure
- Strong boundary planting and sense of enclosure

The objective has been to set out the case for such development within the context of the existing and proposed development plan policies and to set out a Statement Of Commitment at the outset to identify the structure of a future master plan proposal and to identify the key considerations that will need to be taken into account in developing that master plan. The plan notes various matters to be addressed, will include:

- Road capacity
- School capacity
- Affordable housing
- Open space and play provision

The SESPlan sets out:

- The overall approach to development of the area.
- The number and location of new houses over the next 15/20 years.

The SESPlan identifies the following strategic themes:

- Economic prosperity.
- Sustaining communities.
- Environmental quality.
- Sustainable transport.

These strategic themes are central to the allocation of land and consideration of development proposals. The strategy is:

- To provide sufficient housing land to facilitate an increase in the population of the area with growth distributed amongst settlements to sustain the local service role but conditioned by the capacity of the local environmental infrastructure.
- To ensure that the LDP adopts a phased approach to the release of housing land in order to regulate development.
- To use development activity where possible to promote social inclusion, notably through the provision of affordable and special needs housing.
- To seek to locate new development in locations which minimise the length and number of car trips.

We have undertaken an analysis of the effectiveness of the Scottish Borders Housing Land Supply (Appendix 1). This was based on an assessment of effectiveness, using the PAN 2 2010 definitions quoted above. We adjusted the Council’s HLA 2019 assessment to include only those sites that are backed by a housebuilder or developer because these are the only sites that can be considered to be truly effective and marketable.

The key in any analysis of effectiveness is ownership. Ownership is specifically defined as follows:

*ownership: the site is in the ownership or control of a party which can be expected to develop it or to release it for development. Where a site is in the ownership of a local authority or other public body, it should be included only where it is part of a programme of land disposal;*

Ownership determines the prospects of a site being developed and therefore its effectiveness.

**Central Borders Housing Land Supply Analysis 2020**

Capacity =	6538
Number of sites housebuilder/developer led =	69
Number of units housebuilder/developer led =	4371
Number of sites where details unknown =	43
Number of units where details unknown =	1866
Percentage of units where housebuilder/developer led =	66.9
Percentage of units where details unknown =	28.5

PAN 2 2010 requires that housing land be assessed on the basis of defined Housing Market Areas (HMA), which will rarely if ever correlate to a local planning authority area and instead will be a sub-division of the local authority boundary. In Scottish Borders there are a number of such areas. In our submission, the question of the sufficiency of the land supply must be judged on a localised HMA basis not on a local authority wide basis. Therefore, it is not acceptable to conclude that if Scottish Borders overall has an effective 5-year land supply the shortfall in Central Borders can be ignored because it can be made up elsewhere. Each HMA is part of the development plan and has been identified as such by SESPlan. Each must have its own effective housing land supply. This confirms our conclusion that there is a shortfall in effectiveness in Central Borders that needs to be addressed.

Using a sporting analogy, if a total is required to be met within a specified timescale that total will change up or down as the timescale shortens because it will not be possible to achieve the final score necessary to win the game if the participant is not keeping up with the scoreboard throughout the requisite time period. If the participant falls behind the scoreboard the requisite total must go up in order to meet the final score. This is the weakness of the averaged method of calculation of housing land supply because it takes no account of variations overtime. This weakness has been accepted by SPP Interim Policy, which is why the calculation of land supply is given as advice only and is not policy to be followed at all times.

Further, the reality of the HLS is that it is not an abstract concept. It is based on the number of homes that are needed for people to live in over the timeframe identified. If these homes are not built at a rate that is equal to, or greater, than an annualised average, it does not change the fact that they are still needed for the people waiting for them to be delivered.

To summarise:

1. Housing land supply is an absolute. There is a legal requirement to maintain a rolling 5-year land supply at all times.
2. Our assessment of the Central Borders land supply suggests that a third of the land supply is not back by a housebuilder and therefore fails the Scottish Government’s effectiveness test. This amounts to 1866 units, which should be removed from the effective land supply.
3. The result of the removal of 1866 units from the effective land supply is the need to allocate alternative sites through the LDP
4. Any shortfall in Central Borders must be made up in Central Borders

In our submission, the Council’s measurement of likely demand is flawed on two counts:

1. The housing market in the prime CBHA is only began to recover – as supported by private house completions based on value.
2. As the council allocates the sites and grants consent, if they have not granted consent in marketable locations there will be a shortfall in completions – it is self-fulfilling.

We attach two graphs, which are based on data from scot.gov, which illustrate the SBC’s inferior performance and over reliance on affordable housing. There are too many sites in the CBHMA, in remote settlements including Hawick and Jedburgh, which cannot be developed due to “market failure”, the result of development costs increasing beyond the price of the house. Development costs have been affected by the green agenda on the building regs, increased standards from infrastructure providers and roads authority and increased levels of bureaucracy required from planning authorities. While prices in the South of the CBHMA have barely increased.

### 3.0 Planning Policy

We have assessed the proposal against current policy used for considering new development. Having undertaken that assessment we have concluded that the site is suitable for development and that it should be included in the list of development sites required to be prepared by the LDP Reporter.

Policy G1 QUALITY STANDARDS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT sets the standards that all proposals must accord with. The policy has 15 criteria.

Criterion 1, 4 and 11 deals with the appropriateness of the proposal within the character of the surrounding area, wider Scottish Borders architectural styles and the scale and massing of proposals. The details of the materials and building styles will reflect those of the surrounding area and neighbouring properties.

Criterion 2 requires that the proposal is capable of being accommodated within the application site. Given the size of the site this is clearly possible. The attached plan shows phasing to 2018, 2026 and post 2026. Our client wishes to bring as much of the site forward as soon as possible.

The natural features or habitats of the site are to be retained through criterion 3. There will be no impact on the biodiversity of the area and that of the neighbouring community woodland. Landscaping and open grassed areas are proposed as part of the proposals and therefore the proposal accords with this criterion.

Criterion 5 deals with the sustainable construction, materials and design of the proposals. The layout of the proposals has been designed to utilise the available solar energy by being orientated to the south. Materials used in construction will be of the highest standard and ensure proper insulation of the houses for energy efficiency. Rural Renaissance Ltd use their group company JS Crawford Builders to construct all of their housing proposals and can utilise the companies bulk supply chain, delivery networks and local suppliers to ensure sustainable construction in accordance with this criterion.

In accordance with criterion 6, 7 and 8, the proposals incorporate hard and soft landscaping to integrate housing into the wider area. The proposal is absorbed into the landscape visually by virtue of a strong and comprehensive landscape structure that incorporates existing landscape assets within and on the edges of the site, which will link positively to the surrounding landscape. New landscaping of largely native species will increase bio-diversity on the site.

The proposal incorporates sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) and is in accordance with criterion 9.

Criterion 12 deals with the materials, colours and textures of the proposal and their appropriateness within the surrounding area. The proposal incorporates the local tile, render and window pallet of materials and therefore accords with this policy.

The proposal is designed to enable access for people with mobility difficulties and accords with criterion 13.

Policy G5 and G6 relate to developer contributions. All contributions will be made in accordance with the agreed S75.

POLICY NE4 – TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS aims to protect trees, woodlands and hedgerows from inappropriate development. The application site minimises the impact on the existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows.

Policy H1 deals with affordable housing. It is proposed that affordable housing will be delivered in accordance with policy.

POLICY Inf4 – PARKING PROVISIONS AND STANDARDS. The proposal will be designed in accordance with this policy.

### 4.0 Site Suitability

Having undertaken the development plan assessment we have further considered the site's inherent suitability with reference to Scottish Government guidance.

PAN 2 2010 *Housing Land Supply and Affordable Housing* sets out criteria for considering suitability, availability and viability of housing allocations. Gilston meets all the criteria, as follows:

- **Ownership** - The site is in the ownership or control of a party who can be expected to develop it or release it for development within 5 years.
- **Physical** - The site is free from constraints relating to slope, aspect, flood risk, ground stability or vehicular access which would preclude its development.

- **Contamination** -The previous use has not resulted in contamination.
- **Deficit Funding** - No public funding is required.
- **Marketability** -The site can be developed in the 5 year period to contribute to the effective land supply. There is current strong housebuilder interest from a number of parties. This is a crucial part of demonstrating effectiveness.
- **Infrastructure**- The site is free from infrastructure constraints and any required infrastructure commitments can be readily delivered without impacting on viability.
- **Land Use** - Housing would be a suitable use for the site. Its acceptability for housing was acknowledged by the Council in the evidence put forward to the previous Local Plan Inquiry and that acknowledgement was reflected in the previous Reporters' recommendations. It has been acknowledged in part by the allocation made within the Local Plan Amendment.

Scottish Planning Policy was revised in June 2014 and deals with the question of ineffective sites by including a presumption in favour of sustainable development. SPP paragraph 29 identifies 13 sustainability principles. These include giving due weight to net economic benefit, supporting good design and the six qualities of "successful places", and "making efficient use of existing capacities of land, buildings and infrastructure." When assessed against the SPP criteria for sustainable development Earlston scores well:

1. The site boundaries are contiguous with the settlement boundary.
2. Development will satisfy local need.
3. It offers the opportunity for residential development of appropriate scale in relation to the existing settlement and to the identified housing need.
4. There will be no coalescence.
5. Landscape and townscape character are protected. The site is effectively a *blank canvas* and, in line with current Scottish Government policy, this is a place making opportunity.
6. Development complements the existing character of the settlement and the adjoining land.
7. Existing natural features are retained as far as possible and will be supplemented by further boundary planting. The site topography is rolling and it is better suited to housing, which requires smaller build platforms and less earth moving.
8. The site of the proposed development is sustainable.
9. Environmental quality is protected.
10. Development will be of high quality, including buildings, layout and relationship to existing settlement. It will reflect best practice and incorporate *Designing Streets* principles.
11. There will be a mix of house types, sizes and tenure.
12. There will be no loss of sports, recreation or amenity space and amenity space will be enhanced.
13. Evidence is provided to show that the site is deliverable.

The following factors will be considered in developing the detailed planning case:

- The potential contribution to the strategy and policies of the Development Plan and other national and local policy objectives.
- The relative accessibility of the site to a choice of transport options.
- The availability of infrastructure, including education and community facilities.
- The provision of choice across the housing market area.
- The design, quality and density of development that can be achieved.
- The individual and cumulative effects of the proposed development.
- It will not have a significant adverse effect on any natural or built heritage interests or any national or international environmental designations.
- There are no other significant environmental dis-benefits or risks, for example flooding.

The Council has identified a series of criteria for assessing development sites, and these were set out in the Call for Sites Proforma completed by Rural Renaissance in 2019. Our comments on the detail of the relevant factors are as follows:

- Preserving the green network - This proposal continues the existing anticipated development pattern. The aim of this submission is to show how development can be accommodated without compromising wider development policy.
- Suitability for development – The site lies on the edge of the town close to shops, community facilities and transport facilities serving Earlston. This submission seeks the allocation of an additional 27 acres, which equates to an additional 12% on top of the current allocation. The effect of including the additional land will be minimal in the context of the overall development proposal.
- Impact on character of existing settlements (landscape and townscape character)-the site is visually self-contained. This submission seeks the allocation of an additional 27 acres, which equates to an additional 12% on top of the current allocation. The effect of including the additional land will be minimal in the context of the overall development proposal.
- Impact on local amenity and integration with natural environment-the site is visually self-contained. There is no reason for the existing relationship with the surrounding countryside to be changed.
- Effect on school provision – our client provided the land for the new High School. The associated development agreement provides *ring fenced* capacity for our client's development proposals at Earlston.
- Availability of public transport – there is good accessibility to buses serving Earlston and the wider area, including Melrose, Edinburgh and Galashiels. It is close to the Waverley Rail Line at Stow.
- Accessibility to town centres – there is good accessibility to Earlston, which is in walking distance of even the furthest parts of the site.
- Protection of natural and built heritage resources (including archaeology) – there are no such resources known to exist within the site. We would expect planning conditions to address this matter.

- The capability of incorporating renewable energy sources or energy conservation measures into the proposal – Energy conservation is a matter of design and should be identified as a key consideration in the anticipated future master plan.
- Flooding and drainage –the council through its existing allocation acknowledges that there is no flood risk.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Having regard to the above assessment proposal will meet the aims and objectives of the development plan by:

- Ensuring sufficient new housing land is available allowing for a phased approach to the release of housing land and provides alternatives should existing allocations and “non-effective sites” slow or fail to deliver;
- Meeting the economic prosperity and environmental quality strategic objectives;
- Locating development which minimises number and length of car journeys by providing new homes adjacent to a transport corridor;
- Delivering a proposal within a 5 year timeframe, or within such timeframe that it helps reduce the pressure on the planning authority to deliver it’s already allocated sites;
- The provision of choice across the housing market area;
- The design, quality and density of development that can be achieved;
- It will not have a significant adverse effect on any natural or built heritage interests or any national or international environmental designations;
- The proposals can support the existing services in the village;
- The proposals can contribute to the facilitation of improved facilities in the village and in neighbouring villages; and
- There are no other significant environmental dis-benefits or risks, for example flooding.

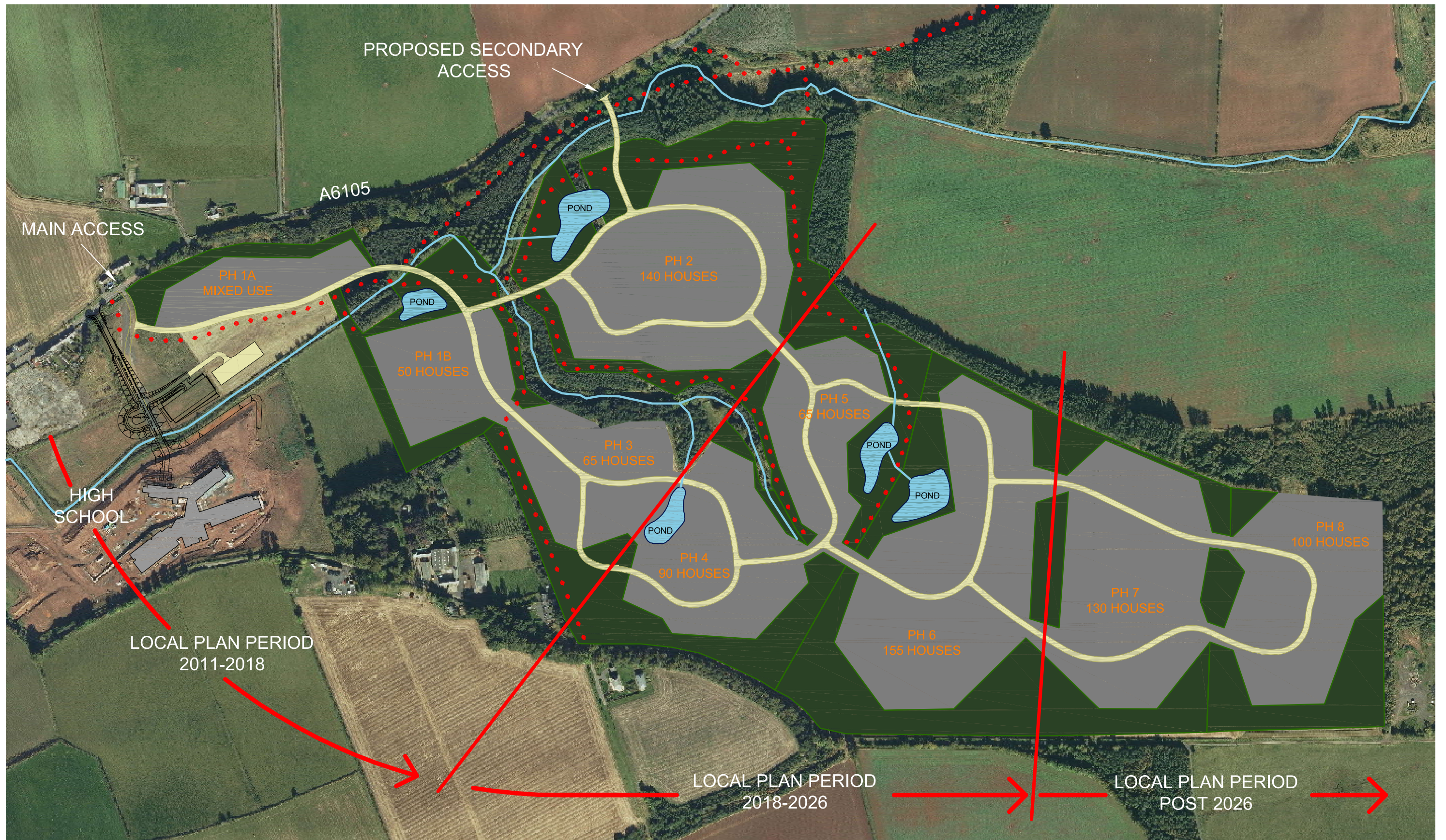
The majority of the land is already allocated. This submission seeks the allocation of an additional 27 acres (12%) and a revision to site capacity to maximise the potential of the site and make the best use of the site’s ability to contribute to the housing land supply in a location that has already been deemed to be acceptable.

Accordingly, our client requests that the Georgefield sites should be included in the list of allocated sites within the Local Development Plan.



# EARLSTON: GEORGEFIELD EAST

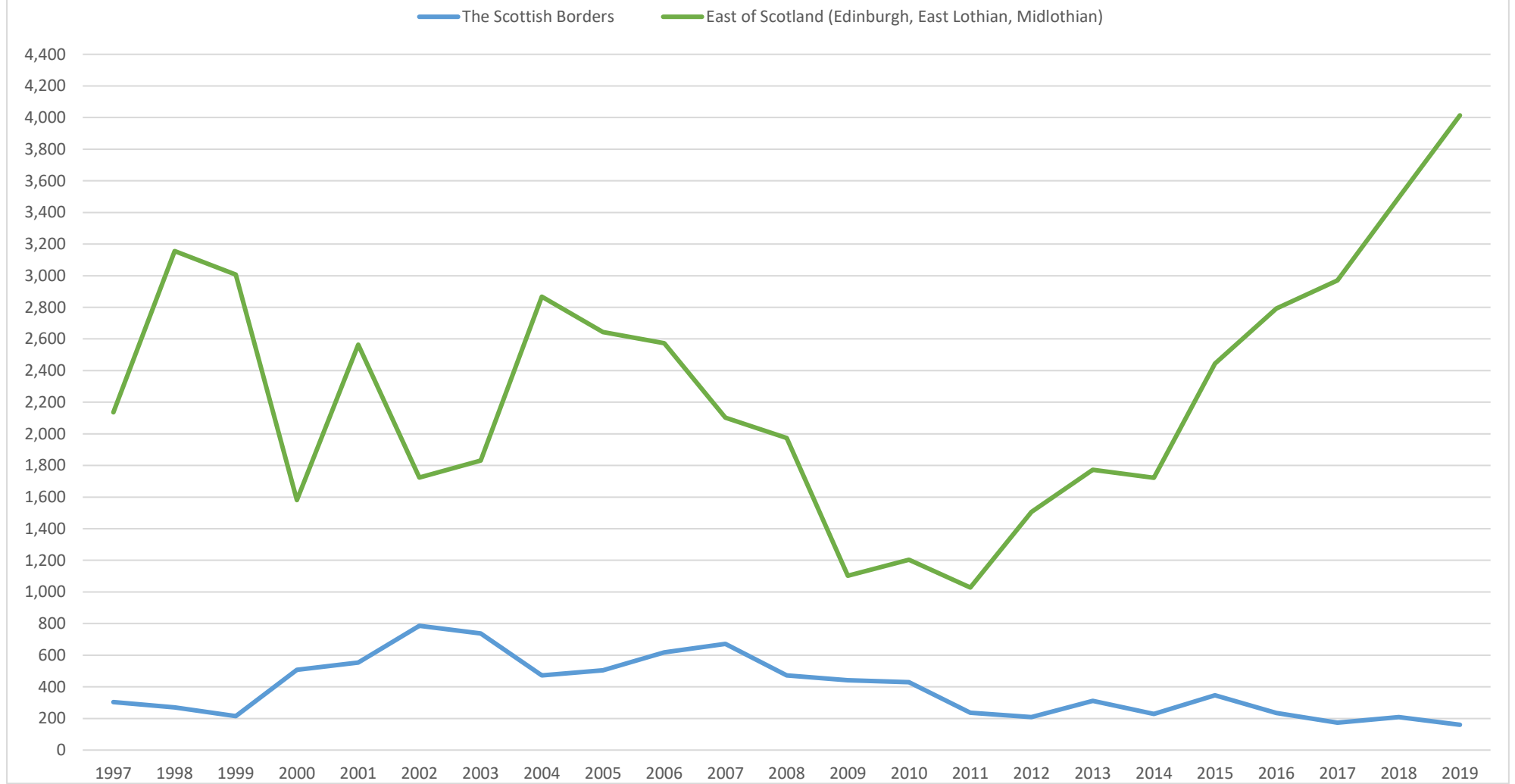
## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



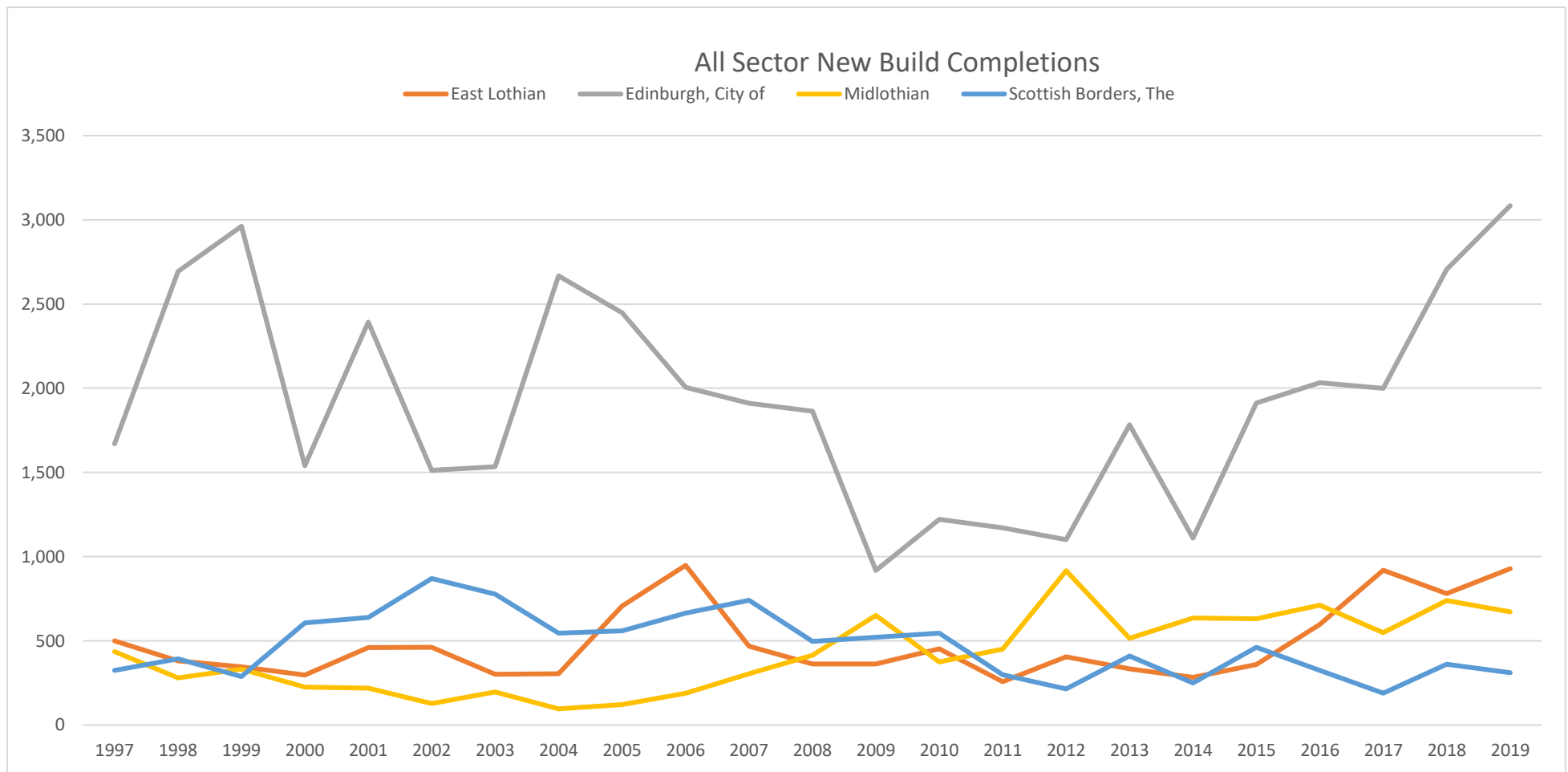
SCALE 1:5000 @ A3



## Private New Build Completions



Source ([Housing statistics quarterly update: new housebuilding and affordable housing supply - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations-policies/housing/housing-statistics-quarterly-update-new-housebuilding-and-affordable-housing-supply))



Source ([Housing statistics quarterly update: new housebuilding and affordable housing supply - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-statistics-quarterly-update-new-housebuilding-and-affordable-housing-supply/pages/10-to-15.aspx))

### Scottish Borders Private vs Social Housing

