



# LINLITHGOW

## A Plan for the Future

### 2015-30

Linlithgow Planning Forum  
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## Executive Summary

Linlithgow was a thriving market town for many years and was the county town of Linlithgowshire. However over the last 50 years and particularly over the last 20 years, it has lost its market character and lost all its county functions to Livingston and is now just one more town in West Lothian.

The population has grown by 200% over the last 50 years, largely through acquiring the role as a commuter town for burgeoning Edinburgh and to a lesser extent Glasgow. As a consequence, there has been little coordinated planning for the town and its infrastructure has been largely neglected. As if to make up for a slowdown in construction over the past ten years, there is now strong pressure for large-scale housing development on the outskirts of the town, with two major planning applications recently rejected by the Scottish Government

Linlithgow's town centre is already congested with car and lorry traffic and is suffering from serious air pollution; the town recognises a need, as does Scotland as a whole, to come to terms with climate change through moving towards a low carbon economy. The town also needs to support its own people as well as those who work elsewhere. In a word, the town needs a well-balanced future. West Lothian Council's recently issued Main Issues Report for the West Lothian Local Development Plan addresses the primary issues without giving solutions.

This document, *Linlithgow – A Plan for the Future*, analyses the town's current predicament and comes forward with holistic remedies. The whole fabric of the town is suffering through 'ad hoc' developments. Linlithgow deserves better; it needs to agree how it sees its future over the next 15 to 30 years. Its fabric is not just its built and urban environment; it is the wellbeing of all its inhabitants, young and old, business and social, education and leisure.

This *Plan for the Future* is targeted in the first instance at providing an informed input to West Lothian Council as it brings together its new Local Development Plan.

This Plan is divided into two sections. Section A and Section B:

### Section A

This section discusses the main problems and threats which face Linlithgow, set against the strengths and opportunities that the Planning Forum believes exist. It highlights the serious housing shortage for the less well-off and the failure to protect, develop and capitalise on the town's historic settings and buildings. New development can assist in providing much needed infrastructure through the planning gain legislation, rather than conversely using the relatively poor infrastructure as a block to new building projects. Other issues requiring urgent



Linlithgow Loch with the Palace, St Michael's Parish Church and the tower of the Burgh Halls.



*The Cross.*

resolution include roads, parking and transport services, education facilities, improvements to the townscape, and the provision of community and cultural facilities. The lack of services for the young and elderly is highlighted, as is the need to actively promote tourism in Linlithgow including the establishment of a good tourist information centre.

It is important to protect and develop shopping facilities, (especially the small independent stores) and to expand general business opportunities, in order to increase the economic wealth of the town. With Linlithgow being so well placed between Glasgow and Edinburgh it should be an appealing centre for new businesses.

All development should be placed in the context of environmental sustainability, and problems such as existing poor water and air quality, an over use of cars, and non-renewable sources of energy, have to be tackled, in a collaborative way involving all interested bodies, statutory and non-statutory, and the community.

### **Section B**

This section deals with the actions recommended for the future, in order to protect the town, whilst

suggesting ways in which the town needs to grow and thrive in a vibrant and sustainable way, maintaining Linlithgow as one of the most attractive places to live and work in Scotland. This section concentrates on concrete and pragmatic proposals for action, including:

1. ways in which the fantastic heritage of historic Linlithgow can be conserved and promoted to increase tourism
2. ideas on how to attract new business and create more jobs
3. ways to increase the housing stock and especially provide social housing
4. road improvements
5. provision of extra parking for commuters, shoppers and tourists, and for tourist buses
6. upgrading of cycle paths and the creation of new cycle networks
7. development of local bus services, linking up with rail transport
8. proposals for retailing, cultural, sports and youth facilities, education and health provision.

The report concludes with a section on the financing of the recommendations, and how the implementation of the plans should be scrutinised and monitored.

# Introduction

**AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMUNITY OF LINLITHGOW, we present this document as a constructive ‘bottom up’ contribution to the emerging ‘top down’ West Lothian Local Development Plan. We are advocating a proper consultative charrette (planning seminar) process to be initiated, to give voice to the town’s citizens but, in the meantime, this is the collective view of the groups mentioned below. This is the first full version of a continuing expression of local views; future amendments will reflect input from individuals, groups and organisations representing interests such as the elderly, young people, churches, farmers, parents and health professionals.**

The main inspiration for this community plan was Linlithgow Civic Trust’s *Vision for Linlithgow* document, the first version of which was a ten-year plan produced in 2005 as a constructive response to the then finalised draft of the West Lothian Local Plan. The resulting Local Plan, adopted as the local development plan covering Linlithgow on 13 January 2009, was strongly considered to give little or no benefit to the town; indeed it seemed likely to perpetuate and worsen the problems of congestion and under-capacity in local services which continue to the present day.

June 2013 saw the adoption of the Strategic Development Plan for South East Scotland (SESplan), covering Edinburgh, West, Mid and East Lothian, the Borders and part of Fife, which removed the specific requirement for planning ‘restraint’ in Linlithgow’ and allowed West Lothian Council to proceed with the production of the new West Lothian Local Development Plan which covers Linlithgow in more detail. The latter plan’s ‘Main Issues Report’ was issued for consultation in mid 2014 and adoption of the Local Development Plan is not expected until late 2016 or early 2017.

This document, which seeks to influence the content of that Local Development Plan, has been produced as a collaborative effort between various local organisations constituted into the Linlithgow Planning Forum, led by the Community Council, rather than groups such as Linlithgow Civic Trust continuing to lobby the Council in isolation. As such, it is to be regarded as a representative view of a wide section of the community of Linlithgow.

The Forum’s main aim is to enable active and committed Linlithgow groups to debate and come to a view on the significant issues for the town, including significant planning applications and changes to the statutory Development Plan. Most recently, its work has related mainly to the new West Lothian Local Development Plan.

## Reasons for the Preparation of this Plan

The Planning Forum and its affiliated community

groups, through this Plan, aim to influence positively the proposal and policy content of the West Lothian Local Development Plan as it relates to the conservation, enhancement and development of Linlithgow. Based on extensive consultation over many years within the community of Linlithgow, this document presents a vision of how the Planning Forum sees the town developing over the next fifteen years. Its concepts and proposals therefore provide a benchmark against which future development proposals can be assessed.

## Affiliated Community Groups

This plan is entirely a community effort, the work of the Linlithgow Planning Forum which brings together the following groups:

- Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Community Council
- Linlithgow Civic Trust (including Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow)
- Linlithgow Business Association,
- Linlithgow Cycle Action Group
- Linlithgow Victoria Hall Trust.



*The Preston Road entrance to Linlithgow.*

# SECTION A - STRENGTHS, PROBLEMS, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## 1. Linlithgow's Strengths

The attractiveness of Linlithgow as a place to live and work is well-known to its 13,300 residents. It has a strong sense of identity as an ancient royal burgh and as the traditional county town of West Lothian. Its pleasant lochside situation, its hilly rural surroundings and its wealth of historic buildings and features give the town a unique character, making it one of the most attractive towns in central Scotland (See West Lothian Local Development Plan, Main Issues Report, paragraph 3.82.)

Linlithgow has a strong feeling of community, as indicated by the enthusiastic continuation of traditions such as the Marches and its support for countless voluntary organisations and groups including the newly formed Linlithgow Community Development Trust. Its location convenient for Edinburgh, Glasgow, Livingston, Falkirk, Grangemouth and Stirling has led to it becoming a popular commuter town, more than trebling its

population over the past fifty years. 41% of employed residents are classed as professional or managerial and 31% as white collar, administrative, supervisory or clerical. 44% of residents have a degree or higher degree. The standards of housing and education are notably high.



*St Michael's Parish Church and the Palace from the east.*

## 2. The Main Problems, Needs and Unfulfilled Potential

It is clear that recent over-development, without obvious benefits to the community, has meant that the town's infrastructure and services are struggling to cope. There has been under-investment to cater for the housing needs of the less well-off and in improvements to capitalise on the town's historic environment. This has meant that the advantages of Linlithgow as a place to live are being eroded.

The lack of educational capacity has been cited by West Lothian Council as a reason for controlling development in Linlithgow. At the same time, the rise in house prices and consequent increase in the value of potential housing land have, even at time of economic recession, created a demand to redevelop, for residential use, sites outwith the currently defined "settlement boundary" and practically every vacant site within the town.

The main problems or issues needing resolution can be listed as follows:

### 1. Roads, Parking and Transport

A fundamental problem is traffic congestion, mainly in the High Street, causing unacceptable conditions for walking and cycling. There is a lack of adequate short-stay parking facilities (including that for tourist buses) in the town centre, and problems associated with commuter car parking

are experienced in the streets around the railway station. Bus services, which could otherwise help to combat the strong reliance on the private car, are limited, both within the town, and to Livingston and Glasgow. There is also a need for continual improvements to the foot/cycle path network to encourage active travel.



*High Street traffic congestion.*

### 2. Education

Up till now, insufficient education capacity at Linlithgow Academy has been used as a means of controlling or preventing town expansion. This situation has not changed in that the recent increase in the capacity of Linlithgow Academy has been allocated mainly to cater for housing

developments outside the town. Low Port Primary School lacks a nursery and there is limited provision for adult education.

### 3. Heritage/Townscape

Whilst the potential is there, and despite some good improvements to street furniture, paving, signage and floral displays, the town centre of Linlithgow (overall) does not compare favourably with other similar historic towns in Scotland in terms of street/pavement surfaces (unacceptably poor, particularly towards the west end of the High Street), street lighting columns, condition of buildings, parking arrangements, etc. There are particular townscape issues in relation to the derelict condition of the Victoria Hall, the structural condition of the former Clydesdale Bank building, the development potential of the 'Guyancourt Vennel' area and the need for landscape upgrading around the Vennel flats.

### 4. Housing

The years of planning "restraint" on the expansion of Linlithgow, as prescribed by successive Council Local Plans, have resulted in the demand for housing exceeding supply. There is currently pressure for more housing development in Linlithgow and no shortage of developers wishing to capitalise on the demand. The Council's "Call for Sites", as an initial part of the Local Development Plan process, demonstrated the existence of a significant number of potential housing sites around Linlithgow, some more suitable than others.

In particular, there have been no social rented "mainstream" houses built in Linlithgow since 1975. Only 11% of the town's housing stock is social rented housing (79% being owner-occupied and 10% private rented). However, plans have recently been submitted by West Lothian Council for 7 houses and 8 flats to be constructed in Linlithgow as part of a 1000 council house building programme by West Lothian Council. Although welcome, this



Some of the earlier Wimpey housing at Springfield.

will do little to reduce the average waiting time for a council house in Linlithgow which is currently approximately 10 years. There is presently very little Housing Association and other affordable housing available in Linlithgow making it difficult, if not impossible, for people of limited means to acquire suitable property in the town.

**Table 1 - New Housing in Linlithgow, 1997-2013**

Site with Planning Permission or Development Completed	No. of houses	Date
Avalon Gardens	55	2000
Avonmill Road	18	2003
Barkhill	40	1997
Barons Hill	1	2013
Blackness Road	66	2004
Boghall Steading	3	1999
Braehead Place	25	2002
Braehead Road	66	2006
East Mill Road	14	2013
Edinburgh Road (Former Yard)	14	2003
Falkirk Road Linlithgow Bridge	42	2005
High St Bus Depot	41	2013
Highfield House	2	2001
Lingate, Falkirk Road	1	2002
Lochside Mews	10	2008
Mains Road	1	2003
Preston House	6	2000
Riccarton Drive	5	2009
St Magdalenes Distillery	33	1998
Union Road	4	1997
West Port School	23	2004
Westerlea, Friarsbrae	12	2012
<b>Total</b>	<b>482</b>	

One result of the high demand for housing has been the construction of 482 new houses (Table 1) since the policy of restraint was instituted by the Linlithgow Area Local Plan of 1994. West Lothian Council's Main Issues Report (paragraph 3.86) states "significantly, none of these developments has added to the supply of affordable housing. This is of particular concern since Linlithgow is identified in the Council's *Local Housing Strategy 2012 - 2017* as an area of high demand for affordable housing and a priority 1 area for investment."

### 5. Youth and Elderly Provision

There is a lack of accessible services for young and elderly people in Linlithgow and, despite the achievements of the Linlithgow Young Peoples Project (LYPP), a lack of support and resources for existing projects. Nearly a third of Linlithgow's residents are in the 45-64 age group and the

growing elderly population will need more day care, health care and organised activities.

## 6. Lack of Realisation of Business Opportunities

More encouragement for small business is needed, taking advantage of modern technology to improve local business diversity, to make the town less vulnerable to downturns in the economy, to capitalise on the well qualified people who are residents in the town yet commute to Edinburgh and Glasgow, and to realise the potential for high-end technological and consultancy businesses close to Edinburgh, Glasgow and the airport. The grossly-underused Oracle buildings in Blackness Road represent a major potential asset for business development.



*Entrance to the Oracle complex at Blackness Road.*

## 7. Tourist Potential

Linlithgow has the potential to attract many more tourists, based mainly on its history, heritage and physical attractiveness. This is recognised in the current West Lothian Local Plan but it does not address the “promotion of the district as a visitor destination” through any sort of proposals which recognise that Linlithgow has, by far, the greatest potential for increased tourism in the part of West Lothian administered by West Lothian Council.

## 8. Shopping

The town's High Street shopping area suffers from poor vehicular access, inadequate off street car parking, on-pavement parking, lack of rear service facilities and excessive through traffic, all of which detract from the enjoyment of using /visiting the retail area. Recent edge-of-town retail developments are adversely affecting High Street businesses, and this may be exacerbated by the recent decision to grant planning permission for a fourth supermarket sited in Edinburgh Road.

## 9. Health Facilities

Existing health provision in Linlithgow is inadequate to cater for the inevitable rise in the town's population which will result from even the infill development permitted by the West Lothian Local Plan (see West Lothian Local Development Plan, Main Issues Report, paragraph 3.83). This will be exacerbated by the current emphasis on 'flatted' development, much of which will be occupied by senior citizens.

## 10. Community and Cultural Facilities

Although the refurbishment of the Burgh Halls, to form an arts centre for the area, has been completed to a high standard in 2010, this has resulted in a loss of much-needed community meeting rooms and a less extensive tourist information facility than formerly existed in the building. The availability of community space needs to be better co-ordinated and marketed, there is a lack of provision for arts and craft workers, and the former Victoria Hall site lies derelict.

## 11. Deprivation

Around 44% of Linlithgow's population is classed as 'deprived' by at least one of the usual measures of long-term sickness, disablement, unemployment, poor health, overcrowding/no central heating and lack of qualifications. 28% are affected by one of these factors, 13% by two factors and 3% by three or more factors. The needs of such people need to be considered through the provisions of this Plan.

## 12. Environmental Sustainability

Linlithgow should play its part in mitigating climate change. Tough emissions reduction targets are defined and compulsory under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act. All 'new' development should be genuinely sustainable (not detrimental to future generations or the natural environment). The Planning Forum considers that a dramatic reduction in dependence on fossil fuels and the associated greenhouse gas emissions from existing town infrastructure and lifestyles is required. Consideration should be given to the provision of centralised heating systems, solar farms, increased biomass, hydro, geothermal heat and other engineering solutions. Local movement needs to shift where possible to active travel and public transport. The aims should be that new development does not increase the town's total emissions and that all future changes must achieve a net reduction in emissions, bearing in mind the Scottish target of 80% by 2050.



### 3. Threats to the Environment and Well-Being of Linlithgow

The main threats to the future of Linlithgow could be regarded as a failure to seek solutions to the problems outlined above - such a failure is the main criticism of the current adopted West Lothian Local Plan and why it is essential to minimise replicating such failure in the forthcoming revised Plan.

#### 1. From 'Restraint' to Neglect

In recent years, West Lothian Council has operated a policy of development 'restraint' in Linlithgow, despite which many hundreds of extra houses have been built, leading to the problems outlined above (see West Lothian Local Development Plan, Main Issues Report, paragraphs 2.11 & 3.82). This plan advocates a solution-centred approach to Linlithgow's problems, similar to those outlined for other communities in West Lothian. The continuation of a policy of "restraint" for Linlithgow would run counter to Linlithgow being sustained as a vibrant and well-functioning community with significant tourist potential (See West Lothian Local Development Plan, Main Issues Report, paragraphs 3.92 & 3.93).

#### 2. Yet More Housing without Community Benefit

The present policy of restraint, introduced in 1994 and contained within the current local plan (2009) does not preclude the development of sites within the existing Linlithgow settlement boundary. As a result of the demand for housing 482 houses have been granted planning permission since 1997, exhausting the supply of "infill" sites, some of which may have had better uses when viewed from a social and environmental perspective. However, the population has not increased significantly as a result of the natural ageing of heads of households and the almost inevitable requirement that their offspring find somewhere to live outside of Linlithgow. The lack of any constructive planning by West Lothian Council since 1996 has had significant social and infrastructure consequences and does not reflect the potential community benefits that a development of 482 houses could have potentially brought to the town. Instead, the disadvantages of congestion, potential gridlock and loss of amenity look set to continue unless a different approach is taken.

#### 3. Effects of Proposals for expanding Winchburgh into a New Town

Development is now well under way on the expansion of Winchburgh, a 'Core Development Area', albeit without a railway station or M9 motorway junction as yet. Although this has taken some pressure off Linlithgow as a possible

development location in the M9 corridor, the necessary establishment of a non-denominational secondary school in the 'new town' is overdue. A new Winchburgh school will release capacity at Linlithgow Academy and potentially allow further housing development at Linlithgow. On the other hand, it would be extremely detrimental for Linlithgow if the Winchburgh developers were permitted to withdraw from their obligation to contribute to the secondary school at the agreed, imminent, stage of development. Similarly, the promised new station (to be funded by developers) could significantly reduce Linlithgow's commuter parking problem and should be constructed as soon as possible.

#### 4. Effects of Potential Large-Scale Developments at Bo'ness and Whitecross

Although outwith the West Lothian Council area, there are possible large-scale housing developments at Bo'ness and at Whitecross. The Bo'ness waterfront proposals for 700 houses plus marina, etc, and the proposals by Morston Assets Ltd for 1,500 new houses at Whitecross seem to be on the 'back burner' at present. However, if implemented in isolation, they will add to congestion and parking problems in Linlithgow, particularly with regard to those wishing to drive into the town and commute from the railway station.

#### 5. Effects of Edge-of-Town Retail Developments

The Stockbridge Retail Park, off Falkirk Road, has had an undoubted detrimental effect on the High Street shops. Loss of trade was originally estimated to amount to up to a sixth of the existing revenue, but this is hard to quantify overall. Some businesses have been severely affected, but some new ones have opened. Certainly, the car park and the traffic-controlled junction on Falkirk Road can be extremely busy. A more recent threat has arisen from proposals for large new supermarkets on sites



Site at Blackness Road which was recently the subject of a planning application for a major supermarket and housing development.

off Blackness Road; most recently a planning application in that area attracted an unprecedented 1,000 individual letters of objection – and was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant. Such proposals would have an extremely detrimental impact on town centre retailers, particularly if it led to the closure of the existing Tesco store in the Regent Centre which acts as a retail ‘anchor’ for the High Street. A similar, but more immediate, threat results from the very recent grant of planning permission for a new, out-of-centre, supermarket at Edinburgh Road – such permissions (or their renewals) pose an ever-present threat to the vitality and prosperity of the High Street.

## 6. Loss of County-wide Administrative Functions

The reprieve of the County Buildings as an important office of West Lothian Council about five years ago was welcome but very short lived, thus terminating Linlithgow’s traditional role as the administrative centre for the County of West Lothian. Not only did the Sheriff Court and Procurator Fiscal move to Livingston, but various Council departments have departed from the County Buildings, and there is no indication that they might return. Trade for local businesses, especially at lunchtime, has declined as a result and, although the current ‘Partnership Centre’ proposals are beneficial, the new uses are unlikely to make up for the employment loss that the town has sustained.



*The County Buildings and the Sheriff Courthouse, formerly major sources of employment in Linlithgow.*

## 7. High, and Increasing, Car Use

Like it or not, the private car plays an important role in the daily lives of most Linlithgow residents. Car ownership in Linlithgow is extremely high with 44% of households having one car and a further 40% with two or more cars. If the town is allowed to continue to grow at its extremities then use of the car to get to the station and the town centre is likely to grow. This process has already started with the retail park at Stockbridge, which spreads

out the shopping zone beyond practical walking distances and by recent housing developments in Bo’ness, commuting residents from which drive to Linlithgow each working day to catch the train.

Car use is exacerbated by the lack of an effective local bus service and of safe, attractive provision for ‘active travel’. Reaching Scottish Government targets of 10% of all trips by active travel by 2020 means better paths, more cycle routes, and active promotion of the benefits of their use. Linlithgow’s local bus services could be greatly enhanced and capacity needs to be developed for car-clubs, bike hire and electric vehicle charging points.

However, research shows that modal shift from car is most likely to succeed when such measures are complemented by disincentives to car use. Introduction of certain parking charges would be a step in that direction.

## 8. Climate Change

Linlithgow is not immune to Climate Change. The town needs to adapt to changing local weather patterns and also to reduce its emissions from fossil fuels and other greenhouse gases.

**Adaptation** - The main changes of importance to West Lothian are likely to include an overall rise in temperature, a decrease in summer rainfall and an increase in winter rainfall. There may also be an increased likelihood of experiencing extreme weather events.

**Table 2 - Met Office UKCP09 Climate Projections for West Lothian based on a Medium Emissions Scenario** (see

<http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk/23161>)

UKCP09* Projected changes in summer and winter temperature and precipitation for West Lothian (Grid 805 - Medium Emissions)					
		2020s	2050s	2080s	Trend
Winter	mean temperature	1.2°C (0.5°C - 2.0°C)	2.0°C (1.0°C - 3.0°C)	2.6°C (1.4°C - 4.1°C)	warmer
	precipitation	5% (-2% - 14%)	12% (-2% - 24%)	15% (2% - 32%)	wetter
Summer	mean temperature	1.5°C (0.6°C - 2.5°C)	2.5°C (1.2°C - 4.1°C)	3.7°C (2.0°C - 5.8°C)	warmer
	precipitation	-6% (-17% - 7%)	-14% (-28% - 1%)	-17% (-34% - 0%)	drier

Linlithgow needs to prepare for changing weather with flooding, heatwaves, storms and drier weather all possible. As such, development should be avoided in areas of risk of flooding and existing buildings in flood risk areas will need protection or even relocation. Increased shelter from the sun could be accomplished by planting more street trees, for example. Building designs could minimise overheating, avoid the need for energy intensive cooling, etc.

**Mitigation** – Linlithgow, along with the rest of the world, also needs to take urgent measures to

minimise energy use and to switch from fossil fuel based energy to renewable source as much as is possible. Fossil fuels include petrol, diesel, gas, heating oil, LPG and coal. Renewable sources of energy include solar, geothermal, hydro and wind power.

Linlithgow's gross carbon emissions need to be on a steep decline in the next 10-20 years and beyond. Buildings need to be better insulated, boilers replaced, combined heat and power and district heating investigated and much more focus on solar and other forms of renewable energy resources. At present Linlithgow spends over £6m per year on domestic gas and electricity. A 10% shift per year would make a massive contribution to the decarbonisation of the town, reducing energy costs, increasing resilience and giving rise to opportunities in local economic development through building stock improvements, technology installation and maintenance.

Any new development must be 'zero carbon' from the outset if the town is to stand a chance of reducing emissions. One approach for new homes might be the Passiv Haus standard which provides for a high level of comfort for occupants whilst consuming very little energy.

Linlithgow is surrounded by prime agricultural land which at present is predominantly fields rented out for commercial farming and monocropping. Not only must these soils be protected for future generations as far as possible, but our farmland needs to diversify into more local food production. The single biggest carbon savings come from changes to our diet, methods of production and the distances that food travels from field to fork.

Other measures should include a shift to more 'active travel' (see section 7 above).

Waste processing is fairly effective in Linlithgow but more could be done to reduce the need to drive to recycle. Home collection services, and enterprises forming to make best use of unwanted goods would reduce the need for landfill.

It is recognised that district heating and combined heat and power plants are not insignificant in size and impact when installed. Any such plants would need careful planning to minimise disruption. Other development that may block future installation should be rejected. All new development should consider energy balancing with neighbouring built areas and not just presume to meet its own energy needs. As examples, housing adjacent to the Leisure Centre or Union Canal could partner on heat and power solutions.

### 9. Air Quality

See West Lothian Local Development Plan, Main Issues Report, paragraph 3.88. Air quality monitoring equipment installed in the High Street has shown that Linlithgow has issues which are impacting on public health. While roughly 50% of Linlithgow's air pollution comes from outwith the town, the remainder is locally generated by road fuels and combustion of other fossil fuels in the area. The form of the townscape acts as a funnel and concentrates pollution at certain locations in the High Street. A range of short and long-term measures are required to mitigate the poor air quality and to reduce any risk to public health.

### 10. Water Quality in Linlithgow Loch

Linlithgow Loch is increasingly suffering from toxic and unsightly algal blooms, particularly during periods of warm weather, caused by pollutants such as run-off of fertilisers and pesticides from fields, effluent from septic tanks and occasional sewage overflows. This poses risks to the wildlife, human health and may also affect fishing and other loch recreation activities.



*Linlithgow Loch, Linlithgow Palace and St Michael's Parish Church (Calum Smith).*

## 4. Opportunities to Remedy the Situation

Taking into account the town's strengths and the various issues outlined above, there would appear to be four distinct options worthy of consideration to remedy the situation:

- a) continuing the policy of 'restraint' as promoted in West Lothian Council's current and previous Local Plans (now rescinded in the Council's recently published Main Issues Report)
- b) continuing and enforcing restraint in such a way that it stops development, accepting the current stress on infrastructure, that housing needs will not be met and that the population will decline/age, while attempting to arrest deterioration
- c) relying on local authority and other initiatives to respond to the town's needs, providing new infrastructure as required without it having to be related to new housing development (fairly unlikely in the the current economic climate)
- d) community-advocated planned change, balancing new development opportunities against town improvements.

All of these options could be supplemented by other ways of raising funds, including the establishment or (preferably) the reconstitution of an existing Trust to purchase and allocate development land.

Groups represented in the Linlithgow Planning Forum do not favour significant new development *per se*. The prospect of further large scale residential development will cause considerable concern to many people, on the basis of their current experience of the increasing strains under which the town operates.

However, with housing land in the Linlithgow area estimated to be worth at least £1,100,000 per hectare (£440,000 per acre), there exists the potential for much of that value to be transferred into town improvements through 'planning gain'. In other words, planning permission for a fixed extent of housing development could be conditional on the provision of a list of priority community requirements which might include some or all of the following (see West Lothian Local Development Plan, Main Issues Report, paragraph 3.91):

- adequate educational capacity
- a four-way junction at Burghmuir
- traffic reductions in, and environmental

improvements to, the High Street (would need new road construction to divert all through traffic)

- greatly improved conditions for active travel and other forms of sustainable transport
- a solution to the car parking problem related to Linlithgow railway station
- the construction of sufficient social-rented housing to cater for the needs of the expanding community
- provision of a range of housing choice to ensure access to affordable housing for first time buyers, currently resident within Linlithgow
- provision of adequate range of youth facilities
- provision of enhanced health service facilities
- appropriate upgrading and extension of the sewer network, including any necessary works to mitigate pollution of Linlithgow Loch.

Projects from the above list would be chosen for implementation depending on their relative value to the community in Linlithgow as well as their financial cost.

The price would be a significant residential land release on the south-east outskirts of the town, programmed and phased as part of the one overall masterplan for the development area, as advocated extensively in planning advice from the Scottish Government. Planning permission related to such a masterplan would have to be dependent on West Lothian Council being satisfied that adequate funding, plans and associated programmes were in place to ensure that all the priority community requirements were provided before the start of the residential developments. The scale of the developments on the town outskirts would be much reduced if all relevant infill developments in the pipeline could be tied into the overall development package through effective operational policies in the West Lothian Local Development Plan.

The alternative will be a community which continues to creak under the strain of inadequate infrastructure and which cannot house its young people, whilst its potential as a business centre, as a distinctive specialist retail centre and/or as a key tourism focus in the Central Belt remain unfulfilled.

**Do nothing/do the minimum is a distinctly unattractive option.**

## 5. Summary Diagram

This section, Section A, has identified the strengths, problems, threats and the opportunities that are available to establish Linlithgow's future in the short, but also in the longer, term. The following section, Section B, sets out a Plan for Action. The Actions focus on what needs to be established in the immediate future; actions which will ameliorate the current problems and threats, and will build on the strengths inherent in the town.

The following diagram is intended to encapsulate both the Unfulfilled Potential set out in Section A and the Plan for Action presented in Section B.

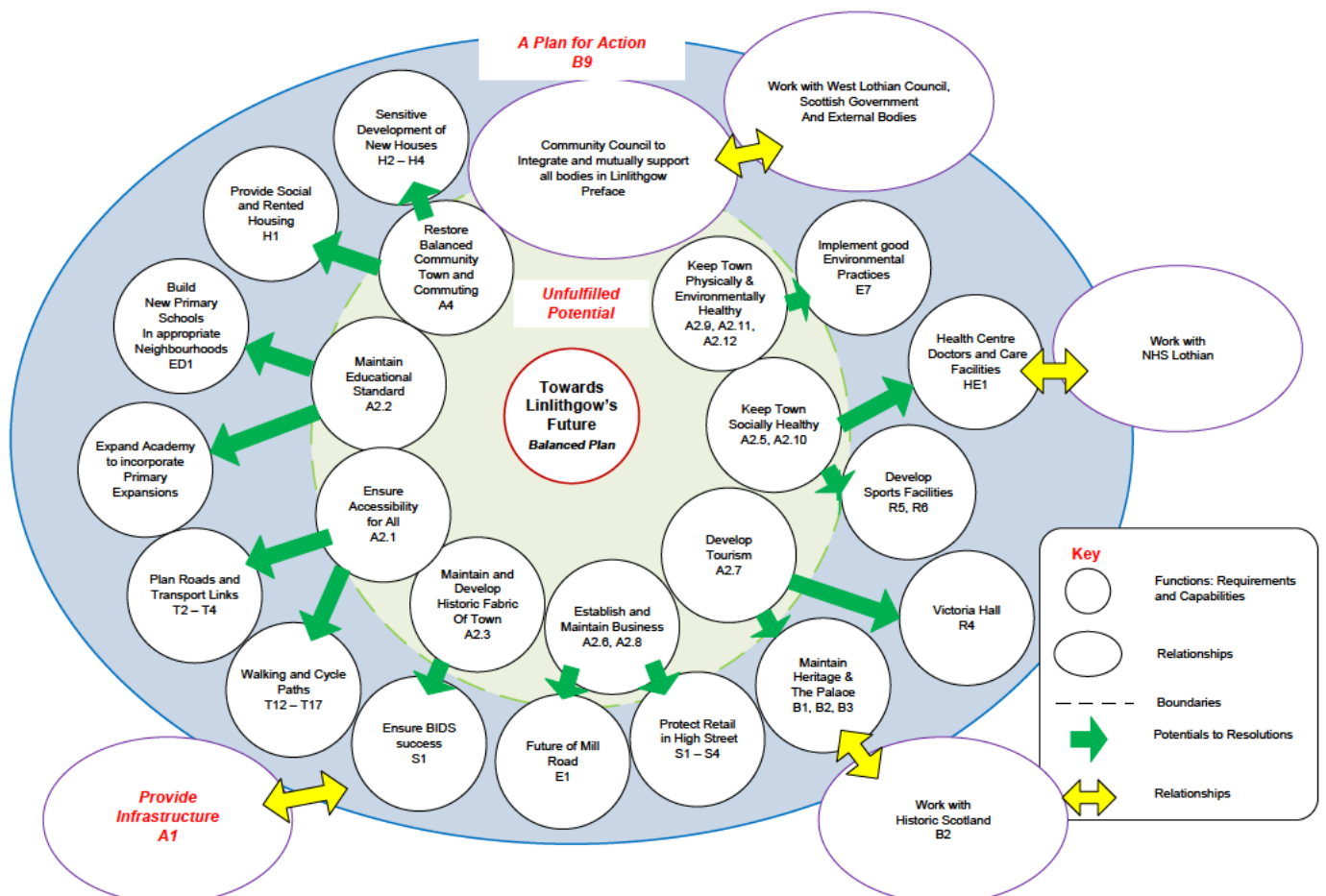
The diagram is to be read as the Unfulfilled Potential in the inner circle in light green; the identifiers are references to the paragraphs within Section A, while the outer circle in light blue sets out the actions as taken forward in Section B; the identifiers are references to the Recommendations in Section B. Sub-circles of the outer circle have been positioned adjacent to the sub-circles of the inner circle, thus 'The Future of Mill Road (Industrial Estate)' and 'Protect Retail High Street' sub-circles are positioned next to 'Establish and Maintain Business' of the inner circle, and the

relationships have been made explicit by directional arrows in green.

A number of ovals (rather than circles) are included being:

- Community Council – the primary driver of this Plan
- West Lothian Council, Scottish Government and External Bodies – being the organisations that Linlithgow needs to interface to and work with. See subsection 9 of Section B for how the Plan for Action may be implemented in practice
- NHS Lothian - an integral part of the health provision to Linlithgow
- Historic Scotland – the town realises that it needs to work closely with Historic Scotland if it is to establish its rightful place in Scotland's tourist industry.

At the centre of diagram is the goal of this document, *Linlithgow - A Plan for the Future 2015 - 2030*. Linlithgow has recognised that what is required is a 'balanced' plan that seeks to benefit all its inhabitants, young and old, commuter and local, and to build on its heritage, recognising that new technologies need to be assimilated whilst protecting the environment.



## 6. Objectives and Founding Principles for this Plan

This *Plan for the Future* aims to:

- provide a community-led perspective on the future development of Linlithgow, and a mechanism through which local people can have a say in input to West Lothian Council's Local Development Plan consultation
- set out parameters for the council's new Local Development Plan to prevent unwanted development which does not align with the needs or aspirations of the community
- protect heritage where appropriate, to increase sustainability and to adapt to changing need
- welcome development proposals which align with the philosophy and content of this document.

The founding principles of the planning content of this document are that:

- Linlithgow supports limited and controlled development that enhances the heritage and character of the town, increasing its attractiveness both to tourists and as a place to live and work
- Linlithgow supports controlled expansion of housing and other development within the town whilst retaining the character of the town
- any development must provide the means to ensure that the additional services and facilities required by the increase in population are provided. No development should proceed without the funding for additional services and facilities being guaranteed
- any developments must follow the guide lines to ensure that they are sustainable and carbon neutral.