

# Big Kid Circus: Former Oakbank Oil Works

## Public Consultation

### About Big Kid Circus and the Project Team

#### Welcome Back

Welcome to the next stage of consultation for Big Kid Circus's plans at Oakbank, East Calder. Since our last update, we've continued to refine and improve our proposals based on your feedback, technical assessments, and ongoing engagement with stakeholders.

We believe Oakbank is the best location to bring our vision to life - a vibrant, inclusive training and community facility, rooted in creativity, nature and legacy. While the site's history includes industrial and agricultural use, today it is largely overgrown and unused. It is a brownfield site, making it ideal for redevelopment and its location, accessibility, and size make it ideal for our project.

However, we didn't reach this decision lightly. We looked at 10 sites across East Calder, Bathgate and Livingston, considering everything from availability and planning status to compatibility with our design needs. Oakbank is the most viable option.

#### The Project Team

Big Kid Circus is Scotland's leading circus act. Established 2005, the circus attracts over 30 performers from around the world, including Europe, Asia, Africa, Central America and South America. Big Kid Circus is a family business and is like a family in many ways, with 50 percent of its performers having collaborated for over 10 years. Owned and managed by the Kirilova family, it has a strong track record of working with community groups and schools across Scotland, delivering dedicated workshops and outreach to enhance Scotland's arts and culture sector.

The project team is led by O'DonnellBrown Architects, working together with planning consultants, Icen Projects, and PR and community consultation agency, BIG Partnership. Since our first consultation event, we have also appointed Hepla as landscape architect, ECS as transport consultant and Narro Associates as civil engineers.



Big Kid Circus performances – please note ticketed performances are not part of the proposals.



Consultation event one on 26th February



Feedback from consultation event one on 26th February

### The Site

The site was formerly part of Oakbank Village which served Oakbank Oil Works. The works were progressively demolished during 1950's, with the final home demolished in the eighties. The site has lain vacant since the houses and other buildings were demolished and has been regenerating with self-seeded plants since that time.

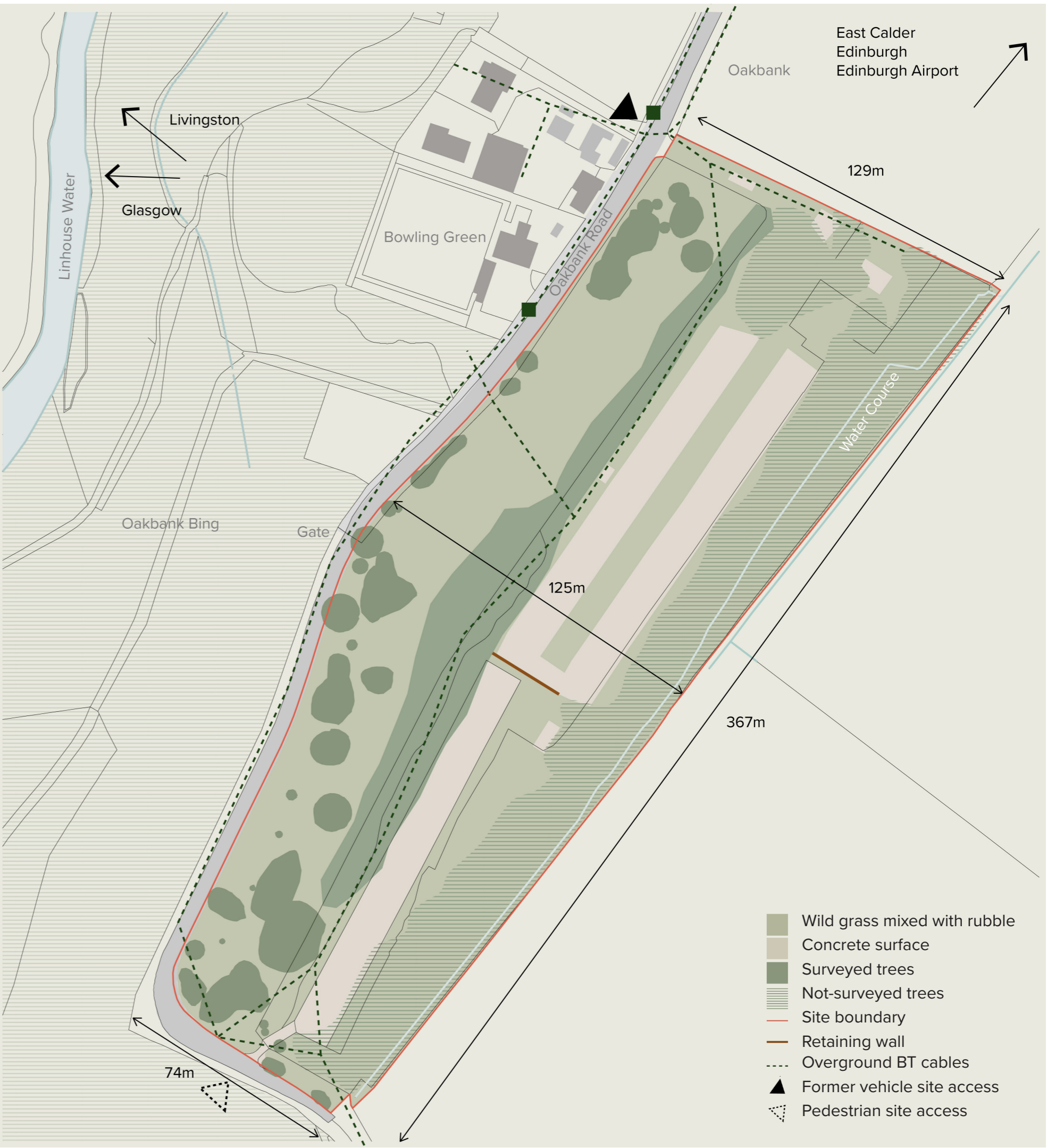
The site for proposed development is located on two plots owned by Big Kid Circus. The overall area of the two plots is 4.1 ha.



Existing site photo: historic concrete surface with self-seeded trees



Photos of the site surroundings: Oakbank Bowling Club and residential buildings across Oakbank Road



Site plan noting opportunities and constraints



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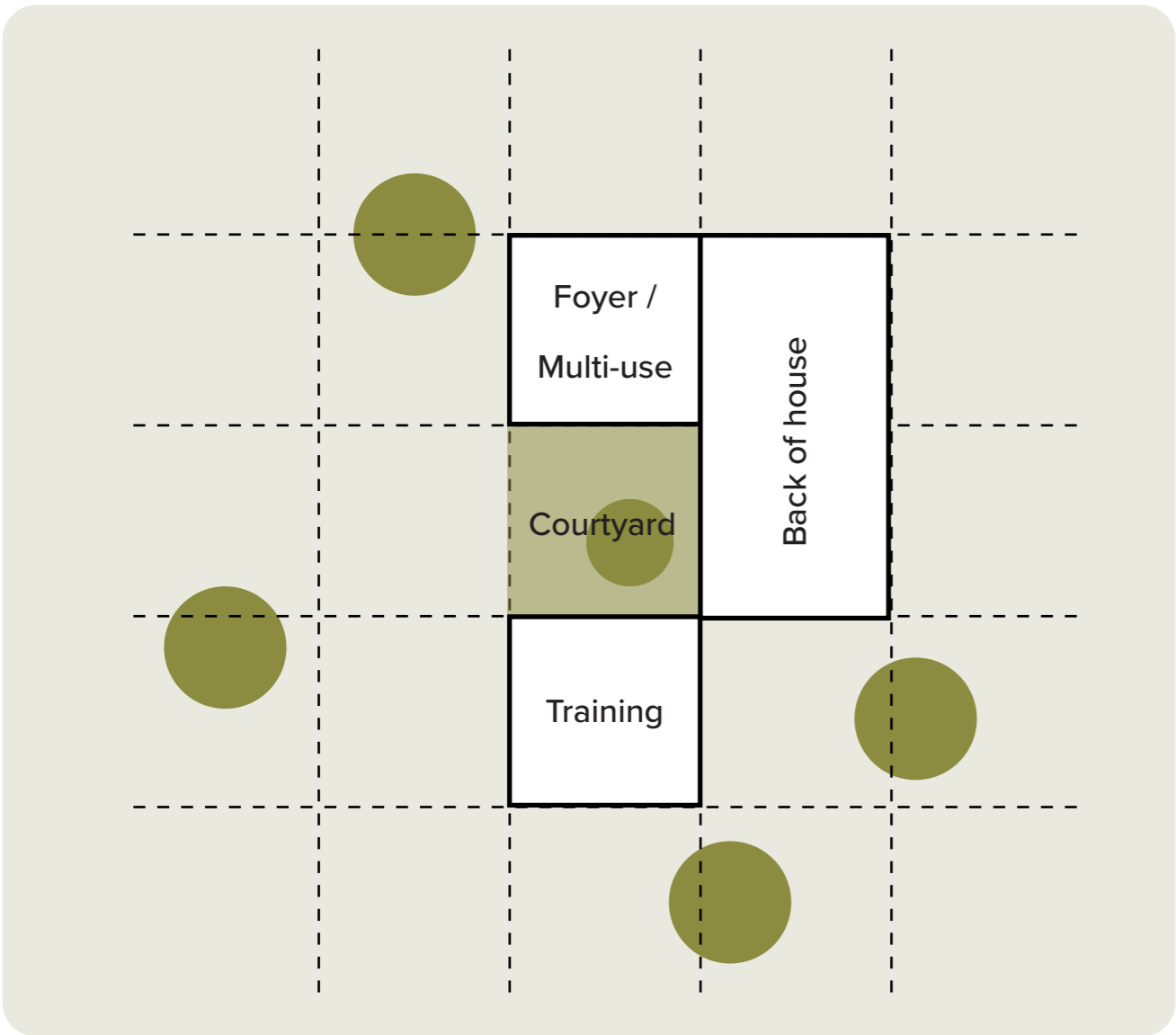
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### About the Proposals and Design Approach

- To remind you, our proposals are as follows:
- Erection of a multi-use double height circus training and community space with associated ancillary uses including changing rooms, showers, toilets, kitchenette, offices, bin store and plant. On-site residence for grounds maintenance staff. Temporary shed for circus service vehicles and equipment including up to 12 HGVs. Area for temporary caravan parking and car parking. Enhanced landscape improvements and nature trail at Land at Oakbank, East Calder, West Lothian, EH53 0BX.
- At the heart of the development will be a sustainable, high quality, state-of-the-art circus training school and performance space.
  - This space could also be used to host workshops and sessions for local community groups and schools - you can find more information on our community board.
  - There will be on-site residence for grounds maintenance staff and an area for temporary caravan parking and car parking.
  - Changing facilities, toilets and showers will be included, as will a kitchenette, offices, and plant.
  - A nature trail and enhanced biodiversity is proposed, providing safe, well-lit and accessible spaces for local people to enjoy.
  - During the winter months, the circus needs a space to store and service its vehicles and equipment. This will include up to 12 HGVs and a temporary maintenance shed for service vehicles.
  - Note that paid performances are not part of our proposals.

- What has changed?**
- Since we last presented, our plans have evolved and at their heart is a space that reflects creativity, practicality and connection to nature.
- The central building will be a multi-use double-height circus training and community space. Designed to feel open and welcoming, it will use natural materials like timber and large windows will flood the interior with natural light and views of surrounding greenery. From rehearsals to workshops, it will be a place that promotes performance, wellbeing and inclusion.
- A striking entrance beacon will mark arrival to the site, setting the tone for a unique, creative destination. There is potential to work with the local community on this, for example, with schools, community groups or local artists, on its design.
- Residential accommodation for a site caretaker is also proposed, helping maintain and oversee the site, with CCTV to ensure safety and security across the site.
- To support circus operations, we are including a small temporary maintenance shed (4.5m high, 6m wide, 8m long) for essential repairs to vehicles and props. This structure is designed to be minimal and removable. We anticipate a maximum of 45 people using the site at one time: 15 in training, 16 in multi-use spaces, two staff, and up to 12 additional circus performers when caravans are in use. This will ensure we can manage the site efficiently and responsibly, while enabling community use to flourish alongside circus operations.

### Building Concept

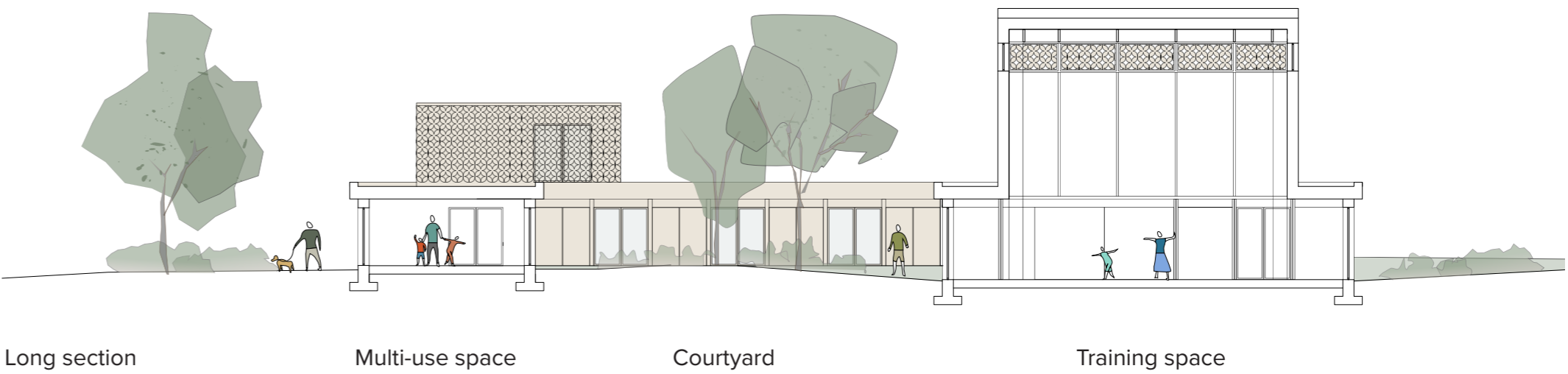
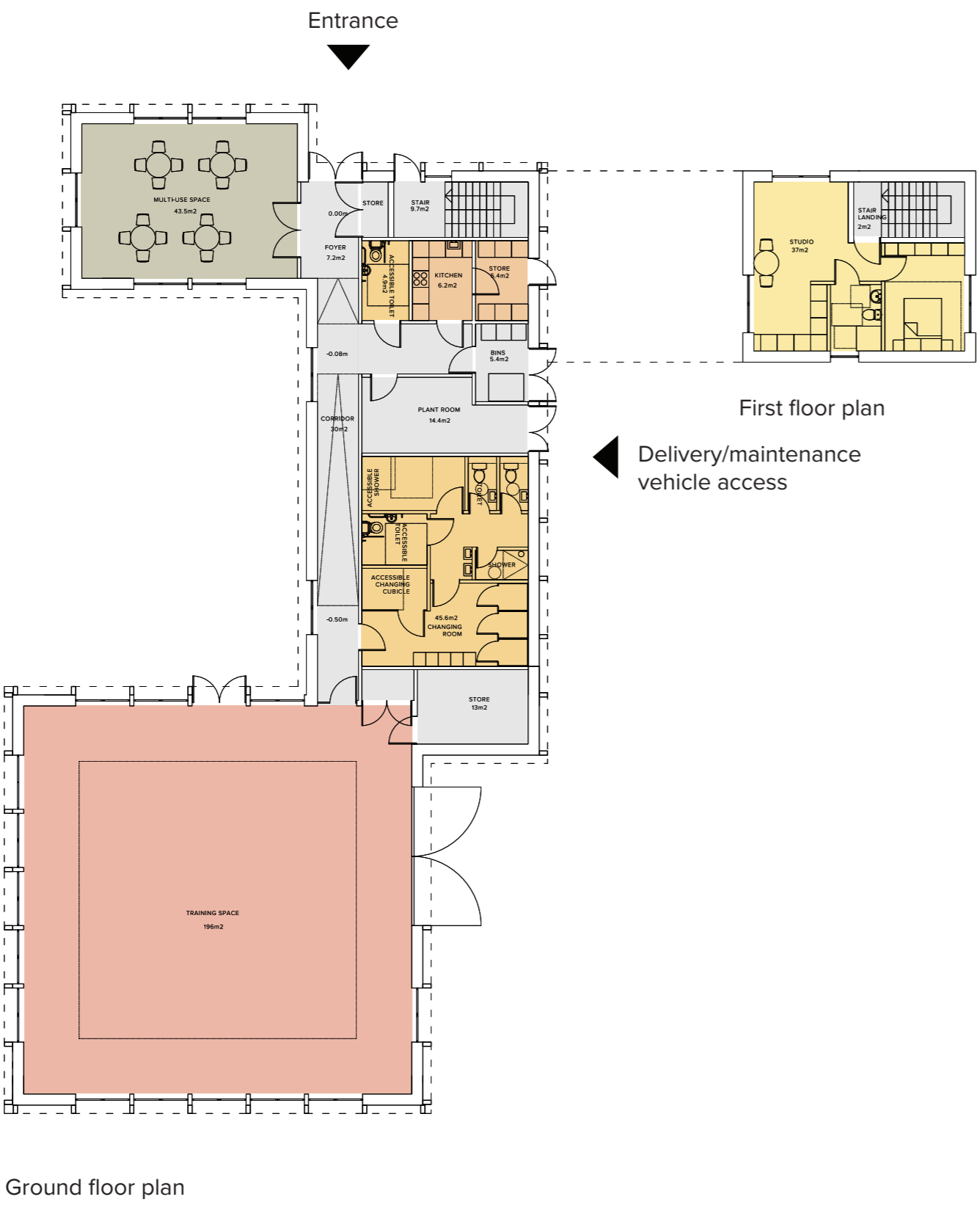


Drawing from the historic farm buildings that developed organically nearby, we propose to form the buildings around a loose courtyard. This would enable a closer connection with nature, allow for future development of the centre and create visual connection between different uses. The buildings can be positioned within a structural grid and step around existing trees reducing the need for clearing the existing greenery and integrating the proposal within the surrounding landscape.



Hoghill and East Langton farm developments as shown on Edinburghshire map 1853 edition

### Proposed Uses



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### About the Proposals and Design Approach



Proposed building and beacon from the access road and the site entrance



Visualisation of the proposed circus training space

### Material references



Facade reference for the ground floor of the building.  
Harmony Learning Hub by Loader Monteith and Studio SJM



Facade reference for the ground floor of the building.  
Harmony Learning Hub by Loader Monteith and Studio SJM



Facade treatment reference for the first floor spaces.  
Bad Schörgau by Pedevilla Architects



Proposed buildings are integrated in the surrounding woodland and provide public spaces for relaxation

### Planning Benefits

This proposal represents a unique opportunity to transform a neglected brownfield site into a high-quality, sustainable development that delivers significant cultural, environmental, and community benefits for East Calder and the wider West Lothian area.

#### Key benefits include:

- Enhanced biodiversity: The site will be re-landscaped with new planting, hedgerows, trees, and a publicly accessible nature trail that links into local paths and the wider heritage trail network, improving access to green space and promoting wellbeing.
- Support for local culture and talent: As Scotland's leading circus, Big Kid Circus will provide a permanent training base that supports local artistic development and offers educational outreach.
- New community facilities: When the circus is on tour, the multi-use training space will be available to local groups for workshops, fitness classes, and community events, helping to meet local demand.
- Health, wellbeing, and inclusion: The nature walk, green space, and inclusive design will provide new recreational opportunities for local residents, enhancing physical and mental wellbeing.
- Economic and social value: The proposals will create direct jobs for site management and maintenance, as well as indirect roles in landscaping and construction. The development will also secure the long-term future of Big Kid Circus as a family-run business with deep community ties.
- Safer, cleaner environment: Improved site security, lighting, and a regular on-site presence will deter fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.
- Improved access and active travel: New safe pedestrian routes will connect the site to Oakbank Road and existing core paths, enhancing connectivity and encouraging walking and cycling.
- Sustainable infrastructure: New on-site drainage solutions will not only address technical requirements but also contribute to habitat creation and a more pleasant environment for both people and wildlife.



Site plan noting opportunities for development



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### Transport, Access and Drainage

#### Drainage

Surface water from HGV and caravan hardstanding is to drain East to swales located along side the new access road. The swales provide a level of treatment for the run off, which is then transferred to a new retention pond to be located in the North East corner of the site.

The car parking spaces to the North of the building would have porous paving present, which provides a level of treatment. This surface water will also be transferred to the retention pond.

The retention pond will discharge via a restricted flow manhole to existing water course along the Eastern site boundary.

Foul Water - There is an existing adopted sewer network serves the buildings to the North West of the site, draining to a septic tank. If Scottish Water confirms that there is capacity, then the intention would be to connect into this network that leads to the septic tank.

A further option is to install a foul treatment plant on site, whereby the treated outflow would drain to the water course along the Eastern site boundary. However, note that foul treatment plants usually require year round use to ensure that they are able to biologically break down the inflow. We have carefully designed the site layout to ensure safe, efficient, and inclusive access for all users, whether on foot, by bicycle, or in a vehicle.

#### Transport and access

Primary access and road design - Access to the site will be taken from Oakbank Road via a newly constructed junction, designed to adoptable standards and compliant with all relevant highway authority requirements. To address local concerns around road width and safety, the access road within the site has been designed to accommodate two-way traffic, including safe passing of HGVs, private vehicles, horse riders, and pedestrians.

Swept path testing and HGV movements - Swept path analysis has been carried out for a range of vehicles, including HGVs. This ensures all vehicle movements, including turning and parking, can be safely accommodated. Up to 12 HGVs can be parked onsite during off-tour periods, with additional provision for trailer storage. Spacing between bays enhances manoeuvrability while minimising the overall hardstanding footprint.

It is important to reiterate that HGV movements will be infrequent and seasonal, primarily aligned with the circus touring calendar. This significantly limits day-to-day traffic impact on Oakbank Road and the surrounding network and when we are travelling, we will ensure roads are clear, ensuring flow of traffic and access is not compromised.

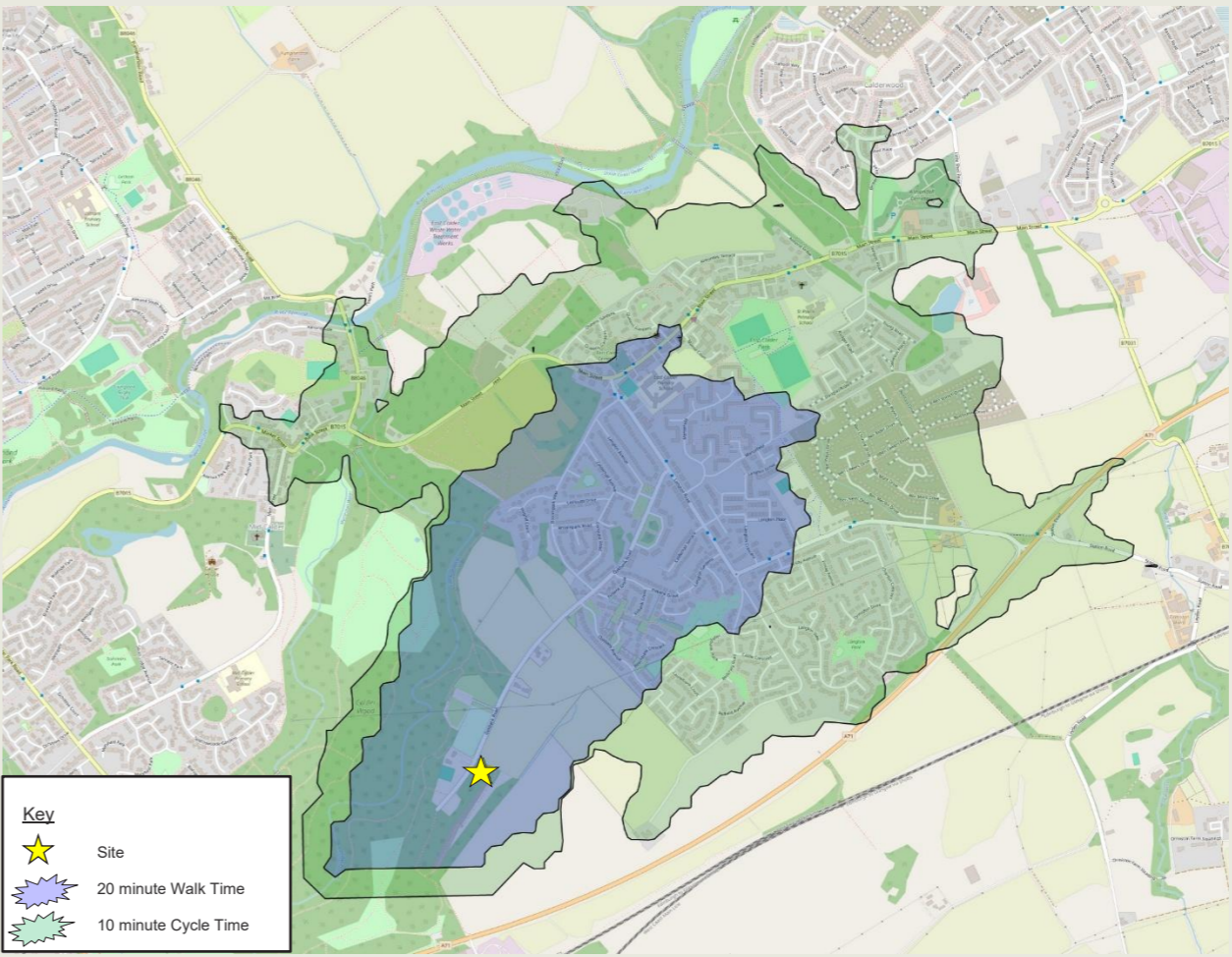
Parking and internal circulation - The layout includes 20 car parking spaces for visitors and community users. A minimum 6-metre-wide internal access road sits behind the bays, ensuring safe vehicle reversing and compliance with West Lothian Council standards. All routes will support inclusive design principles, including level access and step-free routes to accommodate those with mobility challenges.

Cumulative traffic impact - We don't anticipate that the proposals will have a detrimental impact on the local road network or the A71 corridor, even with other nearby housing proposals. We considered alternative access options, including the potential to reopen a southern access point or introduce a slip road onto the A71. However, these options were discounted due to significant technical and cost barriers, including topographical constraints and the prohibitively high cost of connecting to the trunk road infrastructure.

The traffic generation of the proposed development will be discussed and agreed with West Lothian Council Roads Department. The operation of the surrounding road network will be a key consideration of the Roads Department, therefore, the Applicant's advisors will work with the council to ensure any impact is mitigated in accordance with relevant Guidance.

Active travel and connectivity - The site has been designed to encourage walking and cycling. A new footway along the access route will link directly to Oakbank Road and wider footpath networks. The proposal improves pedestrian permeability and access to the nearby Calder Wood core path network, which lies just north of the site. This includes connections to East Calder, Linhouse, and the broader countryside access routes shown on the West Lothian Core Paths Plan.

The site is also within cycling distance (1.8km / 5–15 minutes) of National Cycle Route 75, a key active travel corridor to the northeast. We are committed to encouraging low-carbon travel choices for visitors, and the wider community.



20 Minute Map:  
Walking and Cycling  
Isochrones



Site plan noting drainage strategy



Site plan noting movement and access across the site

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### Landscaping and Biodiversity

We are committed to delivering a scheme that enhances the site's natural character and supports biodiversity. Our goal is to build a space that harmonises with nature and offers long-term environmental and wellbeing benefits. Our landscape strategy will include:

- Reinstating a lightly wooded edge to Oakbank Road to help filter views into the development. The existing, temporary low bund, will be sensitively reprofiled to form low mounds along the western edge of the site beside Oakbank Road to assist with site security. The proposed woodland planting will extend across the interlocking bunds to form a soft wooded edge to the development.
- A large area of wildflower meadow is proposed to the east of the woodland edge to provide a recreational resource for the community, set between the new woodland to the west and retained woodland to the east. A new network of publicly accessible footpaths will be established across the meadows and through the woodland areas.
- The existing pioneer stands of birch and willow which have established across the central western sector of the site will be substantially retained. This woodland will be enhanced with new native woodland planting and also understorey planting to diversify the existing resource and to further assist with filtering views to the functional uses towards the east of the site.
- The existing mixed stand of plantation pine and spruce along the site's eastern boundary will be retained to provide shelter from the prevailing wind and to soften direct views to the areas of parking to the west of the site. The woodland belt will sensitively restructured, removing areas of fallen trees and replanting with native broadleaved woodland species to diversify the value in terms of biodiversity of the tree belt.
- The existing areas of hardstanding will be substantially retained to form the proposed parking areas for HGVs and caravans. The existing well-defined, linear lines of birch woodland that have established



Meandering whin paths through ornamental planting.

Piet Oudolf, Oudolf Garden



Enhanced biodiversity.



Courtyard with ornamental planting and trees.

Inglennookery, The Piet Oudolf garden at Hauser & Wirth, Bruton



Lines of birch with uplighting.

Tate Modern, London



Proposed building and beacon from Oakbank Road

Full details will be submitted as part of the planning application.

Drainage strategies are integrated into the landscape to ensure sustainable water management and, as you will see we have incorporated ponds and a swale into the design.

At our last event, there were some questions about trees on site. In response, we had an independent consultant carry out a survey. They found that there are eight tree groups on site. The trees are of varying quality however, if our development progresses, we will create a tree retention and removal plan that will allow us to manage them correctly.

This would be implemented alongside the landscape strategy illustrated in the adjacent drawing.



Landscape masterplan

Key		Landscape Elements	
<b>Existing Vegetation Structure</b>		<b>Proposed Planting</b>	
	Existing Native Woodland		Proposed areas of Native Birch/Oak Woodland
	Existing Pine / Sitka spruce Shelter Belt		Proposed specimen ornamental trees
	Areas of existing hardstanding to south of site		Wildflower Meadows
			Closely Planted avenues of birch
			Ornamental Planting
			Community Raised Beds and Orchard
			Native Hedgerow with Hedgerow Trees
			Beech Hedging
			Stone Walls
			Post and Wire Fence
			Whin Dust Paths



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### Community Use, Benefits, and Wealth Building

Big Kid Circus is more than a touring act – it's a family-run business with deep community roots and ambitions to give back and the proposed will deliver lasting social, cultural, and economic benefits to the local community:

- Community involvement and local opportunities: The site will offer inclusive workshops and shared spaces that promote local engagement. It will support skill-building, provide employment for two local staff and contribute to long-term community wellbeing. There will be indirect jobs too, for landscaping and maintenance.
- Enhancing local identity: Designed with walkways, trails, and creative features like sensitive lighting and art, the development will become a valued public asset—fostering local pride, strengthening neighbourhood identity, and encouraging community use and investment. The nature trail will be open to public use daily from 8am to 11pm, free of charge.
- Supporting arts and economic growth: As a hub for performing arts, the circus will nurture local talent, especially young people, while creating new opportunities for creative employment and showcasing the area's artistic strengths.

**Community Use**

We'll run workshops for schools and community groups, with a managed booking system in place. The flexible multi-use and training spaces can host activities, guided sessions, and events – all coordinated to ensure the site remains secure, inclusive and welcoming.

At our last event, we were asked what sort of activities could take place in the space. Examples are yoga sessions, art classes or light gym activities. There may be a small charge to book the space to cover wear and tear and we will explore this as our plans progress. Licensed events such as weddings or parties would not be planned for. Facilities including changing rooms, showers, toilets and a kitchenette will be shared between circus staff and community users. A full-time caretaker will oversee site maintenance and safety.

Two new permanent jobs will be created for caretakers, trained in first aid and DBS-certified. Additional local employment opportunities may arise through training programmes and site maintenance. Most importantly, the project secures the future of dozens of performers and staff by creating a sustainable base in Scotland. We see this as a legacy project – building a space of pride and purpose for East Calder and the wider region.

### Community Involvement



Training spaces that allow connection to nature

Nike Box MSK / KOSMOS Architects



Community classes and workshop space



Proposal to introduce bench and plaque to mark the site's history and the people that make the area special.



The design incorporates walkways, trails, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and connection with nature.

Polesden Lacey play area / National Trust

#### Managing the Space

We have set out how we believe the space could work, both for the circus and local people. Note that this is indicative only and subject to change.

##### Example operational plan 1 – when the circus is on tour (Post-1st week February)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
08:00 - 10:00	Open / bookings	Open / bookings	Open / bookings	Open / bookings	Open / bookings	Open / bookings	Open / bookings
10:00 - 16:45	Community use / bookings	Community use / bookings	Community use / bookings	Community use / bookings	Community use / bookings	Community use / bookings	Community use / bookings
16:45 - 19:30	Free use / bookings	Circus work-shops (aerial, hoop, etc)	Free use / bookings	Circus work-shops (aerial, hoop, etc)	Free use / bookings	Free use / bookings	Free use / bookings
08:00- 23:00	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access

##### Example operational plan 2 – when the circus is not on tour (January to 1st week of February - training period)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
08:00 - 10:00	Site access / setup	Site access / setup	Site access / setup	Site access / setup	Site access / setup	Site access / setup	Site access / setup
10:00 - 19:30	Circus training	Circus training	Circus training	Circus training	Circus training	Circus training	Circus training
08:00- 23:00	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access	Nature trail / access



Visualisation of the proposed multi-purpose community space.



Visualisation of the proposed multi-purpose community space.



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### Feedback and Next Steps

During the first stage of our consultation, we noted specific areas the local community were seeking more information. Please see below for our responses.

Your question	Your response
Road width and footpath	A new footpath will connect to Oakbank Road. Road width and junctions are being upgraded to meet council standards.
Traffic volume and pressure on A71	Access to the site will be from Oakbank Road via a new junction built to adoptable standards and highway authority requirements. The internal road is designed for two-way traffic, allowing safe passage for HGVs, cars, horse riders, and pedestrians, with dimensions meeting council safety guidelines. Alternative access options, such as reopening a southern route or adding an A71 slip road, were ruled out due to technical challenges and prohibitive costs.
Car parking	We've included 20 car spaces and defined HGV areas. As part of this, we have considered core paths and cycle routes showing we are aware that traffic is a concern and we are seeking opportunities to design in encouragement of sustainable transport and access.
Residential requirements	One caretaker residence is proposed for on-site support.
Replanting	A tree survey has been carried out and will be submitted with our planning application. More detail on our landscape proposals are on our landscaping and biodiversity board.
Site accessibility for the community	Access to the nature trail will be allowed between 8am – 11pm. See our community board for more examples.
Community use examples	Facilities will be managed and booked to ensure organised, safe access. See our community board for examples.
Noise impact	A full assessment will be instructed but we are not anticipating that there will be any harmful impact.
Phasing and construction length	Development will be phased over a year to minimise disruption and there will be a point of contact throughout the period to ensure regular communication. You can see more detail on our time line and next steps board. Phasing will be as follows and is subject to planning permission being granted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Late 2025: begin phase 1 (Landscaping, vehicle accommodation)</li><li>Early 2026: Commence Phase 2 (main building construction)</li><li>Late 2026: Open and begin programming</li></ul>
Asbestos concerns	At the moment, we are unaware of asbestos on site. We will explore this as part of a ground investigation survey and liaise with the council as required.
List of reports to be submitted with the planning application	Here is a list of all reports, that will be submitted as part of the planning application. Design and Access Statement EIA Screening Transport Statement Tree Survey and Arboriculture Impact Assessment Landscape Statement and Outline Landscape Plan Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Enhancement Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment and Drainage Layout Air Quality Impact Assessment Noise Impact Assessment Phase 1 Desktop Study (contamination, soils etc) Coal Mining Risk Assessment Planning Statement

#### Next Steps

We're now preparing to submit a detailed planning application. This will include:

- Detailed architectural drawings
- Design and Access Statement
- Landscaping and access plans
- A transport assessment
- Community engagement summary

#### Further feedback

We want to hear your views, comments and ideas.

Feedback forms are available at the in-person event for you to complete and leave behind. Alternatively, you can submit this online via our dedicated web page: [www.bigkidcircus.co.uk/aneibase/](http://www.bigkidcircus.co.uk/aneibase/).

Here you will find all information and updates regarding the proposals. You can also call or email us via: 0141 648 5799 [bigkid@bigpartnership.co.uk](mailto:bigkid@bigpartnership.co.uk)

You can still share feedback until the end of May 2025.

Please note that comments made in response to this public consultation are not representations to the planning authority and there will be an opportunity to make representations to West Lothian Council once a planning application has been submitted.

### Timeline



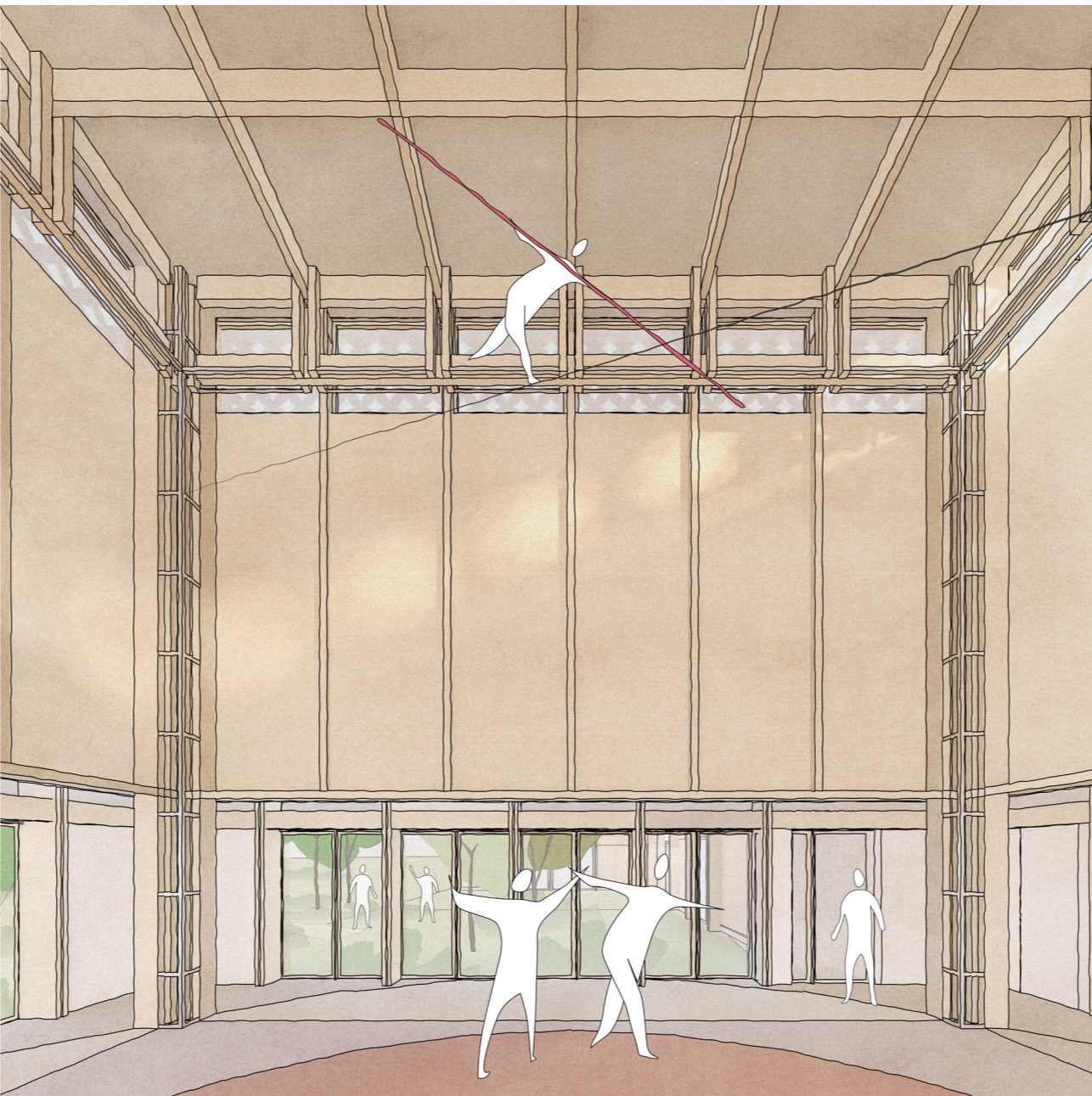
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We want to hear your views, comments and ideas



Initial sketches of what the training centre can look like



Initial sketches of what the training space can look like



Proposed site plan

Please share your thoughts and ideas below