

DRAFT

**WEST LOTHIAN
OPEN SPACE PLAN
2025-2034**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The West Lothian Open Space Plan 2025 to 2034 (the Open Space Plan) provides an overview of open space in West Lothian. It highlights the importance of open space and seeks to ensure open space within the council's ownership or management is managed to deliver meaningful benefits to local communities. This document replaces the West Lothian Open Space Plan 2020 – 2024.

The Plan has been written for a number of reasons:

- The previous Open Space Plan 2020-2024 was at the end of its life and, therefore, needed to be reviewed and updated;
- the (Draft) Town and Country Planning (Open Space Strategies) (Scotland) Regulations 2022, have been published (but are not yet in force);
- the budget available to West Lothian Council has been reduced since the West Lothian Open Space Plan 2020-2024 was adopted and the resources that are now available for investment in open space have consequently been reduced;
- the twin challenges of climate change mitigation and combatting habitat loss are key focusses for Scottish Government and local authorities; they are major considerations in the delivery and management of open space in West Lothian.

Open Space definition

The council has adopted the government's Planning Advice Note 65 (2008) definition of open space. At present, when applying the council's open space standards and assessing performance against those standards, the council considers only certain categories of open space that are defined as 'active open space'. These spaces are predominately owned by the council, are mostly available for unrestricted outdoor public recreation and have established regular maintenance schedules. When the council looks to improve formal parks and play areas, through internal investment and grants or through advising developers or others, it is looking to improve or create 'active open space'.

Benefits of Open Space

- Well designed and managed open space provides a wide range of benefits to communities:
- Mental and physical health benefits associated with outdoor recreation and exposure to nature;
- a sense of local character and place making;
- opportunities for sustainable and active travel;
- food growing opportunities to reduce indirect carbon emissions & food costs and contribute to healthier diets;
- carbon and pollution capture;
- flood mitigation;
- improving the quality of surface water runoff;
- protecting and enhancing biodiversity;
- providing links to other open spaces through green and blue networks;
- economic benefits including attracting new residents and businesses to surrounding areas, hosting businesses, attracting tourism and providing an income from harvest resources including timber, energy and various agricultural products;
- an outdoor educational resource;
- reducing crime and anti-social behaviour by providing free recreation opportunities;
- social inclusion and fostering community spirit.

To assist the delivery of the Open Space Plan, a vision and suite of outcomes has been identified along with objectives, standards and policies to direct the provision and enhancement of open space in West Lothian.

The Open Space Plan will help inform and support important parallel policy initiatives including the Local Development Plan (LDP) (and its future replacement, LDP2, currently being reviewed), the assessment of individual planning applications and the various individual related strategies and

action plans drawn up by the council which affect open space. The Open Space Plan will also distil legislation, national guidance and council priorities into simple objectives and standards that can be used to guide other agencies, stakeholders and groups in their operations and investment related to open space.

There are multiple council service areas operating within the sphere of open space and wider greenspace related activities. A summary of the operational activity of each is provided in the main document.

Open Space Investment

The council has a number of funding streams that are utilised for the maintenance and development of Open Space assets across West Lothian. Maintenance is generally undertaken by the council's in-house staff using a revenue budget. The Open Space Team has a capital funding programme that is generally used to direct investment to ensure open space assets (parks, cemeteries, play areas and sports facilities) do not have any health and safety issues and are in a "fit for purpose" condition.

Other service areas also have resources that contributes to day-to-day maintenance of open spaces and wider green spaces, including allowing the council to meet its legal obligations to ensure council assets are safe.

The life expectancy of an open space asset can be determined by various factors including quality of construction materials, level of footfall, local ground condition, anti-social behaviour and accidental damage etc. In general, each service area decides upon a list of priority capital projects annually and may develop longer term management projects based on ensuring public safety or maintaining and improving service delivery. These are reported to the Council Executive when considering the capital programme.

In relation to urban parks, Open Space Officers have historically identified parks that are considered 'unfit' i.e. scoring less than 40 on the quality standard, or parks that may soon fall into an unfit condition due to high footfall or other factors that accelerate deterioration, for investment. They would then consider the quality, accessibility and quantity standards of the surrounding area prior to determining the list of priorities for capital investment. Due to reducing resources future focus will shift to a "health and safety first" principle while still aspiring to meeting park standards.

To assist open space investment, inform comment on future open space proposals and audit open space provision in West Lothian, a database is maintained by the council identifying various open space types. This is in the form of a digitised map with pertinent information relating to individual sites also available. The database is available on the council's website for public inspection.

The Plan acknowledges that various council services, external agencies and local communities invest in, deliver, manage and maintain open space in West Lothian. They do not operate in isolation and the West Lothian Open Space Plan 2025-34 aims to provide a framework to guide future open space provision to benefit the residents and biodiversity of West Lothian and mitigate the effects of climate change.

In summary, the Open Space Plan will

- Set general standards, objectives and policies for open space and play assets managed by the Open Space team;
- ensure these standards and objectives reflect current legislation, national guidance and council corporate objectives;
- monitor performance on these standards and objectives;
- maintain an inventory of open space;
- identify priorities for capital investment based on these standards and objectives with available resources;
- outline the council's operations and investment related to open space.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reasons for the Plan

West Lothian Council is committed to ensuring that the authority area is well served with a wide range of public parks, play areas, sports pitches and other open spaces. The West Lothian Open Space Plan provides an overview of open space provision in West Lothian, how it is managed and maintained now and the plans for future investment in open spaces in West Lothian.

The Open Space Plan seeks to ensure open space within the council boundary and its ownership (or management) is managed to deliver meaningful benefits to local communities and that these benefits are aligned with open space legislative requirements, national guidance, and other council priorities. The Open Space Plan summarises this legislation, national guidance and council priorities in order to provide an understanding of open space issues and assist services and other external parties investing in West Lothian's open space to get the most out of this investment. The Open Space Plan further aims to distil the legislation, national guidance and council priorities into simple objectives and standards that can be used to guide the council and other stakeholders' operations and investment. The Plan simply sets out the framework that identifies why and how open space provision will be delivered by West Lothian Council over the next 10-year period.

The initial West Lothian Open Space Plan, adopted in 2005, gave an undertaking to review the Open Space Plan every 5 years. That document was reviewed in 2010 and again in 2015. The West Lothian Open Space Plan 2020 to 2024 further reviewed and refreshed the Plan for that period.

The West Lothian Open Space Plan 2025-2034 (this Plan) continues to provide a clear framework for managing open spaces in West Lothian. It will, therefore, help inform and support important parallel policy initiatives including the current Local Development Plan (LDP) adopted in 2018, and its successor which is in preparation, direct the assessment of individual planning applications and complement the delivery of various other strategies/plans/operations that relate to open space which are generated by individual council service areas with a role that impacts open space, green space and green networks.

In summary, for West Lothian, the Open Space Plan will:

- Identify outcomes for open space provision;
- set objectives, general standards and policies for open space;
- monitor performance on these standards and objectives;
- create and maintain an inventory of open space;
- identify priorities for capital investment based on these standards and objectives;
- outline the council's operations and investment related to open space.

1.2 Changes in Plan Format and Content for 2025-2034

The Open Space Plan format has changed since the previous review. The primary change is that the audit of open space (over 0.2 hectares) is presented as a publicly accessible, digitised map. The main body of the Plan remains as written text (this document) but both are now available on the council's website. This change reflects new (draft) planning regulations.

The Town and Country Planning (Open Space Strategies) (Scotland) Regulations 2022, were published in December 2021, but had not been enacted at the time of publishing this Plan. This means that they had not been laid before the Scottish Parliament and had not, therefore, come into force. In addition, no guidance had been published to assist local authorities in their Plan preparation. The council has, however, interpreted and applied the draft regulations as if they had been made/come into force.

The Open Space Plan will now cover a 10-year period commencing at its (proposed) adoption in early 2025 until its review prior to the end of 2034/35. This aligns with the draft regulations. It is also considered a better use of limited officer time.

As part of the review of the previous Open Space Plan (2020-2024), the standards used to deliver open space were re-considered. This has resulted in a change to the criteria used for the quality standard to better assist open space provision in West Lothian (see section 4 for further details).

A statement is now included in the Plan on the overall provision of open space in West Lothian. This is in addition to the settlement statements at a locality level.

Green networks are now identified within West Lothian on a map along with a statement setting out the steps to how they may be enhanced.

A summary of the changes is as follows:

- Open space provision identified during the audit is presented on a Geographical Information System (GIS) based digital map i.e. the audit results are shown on a map on the council's website;
- plan period has been extended to 10 years;
- the quality standard applied to the council's active open spaces (parks) has been changed to better reflect the range of benefits derived from an open space;
- statement of overall open space provision in West Lothian is now included; and
- green networks are now identified on a map along with a statement on how they may be enhanced in West Lothian.

1.3 Definitions of Open Space and its components

There are different words used for the spaces found outside and how they make up our external environment. These are explained below.

Open Space

Planning Advice Note (PAN) 65 provides advice on the role of the planning system in protecting and enhancing existing open spaces and providing high quality new spaces. PAN 65 defined open space as:

“Any vegetated land or structure, water, path or geological feature within and on the edge of settlements, and civic space consisting of squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function. Some spaces may combine green and civic elements.”

Table 1 describes the various broad categories of open space from the PAN 65 methodology.

Table 1 PAN 65 Types of Open Space

Category	Description
Public parks and gardens	Areas of land normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden. These may be owned or managed by community groups.
Private gardens or grounds	Areas of land normally enclosed and associated with a house or institution and reserved for private use.
Amenity greenspace	Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons and used for a variety of informal or social activities such as sunbathing, picnics or kickabouts.
Playspace for children and teenagers	Areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play, usually linked to housing areas.
Sports areas	Large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces, used primarily for designated sports (including playing fields, golf courses, tennis courts and bowling greens) and which are generally bookable.
Green corridors	Routes including canals, river corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town or city as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces together.

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Green corridors	Routes including canals, river corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town or city as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces together.
Natural/semi-natural greenspaces	Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas.
Allotments and community growing spaces	Areas of land for growing fruit, vegetables and other plants, either in individual allotments or as a community activity.
Civic space	Squares, streets and waterfront promenades, predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity and can make connections for people and for wildlife.
Burial grounds	Includes churchyards and cemeteries.
Other functional greenspace	May be one or more types as required by local circumstances or priorities.



Some of these categories have further subcategories which denote where they sit within a hierarchy of regional, settlement, neighbourhood and local importance. For example, the public parks and gardens category includes sub-categories; Country Parks (regional importance), District Parks (settlement importance), Neighbourhood Parks (neighbourhood importance) and Local Parks (local importance). This allows assessment of the various types of open space against their standard level of provision (see Table 2).

It is important to note that the PAN 65 descriptions of different types of open space are not intended to be prescriptive, but are merely a guide to what might generally be expected to be seen in each of the categories of open space across West Lothian.

It should also be noted that the council has a responsibility for all land within its ownership including agricultural land holdings, bings, woodland areas, and other semi-natural spaces. This includes considerable land out-with settlements. The Open Space Plan only focusses on the open and green space in and around urban settlements and the inter-related green/blue networks that connect these settlements to each other or the countryside.

Allotments and community growing spaces are an important category of open space. Many of these spaces are used for food growing. The development of food growing areas in West Lothian is guided by the West Lothian Food Growing Plan 2020-25. That document will be reviewed after the publication of this Plan.

Since the publication of PAN 65, in 2008, some changes have been made to the definitions of particular types of open space and “open space” itself. The (Draft) Town and Country Planning (Open Space Strategies) (Scotland) Regulations 2022, has updated the definitions given in The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as follows:

- Ecosystem Services means the benefits people obtain from ecosystems;
- Green Infrastructure means features or spaces within the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem services;
- Green Networks means connected areas of green infrastructure and open space that together form an integrated and multi-functional network;
- Green Space means space which provides a recreational function, an amenity function, or aesthetic value to the public such as areas of grass, trees, other vegetation or water but not including agricultural or horticultural land;
- Open Space now means space within and on the edge of settlements comprising green space or civic areas such as squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function.

The council has adopted these definitions in this Plan.

Active Open Space

Open space in residential areas comprises three elements:

- Gardens and private open space;
- Active open space (including informal play/recreational space, equipped play areas and sports pitches);
- Passive open space (including amenity greenspace/landscaped areas providing visual or separating different buildings or land uses, green corridors and areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats).

At present, when applying the council’s open space standards and assessing performance against those standards, the council only considers certain sub-categories of active open space. This allows the council and developers to focus on improving and increasing those spaces that can be objectively defined as valuable to the public and their quality can be quantified i.e. we have sufficient information on their features and dimensions etc. to make objective decisions.

The following sub-categories are considered ‘active open space’:

- Allotments
- Local Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks
- District Parks
- Play spaces
- Swing Parks
- Sports Basketball Courts
- Sports Bowling Greens
- Sports Centre and Playing Fields
- Sports Football Pitches
- Sports Kick Pitches
- Sports Playing Fields
- Sports Tennis Courts
- War Memorials.

These spaces, predominately owned by the council, are mostly available for unrestricted, outdoor, public recreation and they have established regular maintenance schedules. When the council looks to improve formal parks and play areas, through internal investment and external grants or through advising developers or others, they are looking to improve or create 'active open space'. At present the scale and complexity of more semi-natural open spaces and rural green spaces makes it more difficult to define 'value' in these other spaces. As such, any investment and advice related to these areas is considered on a case by case basis, looking at such things as public use, formal designation status (e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Biodiversity Sites) and on existing condition.

If an area of active open space should change to a different kind of active open space e.g. creation of an allotment site within a park, the area will still be regarded and safeguarded as active open space.

1.4 Benefits of Open Space

The ideal in creating and improving open space is to realise a wide variety of benefits. Multiple benefits can and should be derived from well planned and managed open space providing a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits to communities. These include:

- Mental and physical health benefits associated with outdoor recreation and exposure to nature
- A sense of local character;
- Opportunities for sustainable and active travel;
- Food growing to reduce indirect carbon emissions and food costs and contribute to healthier diets;
- Carbon and pollution capture;
- Flood mitigation;
- Improving the quality of surface water run-off;
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity;
- Providing links to other open spaces through green and blue networks;
- Attracting new residents and businesses to surrounding areas, hosting businesses, supporting tourism and income generation from harvest resources including timber, energy and various agricultural products;
- Providing an outdoor educational resource;
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour by providing free recreation opportunities;
- Social inclusion and fostering community spirit.

1.5 Plan Context

Plan documents are rarely written in isolation but have to take account of other policies that are operating, influencing or affecting how they are set and shaped. This document is no exception with international, national, regional and local policy and goals shaping the context in which it has been written.

International Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the United Kingdom in 2015, along with other United Nation member states. This sets out 17 goals as a "call for action" in securing sustainable development. The goals "recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests."

The provision and management of open space in West Lothian can, and does, contribute to the direct or indirect delivery of these goals. For example, exposure to, and activity within, a quality green environment contributes to Goal 3 Good Health and Well-Being. Applying open space standards throughout West Lothian can contribute to Goal 10 of Reduced Inequalities. Goal 13 Climate Action, Goal 14 Life Below Water and Goal 15 Life On Land can be worked towards by making sustainable choices when choosing materials and plants in open space projects or enhancing parks. Whilst decisions made at an individual site or even West Lothian wide level may not seem pertinent when considering international goals, they do all work towards achieving international and even global changes.

National Policy

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the national spatial Plan for Scotland. This sets out Scottish Ministers' policies and proposals for the development of land by identifying spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy. It was published in February 2023, with subsequent updates, and replaces previous national planning frameworks and Scottish Planning Policy.

The introduction states that *“The world is facing unprecedented challenges. The global climate emergency means that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the future impacts of climate change. We will need to respond to a growing nature crisis, and to work together to enable development that addresses the social and economic legacy of the coronavirus pandemic, the cost crisis and longstanding inequality.”* It has set 6 overarching spatial principles which are seen as playing a key role in working towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The application of these principles to the planning and delivery of developments should support sustainable, liveable and productive places.

Eighteen National Developments have been identified to support NPF4. The main one affecting West Lothian is the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN). This was first designated in 2009, within National Planning Framework 2, and has remained in subsequent planning frameworks highlighting its ambitious goal as a large scale, long term open space initiative. The vision is to transform Central Scotland (by 2050) into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people’s lives are enriched by its quality. The initiative takes in 19 local authority areas across Central Scotland, including West Lothian. It aims to connect and enhance existing environmental assets, and deliver a range of interventions where the need is greatest, benefitting people, the environment and the economy. The lead delivery agent of the CSGN is Green Action Trust in partnership with other stake holders including West Lothian Council. Successful projects that have already contributed to the Network include the Livingston South Blue Green Network project and the more recent woodland work completed in the Blackmoss Nature Park in Armadale.

NPF4 states that Local Development Plan spatial strategies “should be designed to reduce, minimise or avoid greenhouse gas emissions. The six spatial principles should form the basis of the spatial Plan, helping to guide development to, and create, sustainable locations. The Plan should be informed by an understanding of the impacts of the proposals on greenhouse gas emissions.”

There are further expectations from Local Development Plans in achieving the policies set out in NPF4, some of which involve open space:

- Support climate change adaptation;
- protect, conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity;
- protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally important natural assets;
- protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally valued soils, including land of lesser quality that is culturally or locally important for primary use;
- support proposals that enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover;
- support local living, including 20-minute neighbourhoods within settlements;
- protect and enhance blue and green infrastructure and their networks;
- identify sites for sports, play and outdoor recreation for people of all ages;
- strengthen community resilience to the current and future impacts of climate change;
- support proposals that will have positive effects on health e.g. proposals that incorporate opportunities for exercise, community food growing or allotments.

Regional Policy

Prior to 13 February 2023, the development plan for West Lothian was comprised of two documents; the Strategic Development Plan for Edinburgh and South-East Scotland 2013 (SDP) and the West Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP 1). The SDP provided the strategic land-use framework at the regional level and established a policy context for the West Lothian Local Development Plan and contained policies and proposals that had secured the approval of Scottish Ministers.

NPF4, however, is now part of the statutory development plan and has replaced the Strategic Development Plan element and so removed the regional level framework. Strategic planning matters at a regional level are now set out in NPF4.

Local Policy

The previous Open Space Plan (2020-2024) contributed to, and secured, the outcomes sought by the West Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP). Local Development Plans set out the local vision, priorities, and planning policies for development. West Lothian's LDP provides the background against which planning decisions are made by the council. This includes establishing local planning policies for the protection and enhancement of open space. Where appropriate, the LDP protects open space and identifies where there is scope for improvements. There is a presumption against the development of open spaces that have been identified (and mapped) in the LDP (Policy ENV 21 and ENV 22).

The current LDP is now under review and its adoption is expected by 2027. NPF4 will be a significant and material influence in the new Local Development Plan (LDP2), as it incorporates the most up to date national policies on a wide spectrum of planning topics. LDP2 will cover a ten-year period.

While there is no legal requirement for new LDPs to be directly 'compatible' with NPF4, there is a statutory requirement that planning authorities must take the NPF into account. NPF4 was adopted in February 2023 and, therefore, postdates the preparation and adoption of LDP1 and there may be instances where some NPF4 policies are found to be incompatible with policies in LDP 1. In that event planning legislation makes it clear that whichever plan is the later in date is to prevail. As NPF4 is the most recent plan, it will take precedence.

The development plan for West Lothian also includes supplementary guidance. Supplementary planning guidance provides additional detail on specific subject areas and explains how planning policies will be implemented. Guidance most closely aligned to the provision of open space in new developments is contained in the West Lothian Residential Guide. Open space in new residential areas essentially comprises three elements: Gardens and private open space; Active open space (including informal play/ recreational space, equipped play areas and sports pitches); and Passive open space (including amenity greenspace / landscaped areas separating different buildings or land uses, green corridors and areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats).

The supplementary guidance sets out the expectations for open space particularly the provision of active open space. This is either through direct provision on-site by a developer or their financial contribution towards enhancements to existing assets or new assets. Further details can be found at https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/58739/SG-Supplementary-Guidance-Residential-Development-Guide-Incorporating-waste-management-update-October-2023/pdf/SG_Residential_Development_Guide_incorporating_Waste_Management_update_-_October_2023.pdf

West Lothian Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

Local Outcomes Improvement Plans (LOIP) are the mechanism by which Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) deliver improved outcomes for their communities. They are based on a clear understanding of local needs and reflect agreed local priorities as well as the National Performance Framework developed by the Scottish Government. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, has given CPP's a clear statutory purpose focused on improving outcomes, reducing inequalities and community participation. The Act requires the Community Planning Partnership to produce two types of plan which describe our local priorities and how we plan to improve on these; A Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) and Locality Plans. West Lothian's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2023-2033 sets out how the Community Planning Partnership will deliver improved outcomes for its communities.

The LOIP sets out the local outcomes the CPP will prioritise and how the CPP will deliver on these. It is a 10-year strategic plan that outlines how community planning partners will work with communities to improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

Four thematic pillars have been developed that the CPP will work together to improve. Each thematic pillar is underpinned by an outcome and key focus areas of work that will be taken forward to work towards achieving the outcome. Open space will play an important role in the Improving Health and Well Being pillar where "*West Lothian is a place where everyone has the opportunity to enhance their mental and physical health and wellbeing*". Social, economic and environmental factors shape the conditions within which individuals and communities live and have a profound effect on both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Diet and physical activity are influenced by many and complex factors, often outwith the individual's control. For example, income, availability and affordability of healthy food options, opportunities for physical activity and active travel, access to green space, social influences and stigma. West Lothian is an early adopter for the whole systems approach to the prevention of type 2 diabetes. The approach is being tested in Whitburn initially given its levels of area deprivation and higher incidence of poor health outcomes compared to other areas of West Lothian. Improvements to the food and physical activity environment are shaped by key placemaking strategies such as the Local Development Plan and Local Housing Plan. The CPP is working with local and national partners to ensure strategic decisions are assessed in terms of their impact on the health of local communities, ensuring that the built, natural and economic environment supports good health and contributes to a reduction in health inequalities. Access to quality open space and green space is, therefore, a priority in achieving the LOIP outcomes.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Local Biodiversity Action Plans identify the local priorities for protecting and enhancing ecosystems, habitats and species in each local authority area. They are comprehensive plans that all partners can work to, enabling a joined-up approach across the area.

The Scottish Biodiversity Plan 2023, provides a vision for 2045. The Plan reflects international commitments to biodiversity across the globe, discussed and agreed at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in 2022. It focuses on the desired outcomes for the next 10 years, to halt the loss of biodiversity in Scotland and to restore the essential services and benefits to society that a healthy natural environment provides. Local authorities ensure these commitments are put into practice at a local scale.

The West Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan (2005-2009) is currently being revised and updated by the council's Ecology and Biodiversity Team. The main aims of the West Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) are to outline how our local biodiversity can contribute to national and global priorities, to help us manage the land to promote the protection, enhancement and creation of habitats, to ensure connectivity throughout the area and to facilitate a wider understanding of locally important habitats and species. The new West Lothian LBAP, will be a 10-year plan; Working Together for Nature - West Lothian's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-35.

The council is currently working with stakeholders to inform the new Biodiversity Action Plan document and to implement the plan across West Lothian. Work completed to date includes an interactive habitat map of West Lothian. This map shows all the habitats of West Lothian (including green space areas of grassland and woodland), as they were mapped by consultants in 2022. It is a broad-brush map that helps us to see which habitats currently exist, roughly where they are and approximately how much of them we have. It will inform the Biodiversity Action Plan and helps us to strategically plan habitat networks and connectivity across the area.

Progress with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan can be seen on the council's website at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/75251/Local-Biodiversity-Action-Plan>

2.0 THE OPEN SPACE PLAN PROCESS

To prepare the Open Space Plan there were a number of things to be considered in order to produce a framework that would support (and ideally enhance) existing open space assets and direct new open space provision across West Lothian. The process used to do this is summarised below.

The first thing to think about was *Why do we have to produce a Plan?* What were the reasons for, and purpose of, using resources to produce the Plan? Some of these were to meet (draft) regulations and update an expiring Plan but also respond to factors affecting open space, in West Lothian and around the world.

The next consideration was *What do we want?* What is the intended result of the Plan? Defining the vision for open space in West Lothian sets out the overarching purpose of the Plan. Drawing up outcomes identifies what we want to achieve by having the Plan.

How will we (continue to) deliver open space in West Lothian? was the next consideration in drawing up the Plan. A holistic approach is needed across West Lothian to ensure resources are used equitably. A set of objectives, standards and policies have been drawn up to ensure a consistent approach is applied to our open space.

Objectives, standards and policies set out the way we will deliver open space in principle. We also needed to identify the practical ways to do this. *How will we manage and maintain it?* The day-to-day management and maintenance methods needed to be identified. This involves a number of council service areas. The remit of each of these council areas relating to, or affecting, open space has been included in the Plan. In addition, the council works in partnership with a number of agencies to deliver open space projects on its land or liaises closely with landowners that also deliver and manage open space that borders some of our sites. These are summarised for further information. The practical work undertaken by community groups and volunteers is also identified.

The Plan, therefore, sets out the aspirations for current open space provision and how we intend to provide and manage future provision. To do this we needed to know *What do we have now?* An audit of open space identified where, and what, open space we had and also, therefore, identified gaps in provision. This gives us a starting point for implementing the new Plan.

The audit results were then shown spatially on a digitised map which forms part of this Plan. From this an assessment of open space in West Lothian was made at an overall county level but also settlement level. Green networks were also identified from the audit. Their proposed enhancement was then considered.

The Plan focuses on the present delivery of open space but consideration has also to be given to future planning. *How will we secure open space in the future?* It is intended that on-going delivery of the current standards will be secured by maintaining council investment but also influencing other delivery opportunities; at the early design stage of residential development or in-put by Open Space officers into strategies and plans that may affect open space in West Lothian. A consistent response to future settlement changes is, therefore, sought by the stated objectives and policies in this Plan.

The framework for directing open space has been prepared by West Lothian Council's Open Space team. It is the intended Plan document to deliver a range of free, accessible open spaces with multi-purpose benefits for the residents of West Lothian. *Is this process/draft Plan right for West Lothian?* The communities of West Lothian as well as a number of other stakeholders have a valid interest in shaping the Plan. Consultation on the draft Plan, therefore, had to be undertaken to allow comment on, and input into, the document. ***(The following paragraphs are the intended text following completion of the consultation period and consideration of feedback)*** A draft of the Plan (this document), including the digitised map, was made available for a 12-week consultation period. This was conducted on-line using the council's website with notification of the consultation being given by targeted emails, local media adverts and social media posts.

All comments received during the consultation were considered. Where appropriate, changes were made to the draft Plan and a final version produced. This was then presented to council committee and adopted.

The final Plan is published on the council's website at [\(to be inserted following adoption\)](#).

Review of the Plan document (this document) is intended to be undertaken prior to 2035 in order to draw up a new open space framework for West Lothian. This will take account of any new legislation, regulations, policies etc. and reflect changes affecting open space. The digitised map is considered a "live" representation of open space provision in West Lothian and will be updated periodically as officers become aware of open space and settlement changes.



3.0 VISION AND OUTCOMES

The Plan's Vision is our over-arching intended goal. It can be broken down into more defined achievements or outcomes that we want to secure in the future.

3.1 Vision

The Council's Vision for open space in West Lothian is that

"A range of free, accessible open space is available across West Lothian which delivers benefits to its residents, contributes to climate change mitigation and addresses biodiversity loss."

3.2 Outcomes

This Open Space Plan aims to set out how a range of multi-functional open spaces will be used, delivered and maintained for the benefit of the communities in West Lothian. The Plan will have been successfully implemented when desired achievements/outcomes are realised.

The (draft) Town and Country Planning (Open Space Strategies) (Scotland) Regulations 2022, identify 6 outcomes sought from our open spaces. These outcomes are shared by the council. In West Lothian, these outcomes will be achieved through considered design decisions, various works carried out on site and management decisions taken by different council services in different ways but all working towards achieving these goals. This will in turn deliver multi-purpose benefits resulting in happy, healthy and resilient communities across West Lothian.

Improving access to green infrastructure, open space and green networks – Good access to different components of open space enhances the benefits that exposure to, and use of, them provides for people and wildlife. The provision of park and play area signage is a simple way that we let communities know that they have arrived at a space that is owned or managed by the council for public use with details to contact the council and report any issues. The council is assessing its park and play area signage provision and installing or replacing signs where necessary.

The council will continue to implement its accessibility and quantity standard whereby it seeks to provide all communities with access to a park and play area within a 5-minute walk and further afield to access a neighbourhood, district and country park. (This is not always possible in small or rural settlements).

Officers will continue to input into planning consultations for new residential development and feedback comments relating to the open space standards and the requirements of the West Lothian Residential Development Guide.

The open space database will be maintained and periodically updated to audit open space provision across West Lothian to inform decisions and advise on the number and location of existing and proposed active open space. Where opportunities arise through new developments, or resources allow, improved access to existing green networks will also be considered and sought to connect green infrastructure and open spaces within, and between, communities.

Creating successful and sustainable places attracts people to use, and continue using, our managed open spaces. This in turn delivers social, health, economic and environmental benefits for our residents and habitats. Any proposed changes to our managed open spaces will consider existing site conditions and character, opportunities and issues to ensure the identity of that place is maintained and, ideally, improved.

We will continue to work with communities through different levels of consultation where changes, other than health and safety improvements or to meet park standards, are carried out. When resources allow, we will use Community Choices (the council's participatory budgeting process) to seek community feedback on where investment in open spaces is most wanted.

We will continue to work with communities that seek practical involvement in the management and maintenance of sites on a voluntary basis, recognising that community input fosters community pride and, hopefully, reduces anti-social behaviour and crime.

Consideration of green rather than grey infrastructure will continue and be implemented where practical by, for example, using natural drainage solutions such as SUDs, swales and raingardens (which can also secure positive effects on biodiversity).

The repair or re-use of street furniture will be implemented where value for money can be achieved e.g. repainting seats or re-positioning bins. This option depends on the level of refurbishment that is required and so may not always be practical. If the removal and replacement of an item with new is cheaper, then this option will be chosen, as new features will likely last longer than repairing/patching an existing asset.

The retention of spoil from excavations for new paths or park furniture will be retained on site when possible, where it can be reprofiled without negatively affecting site use or maintenance so saving transportation costs, carbon emissions and landfill costs.

Capital spend will continue to follow the health and safety-first principle proceeded by investment to achieve park standards to ensure our parks and play areas are sustainable and successfully serve our community's needs.

Improving health and wellbeing – The life-long health and well-being of West Lothian's residents can be achieved, in part, through the provision of a range of areas for passive and active pursuits for mental and physical improvement. The Plan will continue to deliver a hierarchy of parks through the council's accessibility, quantity and quality standards and a managed portfolio of play areas. These spaces encourage social interaction, provide opportunities to experience and watch nature and allow quiet contemplation and relaxation which all contribute to positive mental well-being. Physical activity is made possible through sports, play and leisure activities with provision of football pitches, tennis courts, MUGAs, equipped play areas and amenity grassland for informal activities. The Plan will continue to seek delivery of places for pursuits that support personal and community well-being. The standards will be maintained as long as resources continue to allow them to be met.

Advancing equality and eliminating discrimination – Open space resources are, on the whole, freely available to all residents across West Lothian irrespective of their location, characteristics or economic status (although some facilities may require a fee to use or book them).

The council's accessibility standard seeks to ensure all residents have free access (24 hours per day) to open space that is managed for public use within a 5-minute walk. This should include, at a minimum, a local park and play area. Access to neighbourhood, district and country parks is likely to require further travel distances but green networks or public transport generally allows access without the use of private transport. It is acknowledged that some rural areas do not achieve this standard.

The quality standard seeks to ensure a range of features and benefits are provided in parks, depending on their position within the hierarchy i.e. local, neighbourhood etc., which meet the needs of residents whatever their stage in life or characteristics e.g. seating and an area for passive and active activities.

Grounds maintenance standards are applied across West Lothian depending on a site's classification (e.g. park, football pitch, roadside verge etc.) rather than its location.

The capital investment programme in parks and play areas has allocated funding to each ward in previous years ensuring spend is spread across the county. Going forward, focussed investment in parks is unlikely to continue due to necessary budget cuts across council services which will impact on Open Space budgets. Future budgets should still allow for spend on a priority health and safety basis irrespective of a park or open space's location.

Securing positive effects for biodiversity is a very important outcome for the council which recognises the impact that the loss of biodiversity has had on species numbers as well as the fragmentation of habitat networks. This Open Space Plan will seek to ensure that West Lothian's biodiversity is not only maintained but enhanced through the delivery and maintenance of open space. As such, biodiversity will continue to be used as a scoring sub-category in our Quality standard. This in turn will contribute to global improvements for our flora and fauna.

When budgets are available for park and play area investment the conservation or enhancement of habitats is considered within sites. This includes along their boundary edges to enhance external open spaces, green networks or nature networks which may not necessarily be in the council's ownership. This will enhance wider, existing habitat networks to allow species to migrate without hindrance and ownership boundaries

Trees planting, either as individual specimens or blocks, is an effective way to create and enhance biodiversity along with bulb and wildflower planting and the council will continue to do so where resources allow and maintenance can be sustained. The right plant/right place ethos is used to determine plant choices. This does not necessarily mean only plants native to Scotland or Britain are used. A wide plant palette allows species diversity and reduces the impact of disease affecting a single species, unfortunately seen all too clearly as Ash Die-Back continues to affect West Lothian (and other areas of Britain).

New habitats within parks have to date been created on an ad-hoc basis where communities have expressed a desire to see less mowing of amenity grassland or site conditions and topography have required or presented opportunities to do so, such as on consistently wet areas or steep banks. Enhancing our habitats in a more holistic approach has been a driver in preparing a new Grassland Management Plan. This will set out the council's policy on where a reduced mow or no mow approach will be adopted to create and improve habitats and biodiversity.

The council is also preparing a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan for West Lothian. The new plan, once adopted, will set out how local biodiversity can contribute to national and global priorities. It will help us manage the land to promote the protection, enhancement and creation of habitats to ensure connectivity throughout the area and to facilitate a wider understanding of locally important habitats and species.

Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change – Working towards and achieving this outcome in West Lothian is as important as securing positive effects for biodiversity (outlined above). West Lothian Council, like many others, declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to reducing carbon emissions towards zero with the production of its Climate Change Plan 2021-28. The council's Flood Defence team is regularly faced with the effects of increased flooding as a consequence of climate change. While it is recognised that we cannot stop flooding from happening we can take steps to reducing flooding events and dealing with its effects.

The Open Space Plan and its delivery of open space can make a number of small but important contributions to mitigating and adapting to climate change. There are few flower beds and borders in our parks, mainly as a consequence of reduced staff resources to maintain them. The level of bare earth is, therefore, very low but where there are patches of exposed ground they can be mulched or seeded to stabilise soils and reduce water run-off.

Trees are important for biodiversity, as highlighted above, but they also create canopy cover which produces shade and lowers temperatures which now has to be a consideration in West Lothian and Scotland. The right plant/right place (particularly trees) is again given consideration in park enhancements to try and reduce flooding or excessively wet areas with those species happy to grow in, or take up, more water than others considered along with those that will also tolerate drought conditions. Again, using a variety of species will, hopefully, mitigate these effects better than single species on site.

Using more robust materials to withstand scouring or erosion from increased wet spells on site is also considered particularly for new or upgraded paths to improve accessibility. It may seem counterintuitive to use sealed, tarred surfaces rather than permeable, windust ones but value for money and longevity are also considerations when mitigating against climate change. Metal or recycled plastic rather than wooden features such as bollards or seats are also considered when installing or replacing these items.

Again, green rather than grey infrastructure is considered as it is generally easier, quicker and cheaper to design and install with multiple benefits to park visitors, whether human or wildlife.

Material Quality, Sustainable Resources and Adaptability will remain as sub-categories in the scoring methodology of our Quality standard.

The delivery of each of these outcomes is further detailed in the Objectives, Standards and Policy section of this Plan.



4.0 OBJECTIVES, STANDARDS AND POLICIES

The Open Space Plan mainly concentrates on informing capital spend related to urban parks. Other service areas have, their own individual plans and priority projects related to their specific interest and remits. Their objectives, standards, and priority projects may be informed by legislation, national guidance, and corporate priorities that relate only to their specific service area. However, overall open space standards, where appropriate, should ideally be reflected in a number of service areas' operations and plans. This is valuable in not only prioritising spend across those different service areas but also ensures legislation, national guidance and local priorities on open space is informing all relevant service areas and that performance can be measured e.g. the conservation or enhancement of biodiversity should be a consideration of all service areas.

4.1 Objectives

To achieve the vision for open space provision in West Lothian there needs to be a number of objectives (goals) set in order to work towards this. A number of objectives have been identified by the council in order that as many benefits as possible can be derived from open space with the resources available. This is not just for the residents of West Lothian but also the natural environment. If applied throughout service areas, the objectives below will deliver these benefits and fulfil council obligations across legislation, national guidance, and council priorities.

Publication of a new plan implies change. Essentially, the desired change is to ensure that while council service areas continue to deliver their own clear legislative and operational responsibilities, they also consider wider national and local 'open space' legislation and that policy and guidance is reflected in their plans and operations.

The following Open Space Plan objectives will be monitored, including against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and reported via committee:

The council will aspire to have all active open spaces (surveyed parks) fit for purpose before 2029/30 (maintained annually thereafter);

the council will aspire to meet the quantity standard for all settlements;

the council will aspire to provide all residents with access to the hierarchy of active open spaces;

Open Space Officers, and others where appropriate, will provide comment on all planning applications that they are consulted on (including for development of 10 or more dwellings);

4.2 Open Space Standards

There are over 100 public parks that are owned or managed by West Lothian Council. These form a hierarchy of publicly accessible parks ranging from Local Parks to Country Parks. (There are also publicly accessible parks that are not in the council's ownership or management in West Lothian. These have generally been developed as part of large residential developments and are now privately managed, usually by factoring agents, but this Plan does not include those spaces).

In order to measure the value of open space and ensure that it is protected, enhanced, and expanded, where appropriate, it is important to set clear standards. PAN 65 advocated a 'standards-based approach' for the assessment of open space provision and need. PAN 65 suggests that standards should contain three elements: quantity, quality, and accessibility. The draft regulations for Open Space Strategies also requires reference to accessibility, quality and quantity in an authority's open space audit. West Lothian Council, therefore, continues to adopt this approach.

In 2004, council officers prioritised all sites in terms of importance i.e. category 1 = most important, 2 = important, 3 = less important. In general, all active open space was classified as category 1 i.e. the most important. The Open Space Audit 2004 was a baseline quality survey limited to just category 1 sites. The survey was designed to add some descriptive data for the site and to score the site's quality on a simple numeric scale. 750 sites were surveyed and the survey attributed a total score between 0 and 75. The survey was designed to capture quality related to a wider range of benefits than could be captured by a Land Audit Management System (LAMS) survey or the council's internal CONFIRM reporting system. Additional details captured for the sites surveyed included site description, opportunities for improvement, problems and ownership details.

The West Lothian standards were developed using guidance from Fields in Trust, Greenspace Scotland and Woodland Trust Scotland and consideration of standards applied by other Local Authorities. The standards were considered again for this Plan.

The accessibility and quantity standards remain unchanged but the quality standard has been changed slightly to ensure it is appropriate and applicable to West Lothian.

The standards outlined below are intended to:

- Be realistic;
- provide a structured basis for assessing sites and settlements against a consistent methodology;
- allow priorities for capital investment in open space to be identified; and
- allow Planning Officers to readily evaluate local and major development applications.

Quality

Open spaces need to, at least, be maintained in a 'fit for purpose' condition. They should serve local communities by providing a level of service and functionality that delivers as wide a range of benefits, as practical, while being safe.

Determining a quality survey methodology is made difficult by the diversity of spaces (e.g. character, scale, and function vary greatly). This problem can be addressed by recognising that quality criteria are not absolute measures, but rather provide an informed, common sense approach on which a consistent judgement of the quality of a space can be determined. However, it would be of no value to assess a single football pitch or a small isolated play area using the same criteria as a District Park. As such only formal urban parks are currently scored with the quality standard.

Appendix 1 outlines the new quality standard survey methodology that will be used going forward. The original methodology has, therefore, been revised in order to reflect the full range of benefits sought from the open space.

The former Economic Benefits sub-category of the Multifunctional category has been removed. This is because the information required to assess that sub-category is not always available to the Open Space officer when scoring. It is not possible to know every use that the space is being put to or know whether it is being undertaken as a commercial activity and someone (or group) is benefitting financially e.g. two people doing exercises in a park may be friends working out together or one may be a personal trainer charging the other for a health and fitness class. Generally, the council has no knowledge or control over the commercial benefits derived from activities in its open spaces, unless a lease or service level agreement etc. is in place. The score generated by the qualitative survey is a tool used to inform investment in a park to enhance the space or user's experience in it. Scoring something that the council cannot ultimately control or would invest in to change, is, therefore, a redundant element of the methodology. It has been replaced by a High Quality/ Park Features category/sub-category. This aligns to the features that are expected to be found in a park according to its designation within the park hierarchy i.e. Local Park, Neighbourhood Park etc. Missing or inadequate features would be identified and reflected within the sub-category score with appropriate investment decisions then made on the basis of the overall park score.

In summary, each site is given a score between 1 and 5 (low to high) for each of 15 quality criteria. These scores are then totalled, giving an overall score out of 75. A site with a score of 40 or above is considered 'fit for purpose'.

To assist the scoring of different park types, **Table 2** below sets out the range of features that might typically be provided throughout the park hierarchy. In addition, the general size of the space and its catchment area should be taken into consideration.

For example, a Local Park that can be seen in its entirety from a single entrance may be scored 5/5 for 'Orientation and Interpretation' if it has an entrance sign and one good interpretation sign, whereas a District Park may require a network of way markers and interpretation of various key features for it to score 5/5.

In all cases where scoring may be difficult, or very subjective, an explanatory note will be entered into the database along with the score. In general, where criteria score lower than 3, a note should be entered to the database outlining the reason. Therefore, when a low scoring park is looked at in terms of potential capital investment it will be clear what investment may be appropriate and what may be inappropriate.

Table 2 – Park Hierarchy, Accessible Woodland and Play Area Hierarchy and Typical Features

Park Type	Feature
Country Park	Visitor Centre (including facilities)
	Ranger Service
	Unique facilities / attractions
	Offers diverse recreational use
	Offers diversity of habitat / landscape
	Offers signage / interpretation
	Provision of paths / access including waymarked routes
	Public transport connections
	Car park provision
	Country Park management
District Park	Offers diverse recreation use
	Offers facility for formal / informal sport
	Offers diversity of habitat / landscape
	Provides toilet facilities
	Provides changing facilities
	Provides Play Area (NEAP type, see below)
	Provides seating / litter bins
	Lit core path network
	Provision of paths / access
	Receives regular maintenance
	Car park provision (circa 36 spaces)
Formal landscape features	
Neighbourhood Park	Offers diverse recreational use (e.g. MUGA, Football Pitch, Fitness, MTB etc.)
	Provides Play Area (NEAP type, see below)
	Provides seating / litter bins
	Provision of paths / access
	Community event space
	Receives regular maintenance
	Formal landscape features
	Car park provision (typically 24 minimum spaces)
Local Park	Provides for limited local recreation use
	Provides Play Area (LEAP type, see below)
	Provision of paths / access
	Receives regular maintenance
Woodland Type	Feature
Accessible Woodland	Land under stands of trees, with, or with the potential to achieve tree crown cover of more than 20%
	Unrestricted open access or restricted but permissive access

Play Area Type	Feature
Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	For children 0-15
	Close to well used pedestrian route
	Well drained, reasonably flat, grass or hard surface
	At least 30m from nearest dwelling
	Sign indicating play area with contact details of operator
	Sign discouraging dogs
	Fenced if within 15m of road
	Minimum 9 unique pieces of play equipment
	Recognisable boundary
	Seating and litter bins
	Convenient and secure parking facilities for bicycles
Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	For children 0-12
	Close to well used pedestrian route
	Well drained, reasonably flat, grass or hard surface
	At least 20m from nearest dwelling
	Sign indicating play area with contact details of operator
	Sign discouraging dogs
	Fenced if within 15m of road
	Minimum 6 unique pieces of play equipment
	Recognisable boundary
Seating and litter bins	
Local Area for Play (LAP)	Primarily for under-6's
	Close to well used pedestrian route
	Well drained, reasonably flat, grass or hard surface
	At least 10m from nearest dwelling
	Sign indicating play area with contact details of operator
	Sign discouraging dogs
	Fenced if within 15m of road
	Minimum 3 unique pieces of play equipment
Recognisable boundary	

Accessibility

Open spaces need to be accessible to as wide a range of users as practical. Their location should be widely known and access should be safe and easy, be it walking, cycling, horse riding, driving, or using public transport.

Table 3 below outlines the accessibility standard. For each level of the park hierarchy, accessible woodland and play areas, the recommended maximum distance that all residents should have to travel to reach is outlined, as is a population guideline where applicable. The broad principle is that people should be close to at least some type of active open space, while it is reasonable that they may have to travel longer distances to reach larger, less abundant open space with more facilities, particularly if they live in small settlements or in the countryside.

The 500m maximum distance that applies to play areas and Local Parks (or any park higher in the hierarchy than a Local Park) equates to roughly a 5-minute walk/2-minute cycle.

When applying this accessibility standard to the existing play areas and urban parks held in the Open Space Database, it is possible to identify those settlements which do not meet the standard for having particular park types present, and also to identify particular areas within settlements that are not within recommended distances of play areas or the various park types. It should be noted that maximum recommended distances to play areas and parks are "as the crow flies". As such when considering individual planning applications or capital projects, the practicalities of reaching active open space should be considered. For example, a park may be 500m from a small proposed development, but barriers to the community have to be considered e.g. railway line, water courses, poor path network etc.

Table 3 – Park Hierarchy Minimum Size and Accessibility Standards

Sub-Category	Minimum Accessibility Standard	Minimum Size (Ha)	Population Guidelines
Country Park	10km	-	50,000+
District Park	4km	17 ha	10,000 to 50,000
Accessible Woodland	4km	20 ha	-
NEAP	1km	1,000m ²	-
Neighbourhood Park	1km	3 ha	2,000 to 10,000
Local Park	500m	1 ha	250 to 2,000
Accessible Woodland	500m	2 ha	-
LEAP	500m	400m ²	-
LAP	NA	100m ²	-

Quantity

Quantity is a consideration in ensuring appropriate provision of open space, although perhaps of lower relative importance than accessibility and quality. Total open space provision can provide a useful guideline on provision within individual settlement areas and provide a broad basis for comparative assessments when identifying priorities.

Fields in Trust recommend a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 6 acres (2.4 hectares) for 1,000 people. "Outdoor playing space" is space that is safely accessible and available to the general public, and of a suitable size and nature for sport, active recreation or children's play. This standard is applied in West Lothian using active open space as defined in section 1.3.

There are also recommended minimum sizes for the various park types (Table 3). While many existing parks may not comply with this standard, opportunities to enlarge parks will be considered as appropriate and any new parks built should comply with these standards.

Open space provision and standards in new developments

The West Lothian Residential Design Guide reviewed, adopted in 2018 and updated in 2023, sets out the council's position on the provision of open space associated with new developments. Developers are required to ensure new developments provide residents with access to active open space that meets the standards outlined in the Open Space Plan.

When the number of proposed properties and location is known, proposed new developments of more than ten properties are considered by council Open Space Officers, when consulted by Planning Services, in relation to the open space standards by considering the following questions:

- Will the relevant settlement continue to maintain an acceptable quantity standard with the anticipated increase in population?
- Are all proposed properties within accessibility standards of a play area and the various park types?
- Are all existing individual play areas and parks accessible from the new development fit for purpose?

If all questions are answered in the affirmative, or only question 3 is negative, there will be an initial presumption in favour of trying to satisfy active open space requirements through a financial contribution from the developer that will upgrade any existing facilities in the immediate locality that are not 'fit for purpose' i.e. off-site in another part of the settlement.

If all facilities are fit for purpose, those predicted to become unfit soonest will be targeted for investment. There is a presumption that active open spaces are all degrading over time and the pressure of additional residents will accelerate this degradation toward an unfit state.

Where the level of financial contribution is significant, some or all of the contribution may be used to address poor Open Space standards elsewhere in West Lothian i.e. if all local sites are predicted to remain fit for purpose for many years.

Where Questions 1 and/or 2 are answered in the negative, open space provision should be delivered on-site. Where this is the case, council Open Space Officers will advise on appropriate provision. In general, new active open space should be created to ensure all residents are within minimum distance of the various types where accessibility standards apply. The amount of new open space that would be added should not reduce the overall quantity standard for the settlement when the change in population is considered.

Any new active open space provided should be fit for purpose and remain so for a period of at least 10 years. The council's quality standard (Appendix 1) can be provided to support developers.

For smaller developments, where Questions 1 and/or 2 are answered in the negative, but developer contributions would not allow creation of new active open space on-site, these contributions will be used to upgrade any existing facilities in the immediate locality that are not fit for purpose, or contributions may be held and pooled by the council to allow for improvement in local open spaces, or potential creation of new active open space locally at a later date. This may include investment in green infrastructure and flood prevention i.e. not exclusive to active open space.

Active open space provision related to new developments may include:

- Only on-site provision of new facilities;
- contribution to external sites within accessible distances;
- contribution to improving overall West Lothian standards, or
- a combination of all three of the above features.

Whatever the nature of the provision, the overall expenditure should directly relate to the developer financial contributions outlined in the Residential Development Guide. In some cases, where there is a clear understanding of the extent and features of local semi-natural open spaces or other passive open spaces, there may be investment in these spaces with agreement of all parties e.g. community woodland investment.

In the strategic Core Development Areas (CDAs), other provisions may apply. Reference should be made to the relevant LDP section or policy.

If open space provision by developers includes the creation of any new facilities, these facilities should be maintained indefinitely by the developers or their factors to a standard acceptable to the council. Maintenance plans should be developed and presented to council officers alongside open space designs as they will form part of the approved planning application. Designs should include provision of signage that will inform residents who is responsible for maintenance and include contact details for reporting issues.

The principle of multi-functionality can be applied to all categories of open space in developments, and offers the opportunity to make good use of design innovations and the latest technology. For example, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) do not only include retention basins or ponds, but can also incorporate green roofs, swales, raingardens, reed beds, street trees and wetlands. Street trees can be used instead of traffic bollards and trees can also be used to aid traffic calming. The Scottish Government's publication "Green Infrastructure: Design and Placemaking" can be referred to for ideas on placing green infrastructure at the core of planning developments. The Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG) have many useful publications, including "Trees in Hard Landscapes: A guide for delivery" which includes information on designing with trees – using trees as positive assets, as well as technical design solutions to ensure the long-term health of trees above and below ground.

4.3 Policies relating to Open Space

In addition to the application of standards to parks and play assets there are a number of policies which the council operates to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to the way open spaces are managed so that they are assessed and treated the same across West Lothian, particularly when community requests are made for specific features. In some instances, this reinforces the standards above.

West Lothian Council Open Space Play Policy

In June 2013, The Scottish Government launched the National Play Plan Vision and Action Plan. These documents set a standard which recognises the importance of play as well as Local Authority obligations in relations to children's right to play.

West Lothian Council has a well-established provision of public play and leisure facilities across its settlements, deeply rooted in the core themes of the National Play Plan and recognised best practice in terms of outdoor play. This Open Space Play Policy aims to summarise our approach to designing open spaces for play, and build on the wider National Guidance with 'on-the-ground' examples. The Policy explores core design principles, the hierarchy and typology of different play spaces as well as geographical provision guidelines.

Our vision is for West Lothian to be a place for varied, sustainable, flexible, engaging and inclusive play, making use of both natural and urban settings in the most appropriate manner.

Benefits of public play and access to nature

Free public access to outdoor play is widely recognised as a necessity for our society. Local Authority obligations to provide suitable play facilities are outlined in National Guidance, and the 'Right to Play' is enshrined in the UN Convention.

Play Scotland states that *"Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way, for their own reasons."*

At West Lothian Council we understand the intrinsic relationship that builds between a child and their environment through play and exploration. Free outdoor play in particular offers a multitude of benefits such as:

- Providing a break from increasingly busy family lifestyles, with children increasingly spending excessive time indoors or inactive;
- a freely accessible public facility, helping combat poverty and health inequalities;
- outdoor play supports cognitive, physical and mental health, helping prevent long term health issues in childhood and adulthood;
- providing an opportunity for safe social interactions, supporting development of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, social skills and creating a sense of community;
- encouraging an early relationship with nature, a positive understanding of the environment and our responsibilities in its stewardship
- encouraging children to experience risk and challenge, develop resilience and build an understanding of the extent of their own abilities and skills;
- a place for carers and parents to meet and socialise, where they may otherwise struggle to find such opportunities, supporting wider community mental health & wellbeing.

Best Practice and Design Principles

West Lothian Council takes on board a number of leading national best practice documents such as: Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

Fields in Trust Guidance

<https://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-Scotland.pdf>

The UN Sustainable Development Goals

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc/>

'Free to Play' Guidance

https://www.playscotland.org/resources/print/Free-to-Play-Guide-to-Accessible-and-Inclusive-Play-Spaces-Casey-Harbottle-2018.pdf?plscctl_id=11211

NPF4 Policies

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/documents/>

Scotland's Play Plan

<https://www.playscotland.org/policy/play-Plan/>

With this in mind, West Lothian Council has developed overarching design principles to support the continuing development of our play asset provision:

- Ensure play assets are located in the right place, where they can be easily accessed via green travel routes, allow sufficient passive surveillance and have a positive relationship with nearby facilities;
- Create varied environments for children where they can gain the skills to help them navigate the wider world;
- Encourage a range of formal and informal play to support inclusion across different social groups, different abilities and different interests;
- Incorporate opportunities for natural and risky play to help children develop resilience, self-awareness and an understanding of health & safety;
- Consult with children and parents where appropriate to help instil a sense of ownership of public spaces;
- Design with sustainability and efficient maintenance in mind.

The Risk / Benefit Statement

All West Lothian Council play areas are designed and maintained to conform to the industry standards in terms of Health & Safety. However, in line with industry best practice, we recognise the benefits of risky and challenging play in outdoor settings. West Lothian Council supports The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) statement: *“Play is great for children’s well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool”*.

With this in mind, it is important to note that all play area users may use the play area at their own risk, and should consider their abilities and review the equipment prior to engaging in any activity. Parents and carers are encouraged to assist children as they are becoming familiar with a new piece of play equipment or a new activity, to help them develop their own risk assessment skills.

All formal (prescriptive) play assets, are inspected regularly, every 10 working days. During each inspection the play asset is litter picked, play equipment is checked for damage and repaired. Where the equipment cannot be repaired by West Lothian Council staff, or requires new parts, the equipment is left safe and repaired within an appropriate timescale.

Formal play assets include specialist purchased equipment and specialist designed sports assets, such as swings, slides, outdoor gym equipment, ball courts, skate parks etc.

Any informal (non-prescriptive) playscape features are inspected quarterly. During each inspection the play asset is litter picked, any elements are checked for damage and repaired. Where the elements cannot be repaired by West Lothian Council staff, or require new parts, the element is left safe and repaired within an appropriate timescale.

Informal playscape features include designated environmental features designed to invite play such as ground graphics, natural play or feature landscaping.

Inclusivity and accessibility considerations

West Lothian Council is home to a range of people of different backgrounds and abilities. We aim to ensure that there is a sufficient play asset provision available to support all local residents. It is recognised that some play asset users may need accessible surfaces, specialist wheelchair equipment, safety gates, ‘high energy’ play spaces, ‘quiet’ areas, disabled parking spaces, public bathrooms, sensory elements, high contrast furniture to assist with visual impairments and many more particular requirements. Due to the wide range of needs across our communities, there is no one size fits all solution. It also cannot be expected that specialised equipment be installed in all locations, although it may be appropriate to consider these solutions in strategic locations. As such, we aim to create a wide range of different play spaces across West Lothian, to allow residents a

choice suited to their circumstances. In addition:

- Where possible, ball courts and public sports facilities should have a level access point;
- Where possible, gates should be designed to allow a wheelchair user to open and close the gate unassisted;
- Where possible, if a piece of play equipment is being replaced, an alternative with a higher inclusivity rating should be considered;
- Strategically located play areas should include a wider range of equipment;
- Where possible and appropriate, a section or more of the play area should have accessible surfacing and a hardstanding access route.

Fencing of Play Assets and Dog Access

West Lothian Council guidance expects a play area to be fenced where it is located within 15m of a vehicular road. The intention of fencing is to mitigate the risk of a child running out into traffic, or a car crashing into a play area during a vehicular accident. Depending on the site, this may mean that a play area is fully fenced and gated, or it is sufficiently fenced to prevent this risk. In general, fencing a play area is avoided as it often creates a number of issues, such as difficult maintenance access, increased maintenance cost, it may discourage wheelchair users, limit a child into playing in a small space as opposed to the whole park and increase the threat of harm to children through bullying where they may find it hard to leave the space when they wish to.

Fencing is not considered a requirement in other scenarios, such as preventing dog access. The council has no enforcement powers in relation to expelling or banning dogs from play areas or ball courts, however, dog fouling issues or issues with 'out of control' dogs can be reported via the relevant council channel.

Fenced ball courts are often used for dog exercise. This can cause a number of issues such as irresponsible dog fouling, increased deterioration of the facility and making genuine ball court users 'put off' from using the facility either due to dog dirt or a feeling that the space is occupied. Similarly, to Play Areas, expelling dogs is not enforceable through law, but where the issue is highlighted, the council may chain the gates open and put up signage to discourage inappropriate dog use.

As a general approach, where a play area is fully fenced it is expected that dogs be kept outside of the fence. Where the play area is open it is expected that dogs are kept on a lead. This information is included on the play area signage for clarity, but it is not enforceable through law.

Private and Public Play Areas

Throughout West Lothian, there are numerous play areas & leisure facilities freely open to the public. Whilst the majority of these spaces are owned and maintained by West Lothian Council, there are instances where a facility is built on privately owned land by a private landowner. This may typically happen on housing estates, where the land is owned by a developer and maintained by an appointed factor, although scenarios may differ depending on location.

It is important to note that whilst these play areas are fully open to the public, West Lothian Council has no ownership or maintenance responsibility over these assets. Any issues or safety concerns should be directed to the responsible private party.

If in doubt on whether a play asset is privately or publicly owned, a sign should be found at each site detailing the responsible party.

Responsibilities regarding Closed Assets at Schools & Public Centres

The Play Team within Open Space (NETs, Land & Countryside) is responsible for all council owned, publicly accessible Play and the majority of formal sports assets. (The Team does not inspect or maintain 3G/4G pitches). This refers to assets which form part of the wider public open space, are unmanned and fully accessible to the public at all times.

There are a number of 'Closed' Assets where the Team assists in a limited capacity, due to their available expertise and skills, via prior agreement with the managing department. Closed Assets refer to council owned Play and Formal Sports assets which are not part of open space and are only open to the public, or only to particular users, at certain times. Most commonly this includes formal play areas within gated school grounds or community centres. These assets do not contribute to the

Open Space Play provision. Where an asset is associated with, for example, a school but is fully open for use out of hours it is considered a standard asset as opposed to a closed asset.

The responsibilities with regards to the routine maintenance of closed assets are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Maintenance responsibilities relating to Closed Assets

Play Team	Managing Department (e.g. Education)
will inspect each listed closed asset to the same standard and frequency as public assets	will inform the Play Team of any changes to the asset, e.g. new asset, asset closure or equipment change
will carry out minor routine technical work, such as tightening bolts, only	will provide a yearly fee for routine Play Team inspections as agreed historically
will notify the Managing Department of any faults, risks or repair works required, that is further than minor routine technical work	will recompense Open Space for Independent Inspections procured in their name as agreed prior
will provide the Managing Department with technical, H&S and procurement advice on any faults, risks or repair works required	will ensure access is prohibited from any equipment marked with hazard tape
will organise & share Independent Inspections for each closed asset at the same time as for public assets	will be responsible for payment, procurement and management of any repair, installation or removal works to closed assets
will tape off faulty or dangerous equipment with hazard tape	will be responsible for managing access to all closed assets
will review designs for new assets and carry out a separate final installation inspection	
will keep an itemised list of closed asset equipment where this information is provided	

Vandalism in Play Areas and Sports / Exercise Assets

Vandalism is a common issue in Open Space Assets and can range from acts with little financial impact to acts causing long term damage and a high repair cost. Vandalism can be classified into 3 categories:

1. Low Impact Vandalism – this may include things like graffiti or broken glass. The vandalism has a relatively low internal cost (i.e. added workload to Play Inspection Operatives) and may result in other tasks being pushed back or lower Operative performance. The damage can be repaired by Play Inspectors internally with a short turn around. The usual response to this type of vandalism would be to make good with no further follow up.
2. High Impact Vandalism – this may include things like breaking equipment on purpose or setting items on fire. The vandalism has a relatively high cost and requires an external contractor to carry out repairs and/or the purchase of spare parts or new equipment. This may result in temporary closure of equipment and ‘making safe’ to prevent any safety risks to the public. The repairs may take several months depending on contractor availability, budget availability and market lead times. The repair works may place a financial impact on other capital works, reducing planned improvement budgets. The extent and nature of repair and replacement works is within Officer discretion i.e. a piece of equipment may not be replaced or be replaced with something different. West Lothian Council does not make insurance claims for acts of vandalism to Open Space Assets, however for damage which is expected to cost over £3,000.00 a Police Report may be filed.
3. Repeat Vandalism – this is any act of vandalism carried out persistently and repeatedly to the extent that it warrants a response. For example, repeated glass breaking may result in a change in ground surface to facilitate easier cleaning, or repeated vandalism may result in vegetation clearance to improve passive surveillance. The individual instances may be low or high impact, but considered cumulatively are sufficient to warrant preventative action. Repeat vandalism incurs both an internal cost (added workload to Play Inspection Operatives) and a budgetary cost (procurement of external contractor) with consequences as per both option 1 and 2. Any preventative action is within Officer discretion. West Lothian Council does not make insurance claims for acts of vandalism to Open Space Assets, however for damage which is expected to cost over £3,000.00 over a period of 3 instances a Police Report may be filed.

Proximities and offsets for Play Asset locations

The locations for all play areas are carefully chosen to provide a number of benefits outlined below:

- Strategic coverage of Play Areas– Play Areas are spread out across settlements to ensure all residents are within a 500m walk to a Play Area. Where Play Areas are close together and it does not contribute to the Strategic coverage across a settlement, they may be combined or one may be removed (e.g. where a new play area is built near an old play area and as such it becomes redundant). This helps ensure the asset provision is manageable and follows a ‘value where needed’ approach.
- Strategic coverage of Formal / Informal Sports– Formal Sport Assets include ball courts, skate parks, pump tracks and outdoor gyms. Informal Sport Assets include single/double striker goals and basketball practice hoops. They are spread out across settlements to ensure all residents are within a 1km walk to a formal Sports Asset, or within a 500m walk to an informal Sports Asset. Where assets are close together and it does not contribute to the Strategic coverage across a settlement, they may be combined or one may be removed (e.g. where a new asset is built near an old asset and as such it becomes redundant). This helps ensure the asset provision is manageable and follows a ‘value where needed’ approach.
- Accessibility – West Lothian Council aims to locate Play Assets where they can be reached easily and safely with priority given to green travel. This helps ensure that as many people as possible are able to access the asset.
- Land ownership – West Lothian Council may only build Play Assets on council owned land, or where a special arrangement has been reached with the private landowner.
- Environmental conditions – Play Assets are located where possible, on flat, well-draining soil, away from tree canopies, avoiding wind tunnels, rocky outcrops etc. This helps ensure longevity for the Play Asset and does not discourage the public from use (for example because the ground is waterlogged).
- Impact on adjacent land uses – Play Assets are located to avoid clashes with adjacent land uses, for example grass football pitches or dog walking routes.
- Proximities to sensitive receptors – Play Assets are located at specific offsets from sensitive receptors, such as residential housing. This is to ensure no unreasonable disturbance is created where it may impact on private individuals. The offsets increase for play areas which are bigger or cater to older children, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 – Offsetting distances for play area types

PLAY AREA TYPE	DISTANCE FROM NEAREST DWELLING
NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area)	30m
LEAP (Local Equipped Play Area)	20m
LAP (Local Area for Play)	10m
PLAYSCAPE	10m
STANDALONE INFORMAL SPORTS	20m
STANDALONE FORMAL SPORTS	20m

- Proximities of dangers to children – The everyday open public space includes a range of high-risk elements for children, for example vehicular roads, rivers, waterbodies, bridges, livestock etc. Play Assets will be located at least 15m away from such dangers, or where this is not possible, fencing will be provided to control movement. 15m, or above, is considered a sufficient distance for a parent to notice their child approaching a potential danger and capture or call them back. All Play Areas and Public Spaces should be used at own risk and it is expected that children who may not be able to assess risks adequately by themselves are supervised.

The Play Provision Plan

There is no specific National Guidance which sets out the types, locations, size or frequency of different play assets across a geographical area. As such, West Lothian Council has combined guidance from PAN 65, The Fields in Trust ‘Guidance for Sports and Play’ and in-depth knowledge of the socio-economic, geographic and demographic factors across West Lothian settlements.

A variety of size and provision is beneficial in ensuring a clear hierarchy and purpose to play assets, and an appropriate response to the capacity of each open space and its setting. The intention of a strategic approach to Play Provision is to ensure that all residents have equal and fair access to open space. It also ensures resources (financial and maintenance) are spread equally across all West Lothian settlements and focused proportionately on strategic locations.

Throughout this process it may be recognised that some assets have close links to the community and are strategically valuable. As part of our ongoing Plan, we will work to ensure these assets are upkept to maintain this high value and, where possible and appropriate, are improved further. Similarly, it may be recognised that some assets provide very little value to the community and wider Plan. They may even be seen as detrimental, for example due to poor location or long-term vandalism. West Lothian Council will take an economic decision on whether the asset should be maintained or removed in such cases. All assets are continually reviewed.

Our Play Provision Plan is outlined below:

- NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas) are strategic assets whereby their bigger size and more expansive leisure opportunities make them destination spaces that cater to children of different age groups, social circles or abilities;
- LEAPs (Local Equipped Play Areas) are locally central assets which offer a range of play opportunities within a wider green setting and encourage everyday use;
- LAPs (Local Areas for Play), Playscapes and Sports assets are small standalone features which fill in the gaps in between NEAPs and LEAPs, in particular where certain communities may find it difficult to access a more formal play area for everyday play or to allow children a safe space for independent play.

NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area) (1km catchment / walking route)

INTENTION:

- In Country or District Parks – a Destination Play Area with medium - large footprint, unique and varied play opportunities, inclusive to all ages / abilities;
- In Neighbourhood parks – a play area with medium footprint, varied and challenging play opportunities and inclusive to all ages / abilities;
- Play area connects to wider open space leisure such as walking routes, woodlands, picnic spaces or park sports facilities;
- Unique / themed design to reflect local history, nature or site specific character;
- Expected use of up to 2h daily or longer on the weekend;
- Opportunity for a wider range of materials such as timber or elements of bespoke design.

Located within a Neighbourhood, District or Country Park

REQUIREMENTS:

- Aimed at children of all ages 0-15;
- close to a well-used pedestrian route with an access path to the play area;
- fencing only where necessary and ideally not designed to enclose the full area;
- min. 30m from the nearest dwelling;
- signage including guidelines for use and contact details of operator;
- includes a range of park furniture to encourage social play, and allow families to spend multiple hours at the play area;
- a min. of 9 unique pieces of play equipment;
- approximately 1,000m² in size;
- surfacing chosen to suit the site and locality, aiming for a min. of 3-5 pieces of formal play equipment to have accessible surfacing;
- convenient and secure cycle parking;
- public toilet and accessible parking areas where possible and appropriate;
- well drained, reasonably flat, grass or hard surface;
- recognisable boundary.

LEAP (Local Equipped Play Area) (500m catchment / walking route)

INTENTION:

- Everyday space for children's play and family leisure;
- Play area with small-medium footprint, Formal and Informal play spaces for children of mixed age with a range of equipment and play opportunities;
- Safe and convenient for disabled, elderly, carers and pregnant women / young mothers;

- Expected use of up to 2h;
- Primarily within a local park setting with safe pedestrian access routes, or within a larger residential setting to serve the resident community;
- Low maintenance, simple and robust materials.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Aimed at children 0-12;
- Close to a well-used pedestrian route with an access path to the play area if possible;
- Fenced where appropriate, with a min. of 2 exit gates if fully fenced;
- Min. 20m from the nearest dwelling;
- Signage including guidelines for use and contact details of operator;
- Includes a min. of 1 seat for a parent / carer. A bin included only if deemed necessary;
- A min. of 6 unique pieces of play equipment;
- Approximately 400m² in size;
- Surfacing chosen to suit the site and locality, aiming for a min. of 1-2 pieces of formal play equipment to have accessible surfacing;
- Well drained, reasonably flat, grass or hard surface;
- Recognisable boundary.

LAP (Local Area for Play) (500m catchment / walking route)

INTENTION:

- To fill in gaps between NEAPs / LEAPs and support housing estates;
- Local play area with small footprint, safe space for everyday play for young children and toddlers, as well as for children to practice safe independent play or play with lower levels of supervision;
- Mix of sensory and social play (incl. natural play) and some more formal prescriptive play equipment;
- Expected use of up to 1h;
- Residential setting with safe pedestrian access routes;
- Low maintenance, simple and robust materials;
- Safe and convenient for disabled, elderly, carers and pregnant women / new mothers.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Aimed at children 0-5;
- close to a well-used pedestrian route with an access path to the play area if possible;
- fenced where appropriate, with a min. of 2 exit gates if fully fenced;
- min. 10m from the nearest dwelling;
- signage including guidelines for use and contact details of operator;
- includes seating for a parent / carer. A bin included only if deemed necessary;
- a min. of 3 unique pieces of play equipment;
- approximately 100m² in size;
- surfacing chosen to suit the site and locality;
- well drained, reasonably flat, grass or hard surface
- recognisable boundary.

PLAYSCAPE (no measured catchment)

INTENTION:

- To provide an informal, natural and imaginative space inviting children aged 1-18 to play and socialise;
- Located alongside formally equipped play areas, or separately in places where such play areas are not appropriate or not required. Places with unique natural features such as slopes or scenery, small neighbourhood areas on residential streets or points of interest along trails & walking routes can all be considered appropriate;
- Expected use of up to 1h;
- Design to respond to the local environment i.e. urban, natural, cultural / heritage.

REQUIREMENTS:

- No requirement for formal play area elements such as off-the-shelf play equipment, seating, signage, paths or fencing;
- Low maintenance, with little to no maintainable play assets;
- Min. 10m from the nearest dwelling;

STANDALONE INFORMAL SPORTS (500m catchment / walking route)**INTENTION:**

- Space for children's leisure;
- Expected use of up to 1h;
- Residential setting with safe pedestrian access routes incl. cycle access;
- Provided alongside an Equipped Play Area, or in an open space where an Equipped Play Area is not required or not appropriate, but this type of active play is desirable and beneficial.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Includes for striker goals, basketball hoops or similar;
- Low maintenance, steel goals with grass or astroturf surface to goals only, no line marking, no fencing;
- Min. 20m away from vehicular roads or private boundaries;
- Located on flat (max. 1:100 crossfall), well-draining ground.

STANDALONE FORMAL SPORTS (1km catchment / walking route)**INTENTION:**

- Space for adult and teenage leisure;
- Expected use of up to 2h;
- Park / wider greenspace setting with safe pedestrian access routes incl. cycle access;
- Variety of sports and designs encouraged to promote use across different social groups;
- Facility is separate from an Equipped Play Area, as not to discourage younger users and families, but may be in visual proximity;
- Located in an open space with good passive surveillance and where this type of active play is desirable and beneficial;
- Seating, shelter, cycle stands and other site furniture may be considered.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Can include assets such as different ball courts incl. MUGA courts, outdoor fitness equipment & gyms, skate parks, formal pump tracks, athletics courses, parkour areas and similar;
- Low maintenance design with robust, hard wearing materials;
- Ball courts surfaced in all-weather use asphalt (polymeric surfacing may be considered near schools or community centres), lined and with an accessible entrance;
- Steel fencing where appropriate and in the height appropriate to its setting. Min. 2 separate exit routes required to all fully fenced areas;
- Min. 20m away from play areas, vehicular roads or private boundaries;
- Ball courts located on flat (max. 1:150 crossfall).



Open Space Policies relating to urban parks

The features expected to be found within the hierarchy of parks is summarised in Table 2. The council receives many requests for additional or new features to be provided in parks and open space. While every request will be considered individually there are general responses to some requests following previous consideration of a topic, availability of resources or established council policy.

Restricting access to, or within, open space

The council will not generally support a request to fence off a park or open space - The majority of council managed open spaces and urban parks are not fenced or have any restrictive boundaries. This reinforces the principle of providing free and unrestricted access to open space in West Lothian. Even where fencing is situated, such as in our older more “traditional” parks, it is usually still without gates with only a staggered barrier access point. There is generally no practical reason to keep people in or out of an area that is considered open space. (As outlined above, fences, or fences with gates are installed around play assets where a potential risk, such as a road, is located 15m or less from the play facility).

Some parks, particularly Neighbourhood and District parks, would require considerable resources to secure all boundaries. This would not be possible to install nor maintain due to limited budgets. It may also cause issues for maintenance or inspection vehicles used by the council.

Where boundary controls have been installed it is generally to control/keep out unauthorised vehicles. Fencing, bollards and barriers can be used to prohibit vehicles entirely or control access using padlocks or removable controls. This has to be carefully considered to ensure pedestrians and those in wheelchairs (including motorised mobility aids) and prams including double buggies can still access a site. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to physically stop unauthorised motorbikes and quads from a site where pedestrian access is provided. In addition, the council has no powers to enforce this and are reliant on the Police to take legal action. The council does work with Police Scotland and other landowners to combat crime, particularly in our more rural sites through West Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime.



The council receives requests for areas to be fenced off for dog exercising. The council is not responsible for providing this facility to pet owners. If an area was fenced off it would no longer be considered active open space. It is unlikely that the general public would wish to enter and use an area that has a concentrated number of dogs within it, probably off a lead and running around. There would likely be a high level of dog fouling within this space and animals that are not under control. Reducing the amount of accessible open space would negatively impact on the open space quantity standard. It is also likely that the open space quality standard would also be negatively impacted. The council will not, therefore, support requests to fence off an area to exercise dogs nor tolerate the public closing off or restricting access for others to a play or open space, even if only for a short time.

Provision of bins

The Cleaner Communities service within NETS, Land and Countryside determines the provision of waste bins in open spaces including for dog fouling. The proximity of nearby bins, access to and ease of emptying a bin, site use and litter generation are all considered before changes are agreed. The council will not, therefore, agree to all requests for additional bins in a park or open space.

When a park is proposed for investment by Open Space the existing bin provision may be considered by officers. The replacement, removal or rationalisation of bins may then be proposed and discussed with Cleaner Communities. Generally dual purpose, closed top metal bins will be favoured on site.

Additional seating including memorial furniture

Open Space will consider requests for additional seating on a site by site basis. If a park does not have a number of seats that are considered sufficient for its type e.g. Local, Neighbourhood etc., additional seating can be accommodated on site if it would not negatively impact current site use, amenity and maintenance, would not negatively affect neighbouring properties and there is available budget. Requests for seating on a site that has sufficient provision already will not be supported. West Lothian Council does not offer a formal service to install memorial items including seating and plaques. The council can, however, approve the installation of memorial furniture if it agrees to a proposed location and it is to an approved specification, including text and symbols on a proposed plaque. The ordering, installation and payment of any memorial furniture, if approved, is the responsibility of the person seeking its installation. Installation must be undertaken by a contractor approved by the council with provision of an appropriate risk assessment, method statement and all relevant public liability insurances to ensure that the work would be to a high standard.

The council cannot guarantee access to any memorial furniture, including grass cutting around it, at the point of installation or in the future. If the bench was damaged or vandalised and became dangerous it may be removed by the council. No trees, shrubs, plants, fencing, or memorabilia of any kind may be grown or placed on or around the bench. The council would not be responsible for cleaning/maintaining or replacing the furniture in the future, including if subjected to graffiti or vandalism.

The council supports requests from the public to plant new trees in its open spaces as part of the council's Climate Change Initiative through the Adopt a Tree and Plant a Tree programme. More information on these are available at <https://www.tree-time.com/treetime-west-lothian/> There are various options/amounts available but plaques can be personalised to commemorate loved ones or special events etc.

Lighting

The council does not generally light public park or play areas. Some parks have historically had lighting installed or a route through a park is adopted or regarded as a safe route to school. Roads Lighting are responsible for the maintenance of lighting assets. There are now insufficient resources to install and maintain new recreational lighting assets and requests for additional lighting in open space is, therefore, unlikely to be supported.

Allotments and community gardens

The council receives regular requests to provide allotment and community garden/growing sites. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 Part 9, makes it a statutory duty for councils to produce a 5-year 'Food Growing Plan', an annual allotment report and to keep and manage a list of people requesting allotments. The West Lothian Food Growing Plan 2020-25 provides an audit of existing food growing initiatives and states the council's intentions for increasing food growing opportunities by responding to community demand and promoting and supporting a variety of community food growing approaches throughout the area (e.g. allotments, community gardens, growing in parks).

West Lothian's operational model for the provision of allotments and community gardens on council land is to lease the site to a community group, who have responsibility for the day-to-day maintenance and management of the site. Other, less formal, food growing initiatives may only require a maintenance agreement between the community group and NETS, Land and Countryside Services.

There are currently two sites operating as allotments on council owned land. These sites are leased to, and managed by, independent allotment associations. The council is not involved in the daily management of these sites including their waiting lists.

The development of new growing sites is driven by community demand, and prioritised using geographic and population data. Community involvement is fundamental to the development and management of food growing areas.

Further information on the Food Growing Plan and the locations and contact details for a range of food growing sites in West Lothian is available on the council's website at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing>

Open Space Asset Transfer Policy

The council will occasionally receive requests from community groups or individuals to transfer (lease) or sell open space assets. The council may also be requested to enter into an informal but documented agreement that allows a group or individual to manage and maintain an area of open space for their own purposes such as for sport or community growing, which may include affording them some exclusive use of the asset.

If an asset is transferred under a lease arrangement or sold, this asset is no longer considered available for free, ad hoc public access and would no longer be considered active open space i.e. no longer contributes to the council's open space standards in relation to quality, quantity, and accessibility of open space.

Asset Transfer or Sale Prohibited

The council's default position will be that no asset transfer or sale will be considered whereby the loss of the asset would reduce open space standards for a settlement to below acceptable standards for quantity, accessibility, or quality.

In the case of quantity, the council will apply the standard set out in Section 4 i.e. if the loss of an asset would reduce an individual settlement's quantity of active open space to below 6 acres per 1000 people it will not be supported.

In the case of accessibility, the council will apply the standard previously set out i.e. if the loss of the asset removes a park or play asset in its entirety from public use, and therefore reduces the public's access to play areas and parks to below recommended accessibility standards it will not be supported. For example, if the loss of a local park asset results in local residents no longer being within 500m of a local park (or other park higher in the park hierarchy), it will not be supported.

Where only part of a park or play asset is proposed for loss, the accessibility of the remainder of the park or play area will be considered to ensure the loss of a given area does not significantly or permanently reduce access to the remaining assets. For example, the loss of part of an asset may relocate the main access a significant distance from the local community, or force access through a more dangerous, minor entrance including road crossings, or create significant local resident disturbance by relocating pedestrian and vehicle access i.e. it is now further from a community or there are limited access routes e.g. over a busy road. Where there is a significant negative impact it will not be supported.

In the case of quality, where only part of a park or play asset is proposed for loss the council will apply the quality standard previously defined i.e. if the loss of the area will reduce the quality of a park or play area to an unfit for purpose condition, it will not be supported.

Where only part of a park or play asset is proposed for loss, the remainder of the park or play area will be considered to ensure that guidance standards for that asset type are maintained. i.e. if the size of the area lost or the features within the area lost mean the asset no longer meets the guidance criteria for that asset type, the whole asset will be considered to be lost, and the council will not support an asset transfer or sale.

Whereby the council does have a strategic over provision of an asset type, the whole loss of an asset or potential downgrading of an asset (e.g. from Neighbourhood Park to Local Park) may be considered on a case by case basis. However, if additional resources are needed to maintain the remaining open space due to reduced or changed accessibility to the wider area then it will not be supported. For example, if the transfer of an asset, and/or the development of the asset by a third party, was likely to result in significant additional litter or anti-social behaviour that would incur significant additional costs to the council such as where the transfer of the asset could result in construction that prohibits maintenance access to the remaining area, or increases maintenance etc.

Asset Transfer or Sale Consideration

Where there would be no clear lowering of open space standards to unacceptable levels, or additional costs to council, asset transfer or sale may be supported.

Any asset transfer or sale that relates to active open space will require the council's Open Space and Cemeteries Manager or NETs, Land and Countryside Services, Service Manager to grant permission for any asset transfer to take place.

Any asset transfer will only be considered where a community group or other third party has submitted a written maintenance and financial plan to the council. This must include provision for both routine ongoing maintenance and long-term cyclical maintenance of features when they naturally expire e.g. artificial grass surfaces require to be replaced every 10-15 years, wooden fences will typically expire after 10 years etc. Any submitted plan must apply to a period of no less than 20 years. Any subsequent lease must include a legal requirement that the group or individual will return the asset to its original use/condition at the end of any lease period or in the event of their failure to maintain to the standard outlined in the maintenance plan.

Any asset transfer/sale will only be supported where the community group or third party have clearly demonstrated that the loss of freely available access to the public open space is supported by the local community including those not directly affiliated with those applying for asset transfer. The aforementioned is required to protect the interests of all those that may be using open space for a variety of recreational and other uses e.g. organised community events, dog walking, outdoor gyms, picnics etc. Typically, the council would require any consultation with the public, by the requesting group or individual, to include the council approving consultation questions and information methods and programme in order to ensure a suitable range and volume of returns are received.

The council will not financially contribute to any construction project related to asset transfer/sale whereby the asset will no longer be freely open to the public on an ad hoc basis.

Local Maintenance Agreement

Where the council receives requests to allow communities or individuals to supplement or adopt maintenance of an area, these will be considered on a case by case basis, only when a written maintenance plan is submitted to the council for consideration. The council will not support requests whereby any permanent structures are added, or whereby there is any restriction on public access i.e. these would require consideration as an asset transfer with appropriate lease or sale of the area only. Any written submission must include demonstration of adequate public liability insurance, a risk assessment and method statement related to any works.



5.0 MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF OPEN SPACE

Open Space requires, and is impacted by, different management regimes. It needs maintaining with various resources. These are delivered by various council officers, teams and service areas as well as external agencies and community groups.

5.1 Management and maintenance – resources and investment

Various service areas have a revenue budget that contributes to day-to-day maintenance of open spaces and wider green spaces allowing the council to meet its legal obligations to ensure council assets are safe. However, addressing poor open space standards, improving the general quality of open spaces and wider greenspaces, and replacing assets that naturally reach the end of their life across West Lothian, requires more significant investment. These are “capital works”. In general, each service area decides upon a list of priority projects annually and may develop longer term management projects, based on ensuring public safety or maintaining and improving service delivery. These are reported to the Council Executive when considering the capital programme.

In relation to urban parks, council Open Space Officers have historically identified parks that are considered ‘unfit for purpose’ i.e. scoring less than 40 on the quality standard. They would then consider the accessibility and quantity standards of the surrounding area prior to determining the list of priorities for capital investment. For example, an unfit park in an area with a good quantity of open space, with lots of parks attaining quality standards and within easy reach of residents would be a lesser priority than an area with very little quality open space within its reach. Where standards are poor, and there is a lack of formal parks, investment in areas other than parks may be considered e.g. green networks or community woodlands which could augment active open space in an area.

In previous years, the amount of capital funds available for open space investment has been determined through the council’s 10-year budget setting exercise. The current programme runs from April 2018 to the end of March 2028. The 10-year budget setting exercise should identify what capital funds are available each year in order to plan ahead with a structured investment programme in open space. In the last few years, however, the council’s overall budget has been reduced annually which has resulted in cuts to investment in open space, including parks and play assets.

At the time of writing this Plan further cuts in capital investment were being considered across the council which are expected to again result in a reduced capital programme being made available to Open Space officers, as well as the other service areas involved in open space provision, management and maintenance.

Some service areas have dedicated revenue and/or capital budgets or have teams of operatives and officers that focus directly on aspects of open space e.g. Grounds Maintenance or the Play Inspection Team. Others undertake work or manage features that affects open space but they have no dedicated resources relating solely to open space issues e.g. Roads Lighting or Property Services. In general, each service area may have their own unique legislative requirements, standards, objectives and measures, while also contributing to wider overarching legislation, national guidance, and local objectives and measures related to open space.

Only those services involved in managing council owned open space assets that are freely accessible to the public are included in this plan. For example, some of the sports facilities (where booking and charges apply) are managed by West Lothian Leisure on behalf of the council. Likewise, some of the open space around social housing areas is funded and maintained by Housing Services or a housing association. This is a particular feature of Livingston as a former new town. Many housing developments also contain open space managed by a private housing developer often through a factor arrangement. Much of the open space around schools is not accessible to the public and is maintained by the council for pupils only.

5.2 West Lothian Council - NETS, Land and Countryside Services

The majority of the day-to-day management and maintenance of open space is undertaken by NETS, Land and Countryside Services which is a part of Operational Services within the council. This is based at Whitehill Service Centre in Bathgate. Individual teams make up the NETS Service and their remit, management and maintenance responsibilities that relate to open space are summarised below.

Open Space & Cemeteries

The Open Space Team is primarily tasked with the capital investment of the council's urban parks and play assets in order to maintain quality provision in settlements across West Lothian. Officers undertake assessments of the local, neighbourhood and district parks as well as play assets to update open space and assets databases. The location, quantity and quality of open space can then be monitored in order to assess the accessibility, quantity and quality standards to inform and focus investment across West Lothian. This has historically been a combination of targeted capital programmes within individually identified parks and play areas and general upgrades or works to replace features required through deterioration, damage and vandalism in parks, play areas and the wider open space such as green networks.

Play and Outdoor Formal Sports Facilities - West Lothian Council offers all residents free access to safe, well maintained Play Areas and Outdoor Formal Sports facilities, located within open public spaces across all settlements. Free outdoor play in particular offers a multitude of benefits, as outlined above.

Investment in play assets including formal play equipment, outdoor exercise equipment, ball courts and multi-use games areas is managed by Open Space Officers through a capital investment programme. Our vision is for West Lothian to be a place for varied, sustainable, flexible, engaging and inclusive play, making use of both natural and urban settings in the most appropriate manner.

West Lothian Council's equipped play areas are inspected on a regular basis by Play Inspectors within the Open Space team. In between visits, customers are invited to report problems such as broken glass and damaged equipment through the Customer Service Centre or by completing an online form.

The service standards for play area maintenance comprise inspections and repairs as follows:
 Inspect and maintain our play areas once every ten working days;
 conduct independent inspection of all sites at least once every 18 months;
 make safe dangerous or vandalised equipment within 24 hours.

Cemeteries and graveyards - West Lothian Council manages and maintains all council owned cemeteries, churchyards and war memorials through the Cemeteries Team with administrative support from other Operational Services officers. The Cemeteries Team provides a comprehensive burial service to the public including the provision and arrangements for Muslim burials, and deals with the sale of lairs, interments (or burials), and issues permission to put up headstones. The council manages and maintains 32 cemeteries and graveyards in West Lothian through its Cemeteries Team, although some no longer have capacity for new burials.

Information regarding fees for lair sales, internments, headstone applications and the issue of certificates is available on the council's website on its Cemeteries, Churchyards and War Memorial webpage. Cemetery management rules and the terms and conditions associated with internments is also on that webpage.

The council will meet the following standards for burial services –

- Arrange interments within 24 hours of receipt of full details;
- keep burial and lair registers records and make these available for the public to read during normal office hours;
- pre-sell lairs, where cemeteries have sufficient capacity and are unrestricted;
- ensure that sufficient cemetery provision is made to allow West Lothian people to be buried within West Lothian if they so wish;
- provide special facilities for Muslim burials and the interment of babies;
- advise customers of any restrictions applying to the erection of headstones and memorials, tributes or other items which may be left on lairs and give authorisation to erect approved headstones or memorials within five working days of receipt of an application;
- leave floral tributes in place for at least 21 days after an interment and keep other tributes such as teddy bears for at least 21 days after interments;
- treat the deceased and their relatives sensitively and with proper consideration and respect;
- ensure the council's cemeteries are always tidy and well maintained.

Park and Woodlands

Ranger Service - The West Lothian Council's Ranger Service has its office at Beecraigs Country Park and works across the county. The Ranger Service, together with the rest of the Parks & Woodland staff, provide invaluable skills, expertise and experience in the management of West Lothian's countryside. This has a positive outcome on open space through physical works but also improves the experience of those using the outdoors.

The Rangers Service enhances the appreciation and understanding of West Lothian's open spaces by the provision of an information and advisory service, maintains an access management role and supports formal and informal recreational opportunities, conservation and environmental education. Further details about the Service Standard for the Ranger Service can be found on the council's website at https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/29770/2023-Ranger-Service-Service-Standard/pdf/2023_Ranger_Service_Service_Standard_pdf

The Rangers encourage and assist visitors to enjoy West Lothian's countryside especially in the management of access across West Lothian. They provide interpretative facilities, lead/coordinate public events, provide presentations and children's activities and promote working with volunteers, community and partner organisations. They also assist in managing the natural heritage enjoyed by visitors and enhancing biodiversity by promoting awareness and understanding of the natural environment, for example at Bio Blitz events.

A programme of events and activities is run by the Rangers throughout the year. The team works closely with a number of Friends Groups. They also manage West Lothian Volunteer Ranger Service which offers additional volunteering opportunities across West Lothian, including within the 3 Country Parks and wider greenspaces. Planned practical outdoor tasks include vegetation control, meadow management, tree management and pond work.

The Rangers, including an Access Ranger, have responsibility for overseeing access management across West Lothian including core paths, rights of way and other public access routes, particularly in non-urban areas. They support the West Lothian Access Forum. This is an independent, statutory advisory body set up in accordance with Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. It aims to deliver a balanced representation of land managers, participants in outdoor access, communities and public agencies. By developing a consensual approach inclusive of all interests, the Forum provides advice and recommendations on outdoor access in West Lothian to the council, and via the council primarily through the Access Ranger and to other persons or bodies. Further information about the West Lothian Access Forum can be found at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/77201/About-the-West-Lothian-Local-Access-Forum>

Ecology and Biodiversity - The Ecology and Biodiversity Team was created in 2021 with the primary task of updating the West Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) which was out of date. They also help the council address the global nature crisis at a local level. The team is responsible for creating and delivering policy and plans relating to biodiversity and climate change, implementing biodiversity enhancement projects, facilitating community engagement and inputting into the council's planning process - ensuring that biodiversity is considered, from the strategic Local Development Plan to individual planning applications.

An extensive mapping exercise in 2022 identified a range of habitats in West Lothian. Due to expanding populations in the Central Belt of Scotland, urbanisation, transport, pollution and the human demand for natural resources that all these bring, there are many pressures on our habitats. Maintaining diversity and quality of habitats and protecting vulnerable species throughout the area, whether rural or urban, is important for the health of our environment, wildlife and our communities.

The new West Lothian Local Biodiversity Plan 2025-35 will identify the local priorities for protecting and enhancing ecosystems, habitats and species across West Lothian. The plan is not only for council delivery but one that all partners can work to, enabling a joined-up approach across the area. Project work with a number of stakeholders and landowners is a key tool in collaboratively delivering the LBAP.

Trees and Woodlands - The council's Trees and Woodland Team is part of NET's, Land and Countryside within Operational Services based at Beecraigs Country Park. They are responsible for council trees and woodland areas including inspection, safety, management, and development.

They operate across West Lothian carrying out tree works, including tree inspections, surveying, felling, pruning and planting as well as Forestry Operations. The team includes highly qualified and experienced Trees and Woodland Operatives and Tree Inspectors. All works and tree assessments/inspections are carried out to industry standards. There is a consistent approach to requests for service which ensures that all requests are treated fairly and in line with WLC's Tree Management and Safety Policy.

West Lothian Council owns approximately 1000ha of forest and woodland varying from the 270ha forest in Beecraigs Country Park to the numerous smaller shelterbelts and woods which were an intrinsic part of the design for the new town of Livingston and reclamation sites around the council area. There is also a large population of individual trees along streets, in school grounds, council house gardens and parks.

Trees and woodland make a significant contribution to quality of life, the local economy and the environment. A Management Plan for Trees and Woodland on West Lothian Council owned land has been developed to introduce a more holistic and planned regime for the management of trees and woodland growing on land owned or adopted by the council. It includes management guidelines/rules as to how the council proposes to manage its trees and woodland, including the management of associated risks and clarifying what the council is able/is unable to do in response to requests for service from the public. This document is available on the council's website at https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/16468/Tree-and-Woodland-Management-Plan-Report/pdf/20240223_West_Lothian_Council_Tree_and_Woodland_Management_Plan_drytc9p1u3qd.pdf

In addition to remedial work to address tree safety issues or other problems it is important that the council manages its trees and woodland to ensure the long-term sustainability of the tree population in each locality, thus maintaining the amenity, conservation, climate change mitigation and economic benefits which trees provide for both current and future generations. A Tree Management and Safety Policy has also been adopted in response to increasing windblow due to increased severe weather incidences and an ageing woodland portfolio. This is also available on the council's website. The policy seeks to introduce a consistent approach to tree and woodland management across all council services which ensures the sustainability of these valued assets and maintains a balance between public safety and the numerous benefits which trees provide.

West Lothian Council will strive to manage its woods and tree populations in a manner which ensures their long-term sustainability. The work will be reliant on resource availability but will be prioritised according to the benefit to the public in terms of the landscape value, level of recreational use and environmental importance of individual areas, potential current or future risks from trees and the availability of funds, especially those from external sources. Tree and woodland works are carried out in accordance with current best practice including British Standards and the UK Forest Standard.

If you believe a tree on council land is dead, diseased, dying, dangerous, causing or likely to cause structural damage then please contact us through the Customer Service Centre or on the website using the Report It option. This will then be assessed by a qualified officer and, where appropriate, action shall be taken.

The council will implement a pro-active system to maintain reasonable levels of public safety from potentially hazardous trees on its land in tandem with looking for opportunities to increase its woodland area in appropriate locations where this will improve the local landscape and recreational resource as well as enhancing biodiversity and the council's contribution to reducing climate change. In general, the council's woods are to be managed on a continuous cover forestry regime rather than clear-felling and replanting. However, due to the exposed conditions or the nature of woodlands this will not always be possible. At the time of preparing the Open Space Plan woodland management work was focussed on the Ash Dieback Replanting Programme and implementing the Long-Term Forest Plan for Livingston.

The council also has powers to control work on trees on private land through the planning system. If there is a tree preservation order in force in your area or if you live in a conservation area you will be restricted in what you can do regarding tree work. Please contact the Customer Service Centre to check whether your area or trees are covered by any restrictions before undertaking works on individual trees or woodlands. You can check if a tree or property is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) by accessing the TPO Register on the council's website.

Grounds Maintenance

Grounds Maintenance is based at Whitehill Service Centre with some smaller depots across West Lothian. The service undertakes grounds maintenance for open spaces, parks, sports facilities, roadside verges and country parks including cyclical activities such as grass cutting, weed spraying, shrub-bed maintenance and hedge cutting.

The council has Service Standards for Grounds Maintenance which sets out its priorities for these services standards. These are outlined in the table below. The service has developed grounds maintenance zones for service delivery which is consistent with the approach taken for cleansing activities. Zoning is based on location and land use with land types being divided into 8 broad categories/zones according to land use and volume of traffic.

In order to provide a degree of operational planning, these service standards have been designed around resource availability, zoning methodology and the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (Scotland) 2018 (Scottish Government), that defines standards for cleanliness and weed growth.

The service standards, detailed in Table 6 below, provide an operational cycle that ensures the general coverage of the authority area required to maintain grounds maintenance standards. However, the service retains the operational capacity to react to ad hoc events that require a speedier response to improve the standard of grounds maintenance to meet safety requirements. The balance of routine and ad-hoc works is influenced by many factors and may result in the need to reprioritise routine works on a needs basis.

Neighbourhood Environmental Teams (NETs) will react to both grounds maintenance and street cleansing related issues such as those outlined below. The NETs teams will react to a number of issues:

- Sharps and needle removal;
- removal of bodily fluids;
- dead animals;
- fly tipping;
- dog fouling;
- broken glass;
- overgrown shrubs or bushes blocking footpaths and/or roads;
- overhanging branches blocking footpaths and/or roads;
- overgrown grass obstructing road sightlines; and
- graffiti.

Table 6 – Grounds Maintenance Service Standards

Zone / Category	Zone Summary / Remarks	Grass Cutting	Weed Spraying	Hedge Cutting
1 - Town Centre	This would include areas of high footfall associated with educational establishment, particularly secondary and primary schools	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases, fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	1 x annually
2 - Residential (high density)	Terraced, tenement, flatted housing and educational establishments	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases, fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	1 x annually
3 - Residential (low density)	Detached and semi-detached Housing and educational establishments	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases, fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	1 x annually
4 - Sports fields and facilities	Football pitches, athletic fields etc. and all sports facilities managed by West Lothian Council	16 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases, fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	Ad Hoc
5- Open spaces and parks	Open spaces and parks not classified as common ground	12 x annually	¹ Shrub beds, tree bases, fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	Ad Hoc
6 - Industrial areas	Areas of common ground within industrial estates	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases, fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	Ad Hoc

7 - Classified roads and verges not included in zones 1 - 3	Classified Roads (A, B and C) linking towns and residential areas	1 x annually	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc
8 - Rural roads and verges including Livingston Greenways & Wild Flower areas	These areas have specific health and safety requirements to ensure safe operation	1 x annually	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc

Shrub pruning is carried out to all council beds once a year between November and March.

Garden Maintenance scheme (for council tenants only) - Grass cutting x 11 visits a year with every 3rd cycle including strimming edges. Hedges cut x 1 visit a year.

Cleaner Communities

The Cleaner Communities team is based at Whitehill Service Centre in Bathgate. They are responsible for the provision and emptying of most waste bins (including litter and dog fouling) in parks and urban areas (the emptying of some bins within play areas is the responsibility of the Open Space Play Inspectors within Open Space).

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (The Act) imposes a duty on local authorities and certain other landowners and occupiers to keep specified land clear of litter and refuse so far is practicable. The Act also places a duty on local authorities or Scottish Ministers to keep public roads clean so far is practicable. The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse issued under section 89 of The Environmental Protection Act 1990 defines standards of cleanliness which are achievable in different locations and under differing circumstances. It is concerned with how clean land is, rather than how often it is swept. The Code of Practice does not, therefore suggest cleaning frequencies. Rather it sets out how quickly different types of land should be returned to a set cleanliness standard. The objective of the Code of Practice is to establish reasonable and generally acceptable standards of cleanliness which those under the duty should be capable of meeting.

The Code of Practice is based on two principles:

1. Areas which are habitually more heavily trafficked should have accumulations of litter cleared away more quickly than less heavily trafficked areas; and
2. Larger accumulations of litter and refuse should be cleared more quickly than smaller accumulations.

The Code of Practice provides a cleanliness standard based on land use. It sets out grades of cleanliness and divides land into zones according to usage and volume of traffic. If the cleanliness of an area falls, the Code of Practice sets out a response time that is the target for the duty body to restore the land to a particular grade of cleanliness.

Zoning is based on location and land use. The Code of Practice divides land types into broad categories or zones according to land use and volume of traffic. Service frequencies provide an operational cycle that ensures the general coverage of the authority area required to maintain cleanliness standards. However, the service retains the operational capacity to react to ad hoc events that require a speedier response to improve the standard of cleanliness of an area within the maximum timelines detailed in the code of practice. The balance of routine and adhoc works is influenced by many factors and can result in the need to reprioritise routine works on a needs basis, but in general terms include reaction to issues such as sharps and needle removal, dead animals, fly tipping and winter emergencies.

The standards applied by Cleaner Communities are shown in Table 7 below.

There is also a small team of Education/ Enforcement Officers covering West Lothian within Cleaner Communities. This is a dedicated resource that works with communities and carries out education and aware raising as well as enforcement action. Their priorities are Education, Abandoned Vehicles and Fly Tipping.

Table 7 - Cleaner Communities Service Standards

Zone / Category		Zone Summary / Remarks	Litter Picking	Road Sweeper (Compact)	Road Sweeper (HGV)
1	Town Centre	This would include areas of high footfall associated with educational establishment, particularly secondary schools	Daily	Monthly	NA
2	Residential (high density)	Terraced, tenement and flatted housing	Weekly	Quarterly	Quarterly
3	Residential (low density)	Detached and semi-detached housing.	Weekly	Quarterly	Quarterly
4	Areas not falling into zones 1-3	The service applied to these areas will be dependent on Operational knowledge specific to the area concerned	NA	NA	NA
5	Amenity Beaches	Not applicable to West Lothian Council	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Motorways	Not maintained by West Lothian Council	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Rural roads and verges	These areas have specific health and safety requirements to ensure safe operation	3 x annually	NA	Quarterly

5.3 West Lothian Council - Other Operational Service Teams

A number of additional teams within Operational Services have responsibility for features which affect the quality of open and green spaces. This includes Roads and Transportation which manages street lighting, adopted paths, car parks and roads, structures and flood defences. Many of these assets are found within open spaces or along green networks but are not directly managed, maintained or invested in by the Open Space Team.

5.4 Other Council Teams

As well as the services highlighted by the teams above, open space provision is complemented by officers managing public art and sports development. Their policies and programmes will often be implemented in the council's parks, civic spaces and wider green space.

Property Management and Development oversees the management of the council's land and buildings portfolio. It delivers a professional service to internal and external customers to ensure that the council's property assets are deployed and used efficiently and effectively - whether that is to support the delivery of services or to generate income. West Lothian Council owns a significant amount of property located throughout the county including public parks, woodlands, external sports facilities and other open space assets. Open Space officers are often consulted on the proposed transfer of assets by sale, lease or transfer for community management. Generally, the Open Space Team will not support the loss of open space unless accessibility, quantity and quality standards can be maintained and open space users will not be negatively impacted.

Planning Services fulfils the statutory planning and building standards functions of the council. Development Planning & Environment is tasked with delivering the Plan and policy for land management, most recently set out in the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework (NPF4).

The Development Planning & Environment team is responsible for the preparation (and monitoring) of the Local Development Plan (and preparing its next iteration), and other supporting planning policy guidance, information and studies which guide future development and the use of land within West Lothian. This then forms the basis for making decisions on applications for planning permission. The Development Plan, and the decisions taken on planning applications based on its content, have a direct impact on the provision of open space in West Lothian with planning policy safeguarding and shaping open space provision and planning consents managing its creation (and sometimes loss). Open Space officers, therefore, input into consultations when appropriate.

5.5 External agencies

Council revenue and capital investment in open spaces is limited and currently allows the council to keep assets in a 'fit for purpose' condition only. In order to maximise available resources to make improvements and to ensure West Lothian open spaces deliver what local communities want, the council will often work with external organisations and the public to secure external grants and volunteering opportunities to improve open spaces.

Partnership working with external agencies provides significant additional resources to protect, enhance, and create open space. Historically there have been many joint projects involving the council. For example, works to improve the Livingston North and South Blue/Green Networks have involved liaison with Green Action Trust and The Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS). There have been joint projects with Sustrans to improve active travel routes through green spaces. The council has also worked with Forth Rivers Trust, Edinburgh & Lothian Greenspace Trust and The Conservation Volunteers to deliver projects on council owned land.

Council capital funds allocated to open space may be used as leverage to pull in additional external match funding or investment, which may influence priorities i.e. one unfit site or settlement with poor standards may be chosen for investment over another if there is potential to bring in external funding for an individual site or settlement/other area.

External funding sources related to open space include Forest and Land Scotland, Landfill Funds, The National Lottery Heritage funding, Central Scotland Green Network Development Fund, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency funding, NatureScot and West Lothian Development Trust.

5.6 Community Involvement

Budget reductions have impacted on the level of service undertaken by Grounds Maintenance over a number of years, with changes to particular routine services such as grass cutting and grounds maintenance being applied from April 2019 e.g. the upkeep of hanging baskets, planters and most flower beds is no longer undertaken.

There are a number of community groups and volunteers who have taken on responsibility for different council areas and now weed, water, maintain and create planters, shrub and flower beds as well as orchards and wildflower/meadow areas. Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow has taken on responsibility for a number of public areas in Linlithgow for a number of years. They are primarily involved in 'hands-on' work, creating and maintaining Linlithgow's public floral displays in hanging baskets, beds and containers, carrying out tree and orchard planting and other environmental improvements, encouraging wildlife and enhancing the urban scene generally.

The council is happy to consider new proposals from groups provided they have a sustainable plan and resources to do this. If your community group is considering taking responsibility for the maintenance of a shrub or flower bed etc. please use our Report It pages on the website to contact Grounds Maintenance regarding this.

In order to ensure open space meets the needs of its users, council officers will often work closely with the local community. This can include involving communities in quality surveys, offering guidance to community groups on their own projects, consulting school children and local residents when developing capital projects and advising local elected members on projects that are led by communities. Where appropriate, the Community Choices methodology and framework for consultation will be adopted.

5.7 On-line reporting

The council also maintains an online presence relating to open space. Specific issues can be reported directly online to the council, as can feedback on all individual parks, woodlands, and public access routes etc. As and when an open space is allocated capital funding this information can (along with other ad hoc or systematically collected information) form a starting point for additional consultation.

The type of consultation will depend on the scale and nature of investment proposed. Typically, any works that relates to a safety requirement may have no (or limited) consultation opposed to works that relate to a need or desire to improve an open space beyond repairs i.e. if adding new features or changing use of a site.

6.0 OPEN SPACE PROVISION IN WEST LOTHIAN

For management and maintenance decisions to be informed, particularly for future planning, it is necessary to know where and how much open space there is in West Lothian.

6.1 Baseline data

The original 2005 Open Space Plan created an inventory of urban open space sites including at a minimum their name, location, type and dimensions. There were in excess of 1,800 sites mapped and input into the original database (2004) i.e. all sites in West Lothian that were classified as urban open space under PAN 65 typology and greater than 0.2 Ha in size. Site boundaries were identified from Ordnance Survey maps and confirmed by various council officers and consultants on site. Many boundaries were updated in 2017/2018 to reflect changes made since 2005 e.g. sites lost to development, new sites constructed and changes to boundaries for a variety of reasons.

The database has been periodically updated as officers have been made aware of new open space being created through internal investment or third parties (mainly residential developers) or its loss through change of use due to council sales and service requirements such as social housing or third parties through the development plan process. It is a “live” database which reflects constant, on-going changes to land use in West Lothian. Changes are only made to the database when officers become aware of “completed” changes i.e. proposed and commenced developments may affect open space provision in West Lothian particularly in the core development areas identified in the Local Development Plan but the database will only be updated when they are completed and available for public use. This will be done primarily when officers evidence a change on the ground. It is acknowledged that the database may not, therefore, always reflect the up-to-date situation on the ground due to limited officer time to allow desk-top monitoring of aerial mapping or in-person site visits.

The original inventory (baseline data), plus additional detail captured in 2017/18, as well as changes recorded since, forms the council’s Open Space Database. The audit of open space in West Lothian is recorded as a GIS database and a simple spreadsheet that provides information on that open space’s attributes such as location, type of open space (aligning with PAN 65 definitions) and size. The database, therefore, comprises a spatial record (map) of shapefiles delineating open space site boundaries over 0.2 hectares in size (and some under) and supporting text which provides a descriptive, quantitative, qualitative and spatial record for all urban parks within West Lothian and more limited records for all other open spaces within settlement boundaries.

6.2 Open Space Database

The council’s spatial database is publicly available as a GIS based digital map on the West Lothian Council website at [Open Space Map](#). A summary of pertinent details (location, type and size of the open space) is also available by clicking on individual sites.

The open space database, including population figures for West Lothian and park qualitative scoring, allows for an assessment of existing open space against the council’s accessibility, quantity and quality standards (discussed previously). It is also a useful tool in considering the (positive and negative) impacts of new developments on open space and identifying priorities for new investment.

Mid-year population estimates have been made available from NRS for mid-2023 at the local authority area level only. This shows West Lothian’s 2023 mid-year estimate as 183,810. This figure has been used to assess the overall open space provision in West Lothian against the council’s quantity standard.

Individual settlement statements have also been made using population figures extracted from the Population Estimates for Settlements and Localities 2020, produced by National Records of Scotland (NRS) and published in March 2022. This contains the latest available data tables for settlements and localities within Scotland, as identified by NRS, based on mid-2020 population estimates. These were produced with the following notes –

Settlements are groups of adjacent, high-density postcodes whose combined population rounds to 500 people or more. They are separated by low-density postcodes;
Localities correspond to the more well-known towns and cities of Scotland. Localities also have a minimum rounded population of 500 people or more;

Larger settlements may be formed of multiple localities. In some cases, the locality and the settlement are one and the same;

All population estimates have been rounded to the nearest ten;

Settlement and locality boundaries may span multiple council areas;

Settlement parts that cross council boundaries with population below 100 are dropped.

Users should exercise caution when comparing the settlement or locality population estimates with previous years. Whilst an increase in population may be due to new build, it may also be due to the inclusion of existing housing which had previously been separated from the settlement by a low-density postcode (and vice versa for a population decrease).

Their methodology has meant that some villages and towns, regarded as settlements in West Lothian, have not been individually identified. This may be because they are too small for the population estimates or have been included within a larger settlement. For example, Breich, Greenrigg, Philpstoun, Pumpherston, Uphall, Uphall Station and Westfield do not have available population figures in the NRS mid-2020 estimates.

For the purpose of this Plan these settlement populations have been estimated by applying a percentage increase, based on the overall West Lothian population change from 2015 to 2020 i.e. 1.61% increase. It is acknowledged that not all of these settlements will necessarily have increased in population size but in the absence of more definitive figures this will suffice for open space assessments at a settlement level.

6.3 Overall West Lothian open space statement

The amount of “active” open space is used to calculate the quantity standard in West Lothian. With a total of over 1,297 acres of active open space, West Lothian has, on average, more than the recommended average supply of active space for its population i.e. 7.06 acres per 1000 population compared to the recommended 6 acres per 1000 population.

On top of this there is other open space (woodlands, amenity grassland etc.) that is accessible to residents in West Lothian. The distribution of this active open space across West Lothian does, however, differ across the county.

The council considers accessibility to play areas and local, neighbourhood, district and country parks when applying its accessibility standard, with recommended minimum distances to each depending on their type, as detailed in section 4.

All settlements in West Lothian are within 10km of at least one of the Country Parks.

Only a handful of settlements are not within the recommended distance to a District Park: Addiewell, Blackridge/Westrigg and Woodend although some small areas of the other settlements do not fall within the 4km recommended distance.

The majority of West Lothian’s settlements are within the recommended distance to a Neighbourhood Park. Some that do not are, however, not large enough to meet the recommended size threshold to expect a Neighbourhood Park to be located there such as Bridgend, Dechmont, Ecclesmachan, Philpstoun and Seafield.

There are a number of settlements where there is not a Local Park within 500m of all their residents. In many cases, however, they do have access to another park in the park hierarchy e.g. Uphall Station. Westfield residents do not, however, have access to a Local or Neighbourhood Park within the recommended distances of 500m and 1km respectively.

Perhaps of more importance than distance to a range of parks, is the quality of those parks that the public can access. West Lothian Council has 104 Local, Neighbourhood and District Parks. (There are also 3 Country Parks but they are not assessed against the quality standard). One Local Park (Beechwood in Linlithgow) and one Neighbourhood Park (Fallas Park in Fauldhouse) are currently regarded as “not fit for purpose”, falling below the recommended score of 40 and above when assessed against the quality scoring criteria.

On the whole, West Lothian has a good supply of active open space with the majority of settlements able to access a range of parks within recommended distances. Less than 2% of parks do not meet the recommended quality standard of West Lothian Council.

6.4 Provision of open space in West Lothian at a settlement level

The active open space managed by the council can be assessed against our quantity, quality and accessibility standards at a settlement level. Settlement statements are recorded in Appendix 2.



7.0 GREEN AND BLUE NETWORKS IN WEST LOTHIAN

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, defines green networks to mean connected areas of green infrastructure and open space. The (draft) Town and Country Planning (Open Space Strategies) (Scotland) Regulations 2022, amends this definition with the addition of *that together form an integrated and multi-functional network*. Green networks in this Plan, therefore, refers to *connected areas of green infrastructure and open space that together form an integrated and multi-functional network*.

For the purposes of this Plan the multi-functional element will include an identifiable access route where the public can take responsible access, for example, a right of way, core path, active travel route, canal path or greenway.

7.1 Green and blue networks

Green networks provide links through, and between, communities and the countryside. They vary in length and width. Most types of open space form key components of the green network. Some are of local importance, some will benefit a wider settlement area like a neighbourhood or district while some will deliver multiple benefits across West Lothian and be of strategic importance. Green networks can also cross local authority boundaries such as the Union Canal towpath.

Green networks not only allow connections between green infrastructure and the movement of people and wildlife across West Lothian, but can themselves be valuable green, blue and civic spaces of varying sizes whether natural or man-made features adjacent to, bordering and sometimes forming the access network itself e.g. amenity grassland through a park. Vegetated strips provide shelter and opportunities for hunting or highways for pollinators. Street trees and hedges offer shade, shelter and structure and create nature networks. Swales and raingardens offer additional habitat and supporting eco-systems for a range of aquatic and terrestrial species as well as mitigating flooding events and climate change and help combat biodiversity loss.

They allow the movement of people to access services and facilities but also offer leisure and recreational opportunities. Car journeys and carbon emissions can be reduced where safe and pleasant walking and wheeling routes are provided contributing to healthier lifestyles.

Green networks are an excellent delivery mechanism to meet a wide range of Scottish Government objectives including conserving and increasing biodiversity and encouraging active travel by enhancing public access routes. West Lothian sits within the area designated as the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN). The CSGN was first designated in 2009, as a National Development in National Planning Framework 2. It covers 10,000km² across 19 local authority areas of Scotland's central belt.

The Scottish Government's vision for the CSGN is *"to transform central Scotland into a place where the environment adds value to the economy, and where people's lives are enriched by the environment's quality"*. This is an ambitious, long-term environmental programme which is recognised with the CSGN still remaining as a National Development in the current National Planning Framework 4. It addresses climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental inequality by connecting people to greenspace where it is needed most.

Key agencies, local authorities, third sector organisations and landowners have developed a range of partnerships to deliver projects contributing to the CSGN. In West Lothian, the council worked with Central Scotland Green Network Trust (now Green Action Trust) on the Livingston South Blue Green Network to create enhanced access and biodiversity corridors. More recent partnership work has included woodland management in Blackmoss Nature Park in Armadale. Both projects have and will continue to deliver a range of community and biodiversity benefits along those green networks.

As highlighted above, green networks are available at different levels and deliver benefits that are of local to strategic importance. Combined benefits are best achieved when all levels are connected to form a strategic, local authority wide, green network.

A strategic green network has been mapped using formal access networks that connect local, neighbourhood, district and country parks within and between communities and their surrounding countryside across West Lothian. It is acknowledged that large water bodies, woodlands, agricultural land and amenity grassland also have public access on or through them but this Plan is focused on

accessible open space in the council's ownership or management that receives maintenance and investment. Urban and country parks in West Lothian are, therefore, the focus for connectivity by way of green networks. It is also acknowledged that not all the access routes are within the council's ownership and will not receive any council management or investment. They do, however, provide responsible access to the communities of West Lothian with the council having access responsibilities to ensure they remain available for this purpose. West Lothian's strategic green network is shown on the map below.

7.2 Enhancing West Lothian's strategic green network

The primary purpose of enhancement work is to safeguard and protect existing green networks and avoid their fragmentation. A number of actions will be undertaken by the council in order to ensure that the strategic green network continues to be maintained and enhanced in West Lothian:

The council will continue to invest in its open spaces where resources allow, primarily in the urban and country parks, to ensure standards are met in these green infrastructure components which are needed to form quality green networks. When designing park improvements consideration will be given to creating or enhancing access links to external green networks such as the Livingston Greenways but also the habitat that lies on both sides of a park boundary. For example, if there is a woodland external to a park, which has a public access network within it, could new trees be planted within the park boundary to enhance the woodland edge and thus the green network?

Open Space officers will support council strategies and plans that will enhance green networks such as future revisions to the Core Paths Plan and long-term woodland plans;

Open Space officers will support planning applications that propose creating or improving green networks, when consulted;

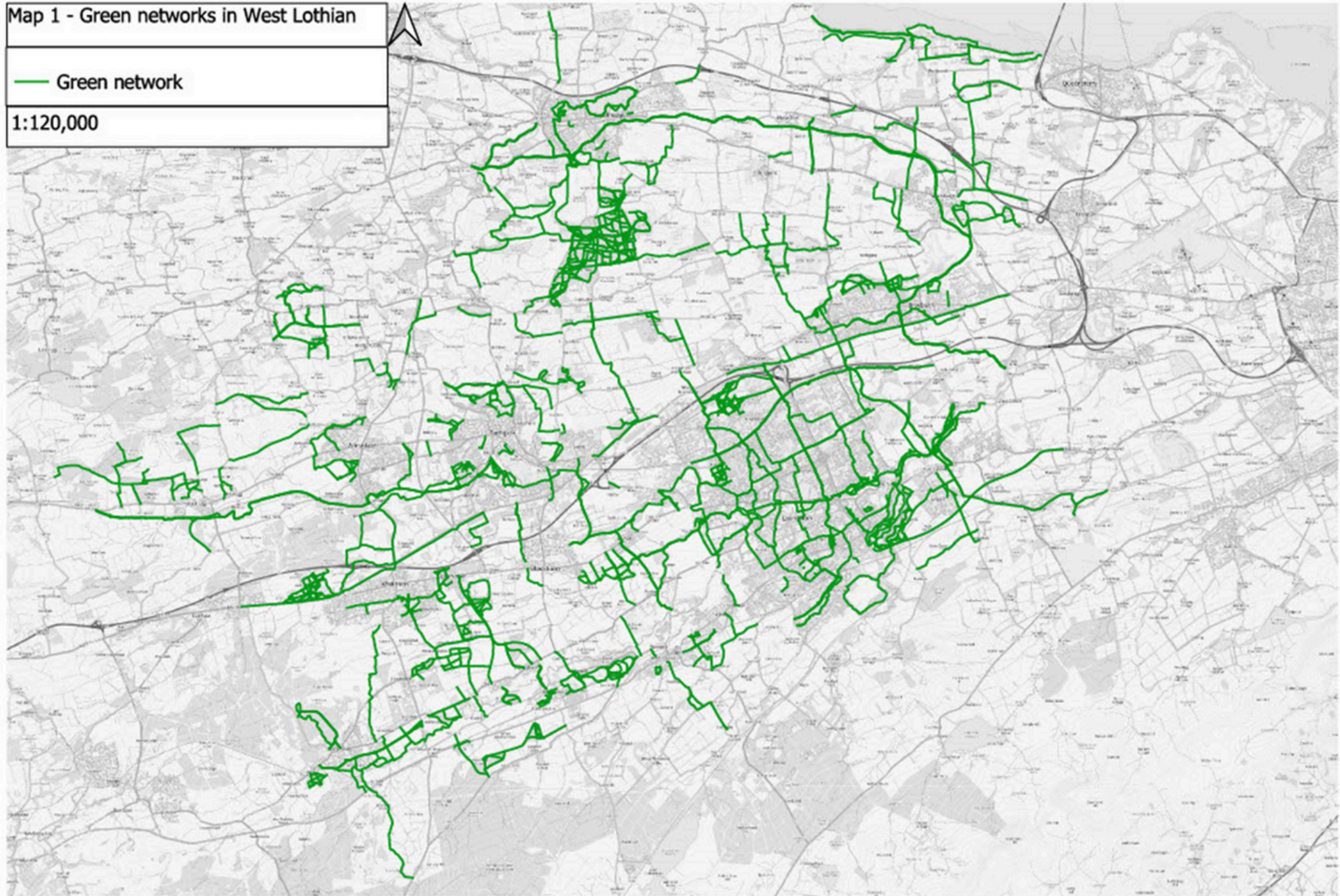
the council's Ecology & Biodiversity team will lead on the implementation of the new Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-35 (LBAP) (*when adopted*) including the enhancement of nature and green networks through delivery of council or partnership projects. Phased green network enhancement work has already been completed through the Whitburn Town Walk Greening Project; the new LBAP will encourage and support private landowners in their green network enhancement projects.



Map 1 - Green networks in West Lothian

— Green network

1:120,000



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8.0 FUTURE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE IN WEST LOTHIAN

Planning for the future provision of open space needs consideration as part of the whole life process. It is, of course, impossible to foresee all eventualities, particularly regarding what resources will be available to the council, but an intended plan needs to be thought about to conserve and enhance West Lothian's open space into the future.

8.1 Maintaining assets

The council will continue to invest in open space with a focus on urban parks and play assets that are currently on the database. Investment will be applied to ensure assets have no health and safety issues and ideally meet council standards. Features may, therefore, be upgraded, replaced or removed on existing sites. This could be due to wear and tear or natural deterioration over time or vandalism.

It is unlikely that any new assets will be created unless standards fall short on accessibility i.e. existing parks and play areas, MUGA's, ball courts etc. may be enhanced but completely new sites will generally not be considered as part of the capital programme. New open space that is required because of settlement expansion will be sought through the development management process which is managed by Planning Services. In the majority of cases a developer will be expected to provide open space, particularly active open space, on-site as part of their development if over 10 units. Occasionally there may be a reason for the council to create a new asset but this is only likely to be undertaken using developer contribution generated from new development either from a single site or accumulated from a few e.g. in response to a need for a toddler play area for a new residential development that could not be built by the developer within their development site.

The location, quality and quantity of all existing assets that are maintained, by the council and private developers, will be considered in order to plan for future provision of active open space. This may highlight a surplus of an open space type in an area (where quantity standards are exceeded) or a number of assets that would be better located in a single site to better benefit a community. A decision may then be made to remove a council asset. For example, Livingston has a legacy of small toddler play areas with only a few pieces of equipment. The redesign of one of these to include more pieces that encourages a longer stay (and also meets play area feature requirements) is considered better than numerous sites that do not engage children for more than a few minutes. The removal of some sites in their entirety would, therefore, allow more investment in a single site to secure a better experience and deliver more benefits to users through improved choice and challenges. The status quo regarding numbers will, therefore, not necessarily be maintained if consolidation of sites would better serve the community and it retains, or enhances, open space standards.

It is not possible to forecast the budget that will be available to the council to invest in active open space in the future. If, however, budgets are reduced then a "health and safety first" approach will be adopted. Where budget allows, a repair will generally be undertaken to items that become unsafe, break or are vandalised.

Where budget allows for a replacement, and there is an economic advantage in replacing rather than repairing part of something, then this will be considered. This might be appropriate if the cost of a repair wouldn't be much more than a replacement or where a replacement would offer better value for money over an extended period i.e. a repair might only last 2 years compared to a new item that could last 10 or more years. The additional resources needed to inspect and maintain an item will also be considered when making a repair or replacement decision.

A decision may be made to remove a feature and not repair or replace it. This may be necessary where there is no budget available to do so or the available budget would be considered better spent elsewhere in an attempt to fairly spread resources and maintain standards. This would be particularly true where a feature enhances an open space but is not a necessity to retain standards e.g. a viewing platform or where there is an over provision of seating.

Unfortunately, vandalism is often the reason for the repair, replacement or removal of an item. Where repeated vandalism is identified to be focused on a particular item or within an area then a decision may be taken to remove the target of anti-social behavior. This may be a temporary or permanent action. Continued investment in something that is deliberately and repeatedly damaged is not value for money or good use of public funding.

Maintaining standards in accessibility, quality and quantity will be sought whenever possible. This may, however, become aspirational in the future unless investment stays at current levels or indeed increases as costs go up.

Wherever possible, climate change mitigation and addressing biodiversity loss will be considered when investment is made in active open space. This may require a financial contribution to carry out physical works or may be achieved through a different use of resources e.g. changes to grounds maintenance regimes.

8.2 External resources

Where resources allow and opportunities arise the council will apply for external funding to enhance open space. The availability of this is of course less certain than the council's annual allocated budgets and it is generally competitive with no guarantee of securing all or part of what is sought. There are conditions attached to the majority of funds relating to what they can and can't be used for, whether they need to be match-funded by the council or possibly others and there are usually spend deadlines. This may mean they cannot fit easily within a programme of proposed works (which are often planned on an annual basis) or require more resources than available to a service area. For example, additional officer time may be needed to carry out consultations or collect and monitor specific information than is available or available without affecting other remits and workloads. Funding from external agencies may, however, allow a level of investment in active open space that adds value to a site or asset. They may become a necessary source of funding to maintain standards in the future. The benefits that may be secured in applying for external funding will be weighed up against the time taken to prepare an application (including supporting evidence) and the resources needed to comply with conditions.

Partnership working is another important way of adding value to a project. Partners may have different or additional resources than council officers have at their disposal. This is particularly true of time available to focus on one project. They may also be able to access funding that is unavailable to the council. The council will continue to work with existing partners where possible and consider new opportunities if they arise

Community groups will continue to play a valuable role in creating, enhancing and maintaining open space across West Lothian. There are a number of active groups which are responsible for maintaining planted areas that the council no longer has the resources to attend to and their support in this is gratefully received by the council.

8.3 Consultations

Officers will continue to input into relevant strategies and plans that affect open space. Open Space officers have, for example, already attended workshops and meetings with Planning Services to provide comment on aspects of the next development plan for West Lothian.

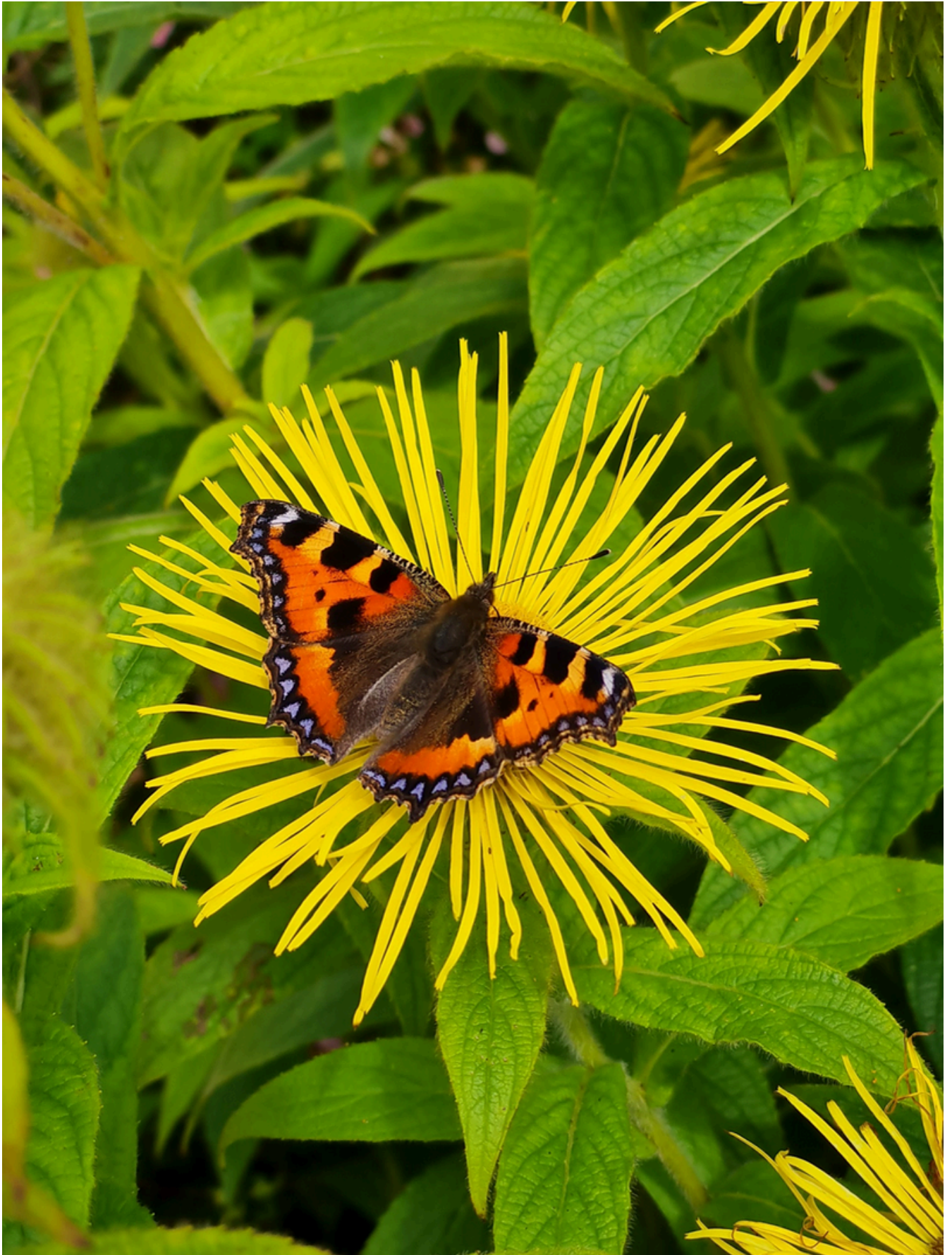
Officers will continue to provide comments on proposed development that is likely to affect open space either in its creation, change or removal. This includes through meetings with developers at the early stages of design, through planning application consultations received by Open Space officers from Planning Services colleagues or providing feedback to Property Services colleagues who have been approached regarding the sale or use of council land such as for a garden extension or leasing part of a park.

8.4 Plan Review

The Open Space Plan 2025-2034 comprises this document and the digitised map representing a visual database of open space in West Lothian. Both will inform and direct the investment in, and management and maintenance of, open space until its review and replacement from 2035.

The written Plan (this document) will cover the full 10-year period and is not intended to be reviewed until preparation of the next Plan prior to 2035.

The digitised map is a "live" tool used to show the location, type and quantity of open space across West Lothian at a given time. As settlements change so too will the location, type and quantity of open space. The map will, therefore, be reviewed and updated periodically as officers become aware of changes. The intention is to make both elements of the Plan available on the council's website for digital reference until they are replaced by a new open space framework.



Appendix 1 Quality Standard Survey Methodology

No.	Category	Sub-category	Score	Some things to consider	Notes
1	High Quality	Character and continuity	1-5	<p>Is the overall space attractive visually?</p> <p>Is there a unique character that distinguishes the space from others?</p> <p>Is there a consistent character and design element throughout? Is the design and features consistent with the surrounding area?</p>	Unique archaeological or natural features will be visible and ideally interpretation available.
2	High Quality	Community Involvement	1-5	<p>Are the community involved in group activities that make use of the space?</p> <p>Are the community contributing to maintenance, policing, and improvement of the space?</p> <p>Are the community engaged in council management of the space and decision making?</p>	Contribution by community can include across sports pitches, play equipment, managing pavilion, conservation projects etc.
3	High Quality	Material Quality	1-5	<p>Is there high quality material used in surface and feature construction?</p> <p>Are materials durable?</p> <p>Does new planting reflect best contribution to overall quality of space i.e. right tree right place, native species, low maintenance, contribute to biodiversity etc.?</p>	Poor quality would include cheap untreated benches, flimsy fences, wind-dust paths where tarmac is required to deal with high footfall.
4	High Quality	Sustainable resources	1-5	<p>Are materials in construction and maintenance from a sustainable source?</p> <p>Is water management sustainable?</p> <p>Is the use of herbicides sustainable and appropriate?</p> <p>Is manual and mechanical vegetation control and other maintenance at appropriate level?</p>	Sustainable materials may be difficult to determine, but should be able to determine if scoring park after an upgrade or if in contact with those responsible for maintenance.

5	High Quality	Adaptability	1-5	Does the space afford flexibility to be managed or used differently over time according to changing needs and uses? Could amenity grassland or pitches become food growing? Could building be erected? Could habitats be changed economically?	
6	Multifunctional	Biodiversity	1-5	<p>Have physical measures been taken to encourage biodiversity? Are there a variety of native plants, are there suitable habitats for native animals? Are non-natives controlled and removed?</p> <p>If there are water bodies are these clean with suitable surrounding vegetation to encourage biodiversity?</p> <p>If notable species and habitats are present, are there any protection measures?</p>	<p>Measures taken could include native planting, bird and bat boxes, areas of previously mown grass allowed to grow, wood piles for insects and amphibians etc.</p> <p>Suitable habitats could include wildflower meadow, areas where grass can grow long, old and new trees, areas with minimal disturbance etc.</p>
7	Multifunctional	Features	1-5	Are all required features for the park available on site, according to its position in the park hierarchy? E.g. Is there a bin, signage, seating, play area, space for recreation if a Local Park?	If all features expected in that level of park are provided then full marks should be given, irrespective of their condition or quality which are considered under different sub-categories.
8	Multifunctional	Networks	1-5	<p>Does the space have green links to wider open space? Does the space contribute to a quality blue network?</p> <p>Are there good sustainable transport links into nearby commercial and/or industrial areas i.e. getting people to work? Does the space link into wider recreational pedestrian or cycle networks including regionally significant ones?</p>	When considering green networks, the extent by which buildings, roads, water, and paths inhibit wildlife travel and disturbance should be considered i.e. rope bridges, underpasses, green bridges etc. improve the quality of a network.

9	Multifunctional	Regulating Services	1-5	<p>Is this the largest green space in the area?</p> <p>Is the space storing water from surrounding areas through vegetation or direct drainage? (or is it contributing to flooding?) Is the space improving water quality e.g. quality of run off, or standing water?</p> <p>Does the space provide significant habitat for pollinators?</p> <p>Is there significant vegetation on site that can help to filter pollutants e.g. trees, bushes, long grasses, rushes/reeds, bog mosses, etc.?</p> <p>Is there vegetation on site that is helping to prevent soil erosion</p> <p>E.g. plants on slopes, beside waterways, etc.? (or are there signs of soil erosion, e.g. bare ground on slopes?)</p>	
10	Multifunctional	Cultural Services (Variety of use)	1-5	<p>Are there any good views or nice places to relax/enjoy the surroundings here?</p> <p>Are there any places particularly good for studying plants or watching wildlife?</p> <p>Can people play a number of different sports activities here? Does play equipment cater to different ages?</p> <p>Are there features for other recreational activities? E.g. dog walking, picnics, public art etc.</p> <p>Is there a suitable space that allows for events and new activities? e.g. school sports days, gala, markets</p>	

				Does the space offer opportunities for learning and school use?	
11	Safe and Welcoming	Accessibility	1-5	<p>Is the area within 500m of a community?</p> <p>Is the majority of the space accessible to able bodied?</p> <p>Is a large part of the space and its features accessible to buggies and wheelchairs?</p> <p>Is car parking and public transport links appropriate for the size and function of the site</p> <p>Are any sports and play equipment accessible to all abilities</p>	
12	Safe and Welcoming	Entrances and boundary	1-5	<p>Are fences, gates, and vehicle barriers appropriate for space and attractive</p> <p>Are entrances in the right place, clear and welcoming or are they hidden or intimidating</p> <p>Could the site be easily found by new visitors to the area either on foot or by vehicle</p> <p>Does the space have a clear boundary?</p>	
13	Safe and Welcoming	Maintenance	1-5	<p>Does the park have scheduled maintenance?</p> <p>Is maintenance effective e.g. are damaged features being repaired, vegetation controlled, furniture treated, bins emptied Is it clear who maintains the site and how to contact them</p>	

				<p>Is the area draining well or are there areas of flooding that could restrict access and potentially be unsafe?</p> <p>Are there any areas of neglect?</p> <p>Do features need repaired or replaced</p>	
14	Safe and Welcoming	Orientation and Interpretation	1-5	<p>Is it clear that this is a park?</p> <p>Is it clear what is available in the space and where it is?</p> <p>Is it clear what the space links to? E.g. industrial estate, core path, neighbouring settlements etc.</p> <p>Is there any information about the wildlife/history/geography/folklore of the site?</p>	
15	Safe and Welcoming	Safety	1-5	<p>Are there areas where people may not feel safe during the day or at night</p> <p>How much of the park is visible from nearby houses and roads?</p> <p>i.e. natural surveillance</p> <p>Are there signs of anti-social behaviour e.g. graffiti, fly-tipping, broken glass, damaged furniture, evidence of drinking and drug- use</p> <p>Do paths and entrances etc. allow for pedestrians to safely pass wheeled users</p>	

Appendix 2 – Open space settlement statements

The open space database has been used to create a summary of active open space provision and standards for each of West Lothian’s main settlements. This is a useful tool in considering the impact of new developments and in identifying priorities for new investment.

Each settlement listed below has a summary of its active open space including site names and size, and reference to the settlement’s quality, quantity, and accessibility standards (outlined above).

It should be noted (for the purposes of the settlement reviews) that ‘Playspaces’ are play areas that are outwith formal parks i.e. standalone sites. In general, all Local, Neighbourhood, District, and Country Parks also contain play areas.

Population estimates are mid 2020 estimates, published by National Records of Scotland.

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1. Addiewell / Loganlea

Quality/Quantity Standard

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Addiewell	2	1.44	
Local Park	1	1.44	
Meadowhead Crescent		1.44	52
Playspace	1	0.09	
Addiewell PS Play Area		0.09	
Loganlea	3	7.09	
Local Park	1	0.56	
Loganlea Road Green		0.56	56
Neighbourhood Park	1	6.51	
Loganlea Park		6.51	48
Playspace	1	0.02	
Loganlea Place		0.02	
Total	5	8.62	
Population	1,280		
Quantity Standard	6.73		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	3 out of 3 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties are within 500m of a play area. Approx. 20 properties in Addiewell (Station Court, Faraday Place, and Blackburn Road) are not within 500m of any play area.

The majority of properties are within 500m of a formal park. Approx. 20 properties in Addiewell (Station Court, Faraday Place, and Blackburn Road) are not within 500m of any formal park.

All properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park, and 10km of a Country Park.

All Loganlea properties are within 4km of a District Park. The majority of properties in Addiebrowhill and Addiewell are not within 4km of a District Park.

2.Armadale

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	2	7.21	
Avondale Park		5.29	55
St Anthony's Park		1.92	54
Neighbourhood Park	3	41.45	
Drove Road Park		20.37	54
Watson Park		10.61	59
Wood Park		10.47	48
Playspace	6	2.87	
Eastertoun Ball Court		0.17	
Glenwood Drive		0.05	
Gracie's Wynd Play Area		0.57	
Kerr's Way Play Area (Private)		0.16	
Mayfield Green		1.79	
Watt Avenue Play Area		0.13	
Sports Bowling Green	2	1.78	
Armadale West Bowling Club		0.89	
Watson Park Bowling Club		0.88	
Sports Football Pitch	1	3.09	
Volunteer Park		3.09	
War Memorial	1	0.05	
Armadale War Memorial		0.05	
Total	15	56.58	
Population	12,720		
Quantity Standard	4.45		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	5 out of 5 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in Armadale are within 500m of a play area. Approx. 60 new properties in the South are not within 500m of any play area, and approx. 300 properties in new developments in this area are only served by a privately maintained play area.

The majority of properties in Armadale are within 500m of a formal park. Several hundred properties in the south of Armadale and east of Armadale are not within 500m of any formal park.

The majority of properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park. Approx. 100 properties in the east (Atlas Court, Etna Court, Old Golf Course Road, and Terrareoch Court) are not.

The majority of properties are within 4km of a District Park. Approx. 100 properties in the north-west are not. Armadale's population is at the lower end of the guideline population for a District Park.

All properties in Armadale are within 10k of a Country Park.

3.Bathgate/Boghall

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
District Park	1	115.43	
Balbardie Park of Peace		115.43	61
Local Park	5	12.64	
Burghmuir Park		3.70	47
Limefield Park (Boghall)		4.48	50
Marchwood Crescent Park		1.67	47
Robertson Avenue Local Park		1.66	54
Windyknowe Park		1.13	56
Neighbourhood Park	3	37.84	
Boghall Playing Fields		12.58	45
Kirkton Park		17.75	60
Meadow Park		7.51	43
Playspace	11	1.66	
Birniehill		0.20	
Blackburn Road		0.03	
Charles Crescent		0.07	
Falside Crescent Grass		0.35	
Hope Park Gardens		0.15	
Limefield Playspace		0.07	
Meikle Inch Lane		0.08	
Philip Avenue		0.10	
Wester Inch Circle		0.16	
Wester Inch Pond		0.37	
Whiteside Play Area		0.09	
Sports Bowling Green	3	1.77	
Bathgate Bowling Club		0.68	
Kirkton Park Bowling Club		0.50	
Glenmavis Bowling Club		0.60	
Sports Football Pitch	2	4.36	
Creamery Park		4.20	
Limefield Five a Side Pitch		0.16	
Sports Playing Fields	1	1.77	
Standhill Park		1.77	
War Memorial	1	0.26	
Bathgate War Memorial		0.26	
Total	27	175.73	
Population	23,600		
Quantity Standard	7.45		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	9 out of 9 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties are within 500m of a play area. Several hundred properties in central Bathgate and in the Standhill area are not within 500m of any play area. The majority of the Belvedere area is also not within 500m of any play area.

The majority of properties are within 500m of a formal park. However, the majority of properties in Wester Inch, Standhill and Whiteside areas are not within 500m of any formal park. Wester Inch Ponds Play Area and its surrounding open space do serve as a Neighbourhood Park, although the ponds and wider open space are not in council maintenance/ownership.

The majority of properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park. Wester Inch, Standhill, and Whiteside areas and Glenmavis area are not within 1km of any Neighbourhood Park.

All of Bathgate is within 4km of a District Park and 10km of a Country Park.

4.Blackburn

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	2	4.31	
King George V Park		2.55	54
Redhouse Place Green		1.76	51
Neighbourhood Park	1	18.21	
Murrayfield Park		18.21	57
Playspace	3	0.24	
Blackburnhall Gardens		0.06	
Kidz Grove		0.13	
Murrayfield 1		0.04	
Sports Bowling Green	1	1.69	
Blackburn Bowling Club		1.69	
Sports Football Pitch	1	3.61	
Blackburn Juniors Football Field		3.61	
War Memorial	1	0.26	
Blackburn War Memorial		0.26	
Total	9	28.33	
Population	5,730		
Quantity Standard	4.94		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	3 out of 3 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

All properties in Blackburn are within 500m of a play area.

The majority of properties in Blackburn are within 500m of a formal park. However, there are approx. 50 properties in the north (Beechwood Road and Beechwood Gardens) that are not within 500m of any formal park.

All properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park, and 10km of a Country Park. Only approx. 30 properties (Happy Valley Road) fall out with the 4km standard for access to a District Park.

5.Blackridge/Westrigg

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	2	3.25	
Hillside Drive Grass		0.73	48
West Craigs		2.52	44
Neighbourhood Park	2	6.50	
Blackridge Park		3.03	50
Westrigg Park		3.48	48
Total	4	9.76	
Population	2,070		
Quantity Standard	4,71		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	4 out of 4 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Blackridge meets all accessibility standards excluding that for District Parks. No properties are within 4km of a District Park, although Blackridge is approx. 2.5km from a Country Park.

6.Breich

	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Neighbourhood Park	1	5.34	
Breich Park / School site		5.34	59
Playspace	2	1.14	
Breich Green		1.12	
Community Centre Play Park		0.02	
Total	3	6.49	
Population	214*		
Quantity Standard	30.32		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Breich meets all accessibility criteria

7. Bridgend

	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality	
Local Park	2	5.71		
Bridgend Park		1.76	60	
Bridgend South Park		3.95	45	
Playspace	1	0.13		
Bridgend Ball Court		0.13		
Total	3	5.84		
Population		780		
Quantity Standard		7.48		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)		2 out of 2 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

All properties in Bridgend are within 500m of a play area and within 500m of a formal park.

No properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park, and approx. 30 properties in the east are not within 4km of a District Park. All properties are within 10km of a Country Park. Bridgend's population is lower than the recommended guideline population for a Neighbourhood Park.

8. Broxburn

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
District Park	1	26.34	
Stewartfield Park		26.34	53
Local Park	3	11.74	
Liggat Syke		6.37	57
Park View Square		1.10	48
Wyndford Avenue		4.27	54
Neighbourhood Park	2	14.99	
Holmes Park		7.34	64
Station Road Park		7.65	50
Playspace	11	1.74	
Almondell Play Area		0.06	
Badger Brook		0.09	
Badger Brook Ball Court		0.16	
Buchan Park		0.21	
Parklands 1		0.10	
Parklands 2		0.11	
Strathbrock Family Unit		0.07	
Cardross Play Area		0.04	
Globe Park (Private)		0.21	
Holmes Road (Private)		0.62	
Nicol Place (Private)		0.06	
Sports Bowling Green	2	2.32	
Broxburn Bowling Club		1.08	
Buchan Park Bowling Club		1.24	
Sports Centre and Playing Fields	1	6.69	
Broxburn Sports Centre		6.69	
Sports Football Pitch	1	6.07	
Broxburn United Sports Club		6.07	
Total	21	69.87	
Population	10,176		
Quantity Standard	6.86		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	6 out of 6 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

All areas of Broxburn are within 500m of a play area.

All areas are also well within the recommended distances of Neighbourhood, District, and Country Parks.

There is a large gap in Local Park provision in the centre of Broxburn. Much of this area is within 500m of a Neighbourhood Park, which means they are within the standard for public parks as a whole, however there is a strip of housing down the centre of Broxburn which is more than 500m from any formal public park. This includes Laing Gardens/Galloway Crescent/Clarkson Road/Globe Park/ Port Buchan/Blyth Road/Badger Brook. Much of this area is not within council ownership.

9. Dechmont

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	1	2.44	
Dechmont Park		2.44	50
Total	1	2.44	
Population	620		
Quantity Standard	3.93		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The eastern residences of Badger Wood and Craiglaw are outwith 500m of a play area.

All areas are within recommended distance of a District Park and Country Park.

The eastern end of Craiglaw is further than 500m from a Local Park, and further than 500m from any formal park.

None of Dechmont is within the recommended distance of a Neighbourhood Park. Dechmont's population is lower than the recommended guideline population for a Neighbourhood Park.

10. East Calder

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	2	7.89	
Langton Gardens / Redcraig Open Space		5.86	54
Langton Park		2.03	52
Neighbourhood Park	1	14.01	
East Calder Park		14.01	55
Playspace	2	0.91	
Broompark Green		0.77	
Queens Gardens		0.14	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.77	
East Calder Bowling Club		0.77	
Sports Centre and Playing Fields	1	4.52	
East Calder Sports Centre		4.52	
Total	7	28.10	
Population	6,430		
Quantity Standard	4.37		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	3 out of 3 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Currently, all areas of East Calder are within 500m of a play area except most of the Calderwood development which is still to be completed.

There is a gap in Local Park provision in the north of East Calder (level with and north of East Calder Primary School), none of this area is within 500m of a Local Park. However, all areas of East Calder are within 500m of some type of formal public park.

All the areas are within the recommended distance of Neighbourhood, District and Country Parks

11. East Whitburn

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Neighbourhood Park	1	3.88	
Redmill Park		3.88	54
Playspace	1	0.30	
Mains Place Play Area (Private)		0.30	
Total	2	4.18	
Population	1,240		
Quantity Standard	3.37		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in East Whitburn are within 500m of a play area. However, there are 6 properties in the West (Hamilton Way) that are not within 500m of any play area, and approx. 25 properties in the south (Mains Place, Crofters Way, and Mains Farm Place) are only served by a private play area.

East Whitburn meets all accessibility standards related to formal parks, excluding these same properties in the south that are not within 500m of any formal park

12. Ecclesmachan

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Playspace	1	0.15	
Ecclesmachan Play Area		0.15	
Total	1	0.15	
Population	202		
Quantity Standard	0.74		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	Not applicable		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in Ecclesmachan are within 500m of a play area. However, there are circa 20 properties in the south that are not within 500m of any play area.

Ecclesmachan is not within 500m of any formal park, nor within 1km of any Neighbourhood Park. Ecclesmachan's population is lower than the recommended guideline population for a Local or a Neighbourhood Park.

All properties are within 4km of a District Park and 10km of a Country Park.

13. Fauldhouse

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	3	7.30	
Caledonian Road		2.27	54
Lanrigg Road Green		1.69	46
Meadow Crescent Strip		3.34	55
Neighbourhood Park	2	13.16	
Eastfield Road Park		7.63	59
Fallas Park		5.53	36
Playspace	2	0.41	
Burnside Play Area		0.09	
Church Place Play Area		0.32	
Sports Football Pitch	1	2.73	
Park View (Fauldhouse United JFC)		2.73	
War Memorial	1	0.32	
Blackfaulds Place War Memorial		0.32	
Total	9	23.92	
Population	4,900		
Quantity Standard	4.88		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	4 out of 5 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

All properties in Fauldhouse are within 500m of a play area and within 500m of a formal park.

All properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park and 10km of a Country Park. The majority of properties are within 4km of a District Park. Those properties west of Falla Hill Primary School are not within 4km of a District.

14. Greenrigg

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Neighbourhood Park	1	10.06	
Greenrigg Park		10.06	51
Playspace	1	0.09	
Polkemmet Road		0.09	
Sports Football Pitch	1	2.76	
Gibshill Park Football Park		2.76	
Total	3	12.91	
Population	1058		
Quantity Standard	12.2		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in Greenrigg are within 500m of a play area. However, there are approx. 10 properties across the south east (Dyke Court) and south west (Baillie Avenue) that are not within 500m of any play area. There is a private play area in Baillie Avenue.

The majority of properties are within 500m of a formal park. Most properties on Baillie Avenue are not within 500m of any formal park.

All properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park and within 10km of a Country Park. All properties excluding most of the properties on Baillie Avenue are within 4km of a District Park, however, all properties are within 4km of a Country Park.

15.Kirknewton

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Neighbourhood Park	1	7.85	
Kirknewton Park		7.85	49
Total	1	7.85	
Population	1,930		
Quantity Standard	4.06		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The central areas of Kirknewton are within 500m of a play area, however, areas in the west and east of Kirknewton are not (West end of Station Road and Braekirk Gardens and all of Caledonian Court, east end of Main St and Kaimes Crescent and all of HillhouseWynd).

The same areas are outwith 500m of any formal public park. There is no Local Park within the recommended distance (500m) although the western half of Kirknewton is within 500m of a Neighbourhood Park.

Most of Kirknewton is more than the recommended distance from a District Park with only the western fringe within 4km of a District Park.

All of Kirknewton is within the recommended distance of a Country Park.

16. Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
District Park	1	146.21	
Linlithgow Loch and Park		146.21	57
Local Park	7	10.50	
Baillielands Park		1.75	45
Beechwood Playing Field		1.84	39
Douglas Avenue Park		1.70	52
Justinhaugh Drive Green		1.02	45
Preston Road Park		1.41	41
Sheriffs Park Strip		1.38	48
Springfield Road Green		1.39	52
Neighbourhood Park	3	22.80	
Listloaning Playing Field		4.20	43
Rosemount Park		6.67	50
Springfield Park		11.93	47
Playspace	9	1.02	
Deanburn		0.06	
Laverock Park		0.06	
Linlithgow Loch Playspace		0.14	
Mill Road		0.17	
Millerfield		0.17	
Oatlands Park		0.11	
Philip Avenue		0.16	
Springfield Drive Play Area		0.10	
The Vennel		0.05	
Sports Bowling Green	2	1.28	
Linlithgow Bowling Club		0.63	
Linlithgow Sports Club - Bowling Green		0.66	
Sports Centre and Playing Fields	1	31.03	
Linlithgow Leisure Centre		31.03	
Sports Football Pitch	1	3.33	
Prestonfield		3.33	
Sports Playing Fields	1	10.85	
Linlithgow Rugby Club		10.85	
Sports Tennis Courts	1	0.51	
Linlithgow Sports Club - Tennis Courts		0.51	
Total	26	227.53	
Population		12,840	
Quantity Standard		17.72	
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)		10 out of 11 Fit for Purpose	

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in Linlithgow are within 500m of a play area. However, there are a few to the immediate west of Kingscavil Cemetery that are not within 500m. In addition, approx. 30 properties across Kettil'stoun Grove and Gardens are not within 500m of a play area.

The majority of properties are within 500m of a formal park. Those properties mentioned above are not, as well as an additional 8 properties on Braehead Park, and a dozen properties on Lovells Glen.

All properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park, excluding approx. 50 properties in the Kettil'stoun area. All properties are within 4km of a District Park, and 10km of a Country Park.

17. Livingston

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Allotments	2	3.07	
Deans Allotments		0.87	
Killandean Allotments		2.20	
District Park	4	183.57	
Almond Park		47.21	61
Almondvale Park		22.64	68
Bankton Mains Park		61.14	62
Eliburn Park		52.58	59
Local Park	8	19.54	
Bellsquarry Recreation Ground		5.41	56
Central Recreation Area / Deans Park		2.93	50
Clement Rise / Glebe Farm Park		2.56	57
Craigspark		1.77	63
Edmonton Green		1.99	48
Fells Rigg Green		1.84	52
Stonebank Local Park		0.96	50
Sutherland Way Park		2.08	55
Neighbourhood Park	9	115.42	
Falcon Brae Grass		4.38	51
Heatherbank Park		8.00	43
Howden Park (North)		57.38	46
Lanthorn (South)		4.88	63
Letham Park (Craigshill)		3.90	48
Livingston Village Park		16.67	48
Mosswood Playing Fields		5.04	50
Peel Park		10.82	66
Quarry Park		4.35	55
Playspace	61	8.53	
Adambrae		0.12	
Bankton Park West		0.11	
Bankton Way Play Area		0.12	
Birrell Gardens Play Area		0.25	
Buchanan Playspace		0.03	
Burnsknowe		0.05	
Camps Rigg 103		0.40	
Chestnut Grove		0.06	
Chuckethall Road		0.10	
Clement Rise Ball Court		0.24	
Clova Drive Play Area		0.29	

Columbia Avenue		0.02
Columbia Avenue Play Area		0.15
Crathes Gardens		0.10
Deans Ball Court		0.07
Doon Walk		0.19
Doon Walk Green		1.21
Eliburn Nursery Class		0.01
Everard Playspace		0.07
Falcon Brae 55		0.00
Forestbank Ball Court		0.07
Forestbank Playspace		0.29
Gowanbank		0.07
Granby Avenue		0.05
Harburn Avenue 120		0.01
Haymarket Playspace		0.03
Kestrel Brae		0.08
Kirkfield West		0.03
Kirkton South		0.06
Knightsridge Adventure Area (The Vennie)		0.41
Ladywell East Playspace		0.20
Lanark Avenue Playspace		0.15
Larchbank Playspace		0.18
Lenzie Avenue Ball Court		0.16
Leven Walk Playspace		0.08
Logan Way Playspace		0.03
Moncrief Way 49		0.03
Muirfield Way 52		0.01
Murieston Valley		0.13
Ogilvie School Campus		0.09
Oldwood Place Playspace		0.18
Onslow Green		0.29
Orchard Place		0.17
Peveril Rise 99		0.01
Play Pals		0.04
Raeburn Rigg Grass		0.65
Roseberry Place		0.09
Rosehill Playspace		0.06
Rushbank		0.08
Sarazen Green Playspace		0.05
Staffa		0.18
Sutherland Way Ball Court		0.25
Sutherland Way Play Area		0.16
Talisman Rise 30		0.01
Talisman Rise 44		0.01
Talisman Rise 64		0.01
Templar Rise 4		0.01
Templar Rise Steelway Goals		0.10
Waverley Crescent Playspace		0.32
Wellview Lane Playspace		0.11
Wood Place 33		0.00

Soft Play Area Swing Park	1	0.22	
Knightsridge Community Centre		0.22	
Sports Bowling Green	4	3.01	
Bankton Mains Bowling Green		0.87	
Harrismuir Bowling Club		0.65	
Letham Park Bowling Green		0.84	
Livingston Station Bowling Green		0.65	
Sports Centre and Playing Fields	1	41.34	
Craigswood Sports Centre and Playing Fields		41.34	
Sports Football Pitch	4	6.19	
Larchbank Kickspace		0.13	
Livingston Football Club Stadium Pitch		1.76	
Livingston Football Pitch Practice Pitch		1.73	
Station Park		2.57	
Sports Kick Pitch	1	0.27	
Livingston Village Kick Pitches		0.27	
Sports Playing Fields	2	9.44	
Centre Greenspace		0.18	
Livingston RFC		9.26	
Total	97	390.6	
Population	56,840		
Quantity Standard	6.87		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	21 out of 21 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Most areas of Livingston are within 500m of a play area, except areas around the periphery and pockets throughout the town, including:

in the west –

the roads north and south of Simpson parkway A705, residential areas around Alderstone Business Park, Appleton Drive, Quarrywood Court

in the north –

Deans: Beechwood Park, east end of Middlewood Park, Woodlands Park, Golf Course Road, Player Green, Gallacher Green, Taylor Green, Eagles View

in the south –

Murieston: some of Easter Bankton, Bankton Glade, Murieston Road, West Cairn View, Wellview Lane, Skivo Wynd.

For future reference, in case they are re-designated as residential areas, these areas are also further than 500m from a play area: Houston Ind Estate, Brucefield Ind Estate, Almondvale Business Park.

There are gaps in Local Park and Neighbourhood Park coverage, and some areas out with 500m of any formal parks. These are areas around North Deans/Dechmont Law, Houston Ind Estate, Simpson Parkway/Kirkton, Charlesfield/Adambrae, all houses along Murieston Road and in the south of Murieston, Craigswood in the north of Craigshill.

All areas are within the recommended distance from District and Country Parks.

18. Longridge

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Neighbourhood Park	1	2.02	
Longridge Park		2.02	49
Playspace	1	0.02	
Northfield Meadow		0.02	
War Memorial	1	0.07	
Longridge Cross		0.07	
Total	3	2.11	
Population	910		
Quantity Standard	2.32		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Longridge meets all accessibility standards.

It should be noted that the play area within Longridge Primary School grounds is fully accessible to the public

19. Mid Calder

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	1	5.05	
Sommers Park		5.05	61
Neighbourhood Park	1	11.12	
Cunnigar Park		11.12	44
Playspace	4	0.86	
Avenue Park West Playspace		0.46	
Maryfield		0.15	
Ochiltree View		0.21	
Spottiswood Gardens		0.04	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.68	
Mid Calder Bowling Green		0.68	
Total	7	17.72	
Population	3,300		
Quantity Standard	5.37		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	2 out of 2 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

All areas are within 500m of a play area, except Almondside and Pumpherston Road/Mill Lane. All areas are within the recommended distance of a Neighbourhood, District, and Country Park.

Although there is a gap in provision of Local Parks in Mid Calder, all areas are within 500m of a formal public park.

20. Newton/Woodend

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	1	5.05	
Sommers Park		5.05	61
Neighbourhood Park	1	11.12	
Cunnigar Park		11.12	44
Playspace	4	0.86	
Avenue Park West Playspace		0.46	
Maryfield		0.15	
Ochiltree View		0.21	
Spottiswood Gardens		0.04	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.68	
Mid Calder Bowling Green		0.68	
Total	7	17.72	
Population	3,300		
Quantity Standard	5.37		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	2 out of 2 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Only properties in Newton are within 500m of a play area, those in Woodend are not.

Newton (including Woodend) is not within 500m, 1km, or 4km of any formal park. It is within 10km of a Country Park. Newton's population is lower than the recommended guideline populations for any formal park.

21.Philpstoun

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	1	2.63	
Philpstoun Park		2.63	54
Total	1	2.63	
Population	428		
Quantity Standard	6.14		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in Philpstoun are within 500m of a play area. Two properties in the east of the main settlement, and all properties in Old Philpstoun are not.

The majority of properties in Philpstoun are within 500m of a formal park. Two properties in the east of the main settlement, and all properties in Old Philpstoun are not.

No properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park. Philipstoun's population is lower than the recommended guideline population for a Neighbourhood Park. The majority of properties in Philpstoun are within 4km of a District Park, however, Old Philipstoun and Wyndford Brae are not. All properties are within 10km of a Country Park.

22.Polbeth

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	2	4.73	
Ennis Park		2.85	52
Langside Gardens Green		1.88	41
Neighbourhood Park	1	20.81	
Limefield Park (Polbeth)		20.81	58
Playspace	3	0.48	
Burnside Terrace		0.05	
Fells Road Play Area		0.28	
Polbeth Community Centre Ball Court		0.15	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.83	
Limefield Park Bowling Green		0.83	
Total	7	26.85	
Population	2,366		
Quantity Standard	11.35		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	3 out of 3 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Polbeth meets all accessibility standards.

23.Pumpherston

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	1	1.54	
Letham Park (Pumpherston)		1.54	48
Neighbourhood Park	1	5.23	
Fraser Park (Drumshoreland)		5.23	57
Playspace	2	0.18	
Harrysmuir Playspace		0.08	
Heaney Avenue		0.10	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.60	
Pumpherston Bowling Club		0.60	
Sports Playing Fields	1	5.08	
Pumpherston Sports Ground		5.08	
Total	6	12.63	
Population	1,209		
Quantity Standard	10.45		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	2 out of 2 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

All areas of Pumpherston are currently within 500m of a play area.

Although there is a gap in provision of Local Parks in the north of Pumpherston, all areas are within 500m of any formal public park.

All areas are within the recommended distance of Neighbourhood, District and Country Parks.

24.Rural

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Bridgecastle		0.19	
Playspace	1	0.19	
Bridgecastle		0.19	
Threemiletown		1.85	
Local Park	1	1.85	
Redhouse Recreation Ground		1.85	51
Total	2	2.04	
Population	6,588		
Quantity Standard	NA		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Not applicable

25.Seafield

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	1	1.51	
Seafield Green		1.51	50
Playspace	1	0.01	
Seafield Institute		0.01	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.66	
Seafield Bowling Club		0.66	
Sports Football Pitch	1	3.60	
Seafield Football Pitch		3.60	
Total	4	5.78	
Population	1,350		
Quantity Standard	4.28		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

All properties in Seafield are within 500m of a play area and within 500m of a formal park. No properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park. Seafield's population is lower than the recommended guideline population for a Neighbourhood Park. All properties are within 4km of a District Park and 10km of a Country Park.

26. Stoneyburn and Bents

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Bents		0.09	
Playspace	1	0.09	
Wallace Walk		0.09	
Stoneyburn		19.08	
Local Park	1	9.18	
Foulshiels		9.18	44
Neighbourhood Park	1	2.68	
Glenview Crescent Playing Fields		2.68	52
Playspace	1	0.08	
Bumlea Drive Play Area		0.08	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.92	
Stoneyburn Bowling Club		0.92	
Sports Football Pitch	1	6.10	
Beechwood Park		6.10	
War Memorial	1	0.11	
Stoneyburn War Memorial		0.11	
Total	7	19.17	
Population		1,980	
Quantity Standard		9.68	
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)		2 out of 2 Fit for Purpose	

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in Stoneyburn and Bents are within 500m of a play area. A handful of properties in the west of Bents are not.

The majority of properties in Stoneyburn and Bents are within 500m of a formal park. Approx. 50 properties in the west of Bents (Cannon Crescent, Main Street, and Garden City) are not.

The majority of properties in Stoneyburn and Bents are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park. A handful of properties in the west of Bents are not. All properties are within 4km of a District Park and 10km of a Country Park.

27. Torphichen

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Neighbourhood Park	1	5.97	
Torphichen Park		5.97	57
Total	1	5.97	
Population	710		
Quantity Standard	8.4		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in Torphichen are within 500m of a play area. Approx. 20 properties on the western and eastern fringes are not.

The majority of properties in Torphichen are within 500m of a formal park. Approx. 20 properties on the western and eastern fringes are not.

All properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park, 4km of a District Park, and 10km of a Country Park.

28. Uphall

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	3	6.56	
Glebe Park		2.72	52
Millbank Place East		1.71	43
Burn Edge Park		2.13	53
Neighbourhood Park	1	5.66	
King George V Playing Fields		5.66	56
Playspace	5	0.5	
Ball Court & Skatepark		0.26	
McLardy Court		0.07	
Craigengar Avenue (Private)		0.05	
South Middleton (Private)		0.12	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.80	
Uphall Bowling Club		0.80	
Total	10	13.52	
Population		4,835	
Quantity Standard		2.79	
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)		4 out of 4 Fit for Purpose	

Accessibility Standard

All areas are within 500m of a play area.

All areas are within the recommended distance of Local, Neighbourhood, District and Country Parks.

29. Uphall Station

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Neighbourhood Park	1	3.27	
Marrfield Park		3.27	51
Playspace	1	0.38	
Nettlehill Drive Play Area		0.38	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.77	
Uphall Station Bowling Club		0.77	
Total	3	4.42	
Population	959		
Quantity Standard	4.6		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	1 out of 1 park Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

All areas of Uphall Station are within 500m of a play area.

Although there are no Local Parks in Uphall Station, all areas are within 500m of a formal public park. All areas are within the recommended standards of Neighbourhood, District and Country Parks.

30. West Calder

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Local Park	1	1.48	
Burngrange West Park		1.48	41
Neighbourhood Park	2	12.56	
Burngrange East Park		5.49	50
Parkhead Recreational Ground		7.07	44
Playspace	2	2.09	
Parkhead Cottages Green		0.94	
The Glebe Green		1.16	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.53	
West Calder Bowling Club		0.53	
Sports Football Pitch	1	6.16	
Hermand Park		6.16	
War Memorial	1	0.17	
War Memorial		0.17	
Total	8	22.99	
Population	3,250		
Quantity Standard	7.07		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	3 out of 3 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in West Calder are within 500m of a play area. Approx. 80 properties in the north (Westwood View, and Mossend Gardens) are not.

The majority of properties in West Calder are within 500m of a formal park. Approx. 80 properties in the north (Westwood View, and Mossend Gardens) are not.

All properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park and within 10km of a Country Park. The western half of West Calder is not within 4km of a District Park.

31. Westfield

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Playspace	1	0.29	
Westfield Play Area		0.29	
Total	1	0.29	
Population	564		
Quantity Standard	0.52		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	Not applicable		

Accessibility Standard

All properties are within 500m of a play area.

Westfield is not within 500m of any formal park. Westfield's population is within recommended guideline population for a Local Park.

Westfield is not within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park. The majority of Westfield is within 4km of a District Park, four properties in the North West are not. Westfield is within 10km of a Country Park.

32. Whitburn

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
District Park	1	48.68	
Blaeberryhill Park		48.68	58
Neighbourhood Park	2	33.73	
Hunter Grove Park		13.72	60
King George V Playing Field		20.01	54
Playspace	4	1.23	
Croftmalloch		0.11	
Dixon Road Play Area		0.14	
Glenisla Court		0.04	
Whitburn Academy		0.94	
Sports Bowling Green	2	1.07	
Polkemmet Country Park Bowling Club		0.73	
West End Gospel Hall		0.34	
Sports Football Pitch	1	2.97	
Central Park		2.97	
Total	10	87.67	
Population	11,490		
Quantity Standard	7.63		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	3 out of 3 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

The majority of properties in Whitburn are within 500m of a play area.

The majority of properties in Whitburn are within 500m of a formal park. Approx. 50 properties to the immediate east of Whitburn Academy are not.

All properties are within 1km of a Neighbourhood Park, 4km of a District Park and 10km of a Country Park.

33. Winchburgh

Type	Count	Area (Acres)	Quality
Allotments	1	1.47	
Winchburgh Allotments		1.47	
Neighbourhood Park	2	13.04	
Millgate Park		4.01	50
Niddry Park		9.03	45
Playspace	2	0.29	
Glendevon		0.17	
Millgate Green Playspace		0.12	
Sports Bowling Green	1	0.92	
Winchburgh Bowling Club		0.92	
War Memorial	1	0.14	
Winchburgh War Memorial		0.14	
Total	7	15.85	
Population	3840		
Quantity Standard	4.12		
Quality Standard (Formal Parks)	2 out of 2 Fit for Purpose		

Accessibility Standard

Most of Winchburgh is currently within 500m of a play area, except Station Road, Station View and Beatlie Road in the north-east and Hillend View in the west.

There is a deficit of Local Parks in Winchburgh, resulting in some areas being over 500m from any formal public park. These areas are: Hillend View and Hillend Road in the west and Station View and Beatlie Road in the north-east. However, these areas will be covered with the completion of Auldathie District Park (partially open) in the west of Winchburgh and Daisy Park in the north-east (under construction) as well as proposed provision in the east by Winchburgh Developments.

All areas are within the recommended distance of Neighbourhood, District and Country Parks.