

Big Kid Circus: Former Oakbank Oil Works

Public Consultation

About BIG Kid Circus and the Project Team

Welcome to our public consultation.

This is the first of two physical events we will hold, to gather feedback and to refine our proposals for the site of the former Oakbank Oil Works. Details of how to leave feedback are on board four and five.

About Big Kid Circus

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.

Over the past 20 years, Big Kid Circus has grown into a respected business, training and supporting its performers to deliver world-class acts to its audiences. In 2024 alone, the team appeared at 18 locations across Scotland including Edinburgh, Glasgow and Falkirk, attracting crowds of up to 1,000 people.

Big Kid Circus is a family business, 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.

Liz Wood, Commercial Manager at The Gyle, Edinburgh, "It has been great to have had the circus team here for the past three years. They have been so professional and we are looking forward to hosting them on site for many years to come."

The Project Team

The project team is led by O'DonnellBrown Architects, working together with planning consultants Icenic and PR and community consultation agency, BIG Partnership alongside a range of specialist consultants.

About O'DonnellBrown

O'DonnellBrown is a creative, community-driven and entrepreneurial architectural practice.

The principles O'DonnellBrown follows are to start from the ground up, speak to communities, understand all the stakeholders, then combine these elements with its particular spatial and creative intelligence to deliver solutions which exceed expectations.

The studio brings a wealth of experience in delivering educational and community-focused placemaking projects across the UK. This includes the design of a new cultural centre for the Crichton Trust and the Scottish Women's Institutes in Dumfries as well as the creation of a new café and improved tourism infrastructure as part of the broader masterplan at Tarbet, Loch Lomond. It also includes the development of Riverside Park with community amenities, forming part of the wider regeneration vision for the Govan Graving Docks in Glasgow. Recent educational projects include the creation of additional classrooms and multi-purpose facilities for Oaklands School and Cubitt Town Junior School in London.

The project team are energised and enthused to be working with Big Kid Circus on this exciting project.



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

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.

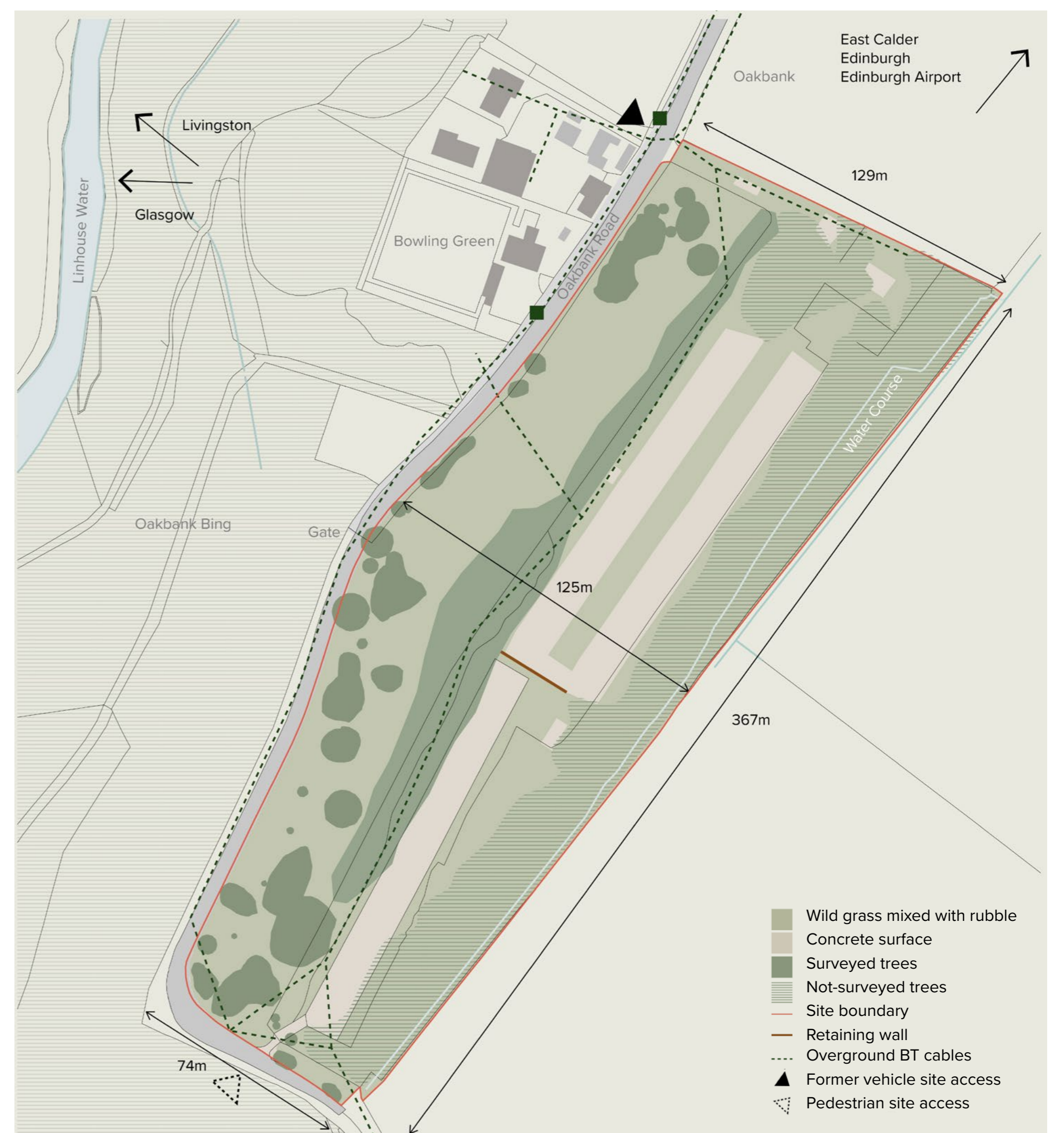
The site for proposed development is located on two plots owned by Big Kid Circus. The overall area of the two plots is 4.1 ha.



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



Big Kid Circus: Former Oakbank Oil Works

Public Consultation

About the Proposals and Design Approach

BIG Kid Circus has identified an exciting opportunity to transform a brownfield site on Oakbank Road, East Calder, into a practical and flexible new home for the circus.

The site, once home to Oakbank Oil Works and agricultural land, is overgrown and underused but holds immense potential for revitalisation.

What is included in the proposals?

- At the heart of the development will be a state-of-the-art circus training school and performance space. This will be a light and bright training space for performers and will help the circus maintain its world-class standards, creating a home for expression and creativity. Importantly, this will be a well-managed space, with user numbers scoped and tightly controlled at all times – for example, it is not proposed it is a 'drop-in' facility.
- This space could also be used to host workshops and sessions for local community groups and schools, allowing young people in particular to access well-curated, organised and safe sessions. 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. This is a key area where the community will be encouraged to input their ideas to shape its design and purpose.
- 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.

It should be noted that holding paid circus performances are not part of the proposals.

Design Approach

We are at the very early stages of the consultation, and we are keen to hear feedback that will help to shape our proposals.

At a high level, our design is centered on sustainability, flexibility, practicality, and connection—offering space for creative expression, community engagement, and fostering a deep connection with nature.

Our vision is to provide a welcoming, accessible environment for the circus team and local community alike which is why we would like ideas and suggestions for what this could look like.

For the nature trail, our vision is to create safe, inclusive and attractive spaces for people to enjoy. Biodiversity is important to enhance the environment and make it a place for people and wildlife to thrive. We have set out some inspiration but are seeking views of how we might further develop these ideas.

At the second stage consultation, more detail will be provided, shaped by the feedback we receive as part of this consultation process.

Project Key Aims



Circus training school and performance space



Community classes and workshop space

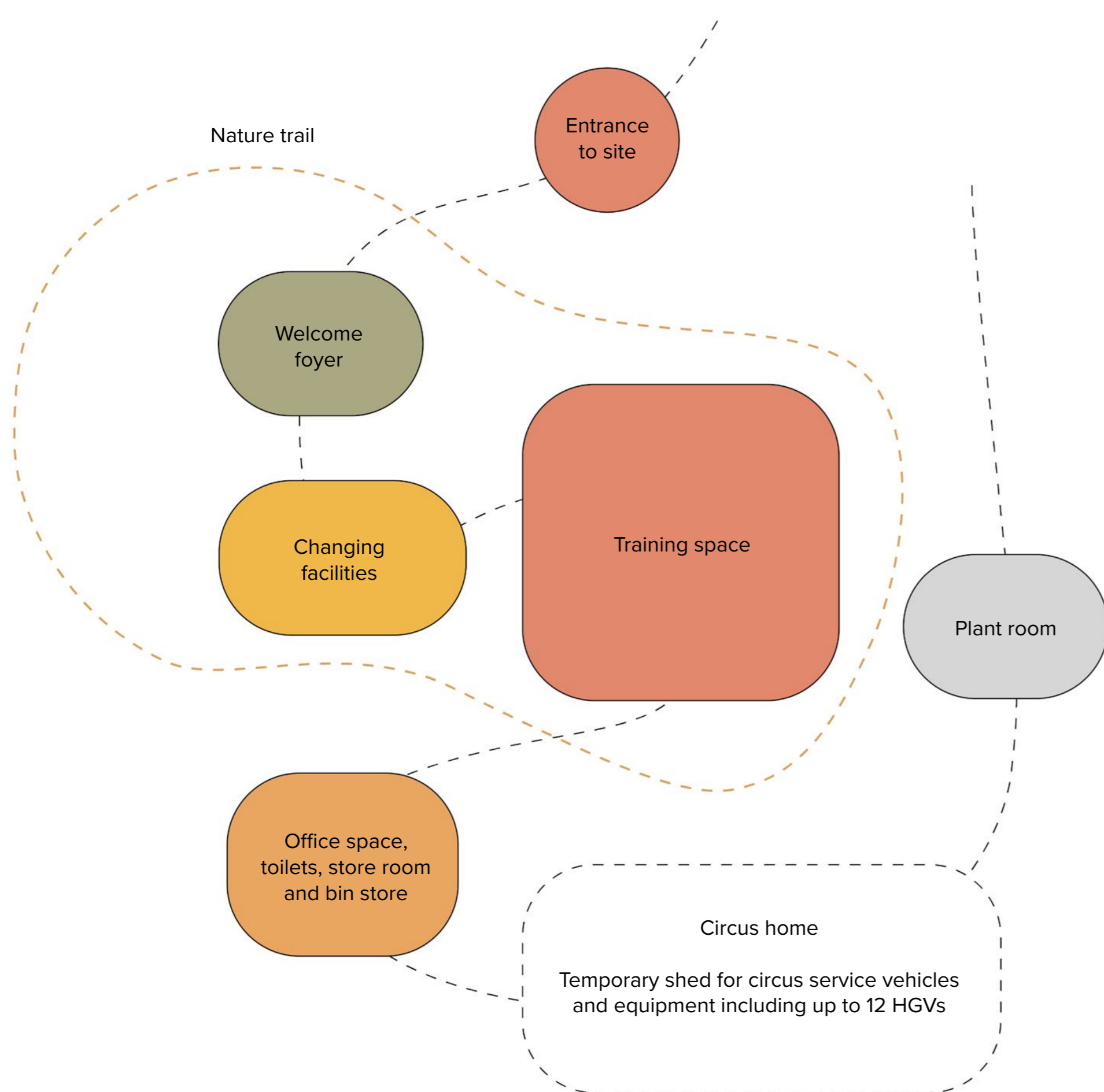


A nature trail for all



Enhanced biodiversity

Proposed Uses



Site plan noting opportunities for development

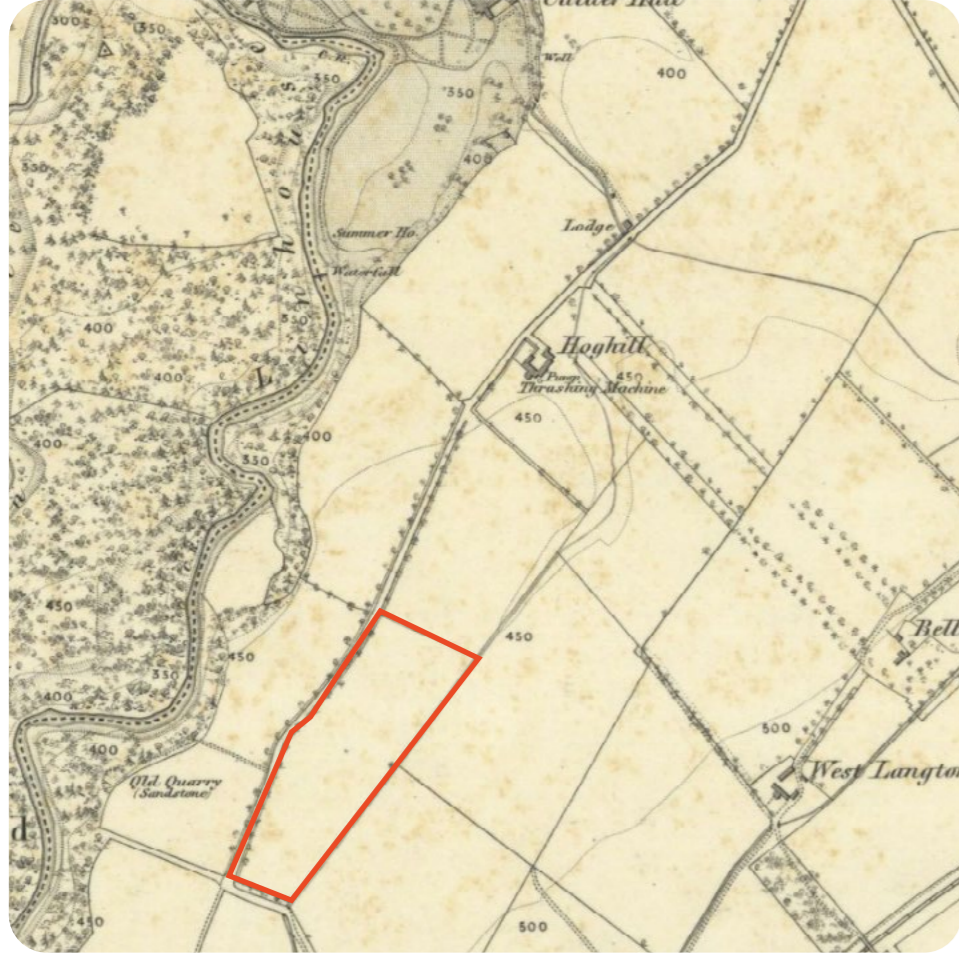
Big Kid Circus: Former Oakbank Oil Works

Public Consultation

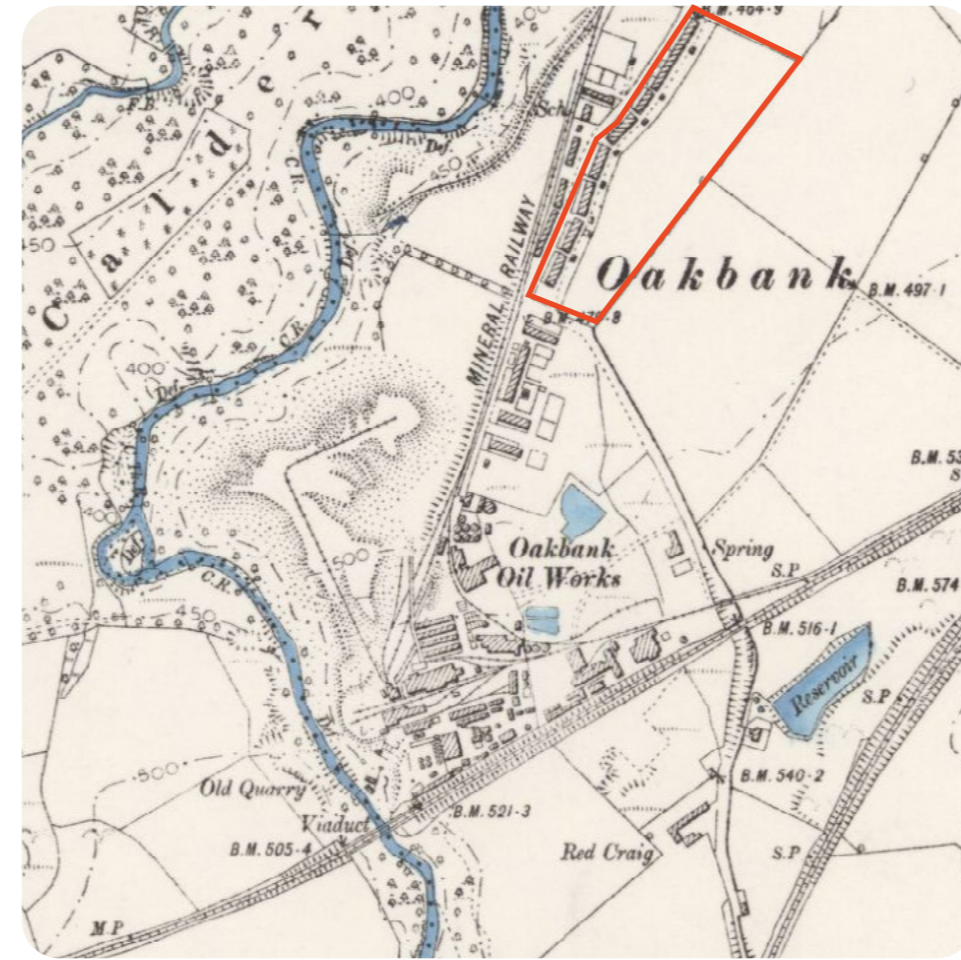
Site History

Oakbank Paraffin Oil Works, (as it was originally known), was one of the earliest shale oil works. The works were initially served by small-scale shale workings in Calder Wood, then, from c.1868, by Oakbank No.1 & 2 pits, lying a mile north of the works and linked by the company's mineral railway. The Oakbank Oil Company also established Niddry Castle Oil Works in about 1902, producing crude oil that was sent to Oakbank for refining. The workforce was accommodated in company housing in Oakbank village. 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.

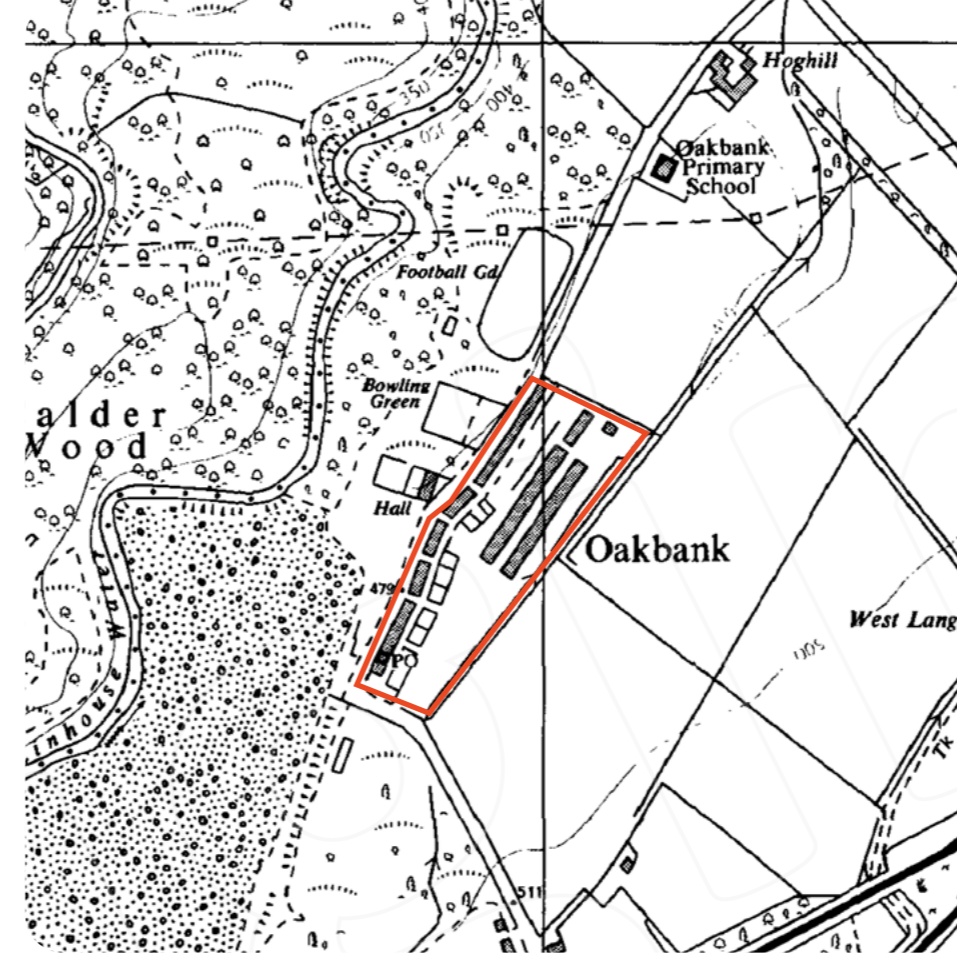
- Key
1. Edinburghshire map 1853 edition
 2. Edinburghshire map 1895 edition
 3. Edinburghshire map 1960s edition
 4. Edinburghshire map 1990s edition
 5. Photo of Oakbank Village showing houses along Oakbank Road
 6. Photo of Oakbank Village showing houses along Oakbank Road
 7. Aerial view of Oakbank, 1988



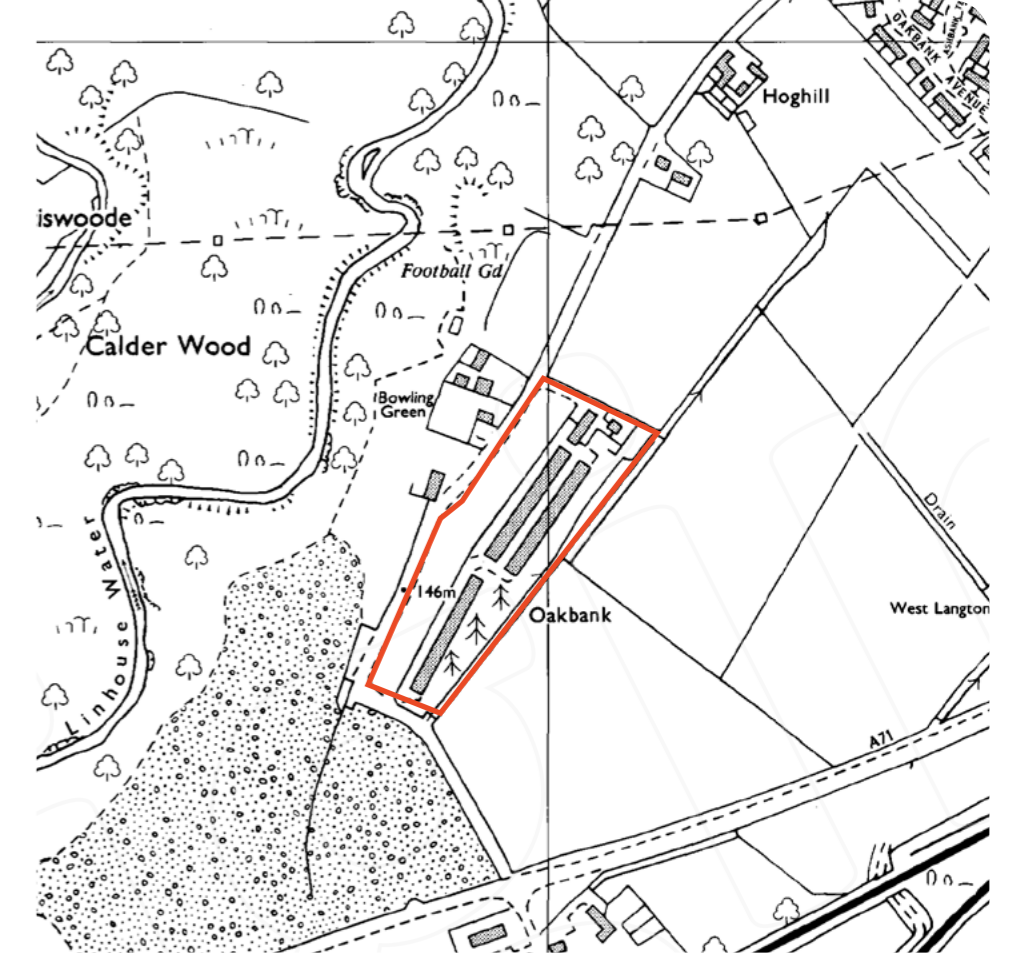
1



2



3



4



5



6



7

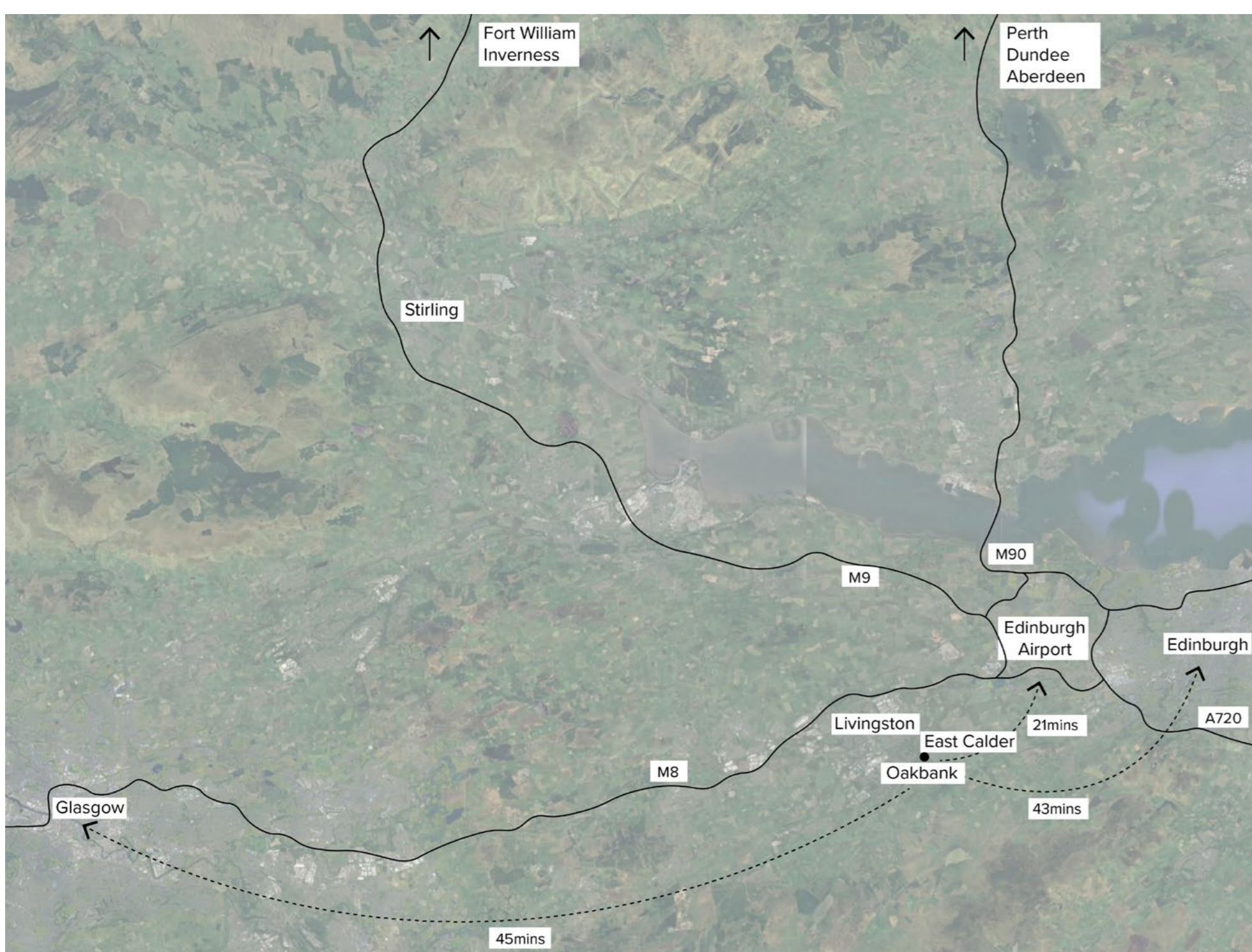
Why Here?

The Oakbank site is ideally located for BIG Kid Circus to establish its permanent base.

Its proximity to Edinburgh Airport offers logistical convenience for the circus performers and teams travelling to and from events across Scotland.

Importantly, the site provides an opportunity to build meaningful connections with the local community, offering an inclusive space that blends performance, education, and nature.

The decision to select this site is driven by the desire to create a long-term, sustainable home that not only benefits the circus but also enriches the surrounding area. If realised, it will enhance the cultural and social fabric of East Calder and complement other nearby attractions, such as Jupiter Artland.



Site accessibility diagram



Site plan showing footprints of previous developments

Big Kid Circus: Former Oakbank Oil Works

Public Consultation

Community Benefit and Impact

The proposed development will bring a range of benefits to the local community, contributing not only to its social and cultural vitality but also to its long-term economic resilience:

- **Community engagement and wealth building:** BIG Kid Circus is committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. The development will foster community wealth building by offering opportunities for local people to get involved in creative workshops and community spaces. By providing a platform for local talent, the project will support skill development and employment for local staff who would be needed to maintain the grounds. These initiatives are aimed at strengthening community ties and ensuring the benefits of the project are felt by all, with a focus on long-term, sustainable outcomes for the surrounding area.
- **Supporting local identity and assets:** The design incorporates walkways, trails, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and connection with nature. By integrating creative lighting and artwork, the development will serve as a local asset, enhancing the identity of the area and creating an inspiring space for visitors and residents alike. This will help foster a sense of pride and ownership among local people, while also providing an economic asset that can attract further community investment and activity.
- **Promoting the arts and economic opportunity:** The circus will serve as a hub for arts promotion, showcasing local talent and providing a safe, supportive space for young people to explore performance arts. Beyond offering a creative outlet, the project will support arts-based employment more broadly. By nurturing local artists and performers, BIG Kid Circus will create new opportunities for community-driven cultural growth, allowing local talent to thrive and contribute to the cultural fabric of the area.

While there will be questions about impact, we are confident that the development, due to its limited capacity at any given time, will have minimal traffic impact. To address concerns, we are commissioning independent studies and reports, including:

- Transport Statement
- Tree Survey and Arboriculture Impact Assessment
- Landscape Statement
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment
- Air Quality Impact Assessment
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Phase 1 Desktop Study
- Coal Mining Risk Assessment

Project References



Training spaces that allow connection to nature

Nike Box MSK / KOSMOS Architects



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

Vajrasana Retreat Centre / Walters & Cohen Architects



Project proposes collaborations with local artists to create public art work as part of the publicly accessible nature trail

Sara Barker, Separation in the Evening (a celestial blossom before the yellow house), 2015. Photo: Allan Pollok-Morris. Courtesy of Jupiter Artland.



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

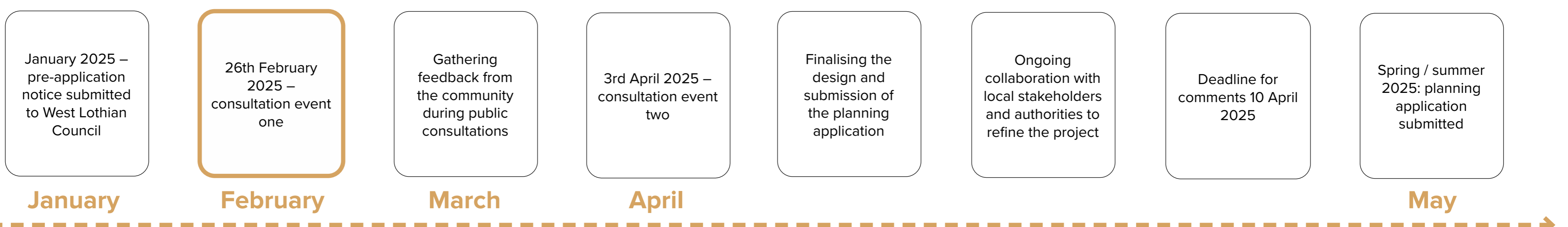
Polesden Lacey play area / National Trust

Timeline, Feedback, and Next Steps

BIG Kid Circus is committed to listening to the community's thoughts and feedback. In particular, we want to hear your ideas about the performance space we have proposed as well as the nature trail. We feel strongly that these are areas the local community can help to shape our thinking.

Two consultations will be held to ensure that the development aligns with the needs and aspirations of local people.

If we receive planning consent, we plan to get started on-site immediately, with the first elements expected to be completed in late 2026.



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 webpage: www.bigkidcircus.co.uk/anehome/.

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

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.



O'DonnellBrown



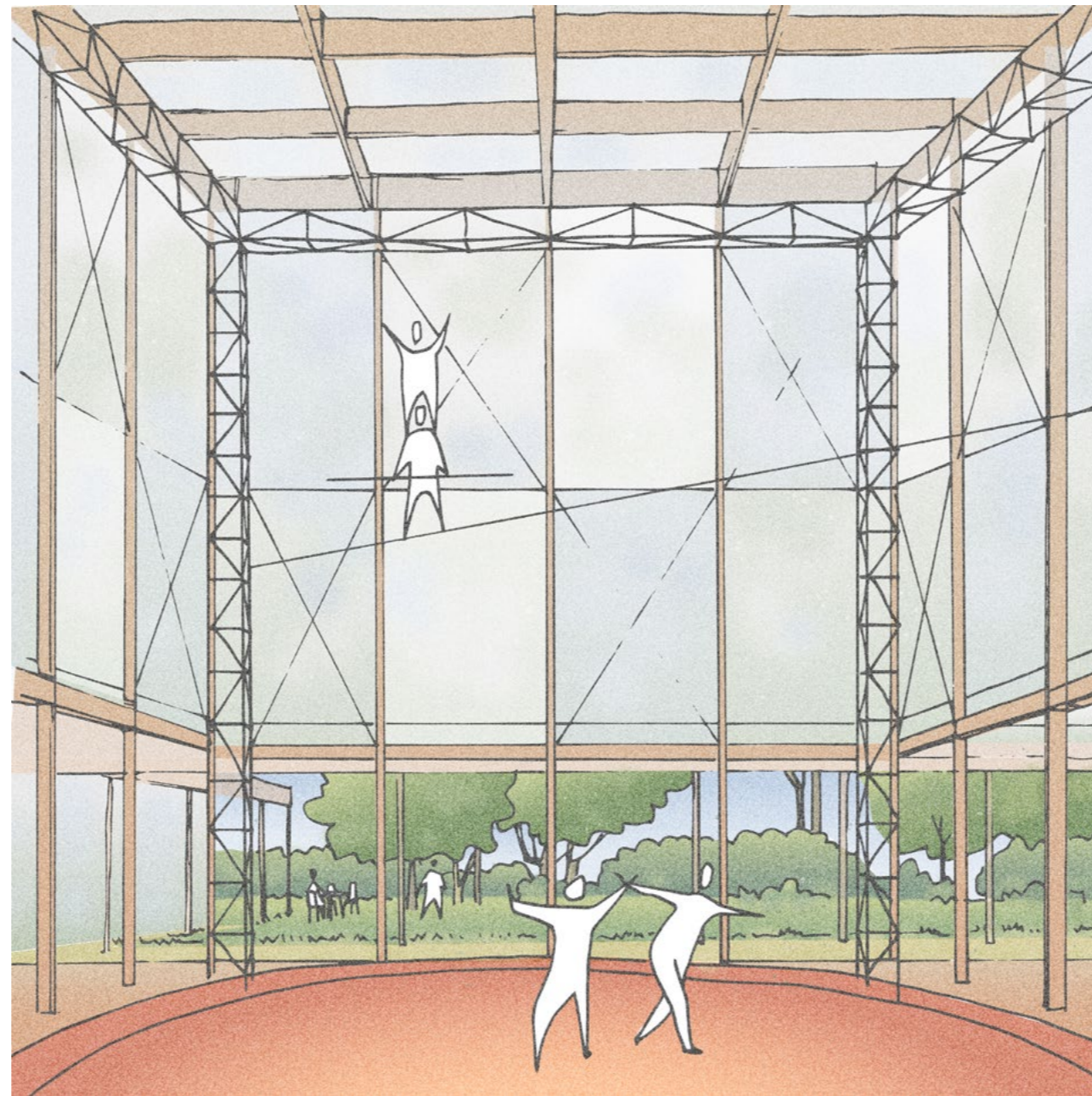
Big Kid Circus: Former Oakbank Oil Works

Public Consultation

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



Site plan noting opportunities for development

Please share your thoughts and ideas below

A large, empty rectangular area enclosed by a dashed orange border, intended for public consultation responses.