

# West Lothian Local Development Plan Main Issues Questionnaire

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West Lothian  
Council

The council has commenced preparation of its first *Local Development Plan* (LDP). The LDP will replace the *West Lothian Local Plan* and will set out a local interpretation of the requirements of the *Strategic Development Plan* (SESplan) and national guidance. The LDP is a land use plan that identifies site specific development opportunities, sets out the council's key development priorities and provides the policy context for the consideration of applications for planning permission.

The current *West Lothian Local Plan* was adopted by the council in January 2009 is available to view on the council's website at <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/WLLP>

The *Main Issues Report* (MIR) for the West Lothian LDP is the first key stage in the preparation of the LDP and we are seeking your views on this. All documentation for the MIR can be viewed at <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/MIR>

Full details on the timetable and stages for preparing the LDP are set out in the Development Plan Scheme 6 which is also available online: <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2725/Development-Plan-Scheme>

A questionnaire to accompany the MIR is set out below and we would be happy if you would complete and return to us.

There are 98 questions that accompany the *Main Issues Report*. You do not have to respond to all of the questions set out only those which you feel are of particular relevance to you. Completed questionnaires should be returned to us by e-mail to [wlldp@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:wlldp@westlothian.gov.uk) by no later than **5pm on Friday, 17 October 2014**.

Alternatively, please download a copy of the form and send it to us at: Development Planning, West Lothian Council, County Buildings, High Street, Linlithgow, EH49 7EZ (postal address only).

You can keep up to date on the LDP by subscribing to our LDP e-newsletter. If you have not already subscribed, you can do so by going to the following link and following the relevant instructions:

<https://newsletters.westlothian.gov.uk/eNewsletterPro/optin/optinealert.htm>

Name	<input type="text" value="██████████"/> Secretary, Friends of the Pentlands	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Mr <input type="radio"/> Mrs <input type="radio"/> Miss <input type="radio"/> Ms (please tick as appropriate)
Organisation (where applicable)	Friends of the Pentlands is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation	
Postal address	<input type="text" value="██████████"/>	
Postcode	<input type="text" value="██████████"/>	
E-mail	<input type="text" value="██████████"/>	
Telephone	<input type="text" value="██████████"/>	

Please note that any comments you make will be open to public scrutiny, but we will keep your contact details private and confidential and will only use your name or business name.

## By filling in this questionnaire you are helping to shape the future of West Lothian

It would also be helpful if you would complete the *Equal Opportunities Questionnaire*, set out at the end of this document.

### Local Development Plan Vision Statement

*By 2024 West Lothian's population will have grown and an improved employment position within a more diversified local economy will have been established. It will be better connected by road and public transport and will have a greater choice of housing and an appropriate range of education, community, health, retail, recreation and leisure facilities and a network of green spaces to meet the needs of its growing population. Development will take place in a sustainable way that protects and improves the area's built and natural heritage assets, meets the challenges of climate change and renewable energy and helps regenerate deprived areas and improves the quality of life for people living in West Lothian.*

#### Question 1

Do you agree with the *vision for the LDP*, or, are there other aspects that should be considered?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

*Please note that Friends of the Pentlands have a limited remit in respect of planning matters and consequently have restricted comments to parts of the MIR relating to issues 6 & 7.*

#### Question 2

Do you have an alternative vision, and if so, what is it?

The aims of the *Main Issues Report* and Associated Main Issues are set out in pages 13 of the MIR.

#### Question 3

Do you agree with the proposed 'Aims' of the LDP? If not, why not?

#### Question 4

Do you have an alternatives, and if so, what are they?

**Main Issue 6: The Natural and Historic Environment (paragraphs 3.172 – 3.213)**

How can planning policy promote sustainable patterns of development to protect our valued landscapes, built and cultural heritage and create a green network across West Lothian?

**Preferred approach**

The council's 'Preferred' approach to the West Lothian natural environment is to direct development to appropriate brownfield sites within settlements in the first instance but also to bring forward the release of greenfield sites in sustainable locations where there are no alternatives in order to meet strategic requirements. When considering greenfield release the council will have regard to the LLDR and other relevant factors, particularly sustainability but also issues of townscape and settlement coalescence. This may allow for some release of new development sites on the edge of settlements, thereby maximising use of existing infrastructure, whilst protecting visual amenity and the biodiversity value of the countryside and preventing coalescence of settlements.

In some instances it may be necessary to extend countryside and landscape designations to protect the purposes for which the land was designated be it landscape value, landscape character and landscape enhancement, buffers to coalescence of settlements, protection of prime quality agricultural land and historic gardens and designed landscapes in West Lothian.

**Alternative approach**

The 'Alternative' approach to the West Lothian natural environment and landscapes is to focus less on brownfield land and allow parts of designated areas to be released for housing or employment development.

**Question 48**

Do you agree with the 'Preferred' approach to the natural environment in West Lothian?

If not, why not?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

*Whilst we agree with the general thrust of the preferred approach there is one matter that requires further clarification. It appears from the LLDR that a small section of land to the north east, south of the A70, at Little Vantage which was originally in the AGLV has been excluded from the cSLA. If this is correct we do not agree with this proposal.*

**Question 49**

Do you agree with the 'Alternative' approach to the natural environment in West Lothian?

If not, why not?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

*We prefer development of brown field sites in preference to releasing land in designated areas, especially green belt.*

**Question 50**

Do you have an alternative approach?

What is it and how would you make it work?

YES  NO  Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

Landscape approach and designation (*paragraphs 3.172 - 3.170*)

**Preferred approach**

The council's 'Preferred' approach to landscape designations is to reduce the number of landscape designations in order to reflect the findings of the Local Landscape Designation Review and identify candidate Special Landscape Areas (cSLA). Special Landscape Areas will replace AGLVs and Areas of Special Landscape Control. This approach is in accord with best practice and guidance prepared by Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Government.

**Alternative approach**

The council's 'Alternative' approach to landscape designations is to continue with the current approach, relying on existing policies and designations. This would not achieve the goal of updating and simplifying landscape designations in accordance with current best practice and national guidance.

**Question 51**

Do you agree with the 'Preferred' approach to landscape designations in West Lothian?

If not, why not?

YES  NO  Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

*Please see comments under question 48 which we also think apply to this question.*

**Question 52**

Do you agree with the 'Alternative' approach to landscape designations in West Lothian?

If not, why not?

YES  NO  Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

**Question 53**

Do you have an alternative approach?

What is it and how would you make it work?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

Development in the countryside (*paragraphs 3.180 – 3.181*)

**Preferred approach**

The council's 'Preferred' approach to housing development in the countryside is to continue to support development in appropriate circumstances for example, sensitive redevelopment of steadings; limited enabling development to secure restoration of historic buildings or structures; and replacement of houses in a habitable condition. Existing Supplementary Guidance will be updated to clarify the circumstances in which development will be permitted, and the design standards expected. The current flexibility in policies on business and tourism development in the countryside will be maintained and it is proposed to carry forward the existing policy on 'very low density rural housing in the countryside' otherwise known as 'lowland crofting' but only in the west of West Lothian.

**Alternative approach 1**

The council's first 'Alternative' approach to housing development in the countryside is to allow relaxations to current policies, potentially by permitting more redevelopment of rural brownfield land for housing. However, this approach is inherently non-sustainable as it would result in development which is remote from services and could lead to a proliferation of undesirable, sporadic development in the countryside.

**Alternative approach 2**

The council's second 'Alternative' approach to housing development in the countryside is not to maintain the current policy approach. This would include a review of the current 'lowland crofting' policy.

**Question 54**

Is the 'Preferred' approach to housing development in the countryside appropriate?

If not, why not?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

**Question 58**

Do you agree with the 'Alternative' approach to business, tourism and recreational uses in the countryside?  
If not, why not?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

**Question 59**

Do you have an alternative approach?  
What is it and how would you make it work?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

Green Networks, and extension to Pentland Hills Regional Park (paragraphs 3.183 – 3.189)

**Preferred approach**

The council's 'Preferred' approach to the green network is to define the part of CSGN in West Lothian as a network of multi-functional green corridors focussing on the existing network. This would build on the existing initiatives extending the network into the rural hinterland to connect with adjacent local authorities existing and emerging networks, and penetrating into urban areas, linking with the council's Open Space Strategy and Core Paths Plan.

**Alternative approach**

The council's 'Alternative' approach to the green network is to maintain the existing green spaces in their present form, with a clear urban fringe focus. This would continue to prioritise resources closest to the places people live and work, but would fail to capture the wider focus of the CSGN to link existing and new green spaces into wider multi-functional green networks.

**Question 60**

Do you agree with the 'Preferred' approach to the green network in West Lothian?  
If not, why not?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

**Question 65**

What are your views on the proposed extension to the Pentland Hills Regional Park in West Lothian?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

*Yes - in principle.*

*The Friends of the Pentlands has always had, as one of its longer term objectives, the promoting of the extension of the Regional Park in order that it may cover the whole area of its interests. We always envisaged this would involve the Ranger Service (and Voluntary Ranger Service) assisting with the conservation and protection of the land outside of the existing Park. In particular we would not wish to see the landscape in the South West of the hills be changed so we believe the existing planning regulation enforced by the three local authorities for the area incorporated by the proposed extension should continue as it is. Many pertinent issues would arise as a consequence of an extended Park and we believe that assured funding and resourcing as essential pre-requisites for the success of such a proposal.*

Biodiversity and Geodiversity (paragraphs 3.190 – 3.197)

**Preferred approach**

The council's 'Preferred' approach to biodiversity and geodiversity sites is to review and update the existing list of locally designated sites (Wildlife Sites and Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites RIGS) and to protect and promote improvements to them through Supplementary Guidance where appropriate. Policy protection for carbon-rich soils will be reinforced.

**Alternative approach**

The council's 'Alternative' approach to biodiversity and geodiversity sites would be not to promote Supplementary Guidance, but simply to map local sites within the LDP as at present. Whilst this might give the sites more prominence within the LDP, the process would be less functional.

**Question 66**

Do you have any general or specific issues with the proposed list of Local Biodiversity Sites and Local Geodiversity Sites?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?

**Question 67**

Do you agree with the 'Preferred' approach to Biodiversity and Geodiversity in West Lothian?

If not, why not?

YES     NO     Don't know

Do you have any additional comments?