



**West Lothian
Council**

Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)

2024/25 - 2028/29

November 2023

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1. Executive Summary

West Lothian Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) identifies priorities for investment over a 5-year period from 2024/25 – 2028/29.

The West Lothian Affordable Housing Programme to 2027/28 includes sites for the development of a minimum of 1,621 homes, including 383 additional council homes and 1,238 homes delivered by Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners.

In addition to the current programmes, a number of potential development opportunities have been identified should additional funding from the Scottish Government be made available over the next five years.

2. Background

Local Authorities are required to produce a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) to supplement their Local Housing Strategy. The purpose of the SHIP is to set out how the investment in affordable housing will be directed over a five-year period, in this case, 2024/25–2028/29. This SHIP has been developed in line with revised guidance issued by the Scottish Government.

The SHIP informs the Local Development Plan (LDP) through identifying sites that can be developed for affordable housing. It reinforces the role of the local authority as the strategic housing authority and informs Scottish Government investment decisions;

West Lothian Council's SHIP sets out the affordable housing investment priorities for the area as identified in the new Local Housing Strategy 2023/24 to 2027/28. It demonstrates how these investment priorities will be delivered and the resources required. The SHIP sets out the national and local context by identifying the council's investment priorities; the approach being taken to the delivery of these priorities; outlines potential risks and constraints; and how these can be mitigated.

Strategic Context

A new West Lothian Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023/24 - 2027/28 was approved at Council Executive in June 2023. A target of 1,580 affordable homes was set with a further target for private homes to be considered in the preparation of the new Local Development Plan over the next three years. Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 provides the national strategic context to West Lothian's SHIP.

The Need for Affordable Housing in West Lothian

There is an identified need for quality affordable housing in West Lothian.

- As at August 2023 there were 11,013 applicants on the Common Housing Register for social rented housing. Some RSLs operating in West Lothian also hold their own waiting lists.
- Homeless presentations have reduced during 2023 but there continues to be high demand for temporary accommodation including use of bed and breakfast accommodation to provide emergency accommodation for homeless households.
- The council submitted the updated Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to Scottish Government in June 2023 and work continues on the implementation of the actions identified.

A need for new accommodation has been identified specifically for young people requiring housing support. A site has now been selected and the project is progressing well.

- The council approved a new Housing Allocations Policy in March 2021.

A new Housing Need and Demand Assessment was completed in April 2022 and was approved as robust and credible by the Scottish Government Centre for Housing Market Analysis in July 2022. The six South East Scotland Councils worked collaboratively on this through the South East Scotland Housing Forum. The HNDA3 Core Project Team is accountable to the Regional Housing Board of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal.

Update on West Lothian Local Development Plan

It is West Lothian Council's intention to replace the existing West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP 1), which was adopted in September 2018 with a new plan, LDP 2. This will set out how West Lothian could grow over a ten-year period.

The new plan will set out planning policies and policies and proposals for the use and development of land within West Lothian for a ten-year period starting from when it is adopted, intended to be during 2026. The council began the preliminary preparation of LDP 2 in 2022, all within the context of a new regulatory regime introduced by The Planning (Scotland) 2019 Act which makes substantive changes to the process for preparing development plans in Scotland and with the overarching aim of making them more effective, with greater community involvement and more focus on delivery.

The Scottish Government has reinforced key elements of the updated planning regime by bringing regulations into force on 19 May 2023. The regulations are supported by new detailed guidance setting out ministerial expectations of the new -style LDPs. Three overarching aims for LDPs have been identified, that they fully require to be place-based, people-centred and delivery focused.

The most recent iteration of the council's Development Plan Scheme (DPS No.15) anticipates the first significant stage of the LDP, the Evidence Report being prepared for submission in the early part of 2024.

West Lothian Local Development Plan 2 Timetable

Plan Preparation Stage	Anticipated Date
Early Engagement	Q1 2023 to Q4 2023
Council approval of the Evidence Report and submission to Scottish Ministers	Q1 2024
Gatecheck	Q2 2024
Call for ideas	Q3 2024
Council approval and publication of the Proposed Plan	Q2 2025
Proposed Plan Consultation period	Q2 2025
Submission of Proposed Plan (and a Modification Report if necessary) to Scottish Ministers for examination	Q2 2026
Examination	Q4 2025 to Q1 2026
Adoption	Q2 2026

(The timescale may have to be adjusted during the course of 2023 in response to a range of external factors, some of which are beyond the control of the council.)

The policies and proposals of the LDP will be focused on places and locations, working with the context provided by National Planning Framework (NPF4) adopted in February 2023. The National Planning Framework is authored by Scottish Government and sets out long-term spatial strategy for the development of Scotland as a whole and identifies what Scottish Ministers consider to be development priorities. NPF4 will have a significant bearing on how the council undertakes preparation of the next LDP, in particular how it quantifies future housing requirements.

NPF4 Policy 16 - Quality Homes – sets out a distinct, new approach to planning for new homes that focuses on delivering outcomes and more quality homes that meet diverse needs. The policy also promotes and reinforces a plan-led approach.

LDPs are expected to identify a Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) for the area they cover. This is to meet the duty for a housing target and to represent how much land is required. To promote an ambitious and plan-led approach, the LHLR is expected to exceed the 10 year Minimum All -Tenure Land Requirement (MATHLR). In West Lothian, this has been identified as 985 houses per annum.

3. Progress since the last SHIP

New Council Housing

Since the last SHIP, the sites noted below have been completed.

Site	Total Number of Units	Date of Site Completion
Livingston, Eagle Brae	29	March 2023
Livingston, Deans South	29	December 2022
Bathgate, Hopetoun Street	4	April 2023
West Calder, Mossend	69	May 2023
Pumpherstoun, Cawburn Road	16	June 2023
Livingston, Murieston, Wellhead	42	June 2023
Total	189	

RSL Housing

Since the last SHIP, RSLs have completed the following sites: Almondvale, Livingston, Hunter Road, Livingston, sites at Calderwood for Homegroup and Places for People, Wellhead, Livingston, Blackness Road, Linlithgow and Craigginn Terrace, Blackridge.

The sites below are currently under construction

Site	RSL	Total Number of Units	Est. Comp.
Winchburgh BB	Wheatley Homes East	81	2025
East Calder, Raw Holdings	Wheatley Homes East	63	2024
East Calder, Raw Holdings	Wheatley Homes East	75	2024
Livingston, Deans phase 1B	Wheatley Homes East	46	2025
Calderwood	Places for People	57	2025
Livingston, Gregory Road	Places for People	53	2024
Winchburgh 02A	Homegroup	55	2024

Site	RSL	Total Number of Units	Est. Comp.
Longridge, Fauldhouse Rd	Cairn Housing Association	52	2024
Livingston, Crusader Rise	ARK Housing Association	20	2024
Uphall Station Village	Cairn Housing Association	20	2024
Total		522	

a) Homes for West Lothian Partnership

Homes for West Lothian Partnership has been set up to engage with RSLs operating in West Lothian. The purpose of this is to increase the supply of affordable housing. The number of RSLs seeking to develop housing in West Lothian has increased in recent years. RSLs that have agreed to be involved in the Partnership are;

- Ark Housing Association
- Wheatley Homes East
- Places for People and Castle Rock /Edinvar
- West Lothian Development Alliance Almond Housing Association
- Horizon Housing Association,
- Bield Housing and Care
- Hanover Housing Association
- Link Group
- Cairn Housing Association
- Trust Housing Association
- Homegroup

There is also representation from More Homes Division at the Scottish Government which encourages regular updates on programmes and policy to be discussed. Several meetings have taken place in 2023 and discussions are ongoing with RSLs so that more affordable housing development in West Lothian can be agreed and supported. There has been ongoing discussion about the development of a West Lothian Standard for housing.

b) Shared Equity Programmes

Previously, many people were assisted through the Open Market Shared Equity Programme (OMSE). In 2019, Scottish Government altered the criteria by changing the arrangements for OMSE purchasers in West Lothian. There were 9 homes purchased through the OMSE during 2022/23.

c) Other Tenures

RSLs have given greater consideration to Mid Market Rent in West Lothian. Wheatley Homes East, Places for People and Link Group have identified sites for 344 units for mid market rent. Further sites where the landlord is to be confirmed could provide a further 42 units for mid market rent.

d) Further Joint Working

Over a 10-year period from 2023 to 2033, the proposal will be to deliver a minimum of 1,621 affordable homes. The council and RSL partners, through Homes for West Lothian Partnership will contribute to the delivery of this scale of housing.

The following projects have been identified as a priority;

- Deans South, Livingston – A scheme for comprehensive redevelopment is currently under development. The sale of land by WLC to Springfield Properties PLC was concluded in May 2021. Springfield PLC are developing the site and this will deliver 127 homes for social rent in partnership with Wheatley Homes East.
- Core Development Areas. Progress is being made on the Core Development Areas (CDAs) at Winchburgh, Calderwood, Developers have approached RSLs and WLC to discuss opportunities for development in the CDAs. In the current SHIP there are 6 new sites at Winchburgh being proposed and two new sites at Calderwood. These sites could deliver a minimum of 329 homes.
- Places for People/Castle Rock Edinvar have completed 115 homes at Calderwood.
- Homegroup have completed 69 units at Calderwood
- City Deal – Two new secondary schools at Winchburgh have been completed. Homegroup and Wheatley Homes East are developing large sites there.
- A major development of 196 homes at Heartlands, Whitburn is being proposed by Link Group.

4. Prioritising the SHIP programme

There are three strands of future affordable housing provision:

- The council's new build programme,
- RSL programme funded by the Scottish Government
- The council's Affordable Housing Policy.

Priorities for Funding

The Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 confirmed priorities for affordable housing investment. These are noted below.

Area Priority for Investment
Priority 1: Broxburn, East Livingston & East Calder, Linlithgow, Livingston North, Livingston South, Uphall and Winchburgh
Priority 2: Armadale & Blackridge, Bathgate, Whitburn & Blackburn.
Priority 3: Fauldhouse & Breich Valley.

The priorities reflect the approach to housing development set out in the West Lothian Local Development Plan, specifically policy HOU4. Funding allocations will be based on best value principles.

The priority for the SHIP programme is to develop those sites that already have a funding commitment. The council will continue to give priority to sites in West Lothian in high demand areas and Core Development Areas.

The redevelopment of Deans South, Livingston is a key priority over the next five years. A site for 29 homes was completed in March 2023. Wheatley Homes East commenced development of their first phase of new homes in Summer 2023. The remainder of the Deans South estate has been prioritised for investment so that the site can be fully developed.

4.1 Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Programme

RSL's in West Lothian have identified sites for homes for development over the period 2024/25 -2028/29. The sites are noted at table 1.

The priority has been determined on the basis of location and the sites being capable of development over the short term. Further consideration will be given to sites that can be brought into the programme in the longer term.

The majority of RSL sites are in either Priority 1 or Priority 2 areas. The SHIP has been developed to allow flexibility and ensures that sites can come forward should additional resources become available.

Table 1

RSL	Site	24/25	24/25	25/26	25/26	26/27	26/27	27/28	27/28	28/29	28/29
		Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE
Almond HA	Mill Centre Blackburn Phase 1	20									
Almond HA	Glendevon Park Winchburgh					16					
Almond HA	Craigshill Regeneration, Livingston			24		25				50	
Almond HA	Community Centre & Petrol Station, Blackburn			28							
Link Group	Bangour Village	97									
Link Group	Heartlands, Whitburn	196									
Link Group	Sydney Street, Livingston	49									
Link Group	Raw Holdings, East Calder	42	33								
Link Group	Alderstone Road, Livingston	22									
Sub Total	602	426	33	52		41				50	

RSL	Site	24/25	24/25	25/26	25/26	26/27	26/27	27/28	27/28	28/29	28/29
		Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE
Wheatley Homes East	Raw Holdings, East Calder	38	25								
Wheatley Homes East	Winchburgh O Phase 2			35	20						
Wheatley Homes East	Winchburgh Plot P3	40	36								
Wheatley Homes East	Winchburgh BB	52	29								
Wheatley Homes East	Gavieside							125		110	50
Wheatley Homes East	Preston Farm, Linlithgow	15									
Wheatley Homes East	Linkston Road, Bathgate					62					
Wheatley Homes East	Sibbald's Brae, Bathgate	29									
Wheatley Homes East	Charlesfield Road, Livingston	25	11								
Wheatley Homes East	Deans South Phase 1A, Livingston	6									
Wheatley Homes East	Deans South Phase 1B, Livingston	46									
Wheatley Homes East	Deans South Phase 2, Livingston	38									
Wheatley Homes East	Deans South Phase 3A, Livingston	12									
Sub Total		301	101	35	20	62		125		110	50

RSL	Site	24/25	24/25	25/26	25/26	26/27	26/27	27/28	27/28	28/29	28/29
		Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE
Wheatley Homes East	Deans South Phase 3B, Livingston	25									
Homegroup	Winchburgh DD-EE	36									
Homegroup	Winchburgh CC-FF	19									
Homegroup	Winchburgh O2A	55									
Castle Rock Edinvar	Valley Park, Calderwood	15									
Castle Rock Edinvar	Standhill North, Armadale	57									
Places for People	Standhill North, Armadale		37								
Castle Rock Edinvar	Whitburn Road, Bathgate	16									
Places for People	Whitburn Road, Bathgate		9								
Sub Total	269	223	46								

RSL	Site	24/25	24/25	25/26	25/26	26/27	26/27	27/28	27/28	28/29	28/29
		Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE
Castle Rock Edinvar	Calderwood Town Centre	42									
Places for People	Calderwood Town Centre		12								
Castle Rock Edinvar	Charlesfield Lane, Livingston			30							
Places for People	Charlesfield Lane, Livingston				15						
Castle Rock Edinvar	Wilkieston	12									
Castle Rock Edinvar	Lower Bathville, Armadale			60							
Places for People	Lower Bathville, Armadale				30						
Sub Total	201	54	12	90	45						

RSL	Site	24/25	24/25	25/26	25/26	26/27	26/27	27/28	27/28	28/29	28/29
		Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE
Castle Rock Edinvar	Wester Inch			7							
Places for People	Wester Inch				15						
Castle Rock Edinvar	Winchburgh Q	28									
Places for People	Winchburgh Q		16								
Cairn Housing Association	Fauldhouse Road, Longridge	52									
Cairn Housing Association	Uphall Station Village, Pumpherston	20									
Sub Total	138	100	16	7	15						
Total	2,014										

4.2 West Lothian Council Future Sites

The sites in table 2 are identified for potential future development by WLC.

Table 2

Site	Number of Units	Tenure	Timescale for Approval
Livingston, Houston Road	30	Social Rent	2024/25
Livingston, Simpson Parkway	32	Social Rent	2024/25
Livingston, Almondvale Cres	36	Social Rent	2023/24
West Calder, Mossend, site K	19	Social Rent	2024/25
Total	117		

4.3 Other Sites

A number of other sites in table 3 below have been included in the programme. The housing provider for these homes will be confirmed in due course.

Table 3

Site	Number of Units	Tenure	Timescale for Approval
Livingston, Trim Track	50	Social Rent	2027/28
Linlithgow, Clarendon Farm	30	Social Rent	2028/29
Livingston, Beatlie School site	30	Social Rent	2028/29
Livingston, Ettrick Drive	12	Social Rent	2028/29
Bathgate, Guildiehaugh Phase 1	65	Social Rent	2028/29
Whitburn, Hen's Nest Road	26	Social Rent	2028/29
Livingston, Cedarbank	41	Social Rent	2028/29
Stoneyburn, Cannop Crescent	32	Social Rent/MMR	2024/25
Winchburgh, Site HH	28	Social Rent/MMR	2025/26
Bangour Village	104	Social Rent/MMR	2026/27
Total	418		

4.4 Open Market Acquisitions

There were 34 open market purchases in 2022/23 by WLC. It is proposed that there will be a total of 58 homes purchased from the open market to increase affordable housing supply in West Lothian. West Lothian Council have proposals for 38 open market purchases and Almond Housing Association have proposals for 20 Open Market purchases in the SHIP period.

4.5 Affordable Housing Supply Programme in West Lothian

The Scottish Government has confirmed the Resource Planning Assumptions (RPAs) on grant availability for the first two years of the SHIP with the remaining three years to be assumed as the same as year two. The RPAs are detailed in table 4 below.

Table 4: Resource Planning Assumptions

Year	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
RPA	£15.430m	£15.685m	£15.685m	£15.685m	£15.685m	£93.546m

The Scottish Government has recommended that the SHIP should include substantial over provision (at least 25%) to allow for slippage and or additional capacity. This will ensure the Council and partners can spend the base allocation and allow advantage to be taken of any additional funding should it become available.

5. The Economic Climate

The housing market has shown signs of improvement in recent years. Many of the sites that were stalled are now starting to pick up with development continuing on a number of sites, particularly in the Core Development Areas. There were 751 private sector completions in 2022/23 which is high given the issues with Covid-19.

According to the Registers of Scotland, the median house price in West Lothian in June 2022 was £187,625. In June 2023 this was £227,000. In Scotland the median price in June 2022 was £185,000 and in June 2023 was £188,175.

There continues to be uncertainty in the labour market and challenges on the supply chain, post pandemic. Increasing costs are also impacting heavily on the construction sector.

6. Investment in Affordable Housing

The table below shows Scottish Government historic investment levels in West Lothian (for both RSLs and WLC) between 2013/14 and 2022/23

Table 7: Historic Actual Investment

Year	Actual Expenditure (£'000)
2013/14	887
2014/15	4,614

Year	Actual Expenditure (£'000)
2015/16	10,347
2016/17	10,429
2017/18	10,950
2018/19	13,084
2019/20	16,194
2020/21	13,489
2021/22	24,665
2022/23	27,427
Total	132,086

Additional funding in excess of £12 million was allocated to West Lothian in 2022/23 which enabled projects to be brought forward.

Table 8: Future Resource Planning Assumptions

Year	Indicative Planning Figure (£'000)	Affordable Housing Supply Programme indicative planning figures including slippage (£'000)
2024/25	15,430	19,287
2025/26	15,685	19,606
Total	31,115	38,893

West Lothian Council's Investment in new housing supply

West Lothian Council is highly committed to partnership in the delivery of Local Housing Strategy outcomes. This is demonstrated through the provision of new build council housing and direct assistance to RSLs to enable their development proposals to proceed. Scottish Government direct funding remains important across the range of projects.

The approved Housing Capital Investment Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28 includes £31.436 million for new council housing supply. The council delivered 1,807 new build council homes between 2012/13 and Q4 2022/23. The Scottish Government provided £3.925 million to the council to support new build council housing and open market acquisitions in 2022/23.

Other Funding

Funding from a Charitable Bond is available to support a number of RSL projects in West Lothian. This funding is administered by More Homes Division at the Scottish Government. Commitment has been given to support at least four projects through this type of funding. Sites to be confirmed in due course.

7. Development Constraints

The key development constraints centre on the provision of funding for infrastructure such as primary and secondary schools. The City Deal Fund is being used to support new schools at Winchburgh.

While there continues to be funding constraints, it is clear that RSLs are having some success identifying projects. Challenges remain in regard to the availability of private finance for RSL's. There is opportunity for front funding the purchase of development sites should this be required. The majority of RSL projects coming forward in this SHIP are likely to be for social

rent rather than mid-market rent. RSL's have identified sites for 386 homes for mid-market rent. This demonstrates the willingness of RSL's to consider tenures other than social rent.

Constraints identified by RSL's include inflation in the construction sector, abnormal costs, demolition and site clearance and developer contributions. To assist in trying to overcome these constraints, the council will continue to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders in relation to the provision of infrastructure.

8. Collaboration across the Housing Market Area

West Lothian is a member of the South East Scotland Housing Forum. This group includes representation from housing and planning from the six SESPLAN member councils and Scottish Government. The group collaborated successfully to produce housing need and demand assessments HNDA2 and HNDA 3, with HNDA 3 receiving robust & credible status from the Centre for Housing Market Analysis in July 2022.

Homes for West Lothian Partnership was set up in 2018 to engage with RSLs operating in West Lothian. The purpose of this is to create a coordinated strategy of land assembly, finance, construction planning and targeted provision of homes based on need to increase the supply of affordable housing. Several meetings have been held with RSLs and all have been invited to contribute to the SHIP. Joint working with RSLs and the voluntary sector continues in relation to the development of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to address homelessness in West Lothian.

9. Partnership Process for producing the SHIP

West Lothian Council continues to consult with key partners to develop and deliver quality affordable housing. There are regular updates on progress towards meeting the Local Housing Strategy objectives with stakeholders. Noted below is a breakdown of the partners involved in the delivery of affordable housing in West Lothian;

- **RSLs**

West Lothian Council and RSL development partners have an ongoing dialogue in relation to the delivery of affordable housing. In regard to the development of the SHIP, the RSL partners were invited to meetings to discuss their input. Meetings were held with Almond Housing Association, the Wheatley Homes East, Places for People, Home Group, Ark Housing Association, Cairn Housing Association and Link Group. The key points discussed were in relation to identifying potential development opportunities and overcoming constraints to development including funding requirements and infrastructure. With increased level of grant funding anticipated over the period of the SHIP there is a potential to support a variety of housing providers.

- **Private Developers**

West Lothian Council maintains regular dialogue with private developers in determining the most appropriate affordable housing contribution whilst taking significant factors into account for each individual development site.

- **West Lothian Council Service Areas**

West Lothian Council Service Areas including, Planning, Legal Services, Finance and Property Services and Housing maintain a close working relationship to deliver affordable housing and to develop a strategic approach to provision. This assists in the speed of delivery of development and the quality of housing provided.

There is ongoing liaison with Social Policy to identify requirements for specialist housing provision in West Lothian.

We have worked closely with Social Policy in relation to the design of the new build houses to ensure that they are future proofed and limit the need for adaptations in the longer term. There is increasing engagement through the Delivery Plans to identify future requirements for specialist housing provision.

- **Government Assistance**

The council welcomes the government funding to assist the provision of housing either through its own new build programme or to fund RSLs for site acquisition/off the shelf purchase. This funding has enabled significant numbers of affordable housing to be completed. In 2018/19 West Lothian Council had the highest number of completions of new build council houses of any council in Scotland. The council has endeavoured to make best use of the sites identified to develop council housing that will optimise the use of the sites to meet a variety of housing needs.

10. Investment Outcomes

There are several key outcomes to be achieved in the course of the five year period of this SHIP:

- Completion of an agreed number of RSL homes through the Strategic Local Programme (SLP).
- A new programme of new council house building,
- Maximise employment and training opportunities through the provision of new build housing.
- To assist with the provision of new infrastructure by making appropriate developer contributions through new build programmes.
- Implement the actions in the West Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028.

11.Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) Delivery Plan

In 2022/23 West Lothian Council ranked 2 out of 26 Scottish authorities, an improvement of 2 places from 2021/22. The Scottish average performance is 78.49% compared to WLC performance of 93.79%.

12. Specialist Housing Provision

New Developments of specialist housing provision have been completed or are under construction.

- Cairn Housing Association completed a development of 27 bungalows at Blackridge;
- West Lothian Housing Partnership has developed amenity housing in Livingston as part of the Almondvale development (Living Well);
- WLC completed a development at Cawburn Road, Pumpherston for 16 homes for people with complex care needs;
- Ark Housing Association is developing a site at Crusader Rise. These properties are suitable for people with complex needs.
- WLC is progressing the development of a site at Almondvale for housing for young people and for mainstream housing.

12.1 Wheelchair Accessible Housing

Targets for wheelchair accessible housing were set out in the West Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2023-28. A target of 10% wheelchair accessible homes was set over the duration of the Strategy. This currently applies to affordable housing; the longer-term ambition is to encourage private developers to provide more private housing that is wheelchair accessible housing. Further consideration will be given to this in the new Local Development Plan.

Table 9 - Wheelchair accessible house completions

Provider	Wheelchair Accessible Bungalow Completions						
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
West Lothian Council	16	30	41	60	8	0	15
Almond Housing Association	0	6	0	1	0	0	0
Wheatley Homes East	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	16	36	41	61	8	0	17

West Lothian Council provided the majority of wheelchair units between 2016/17 and 2019/20 as there was a large programme of new build council housing. RSLs are encouraged to provide homes that are suitable for people with a range of needs and they have

RSLs and WLC have submitted proposals in the SHIP for at least 85 homes that would be suitable for wheelchair users and 140 homes that could be suitable for older people or people who require amenity housing.

Funding for adaptations continues to be supported through the HRA for council tenants and through Scottish Government grant for homeowners, private tenants and through Scottish Government grants to RSLs.

Scottish Government is undertaking consultation on “Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland’s Homes”. The consultation sets out amendments to the current Housing for Varying Needs Standards and proposes new elements to be included in Building Standards to enable housing to be more accessible. A key aim is to encourage more private homes to be developed to accessible standards. West Lothian Council will respond to this consultation.

13. Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

The West Lothian Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) was updated in June 2023 and submitted to Scottish Government. The following RRTP achievements were noted:

- Increased sharing spaces for Temporary Accommodation;
- Increased Private Sector Lease properties for use as temporary accommodation;
- 486 new/additional social lets added by the council and RSL partners in 2022/23;
- New affordable homes programme approved in February 2023;
- Evaluated Housing First for Adults and secured funding to increase service provision and transition to mainstream approach;
- Continue to increase the supply of affordable housing solutions;

- Continue to deliver enhanced services to households who require to use temporary accommodation;

Key actions identified in the RRTP for 2023/24 include;

- Deliver a new build supported accommodation unit and dispersed temporary accommodation for young people;
- Seek to obtain a successful approach to responding and reducing youth homelessness
- Redesign Housing support services to mainstream and increase Housing First Services;
- Continue to work with Health & Social Care to improve the outcomes for people at risk of homelessness and respond to the needs of adults where housing in the community is not suitable;

There are a number of challenges that lie ahead in achieving rapid rehousing. The operating context has changed significantly since the council was asked to develop a RRTP. There remain large backlogs of homeless cases awaiting housing which stemmed from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is likely to be further pressure on demand due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, humanitarian efforts to accommodate refugees and the Prevention of Homelessness Duties. This will widen the supply and demand gap further leading to greater pressures on the homeless services and the ability to achieve rapid rehousing.

The lack of long-term funding commitments and future RRTPs beyond 2023/24 will continue to create challenges in securing and retaining skilled staff and services and ensuring continued service delivery to the council's customers.

The council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) 2019-2024 sought to secure £3 million of additional resource to allow the transition required to fully implement the RRTP from the £50 million Scottish Government Ending Homelessness Together Fund. To date the Scottish Government have awarded the council a total of £1.559 million by 2024/25, a shortfall of £1.441 million. Delivering the RRTP within a context of constrained resources and lack of long-term funding will therefore continue to cause pressures. Given the scale of challenges that remain, it is not anticipated that rapid rehousing will be achieved by the end of the RRTP in 2023/24.

The SHIP aims to support the actions of the RRTP in the following ways:

- Increasing the supply of permanent accommodation.
- Supporting RSL development.
- Prioritising support for new build affordable housing in areas of high demand.
- Delivering housing that meets a range of needs.

As the number of new build council completions decrease and the RSL completions increase, it is critical that all providers assist in meeting the needs of homeless households.

14. Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

In June 2019, Council Executive approved the Local Child Poverty Action Report. This report was updated in June 2023 to take account of Covid-19. Latest local estimates place West Lothian's level of child poverty at 24% after housing costs. (These figures are pre-pandemic) These estimates also cannot effectively measure the impact of the range of anti-poverty measures introduced in Scotland including the Scottish Child Payment which it is estimated will shift poverty downwards by two to three percentage points by 2023).

Headline Poverty Figures in West Lothian:

- 12% of the West Lothian population is income deprived
- 21% of children experience relative poverty
- 75.1% of working age adults are in work
- Almost 25% of children experience relative poverty
- 18% of employees earn below the Living Wage
- 19% of residents experience fuel poverty (fuel bill >10% of income after housing), 9% of residents experience extreme fuel poverty (fuel bill >20% of income after housing)

Estimates indicate that 21.1% (n= 7,263) of children in West Lothian were in relative poverty in 2020-21, compared to 21% in Scotland.

In completing the 3,000 homes target between 2012 and 2023 the council and RSL partners play a part in combating poverty through providing affordable homes for families. A further programme of new affordable homes is underway with the aim of providing a minimum 1,621 affordable homes between 2023 and 2028.

In 2022, Advice providers in West Lothian successfully supported 328 tenants and homeowners at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes. This is achieved through income maximisation, negotiation of repayment of arrears and access to funds such as Discretionary Housing Payment.

Tenancy Award training has also been made available to young people to assist them with tenancy awareness and personal finance. Mainstream schools plan to run the course from 23/24.

The need for larger family housing is a consideration on most sites in the SHIP, however, with a greater reliance on sites coming through the Affordable Housing Policy, there can be challenges securing sufficient land in the right locations to build housing for larger families. The aim is to encourage developers to provide a wider range of standard house types that are suitable for a range of needs including larger families.

15. Welfare Reform

West Lothian Council has developed an anti-poverty strategy that sets out a series of actions to support people affected by welfare reform and those at risk of poverty. The Scottish Government's Discretionary Housing Payment is being used in West Lothian to assist with housing costs and in particular to mitigate the effects of the removal of the spare room subsidy.

Reports were produced each month to ensure that all customers impacted by the "bedroom tax" received full mitigation for any period involved. Joint working with social sector landlords

also identified any tenant in receipt of Universal Credit who was subject to a bedroom tax reduction. During the year a total of 5,070 awards of Discretionary Housing Payment were made to customers impacted by the "bedroom tax". The total amount of Discretionary Housing Payments awarded to mitigate the bedroom tax was £2,918,581

The cost of living crisis is likely to impact severely on many households in West Lothian with a large number of people who are in work at risk of poverty.

16. Fuel Poverty and Climate Change

The Local Housing Strategy outlines the council's approach to reducing fuel poverty and tackling emissions that contribute to climate change. The council provides advice and information on fuel poverty via the Advice shop and signposts individuals to agencies such as the Home Energy Scotland.

Energy advice providers in West Lothian supported householders to make savings of £505,370 on fuel costs through energy efficiency advice, tariff switch, support to resolve billing and meter issues and access to energy grants.

In 2022/23 compliance works to council housing stock include a number of energy efficiency projects aimed at meeting the requirements of Scotland's Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) regulations. These works include central heating upgrades, enhanced investment in external wall insulation and PV panels. Total spend on compliance works during 2022/23 was £7.708 million.

The council seeks to ensure that all new build housing is energy efficient and 93.79% of West Lothian Council Housing stock currently meets the Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing (EESH).

All sites in the SHIP, with the exception of open market acquisitions are anticipated to meet greener standards.

The heating for the complex care unit at Cawburn Road will be from renewable energy through a ground source heat pump. This will attract funding from Scottish Government.

All sites identified in the SHIP, with the exception of open market acquisitions, are anticipated to meet greener standards.

The council is proposing the integration of net zero carbon targets for the next local housing strategy. There are two key elements to this;

- The council is aiming to make a strong commitment to ensuring that our future new build housing stock is as energy efficient as possible. It is proposed that all new build council housing stock are designed and constructed to meet the requirements to achieve an A – Rated Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) in terms of both the building's 'energy efficiency rating', and the building's 'environmental impact rating', which shows the buildings CO² emissions. In addition to this it is proposed that all future new build council housing stock should meet all 8 requirements to achieve the current Scottish Building Standards "Silver" Standard.
- A route map has been developed with key milestones for existing WLC housing stock to meet EESH 2 compliance.
- Rising fuel costs means that significantly more people in West Lothian will be in fuel poverty and there are limited mechanisms to address this.

The challenge for all affordable housing providers will be to ensure that there is sufficient funding to meet the requirements of EESSH2 and continue with investment in new affordable housing.

17.Private Sector House Condition

The condition of houses in the private sector in West Lothian is generally good. The council's Scheme of Assistance has been reviewed to provide information, advice and access to practical assistance to enable homeowners to fulfil their responsibility of maintenance and repair of their property and to provide grant support to home owners whose homes need adapted to suit the needs of a disabled person.

The revised Scheme of Assistance was approved by the Council Executive in June 2019. The council has given a commitment to develop its approach to private sector housing over the coming years in order to improve house condition and this will include enforcement activity where necessary. The Scheme of Assistance was reviewed in 2021 and now includes reference to the Tenements Act. Work continues in relation to bringing private sector empty homes back into use.

18. Empty Homes

There are 322 long term empty homes (one year or more) in West Lothian and 89 second homes.

There is regular liaison with Council Tax and Environmental Health to investigate reports of empty properties and the owners can be contacted to establish their intentions for the property. West Lothian Council works in partnership with Shelter to provide information and advice to owners of empty homes.

Over the last 3 years, 132 homes have been purchased through the Council's Open Market Acquisition Scheme. At least, 60 of these were vacant at the time of purchase. Almond Housing Association have also purchased a small number of properties. These homes have been brought back into use for much needed social rented housing. Scottish Government grant has been provided to enable both the council and Almond Housing Association to purchase empty homes through the Open Market Acquisition Scheme.

In addition, owners that approach the council with empty properties can be considered for the private sector leasing scheme.

A dedicated empty homes officer will be appointed to ensure that empty homes can be brought back into use with minimal delay.

19. Gypsy/Traveller sites

West Lothian Council no longer operates a site for Gypsy/Travellers. The council will engage with Scottish Government, COSLA and MECOPP to support Gypsy/Travellers to assist in improving the understanding of requirements of Gypsy/Travellers coming to West Lothian.

20.Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment pre-screening report was undertaken and has determined that a full assessment is not required for the SHIP because it is unlikely to have significant environmental effect. Most of the sites that are included in the SHIP are allocated

for housing in the West Lothian Local Plan and/or the West Lothian Local Development Plan which has been the subject of a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

21. Equalities

West Lothian Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity and eliminating discrimination and the Authority follows strict corporate guidelines which governs the manner in which these areas are approached. An equalities relevance assessment has been carried out for the SHIP and this will be made available. Both the council and RSLs specify that all new build housing will be constructed to housing varying needs standards.

22. Conclusion

This SHIP illustrates a range of approaches to the provision of affordable housing. The council's new build programme has delivered large number of new homes in a relatively short timescale with low levels of subsidy to meet the housing needs of people in West Lothian.

Partner RSLs continue to provide much needed affordable housing in settlements across West Lothian helping to sustain investment in communities in difficult economic times. RSLs are identifying development opportunities and making use of the funding available in a variety of ways to include a mix of both social rented and other affordable tenures. The council continues to work closely with housing association partners in a variety of areas including the common housing register, homelessness, support provision as well as housing development.

23. Appendices to the SHIP Submission (not attached)

1. SHIP Templates
2. Integrated Impact Assessment
3. Strategic Environmental Assessment pre- screening report

24. References

Guidance on Preparing Strategic Housing Investment Plans 13 June 2023

[Introduction - Strategic Housing Investment Plan \(SHIP\) guidance note MHDGN 2023/02 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/ship-guidance/2023/02/introduction-ship-guidance-note-mhdgn-2023-02-13/pages/1-1-introduction-ship-guidance-note-mhdgn-2023-02-13.pdf)

West Lothian Council Housing Land Audit 2020

West Lothian Local Development Plan

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/27735/Adopted-West-Lothian-Local-Development-Plan/pdf/West_Lothian_Local_Development_Plan_-_Adopted_final.pdf

West Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2023-28

[Housing Policy and Strategies - West Lothian Council](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/27735/Housing-Policy-and-Strategies-West-Lothian-Council.pdf)

West Lothian Child Poverty Action Report 2022/23 June 2023

West Lothian Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Update 2023/24 June 2022

Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland's homes consultation

[Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland's homes: consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/enhancing-accessibility-adaptability-usability-scotland-homes-consultation/pages/1-1-enhancing-accessibility-adaptability-usability-scotland-homes-consultation.pdf)

November 2023