



# WHITBURN TOWN CENTRE Public Realm Design Guide

West Lothian Council  
October 2009



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**Public Realm Design Guide**

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# Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Report

West Lothian Council are seeking to promote and facilitate urban regeneration and investment in the districts town centres and is developing with local stakeholders and community interests public realm strategies for physical improvement.

A study of Whitburn Town Centre has been completed that includes an assessment of the potential for improvements in the town that will help to support the growth of the town, support centre vitality, increase the opportunity for town centre retailers and enhance place quality. The regeneration of Whitburn is particularly important in the context of the new Heartlands development and towards sustainable urban futures. The intent has been to establish through consultation, a clear vision and strategy for the public realm and from this to develop a project based strategy and design framework that supports local plan and locality planning.

The Public Realm Design Framework will establish a clear framework for public realm investment and will be promoted within the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

## 1.2 History and Background

*Whytburns* appeared as a small place on Timothy Pont's map dating from about 1600. It stands 5km southwest of Bathgate and was then well away from the area's early east – west roads. The town was once dominated by the large Polkemmet Colliery which was sunk in the years 1913-22 and connected by mineral railway with an earlier mine south of Harthill and so the Fauldhouse area. By 1931 the population of the town was 2,440 and continued to grow to over 6,000 by 1951, when another mine was open to the north. The towns population was boosted by the 1960s Glasgow overflow. The town's Murraysgate and surrounding areas northwest of the cross were established to deal with the overflow. The M8 Motorway built in the late 1960's had bypassed the town by 1971. By the end of the 70's Polkemmet employed approximately 1,500 men and Levi Strauss had opened an overall factory in the town. By 1981 Whitburn had grown to a town well over 12,000 people mainly living in council houses and the general facilities had been greatly enhanced over the previous 30 years to that of a small town.

However Polkemmet Colliery was closed in the mid-80's as a result of damage by underground flooding during the miners' strike and never re-opened. By 1996 Levi Strauss was employing approximately 650 people but due to undercutting the factory had closed by 1999. There are now fewer employment opportunities in Whitburn and most people travel to work in other towns.

The colliery buildings of Polkemmet have now gone and the coal bings that once were so prominent have been removed. Work to dismantle Bing No 3, the infamous burning bing, started in August 2006 and was completed by February 2008.



Historical images of Whitburn

### 1.3 Successful Town Centres

Successful town centres are a result of a number of complex and interrelating aspects – environmental and service quality, mix and diversity, activity and vibrancy, adaptability, accessibility, etc. It is useful to look at national planning guidance where many of these key attributes have been explained and form key policy objectives.

#### **Scottish Planning Policy 8**

SPP8 identifies town centres as places which provide a diverse and sustainable mix of activities and land uses which create an identity that signals their function and wider role.

One of the key policy objectives contained in SPP8, especially relevant to this report is the need “to improve the physical quality of our town centre environments”. This means promoting good quality design, protecting and enhancing existing quality, supporting the creation of town centres which are safe, inclusive and attractive for everyone and which promote sustainable management of water and energy.

#### **Planning Advice Note 59: Improving Town Centres (1999)**

PAN 59 identifies the general qualities of successful and popular town centres. These centres:

- Include a range of facilities focused in a relatively small area (a critical mass of attractions) and make best use of the already considerable investment in the built environment. These attractions include a mix of shops (particularly specialised shops providing choice and variety) as well as a wide range of financial, professional and government services together with cultural, entertainment and

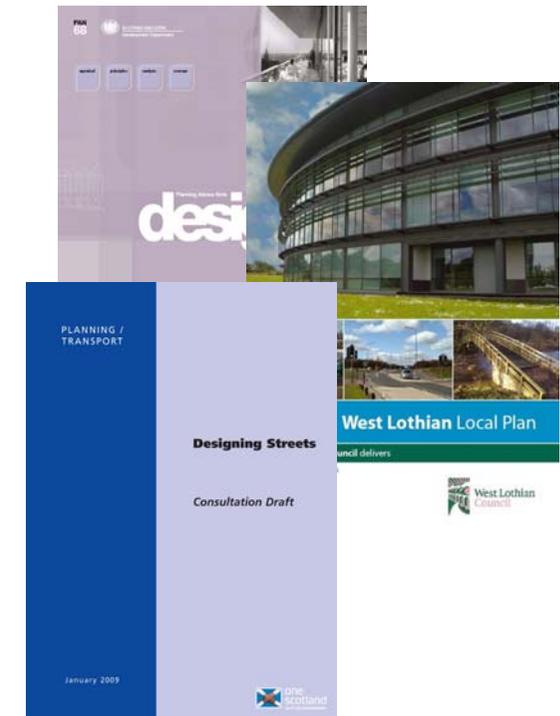
leisure facilities. There are therefore considerable opportunities to combine shopping trips with other activities. The existence of a thriving local resident population can be a positive force for change and the maintenance of quality.

- Are highly accessible by a range of types of transport (and in addition make best use of their traditional focus as nodes for public transport), have sufficient good quality short stay car parking close to shops, have good transport linkages within the centre and have efficient arrangements for delivery of goods
- Have an attractive amenity in terms of built environment and townscape, streets and public spaces are considered clean and safe and have a sense of local identity and character; all of which greatly enhances the attraction of the centre in which the shopping or leisure experience take place; and, in the future, will be those which have the vision and mechanisms in place to build on these assets, overcome problems, adapt to market and consumer needs, and secure appropriate and necessary improvements

#### **Designing Streets: Consultation Draft**

Designing Streets is intended to be a companion document to “Designing Places” and aims to apply the principles of good design contained in that policy to both new and wherever possible, existing streets. The intended outcome is streets that are better designed to accommodate the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, as well as contributing to the quality of the built environment and place-making.

Designing Streets refocuses on the place-making function, giving clear guidance on how to achieve well-designed streets and spaces that serve the community in a range of ways. Designing Streets is expected to be used predominantly for the design, construction, adoption and maintenance of new streets, but it is also applicable to existing streets subject to re-design.



## 1.4 The Public Realm

The term 'public realm' often means different things to different people or disciplines.

- The appearance, character and quality of the public realm are composed of streetscape and landscape elements (both hard and soft) and treatments directly within the space and by buildings and landscaping that frame and enclose the space. The latter is frequently referred to in the field of urban design as the 'public realm armature' which recognises the total extent of open space connecting building form and facades, place qualities and public realm regardless of whether this is public or privately owned
- The public realm is shaped by the actions of a range of people and disciplines, including highway engineers, urban designers, architects, planners, developers, maintenance workforce, and property owners and of course the general public in the way they use, treat and move around the public realm. As such, designing, creating, managing and maintaining the public realm is rarely a straightforward process, and achieving a high quality of public realm requires commitment from all parties working in collaboration around a shared vision and goal.
- Use of the public realm inevitably involves a wide range of differing groups of people, particularly within a town centre location. These groups often referred to as stakeholders, include everyone with an interest in the quality and success of the town centre. Conflicting needs and requirements between stakeholders often arise which needs to be carefully managed from the outset. This should be

addressed through town centre management and creation of a public realm which is fit for purpose, functions effectively and which strengthens the sense of quality and enjoyment.

Small towns across Scotland have over the last decade witnessed significant challenges as a result of changing patterns of retailing and a planning system that has done little to support the traditional local centre. In recent years Scottish Planning Policy and Planning Guidance has sought to address this and give greater recognition to urban design, sustainable places and address the importance of urban design and design quality in planning decisions.

Small towns are a key element of the economic, social and historical tapestry of Scotland. There are 262 with a population of between 2,000 and 20,000 inhabitants which constitute around a third of the Scottish population. These are important urban places and are likely to become more important as we seek to find ways to promote more sustainable living and address the key challenges of climate change. Small towns and local centres are also vital to local economies as key locations supporting enterprise, local services, transport interchange and a range of civic functions.

Experience over recent years and from similar sized towns elsewhere suggests that the traditional market town qualities are under threat. The Federation of Small Business in Scotland notes that:

- Specialised stores including butchers, bakers, fishmongers and newsagents selling confectionery, tobacco and newspapers closed at the rate of 50 per week between 1997-2002

- General stores have been closing at the rate of one per day and 13,000 independent newsagents closed between 1995 and 2004 and 8,600 independent grocery stores closed between 2000-2005 (25% decline)
- Wholesalers which underpin the vital retail infrastructure for local stores have closed at the rate of six per week over the last two years and over a five-year period VAT registrations for small-scale food manufacturers fell by almost 12%

Confronting these challenges requires positive action by Councils, planners, local stakeholders, retailers and all those with a commitment to their local town. Positive action, when supported by positive planning and concerted local action has been demonstrated to work. Key lessons learnt include:

- Creating a strong sense of local ownership and active participation in the future planning of town centres
- Creating strong local representative organisations working together to provide leadership and provide champions for the town centre
- Building the quality of place and ensuring that all decisions are aligned with the vision and development objectives of the centre
- Enhancing the town centre offer and quality of the visitor experience
- Building on the distinctive qualities and strengths of the town centre.



# 2

# Whitburn Appraisal

## 2.1 Description

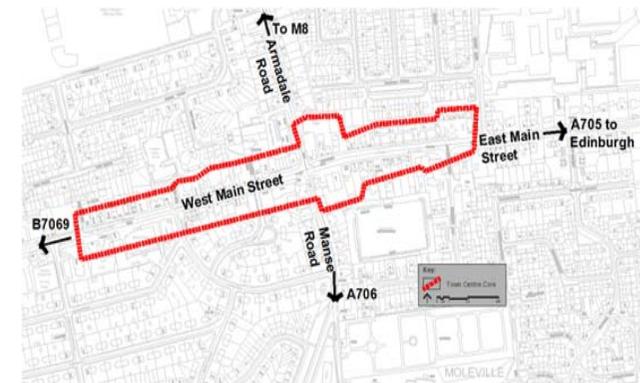
Whitburn is a key traditional town and important local centre serving district and local functions, with a population that today stands at approximately 13,000. Whitburn is soon to see major changes with the planned Heartlands development to the south west of the town centre. The town has a number of notable buildings including the Masonic Lodge and Burgh Halls. There is a strong community infrastructure in the town, witnessed by the local football team Whitburn Juniors, who have up to 18 teams, 340 players and 70 volunteers, and also by Civic Week and the Annual Gala Day. Local independent traders and national multiples across a range of retailing mainly represent retailers in the area. An approximate breakdown of shops in the central area (including empty shop units) is set out below:

Shop Type	No. of Units	Shop Type	No. of Units
Empty Units	14	Pet Shop	1
Services	14	Sport shop	1
Café / Take-away	11	Dry Cleaners	1
Hairdresser	9	Fishmonger	1
General Store / Newsagent	5	Hotel	1
Public House	4	Charity Shop	2
Bookmakers	4	Off Licence	1
Supermarket	4	Travel Agent	1
Baker	2	DVD Store	1
Butcher	2	Chemist	1
Banks	2	Clothes Shop (Women)	2
Florist	2	Opticians	1
Electrical Shop	1	Other	13

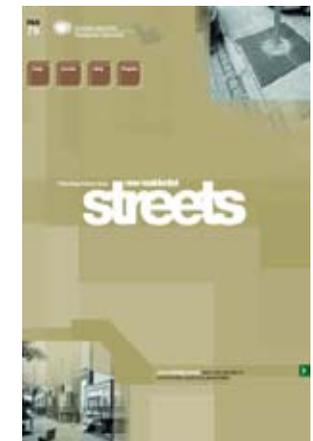
## 2.2 Development Plan Context

The Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2015 (E&LSP) identifies a number of town centres that provide a range of facilities and services, and which also benefit from being the focus of community and public transport. Within West Lothian the Almondvale Centre, Livingston, Armadale, Bathgate, Broxburn/Uphall, Linlithgow and **Whitburn** are identified. Policy RET5 requires the town centre boundaries be defined through local plans or other initiatives and the vitality and vibrancy of centres should be kept under review, improvements introduced, and new developments be well integrated into the local townscape. Local Plans should also make appropriate provisions for new local shopping facilities in areas of planning growth, which includes Whitburn. The Adopted West Lothian Local Plan 2009 aims to:

- Sustain the vitality of local centres and encourage retail and community facilities commensurate with their status
- Resist retail development outwith Livingston, Bathgate and other centres identified in the plan, and shown on the proposals map, where these would detrimentally affect the identified town centre
- Improve the physical environment of existing centres, through the council integrating its own programmes of action with those of agencies, developers, traders and local communities with whom it works in partnership
- Promote new retailing provision in the key areas of major planned growth in West Lothian, identified in the Adopted West Lothian Local Plan 2009, but commensurate with supporting the existing nearby centres



Whitburn Town Centre Context



## 2.3 Planning & Development

The town has been given the go-ahead for a £500 million project called "Heartlands". This has included the removal of 1.4 million tonnes of shallow coal reserves by opencast methods and the regeneration of 600 hectares of derelict ground, to the south-west and west of the town.

It will also include a new junction on the M8 at Cowhill and a business park. The roads layout at the west of the town has already been modified to allow access for the construction of the new junction and business park. It is estimated that the project will provide 4000 new jobs, 2000 new homes, 2 championship golf courses, a 5 star (150 bedroom) luxury golf lodge and hotel, 350 car park and ride facility and a supermarket.

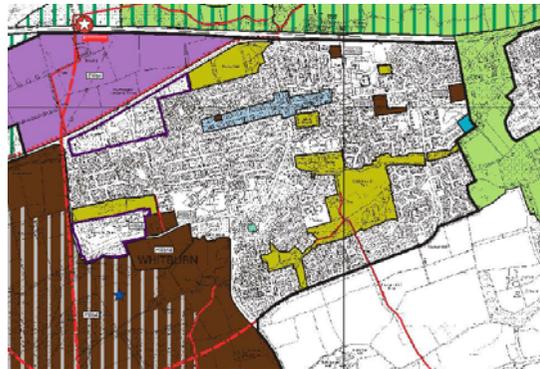
### Locality Plan

Locality Planning is being developed across West Lothian within each multi-member ward. This process involves partner agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors working together with communities to jointly plan local services.

Locality planning has a particular focus on addressing the key priorities within a local area and seeking to coordinate service delivery, spatial planning, and local initiatives, that:

- Support the delivery of the Council's Single Outcome Agreement
- Engage with and facilitate the involvement of communities in identifying and addressing local priorities
- Provide a focus for action on local priorities
- Encourage integrated service delivery

A Locality Planning Officer has worked with local groups and local stakeholders to provide support and encourage dialogue and local participation on town centre and other local issues. Closer engagement of stakeholders with the Council and community action and participation through groups such as Retailer and Trader Groups are an important element of this work.



Local Plan Extract

## 2.4 Strategic & Local Movement

The town is well served by the M8 motorway from Edinburgh (exit off Junction 4) and Glasgow (exit off Junction 5). Edinburgh is only 25 minutes away by train on the Bathgate - Edinburgh Sprinter line and there is a station in Fauldhouse on the southern Glasgow - Edinburgh rail line. The main approach roads into the town include the A705 from the east, the A706 from the north and south and the B7069 from the west.

### Car Parking

On-street parking is provided for in the village and parking is also available in other areas such as the Armadale Road Car Park (approximately 55 spaces), an area behind the Royal Bank of Scotland (approximately 24 spaces) and also just off Market Place (approximately 30 spaces). Consultation comments have highlighted concern at parking provision and ease of use of the centre. On-street parking is also provided along East and West Main Street.

Parking is also provided east of the town centre in Brucefield Place. However this is isolated from the town centre core and conflicts with residential users.

Parking management and enforcement is managed by Lothian and Borders Police.

### Public Transport & Bus Connections

Whitburn is well served by local bus services to Edinburgh Livingston, Broxburn, Bathgate and Glasgow serviced by First Bus including services no 8/208, 10, X14.

## 2.5 Community Infrastructure

Whitburn's location and history have fostered a strong community identity and tradition of community involvement which the people of Whitburn are proud of. There are four primary schools and one secondary school in Whitburn which also caters for young people in other villages nearby. A health centre and day hospital unit is situated just off the Main Street and opposite the Whitburn Older People's Group with the library also located close by. To the east of the Cross there is a West Lothian Council office where housing and other staff are based and further east is the post office. A well used community centre, owned by West Lothian Council and managed by a committee of local representatives, is close to the town centre. Other community facilities in the town include:

- Whitburn has a King George's Field in memorial to King George V which was opened in 1955 by Queen Elizabeth II.
- Whitburn Academy with a school roll of approximately 1,200.
- Whitburn has a new leisure centre, opened in the refurbished swimming pool buildings. It contains a multi-gym, a 25m swimming pool, sauna and steam rooms.
- Whitburn is home to Whitburn Junior F.C. who play at Central Park
- The town holds its annual gala day on the fourth Saturday in June, and sees a parade take part through the town, followed by games and races at King George V Park. The gala day is part of a week of activities known as the "Civic Week", the Civic week also attracts a fairground and fireworks display which is based just on the edge of King George V Park.

## 2.6 Strengths & Weaknesses

### Strengths to Build-On

- Simple central town centre core around the Cross
- Diverse Retail including National Multiples and Independent Retailers across a range of retailing
- Architectural buildings of heritage merit that provide a strong sense of character, including The Cross Tavern, Burgh Halls and The Olde Market Inn Community Spirit / Town Social Cohesion
- Quality Displays



Quality displays and buildings of merit

### Weaknesses to Address

- Place Quality particularly around the cross is of mixed quality leading to a weakened sense of character and identity in town centre core
- The situation where a number of premises in the heart of Whitburn Town Centre lie empty has a huge negative affect on the area.
- Signage and Sense of Arrival
- Parking Arrangements
- Shopfront image
- Area of dead space where buildings are set back from the road weakening the urban structure and introducing inactive frontage



Poor quality of place



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# 3

## Whitburn Town Centre Vision & Objectives

### 3.1 Vision & Objectives

The delivery of the successful regeneration of Whitburn Town Centre will require:

- A Clear Vision
- Public Realm Design Framework
- Action Plan

Building stronger town centres requires that all development (public / private and voluntary) help support the quality and distinctive attributes of the town centre. Looking to the future, new development happening in the surrounding area brings new opportunity for the town centre potentially with an increase in retailing and spending. The town centre needs to work to address and prevent retail leakage and ensure new developments perceive Whitburn as their natural centre.

Building a stronger sense of vision involves close working between the Council, community and stakeholders to develop a forward looking vision, which is realistic, clear and well understood and importantly is capable of winning support. The plan will inevitably include a range of measures and should be supported by a programme of projects that allow for phased implementation through a range of initiatives.

The first stage is to recognise, embrace and communicate the opportunity for positive change and then to develop a clear plan that looks for all interests and stakeholders (i.e. traders/retailers, community groups, local members, community council etc.) to engage and work together and drive forward town centre improvements.

Consultations shared a common theme around the need for investment, a shared commitment to regeneration and the importance of positive action and participation of local groups and interest. Whitburn needs to positively express its strengths and through local initiatives and action (including Traders Group / Business Interests / Community Council / WLC initiatives) collectively work to address a more positive image and place quality for Whitburn. Key ideas and projects have focussed on addressing the key issues (amenity / parking/ quality of place / retail choice / local services) around the town centre. The shared vision would seek to:

*“create a higher quality town centre environment that offers place appeal and helps to strengthen quality of place and sense of vibrancy”.*

We are keen to avoid an over ambitious list of projects and initiatives that address everything but are overly ambitious relative to available resources and unlikely to be implemented. There is the need to plan carefully for future development, taking care to learn the lessons of the past. This study represents a key opportunity to develop a clear strategy for future delivery and investment in the town centre and how changes to infrastructure should be shaped and brought together in a way that develops the assets of the town and helps to improve competitiveness. Our experience tells us that, if place-making is to have a role, it must be focused to create:

- Legibility
- Distinctiveness
- Appropriate and durable quality

This needs to take into account and build on local assets including importantly the local community, local businesses and stakeholders. Important to building a better quality of town centre is the need to address the:

- Need to focus and prioritise the quality of the central core and address key areas such as image, parking, signage and public realm space
- Character, sustainability and enduring quality of all investment
- Role of landmark buildings, built heritage places of reference and the need to create clear spatial hierarchies
- Development of clear, safe and attractive connections that encourage walking and cycling and safe access for all
- Opportunities for new projects to contribute to townscape quality
- Opportunities to remove the barriers to access and accessibility



The Cross, Whitburn

## 3.2 Addressing Community Objectives & Enhancing the Centre

A level of consultation was also undertaken to better understand the needs of the stakeholder and community and to establish the opportunity to discuss local issues and town centre improvement priorities in view of preparing the Town Centre Design Guide. The consultation exercise involved the following:

- Meeting with Community Council 12.08.09 and 16.09.09
- Public Consultation held 22.08.09
- Distribution of Questionnaires

The Consultation Report's key findings set out below:

- All consultees expressed strong support for improvements to Whitburn and the need to work together to support investment and make things happen
- Main improvements sought for Whitburn include:
  - Improved condition of buildings in the town centre and shop front improvements to strengthen local retailing
  - Improvements to pavements and street furniture to improve the amenity and experience of the town
  - Better parking and improved signage to current parking to make the town more user friendly
  - Improved pedestrian safety including traffic calming and traffic management measures

Addressing quality of place and design to enhance the centre needs to be framed within a clearly understood set of principles. These need to be established and understood early in the process. Six key qualities are widely considered vital to the success and sustainability

of development, it will be important to keep these in the fore in planning for Whitburn's future town centre:

- **Sense of Identity**  
Protecting the special qualities of the Town
- **Ease of Movement**  
Making circulation direct, safe and interesting
- **Safe and Pleasant Spaces**  
Ensuring spaces are appealing to users
- **Sense of Welcome**  
Ensuring places feel clean, safe and inviting
- **Adaptability**  
Support diverse activity and allow for change
- **Good Use of Resources**  
Ensure resources are well used

Based on the above, development and other initiatives within the town centre should be designed to:

### Perceptions & Image

- Create a welcoming and attractive first impression, including signage
- Portray a positive, inviting and high quality image
- Encourage a more diverse mix of uses and activities including events

### Connected & Accessible

- Encourage a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment most importantly at the Cross
- Improve the use of and connections to the public space network through townscape improvements

### Maintain & Enhance Quality

- Improve and enhance the town centre core with a strong focus on the central areas
- Allow for effective maintenance and management of public realm including maintenance of gap sites

- Improve unattractive or poorly maintained buildings and secure demolition of derelict buildings
- Promote through a range of measures a town 'facelift'

### Safety

- Ensure that the public space network is, and is perceived to be, safe, secure and inviting and linked to key arrival points / parking
- Deter crime and anti-social behaviour where possible where possible through good lighting and supporting local initiatives
- Allow for ease of movement through safe and convenient pedestrian crossings particularly at the Cross
- Review security to business premises and look to address issues of external roller shutters and shop window security



Whitburn Town Centre

### 3.3 Key Opportunities

- Enhance town centre core strengthening identity, sense of quality and appeal focussed at the crossroads to raise quality and sense of welcome
- Improvements for key pedestrian linkages and safe routes to encourage access to the centre (walking, cycling) and of more remote parking
- Remove clutter and tackle issues of litter, dereliction and fly posting and generally improve core retail pavements and shop fronts
- Use of consistent street furniture and planting palette to strengthen sense of place and quality
- Secure wider community support and participation through the Community Council, Traders Group and Whitburn Community Development Trust

### 3.4 Community Participation

The enhancement of Whitburn Town Centre will require more than just a series of physical projects and improvements to public realm, shopfronts, parking and signage, etc important though these elements are. Action is also needed to overcome any air of inertia and support for the status quo and to create a positive climate of confidence and to strengthen the engagement with the local community.

To address community objectives, community groups and traders/retailer groups should seek to work closer together in order to promote the area and organise local initiatives. Closer cooperation between local groups should be encouraged and the local members and Community Council have a key role in this regard.

A number of groups exist and it will be important to establish a Town Centre Management Group represented by all interests with specific interest in the future vitality and success of the town centre. Town Centre Management Groups have demonstrated their effectiveness in identifying the key needs of town centre stakeholders and working together to deliver local initiatives, strengthen business confidence, coordinate improvements and support positive change and direct action.

Experience elsewhere has shown that these groups are most effective when they are well represented and can work alongside other wider groups such as Community Council's, the local development trust, traders group and others.



Whitburn Wider Context Plan



Whitburn Community Consultation Event



# 4

# Key Design Principles

## 4.1 Introduction

The Place Analysis identified a number of issues, which helped frame the key design principles that should steer future planning decisions and shape public realm interventions.

The principles build upon the core principles of Designing Places and the objectives set out above in the earlier section (Section 3.1) and relate closely to the consultations held within Whitburn. Key design principles for the town centre regeneration of Whitburn include:

1. Create a Well Defined Town Centre
2. Enhance Quality of Town Centre
3. Improve Shopfronts in the Town Centre
4. Improve Sense of Welcome & Arrival
5. Improve Pedestrian Connections & Remove Barriers to Accessibility
6. Provide a Safer Town Centre



Gap site - Whitburn

## 4.2 Create a Well Defined Town Centre

The aim will be to have a well defined and distinctive place that respects the values of the community and a place where people will want to work, live and visit and a place where people can meet. It should create functional public realm for all users, resolving conflicting demands through practical and sustainable design measures.

Successful town centres present a positive image and naturally define the central core as the area with the highest intensity of use and activity. The Cross defines Whitburn's town centre and a focus around the crossroads will help create a more distinctive and welcoming place. A number of projects are proposed around improving the town centre core as set out and illustrated below.

### Project 1

Addressing the opportunity of the 'gap' site adjacent to Armadale Road Car Park would help create a civic anchor for Whitburn. A section of the site could potentially be released for built development as a community building, with the remaining area providing a new public square for the town centre (see sketch option below). This can help create



Potential opportunity for public realm space

space for civic activity and support the vitality of the town centre. A town notice board with visitor information and key signage, seating and feature lighting could also be provided within this space.

### Project 2

Opportunity exists to enhance the core of Whitburn by improving the management and maintenance of the area around the railings adjacent to the Cross. There is potential to locate a town centre sign in this

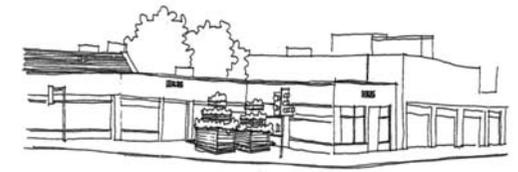


Potential option for town centre space

area which would welcome visitors/shoppers to the town centre while also acting as orientation signage for parking, public toilets, key buildings, etc.

### Project 3

The space outside the Royal Bank of Scotland building also presents the opportunity to enhance the core of Whitburn. Strengthening of the quality of this



Potential opportunity to enhance secondary space

space with a higher quality feature or public art associated with Whitburn's history, along with benches, would help strengthen the quality and appeal of the core area.

**Project 4**

Consultations and town centre analysis both highlighted the need to better utilise other secondary spaces around the centre and generally improve amenity and management. A number of smaller spaces exist where buildings are set back from the road weakening the urban structure and introducing traffic management and pedestrian access and safety issues. Coordinated street furniture including tree planting, seating and bedding planting and hanging baskets would enhance these areas. Areas that need further discussion include the area of Market Place, frontage to cross Café and East Main Street pavements.



Potential opportunity for street trees/planting

In the town centre any new buildings should be orientated to address the public realm and enable opportunities for overlooking and natural surveillance, ideally to include an element of residential buildings. The creation of restricted spaces, particularly around

building edges that are difficult to view, clean and maintain should be avoided. Where the need for provision of shutters is identified an appropriate balance between security and environmental quality should be sought.

### 4.3 Enhance Quality of Town Centre

Key to the success of a town centre, whether measured in terms of retail spend or number of visitors, is the quality of its environment. This needs to be considered for all aspects of development from individual buildings, to public spaces, landscaping, car parking and servicing. Quality is reflected not only in the design of a place, but also in the condition to which it has been maintained.

Successful town centres also invest in good design and high levels of maintenance to ensure high levels of safety and cleanliness. This plays an important role in creating an attractive and welcoming town centre image.

Whitburn exhibits a tired and shabby public infrastructure created by a combination of indifferent quality road surfacing and footways, streetscape clutter, signing, guardrails, all adding to the general inhospitable environment. Much of Whitburn central core has not been maintained to a quality standard and the legacy of inadequate maintenance needs to be addressed.

**Project 1**

The Council should explore the possibility of using colour wash for the group of buildings around the

Olde Market Inn. This would help provide buildings with a new clean look and as a result enhance appeal and welcome. Another possible solution is to create a mural on the gable end of the Olde Market Inn reflecting Whitburn's history, celebrating a Whitburn town hero or an important day in the town's calendar (i.e. Gala Week).

**Project 2**

Well-designed, accessible spaces contribute to a healthy and prosperous place, a place where people want to stay and enjoy rather than rush through or avoid and in Whitburn it will be important to secure higher streetscape and pavement standards. We would propose that new street paving on the main walkways be provided in Whitburn offering quality natural stone flag finishes. Better quality and often more expensive, natural materials will tend to be more durable and to weather better than cheaper, man-made materials. This often has direct implications for the level of maintenance or repair required over the long term.

### 4.4 Shopfront Improvements

The quality of shop fronts of Whitburn is also generally poor and unwelcoming. A Shop Front Improvement Scheme could offer a level of grant assistance to help shop owners / tenants repair or upgrade shop fronts, create new retail identity and increase their profile.

The situation where a number of premises in the heart of Whitburn Town Centre lie empty has a huge negative affect on the area. Such clusters need addressing by ensuring wherever possible short term

lets (charity/other uses); retaining display shop windows; community advertising; or other innovative mechanisms.

Retailers could also implement some simple measure to enhance the retail experience and perceptions of Whitburn as a town centre where people want to visit and shop. Whitburn is less welcoming than some other centres and the sense of welcome and interest need more individual retailer effort. Small measures can be effective. Environment is important but the key is to facilitate visual and physical access from street to store.

The security measures of shop units can have a strong impact on perceived security and impressions of the shopping environment, particularly at night. External closed security shutters should not be acceptable, with the more appropriate solution based on internal open security screens which are not visually disruptive to the shop front and which maintain a level of transparency. Maintaining active shopfronts and open display windows at night is important to the image and quality of place and all traders should be encouraged to work collaboratively to avoid further external shutters in the main retail core.

#### 4.5 Improve Sense of Welcome and Arrival

Well defined points of arrival to the town centre are essential to creating first impressions. Development interventions should seek to reinforce the quality and stature of key town centre entrances to create an

attractive and inviting sense of welcome/ arrival. Sense of welcome can be expressed through signage, banners, enhance lighting arrangement, street furniture and seasonal dressing (floral displays/ flags/ banners/ and signage) and the quality of streetscape maintenance and cleansing.

#### 4.6 Improve Pedestrian Connections & Remove Barriers to Accessibility

The streets will be successful if they are seen to be available for everyone. The more the streets are subdivided for the exclusive use of particular groups, the more restrictions will be required and consequently, the more signage and clutter. Within the town centre, greater emphasis should be given to raising pedestrian functions in the transport user hierarchy. Roads should not be designed for cars, with pedestrian needs as secondary, but as streets where pedestrians, cyclists, etc feel comfortable using.

An accessible and inclusive Town Centre must avoid barriers which would impede the movement of people using wheelchairs, those who may be visually impaired and others who can be disabled by their environments, including those pushing prams or pushchairs. Advice contained within Planning Advice Note 78 "Inclusive Design" should be followed and community accessibility groups consulted.

Signage should be upgraded to improve pedestrian movement and accessibility to public and community facilities including the Community Centre, library,

leisure centre, etc. Signage should also be improved to direct car users to available parking in the town centre area and which are convenient to town centre users perceptions as confidence in the location by customers can be just as important as the physical provision.

Improvements should include environmental upgrading for key pedestrian linkages to encourage greater pedestrian movement and perceptions of safety. This should also include local environmental improvements that enhance amenity on pedestrian and cycling routes that connect the Town Centre to new developments outwith the centre (i.e. Heartlands development).

#### 4.7 Provide Safer Streets

Passive/ natural surveillance and human presence within space is usually the most effective means of ensuring that places are safe. People feel comfortable and confident using areas where there is good visibility and effective lighting and where they feel they can be seen and heard by other people. Safer streets means changing the mix of use and encouraging more positive use of the public realm alongside other community policing, streetscape management and security measures. Support in delivering safer streets can include better recording and intelligence on street crime, vandalism, fly-posting and anti-social behaviour. A Retailer Watch Scheme encouraging closer liaison with both police and environmental wardens could assist.



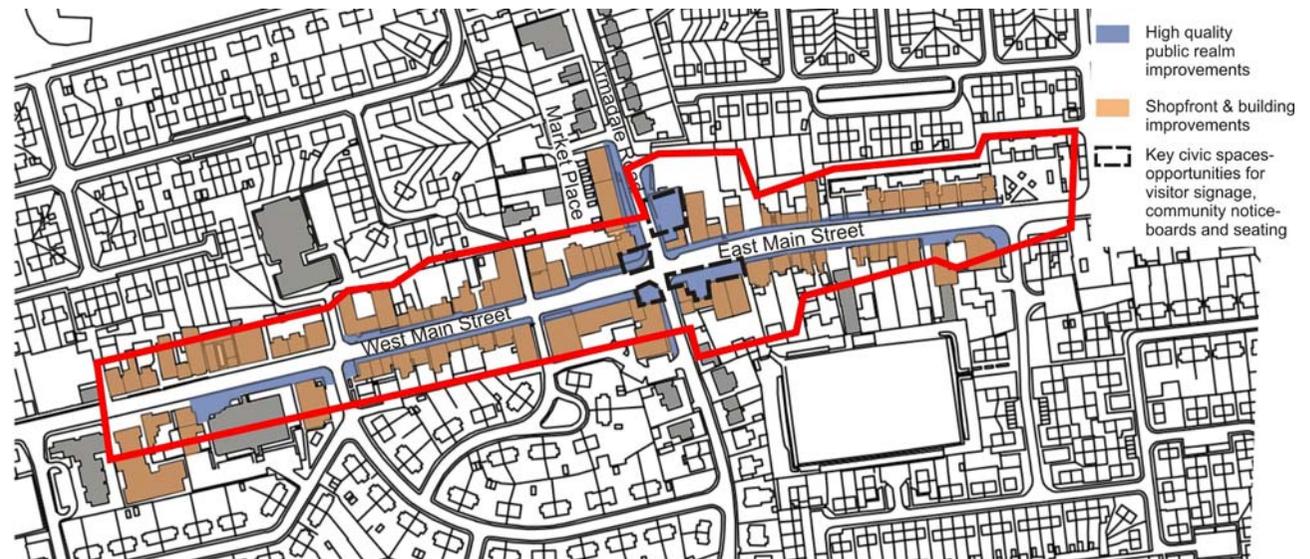
# Design Guidelines for Development Control

# 5

## 5.1 Planning Application Requirements

A Design and Accessibility Statement must accompany major planning applications for development within Whitburn (excluding signage and change of use) in line with the advice set out in PAN 68. This must clearly set out the design concept, explain how it contributes positively to the surrounding context and how it addresses the key principles set out in the previous chapter and the design criteria listed below.

The Council is seeking to support and make more transparent issues of quality in planning and design that affect Whitburn. Early dialogue based on the principles set out previously will be encouraged and are intended to assist all development interests better understand requirements and the local interpretation of best practice guidance.



**Principle 1: Create a high quality town centre environment**

**Principle 2: Create a town focus at the crossroads**

**Principle 3: Facilitate town events and markets**

**Principle 4: Strengthen appeal and sense of vibrancy**

- Remove clutter and tackle issues with litter, graffiti and fly posting
- Strengthen the town centre identity, sense of quality and appeal focussed at the crossroads using a high quality public realm treatment
- Create an attractive civic space to allow flexibility of uses- markets and other town events
- Environmental improvements for key pedestrian linkages
- Use a consistent street furniture and planting palette to establish a sense of quality

Outline Design Options

## 5.2 Improve Pedestrian Routes and Safety

- Development proposals and Design Statements must demonstrate how they will enhance the appearance, function, safety and accessibility of all public rights of way directly adjacent to the site.
- Development must not obstruct any public right of way, either physically or visually or compromise public accessibility.
- The West Lothian Access Committee must be consulted early in the design process where the development proposal is likely to impact upon public realm accessibility.
- Pedestrian routes/ footways should be wide enough to allow easy passing and overtaking, and should be well lit and overlooked by nearby properties to improve safety and surveillance.



Well lit and maintained footpath

## 5.3 Enhance Public realm & Landscape

- Public realm must be completed to add quality and positively contribute to safe public use and movement. Materials shall reflect/ be benchmarked against the best quality materials in the local area and be of no lesser quality.
- Avoid the creation of spaces, particularly around building edges, that are difficult to view, clean and maintain.
- Soft landscape should at the design stage recognise future maintenance needs and higher quality finishes (semi-mature trees and native ground cover/ or limited high density native planting) may be a better option than standard shrubs.
- Private car parking must be located and be secondary to pedestrian access and movement typically to the centre or rear of a block away from the public realm frontage.
- Where frontages allow public realm works to be carried out, opportunities should be investigated for the incorporation of secondary civic space that share a common palette of materials and detailing.



Attractive civic area

## 5.4 Respect for the urban structure

- Buildings should be attractive and innovative, with clear front and back elevations, with public façades that positively address the public realm and incorporate frequent entrances and windows.
- Buildings must wherever possible provide continuous street frontage and contribute positively to the quality of the street.
- Buildings should follow the established building line along the street frontage.
- Set backs from the established building line will be allowed where this contributes to the articulation of the building, and/or where this results in usable, safe and attractive public space.



Masonic Hall

## 5.5 Secure investment in Shop-Fronts & Building Facades

The aim of this section relating specifically to shop front alterations/ improvements is to establish a strong and attractive shop front theme for the Town Centre. It should be noted that new shop fronts and works to existing shop fronts in most cases may need planning permission and the installation of advertisements may need advertisement consent.

### General Design

- Traditional shop front 'stall risers' – the part of the elevation filling the area between the shop window and the pavement – and cills should be treated simply in flat timber or render and coloured to match the rest of the shop front. The stallrisers should not be made into features through tiling, panelling or painting in contrasting colours.
- The corporate styles of multiple stores should be adjusted to suit local circumstances.
- Recessed doors should be retained if they survive.
- Traditional features such as pilasters, surrounds, stall risers and cornices should be retained if they survive.
- Where a shop occupies more than one building, any replacement of the shop front should take account of the individual buildings and should not be designed as a unified whole extending across both façades.

### Fascias

- Deep, "dropped" fascias should not be used and the opportunity should be taken to return enlarged fascias to their original depth.

### Materials

- Where new work is required, traditional materials should be used. Aluminium, tiles, mirrors, PVC, laminates etc. are not generally appropriate.

### Colours

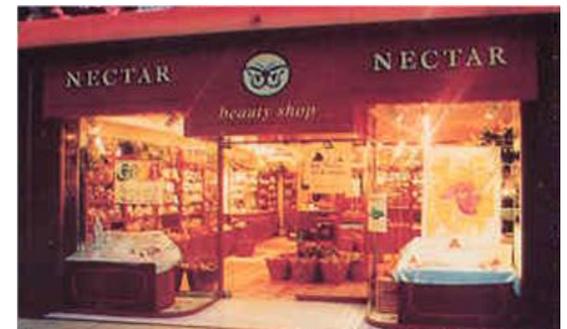
- Pure white, purple, lilac, bright red, light colours and pastels are not usually appropriate.
- Lower sections, where staining can occur, often look best when painted black or a very dark colour such as black or slate grey.

### Signage

- Hand painted signs are preferred, but high quality applied lettering of a non-plastic or reflective material can also be effective.
- Plastic individual letters should be avoided.
- Where a fascia board exists, lettering should be applied flush to the board and be no higher than four fifths of the height of the fascia board.
- Lettering should be limited to the minimum information relating to the shop and its service. Lettering should not be applied to any sub-fascia or other parts of the façade.
- Colour for signage could attempt to incorporate a local theme, building on the local colour palette to help strengthen the sense of community and identity
- Sponsored fascia signs are rarely appropriate unless they conform to the standards identified above.
- Hanging signs can be effective but projecting box signs, whether illuminated or not, should be avoided.

### Window advertisements

- Covering the shop window with signs and advertisements does little for the street scene as a whole and such clutter should be avoided.



Attractive and appealing shop fronts

- An imaginative or even simple yet effective window display is always better than a profusion of signs and bills posted behind the glass.

*Illumination*

- Internally illuminated box signs applied to the fascia and projecting in front of the main plane of the shop front are not attractive elements in a traditional street scene and should be avoided.
- Where illumination is necessary it should, where possible, be in the form of well-designed down lights illuminating a fascia board.

*Security*

- Security measures, where necessary and approved, should be integrated into the original design of the shop front rather than stuck on.
- Flat roller shutters which cover the windows when closed, external boxes to contain roller shutters when open, alarm boxes, gates and grilles are unsympathetic and add an unattractive air to the street scene.
- Alarm boxes should be fixed in inconspicuous positions on the façade.
- Solid shutters cause a dead and uninteresting appearance and should be avoided. An open mesh grille behind the glass is the preferred means of security. Where considered acceptable, external shutters should be of an open grille type.

*Canopies*

- Where canopies are required, only retractable blinds of a traditional canvas type without advertisements should be used. Curved “Dutch” canopies are not generally appropriate.

## 5.6 Town Centre Welcome

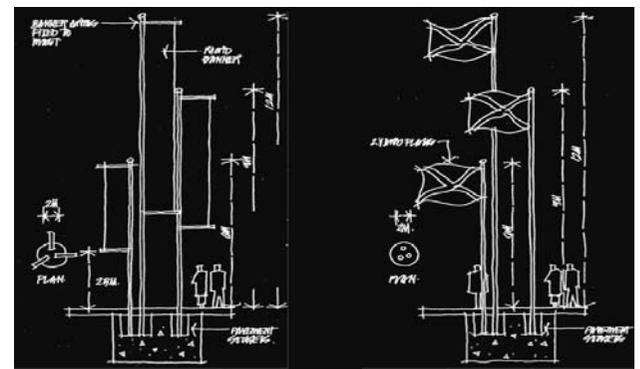
Expressing a welcome can support regeneration and physical renewal and positively impact on perception and image of the town. We have reviewed the opportunity for gateways for Whitburn and believe the focus should be on the town centre rather than peripheral locations with investment in town centre signage replacing a gateway approach.

- Concentrate investment and environmental improvement on the town centre
- Express a sense of arrival, welcome, a positive image and visitor information in the centre of the town

Town boundary signage should be simple and low key with the town centre expressing a clear sense of arrival that is visually strong and makes a positive and confident statement.



Banners adding sense of place



Banners as gateway features

## 5.7 Development Proposals for the Town Centre

### *Scale and massing*

- The scale and massing of development should be composed to maintain and strengthen the prevailing order, hierarchy and rhythm of the traditional streetscape.
- Building heights should respect the existing eaves and ridge heights of adjacent buildings, unless the location is appropriate for the creation of a landmark building or strengthening a key public space node through a taller corner building or feature elevation.

### *Materials and detailing*

- The use of quality building materials reflecting the local vernacular will be encouraged.
- Ensure consistent high quality paving materials, street tree planting, street furniture and attention to detail.
- Quality of design is a material consideration in planning and the selection and approval of materials is a key element in securing design quality. Material palettes and samples should be discussed at the earliest stage with planning officers.
- Design detailing of windows, entrances, and roof profiles and eaves all impact significantly on building quality and should be discussed early in the design process with planning officers.

### *Elevations*

- A building's principal public façade should include a clear, legible main entrance and include windows/ fenestration that ensure the main public facade creates opportunities for the overlooking of public space and good surveillance of street activity.
- Blank featureless elevations and facades lacking windows that are visible from the public realm should not be permitted.
- Glazed openings, side and bay windows (set back from the public footpath) will be encouraged where appropriate to the surrounding streetscape context, since these offer good levels of passive surveillance.
- The composition of street frontage elevations should be subdivided, through setbacks or vertical design elements, to continue the predominant rhythm of narrow fronted traditional high street plots – this should be done regardless of the type of use being accommodated and does not necessarily prevent larger internal floor spaces.

### *Energy Efficiency*

- All development applications shall indicate how the development addresses environmental performance (climate change/ energy efficiency/ material recycling/ waste management) and accords with planning policy and guidance.
- Hard surfaces must address Sustainable Urban Drainage and provide porous surfaces and reduce surface water flow into public sewers in accord with current guidelines and best practice (Dependant on individual applications)



Examples of poor quality street paving and planters in the town centre requiring improvement

**OLDE MARKET INN**

*Established 1783*

# 6

# Public Realm Guidance

## 6.1 Introduction

Quality of public realm is an important element in defining quality of place. This section of the report provides guidance on how to improve the quality of the public realm through the establishment of a limited range of high quality materials, furniture and lighting. During the design process, it is important to consider the appropriateness of the elements for the specific area, the role it is intended to fulfil and the future maintenance requirement. This section is divided into:

1. General guidance for application of elements
2. Surfacing details
3. Planting guidelines
4. Street furniture guidelines
5. Signage
6. Lighting



Attractive public realm space

## 6.2 Guidance for the Application of Elements

The following general guidelines are proposed for the location of street furniture and other Design Elements in order to achieve easy, uncluttered pedestrian movement, set appropriate quality standards and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

### Signage

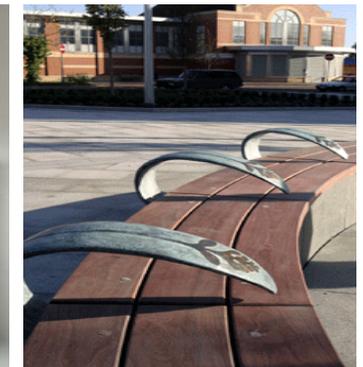
Improved signage and a distinctive new town centre sign or information board would assist in orienting visitors and allow the community, local traders and business to promote local events and interests.

### Locally Distinctive Street Furniture

The central core of Whitburn will focus on the Cross. Street furniture should be carefully selected and sited to minimise clutter but also to strengthen character and distinctiveness and increase dwell time. Further dialogue with the local community on street furniture should form part of the design process. Consideration of a combination of large and small



Example of town centre board and orientation signage



New street seating can help dwell time

## 6.3 Surfacing Guidelines

scale paving units should be used to provide contrast and interest. Surfacing materials should be durable and appropriate and tie in with the existing material palette.

### High Quality

Use a combination of high quality natural stone and concrete products in large areas of high footfall, where cost prohibits the use of all natural stone e.g. principal shopping streets.

- Use of larger scale paving units, a minimum of 400x400mm for the majority of the pedestrianised civic space. The colour of the units should be selected to compliment the building materials. Natural stone offers best long term value and quality appearance but a concrete product with a high natural aggregate content would also be appropriate.
- Opportunity for using some natural stone for setting areas/ contrast strips and detail areas. These are appropriate within high quality seating areas or to

provide a link between other areas of natural stone in civic spaces.

- Retain all existing traditional whin and granite kerbs where possible. New kerbs should typically be a proprietary concrete product containing natural stone aggregate.

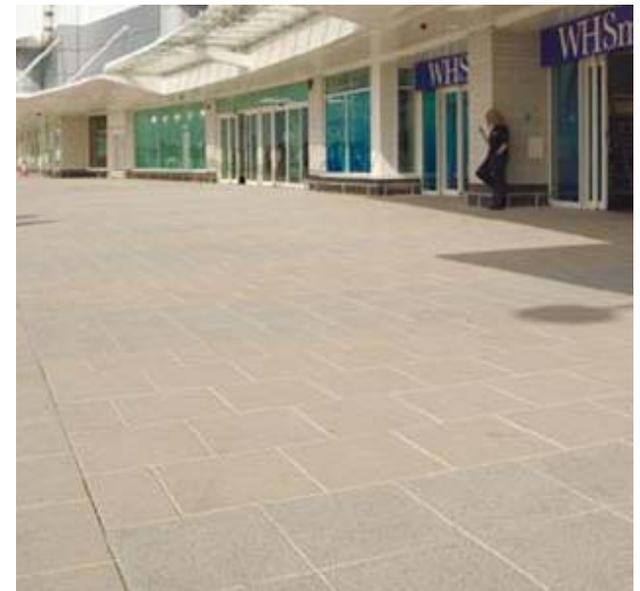
**Typical location:** New civic space

### Moderate Quality

Use of predominantly high quality concrete products in areas adjacent to new development where cost or functional use prohibits the use of natural stone.

- Use of flexible bound surface for the majority of the footways.
- Use of small paving units to add interest and detail to at edges and seating areas.

**Typical location:** Town centre core



Examples of enhanced street paving

## 6.4 Planting Guidelines

Planting is a useful element for the creation of attractive and sheltered places, and for spatial definition. Existing street trees in good condition should be retained, and poorer quality specimens should be considered for removal. Additional planting should be provided to compliment the existing tree stock.

Different planting is appropriate for different areas within the town centre. The following provides general guidance:

### Planting within the town centre core

- Good quality street trees should be used with a clear stem to add character but retain views
- Limited shrub planting should be used as this may screen views. Limited use of ground cover planting should be used and is more appropriate

### Planting adjacent to footpaths

- Trees with a clear stem should be used to retain views
- Use of large shrubs not appropriate, as these block views and restrict natural surveillance. Ground cover planting to retain views is more appropriate

### Planting specification

New planting should be urban and ornamental in form. Typical guidelines include:

#### Street trees

New street trees should be columnar in form with a maximum mature canopy width of 5m and a minimum clear stem of 2.2m. These should be planted within defined town centre core avenues or in single species groups for impact. Use only root balled or container

grown specimens and plant at a minimum of 18-20cm girth size.

Some typical species are: *Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata', *Acer campestre* 'Streetwise' or *Acer Campestre* 'Emerald Green'



Current planter in the town centre

## 6.5 Furniture Guidelines

A consistent suite of street furniture should be utilised within the town centre core to improve visual appearance and sense of quality, and should be selected to combine comfort and quality with robustness and functionality.

Care should be taken in locating of the street furniture to prevent creating clutter and impeded accessibility within the streetscape. Critically seating should offer comfort, low maintenance and be coordinated with other elements

### Application of street furniture

#### Town centre core

Street furniture elements should be selected for both quality of appearance and robustness and may include stainless or galvanised steel, stone and timber.

### Furniture Specification

Typical guidelines for furniture provision within the town centre core include:



Quality street furniture

- Benches with arm-rests and backs for comfort. A combined stainless steel/ hardwood is appropriate for comfort and durability
- Selection of litter bins should be undertaken in consultation with West Lothian Council's Operational Services. Bins without lids are not appropriate within the town centre environment.



Image of new seating area

### Cycle Provision

Criteria for designing cycle networks include access, safety, continuity, directness and comfort. They should be fit for purpose, well lit and DDA compliant. The provision of well designed cycle parking facilities will encourage their use by cyclists.

Cycling provisions should also include cycle routes that connect the Town Centre to the Polkemmet / Heartlands location.

There are many types of cycle parking fixtures available, though not all meet the following requirements:

#### Security

The frame and if possible both wheels should be able to lock to the parking fixture. For short term use, the parking area should be in clear view of passers by with natural surveillance. Cycle racks that only support a cycle by the front wheel are not satisfactory.

#### Convenience

Facilities should be sited as near as possible to user destinations e.g. near entrances of shops, the library, in car parks at closest point to the centre, and other locations such as schools or places of employment. This is particularly important for short term use.



Secure cycle rack and good cycle links are important

## 6.6 Signage

Consider opportunities for a bespoke signage family consisting of visitor information signs, interpretation and way-finding. These could be used at key arrival points and civic spaces. Signage must be considerably positioned within the streetscape to balance effective visibility of signs with the need to maintain good levels of visual connection (few obstructions) along pathways. It should avoid any street clutter, not be visually inappropriate nor reduce the quality of the street scene. They should be located:

- A sensible distance from tree foliage,
- At a sensible height which takes account of wheelchair users eye level,
- In well-lit areas, not overshadowed by nearby buildings,
- To allow for a reasonable range of viewing distances
- To avoid forming clusters of various types of street furniture
- In some cases, combining a pedestrian sign with a streetlight



Example of poor quality signage in the town centre

## 6.7 Lighting

Lighting can contribute to enhancing the appearance of an area after dark and making residents and street users feel secure. Development should include a high quality lighting scheme at the crossroads to improve the sense of arrival to the town centre. The lighting should be appropriate to the context and planned as an integral part of the new civic space, and in conjunction with the location and anticipated growth of planting. Consideration should be given to attaching lighting units to buildings where possible within the town centre to reduce clutter at street level.



Lanark A705  
+  
Old Calder B705      Newburgh B1269  
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# Action Plan

# 7

The Public Realm Design Guide has been developed to provide a clear way forward in the development and implementation of a series of projects to improve Whitburn town centre. The Action Plan seeks to balance aspiration and pragmatism and offer a 'shopping-list' of potential projects capable of contributing to place quality. The Action Plan sets out the low, medium and high priority projects that will work towards achieving the vision and objects of the Town Centre Design Guide. Project outcomes are linked to the objectives as set out in earlier sections. Overall the Action Plan has been developed to reflect local ambitions set in the preceding sections of this report and from feedback from community consultations. The list addresses a breadth of projects each of which could make a contribution but it is not intended that the list is definitive (nor that all projects require completion) rather it offers a framework to provide a mechanism for further design development and prioritisation.



Buildings in the centre can express a sense of welcome



Display beds need to create an impact

Ref No.	Potential Project	Project Description	Partners	Provisional Budget	Priority	Project Outcome
WHIT 01	Creating quality 'town square' civic space – Gap Site	Create a quality central space and defined town centre core focused on the crossroads providing new surfacing, seating, town notice board with visitor information with potential for built development on the site	WLC, TCMG / other stakeholders / community groups	£230,000	High	Enhance quality of environment and build upon town distinctiveness
WHIT 02	Streetscape improvements to town centre including Improving civic spaces adjacent to the cross space	Create secondary high quality public realm with good seating and floral displays focussed on the Cross.	WLC, TCMG / other stakeholders / community groups	£120,000	Medium /High	Enhance quality of environment and create a central core of higher quality and more usable public realm
WHIT 03	Shop front scheme	Improve shop fronts by offering a grant support for the cost of Shopfront Upgrading	WLC / Retailers	£20,000 Long term programme	High	Enhance quality of environment
WHIT 04	Town Centre wide furniture strategy	Cordination of street furniture elements such as litter bins, hanging baskets, seating	WLC in consultation with TCMG / other stakeholders / community groups	£20,000	Medium	Improved sense of place and distinctiveness
WHIT 05	Undertake Public Realm cleansing to improve image	Cleaning of public realm spaces. Removal of litter, graffiti, chewing gum, etc.	WLC	£5,000 - £10,000	High	Raise quality of environment and improve image
WHIT 06	Town centre wide signage strategy	Introduction of notice boards/information points. Signage to car parks, local attractions and services	WLC in consultation with TCMG / other stakeholders / community groups	£20,000	High	Better signage to local attractions and services. Invite visitors and through traffic to shop and use facilities

WHIT 07	Support new Town Centre Management Group	Provide town centre management advice and support to facilitate improved retail confidence and town centre appeal.	WLC	In-kind resources	High	Help community interests promote Whitburn and encourage partnership working between groups
WHIT 08	Develop within the civic space location for Christmas tree / carol services / Christmas light event	See Civic Space WHIT 01	WLC in consultation with TCMG / other stakeholders / community groups	Included above	Medium – High	Create a focus for any local seasonal event
WHIT 09	Town Centre security of shops	Seek to reduce the extensive use of external security roller shutters	TCMG/Retailers	Individual shop owners /tenants	Medium	Promote the vitality of the town and help to support longer dwell time and footfall
WHIT 10	Community self-help 'hit – list projects	Encourage through TCMG a series of minor 'direct action projects that address specific local issues and improvements.	TCMG/WLC	In-kind resources	Medium	Promote the vitality of the town, support engagement and help to support longer dwell time and place quality.

**TCMG:** Town Centre Management Group / **WLC:** West Lothian Council