

West Lothian LDP2 Evidence Report	
Schedule	4. Blue and Green Infrastructure and Open Space
Information required by the Act and NPF4 regarding the issue addressed in this section	<p>Town and Country Planning (Scotland) (Act) 1997, as amended:</p> <p>Section 15(5)(a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district, the principal purposes for which the land is used. <p>Regulation 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have regard to any open space strategy. <p>Other statutory requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Paths Plan (Access Rights) <p>National Planning Policy 4 (adopted 13 February 2023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPF4 Policy 20 Blue and Green Infrastructure - LDPs should be informed by relevant, up-to date audits and/or strategies, covering the multiple functions and benefits of blue and green infrastructure. The spatial strategy should identify and protect blue and green infrastructure assets and networks; enhance and expand existing provision including new blue and/or green infrastructure. This may include retrofitting. Priorities for connectivity to other blue and/or green infrastructure assets, including to address cross-boundary needs and opportunities, should also be identified. LDPs should encourage the permanent or temporary use of unused or under-used land as green infrastructure. Where this is temporary, this should not prevent future development potential from being realised. LDPs should safeguard access rights and core paths, including active travel routes, and encourage new and enhanced opportunities for access linked to wider networks. <p>This schedule aims not to repeat the content of other topics covered by the LDP2 Evidence Report. Other schedules which should be read alongside this schedule on Blue and Green Infrastructure include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 - Biodiversity 3 - The Water Environment and Flooding 5 - Natural places and soils

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 - Forestry, woodland and trees • 8 - Greenbelt • 9 - Health, Wellbeing and Equalities • 20 - Sustainable Transport
Links to Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) • West Lothian Council, West Lothian place-based Green Networks (2014) • West Lothian Council, Livingston North Blue Green Network • West Lothian Council, West Lothian Natural Capital Assessment (2023) • West Lothian Council, Open Space Plan 2020-24 • West Lothian Council Draft Open Space Plan and map West Lothian Map. • West Lothian Council, Food Growing Strategy 2020-2025 (Open Space Plan Annex B) • Greenspace Scotland, Scotland's GreenSpace map • West Lothian Council, Core Path Plan

Summary of Evidence

Purpose, scope and structure of this schedule

This schedule focuses on blue and green infrastructure. This schedule and its evidence are set out in the following sections:

- Part 1 - Blue and Green Infrastructure Assets
- Part 2 – Blue and Green Networks in West Lothian
- Part 3 - Open Space and Core Paths

Part 1 – Blue and Green Infrastructure Assets and Networks

- 1.1 West Lothian has an abundance of green and blue assets and networks, and like other forms of physical infrastructure, are critical to the delivery of successful and sustainable places which support people’s mental and physical health.
- 1.2 **Blue infrastructure** includes water environment features within the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem services. Blue features include rivers, lochs, wetlands, canals, other water courses, ponds, coastal and marine areas including beaches, porous paving, sustainable urban drainage systems and raingardens. **Green infrastructure** is features or spaces within the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem services.
- 1.3 An audit of the existing blue and green infrastructure assets in West Lothian has been carried out and is being mapped onto GIS. This includes:
 - Open Space, including urban parks, play areas, food growing, sports facilities, public arts, country parks, trees and woodlands, cemeteries, biodiversity/geodiversity sites, green and blue networks and the core path network
 - International, national and local designated sites

- Countryside and landscape designations, country and regional parks, gardens and designed landscapes
- West Lothian broad habitat types, rivers, lochs, wetlands, canals, other water courses, ponds, coastal and marine areas. Habitat data from the Central Scotland Green Network (plus opportunities)
- The Scottish Wetland Inventory
- The National Forest inventory, Native Woodland Survey, WLC treeplotter/woodland datasets
- SEPA's natural flood management maps and reservoir inundation maps provide a high level of locations overview of where the implementation of the specified nature-based techniques could be most effective
- SEPA '[water bodies data sheets](#)' for areas of significant water bodies in West Lothian and from [RBMP3 \(sepa.org.uk\)](#) including data on current state of the water environment in West Lothian
- Riparian corridor opportunities (SEPA)
- Geomorphic risk layer - identifies sections along the river network at risk of channel adjustment. Avoidance of development in these areas would be beneficial for climate adaptation and are areas where the undeveloped riparian area could be included in a nature network
- Water Environment Fund Projects current, completed and future opportunities layer – identifies existing or potential project locations and therefore opportunities for water environment improvement relevant for nature networks
- Water environment classification layers – provides current baseline information and could be used to identify opportunities to address issues and enhance nature networks
- Natural Flood Management maps – identifies areas to be protected for their role in reducing flood risk and for opportunity mapping for nature-based solutions
- River recovery potential - prioritise passive river restoration actions
- West Lothian Council's Natural Capital Assessment (2023) models eleven ecosystem services: carbon storage and sequestration, air purification, noise regulation, local climate (urban heat) regulation, pollination capacity, water flow regulation, water quality (sediment yield and nutrient deposition) regulation, food production, timber production and accessible nature.

1.4 This audit of the existing blue and green infrastructure assets in West Lothian will:

- assist in the development and delivery of West Lothian's Nature Network and policies to support biodiversity as set out in Schedule 2 (Biodiversity)
- assist in the identification of pressures (such as flood risk, water quality) which the Local Development Plan could help address through the identification of opportunities to reduce flood risk and to improve the water environment as set out in Schedule 3 (The Water Environment and Flooding), and
- for use in the assessment of proposed development sites as part of the Site Appraisal Methodology as set out in Schedule 28.

1.5 A **draft Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA 2024)** has been prepared as accompanying evidence to the Evidence Report. Its primary purpose is to provide a high-level overview of existing and future flood risk across all sources. One of the aims of the SFRA is to promote natural flood management (NFM) techniques and the integration of blue / green infrastructure

to enhance flood resilience, biodiversity, and community amenity spaces. Further evidence on the Water Environment and Flood Risk is set out in Schedule 3.

Part 2 – Blue and Green Networks in West Lothian

- 2.1 One of the key features of green and blue infrastructure is that it is a network of integrated spaces and features, not just individual elements; and that it is ‘multi-functional’ – i.e.
- providing space for health, wellbeing, leisure and food growing
 - linking people and places by encouraging active travel
 - managing the water environment
 - providing sustainable drainage and reducing water run-off during flash flooding
 - providing habitat networks for species movement
 - providing carbon storage
 - cooling urban areas during heat waves.
- 2.2 The **Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN)** is one of 18 National Developments identified in NPF4 and is regarded by the Scottish Government as having a key role in tackling the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss including by building and strengthening nature networks.
- 2.3 The council prepared and consulted on draft supplementary guidance on **West Lothian place-based Green Networks (SG)** for LPD1. The guidance has not yet been progressed to adoption but provides a useful starting point and analysis of the priorities for connectivity to other blue and/or green infrastructure assets, including to address cross-boundary needs and opportunities, including:
- **West Lothian-wide** – the strategically important or West Lothian wide green networks *e.g.*: coastal fringe, national cycle routes 75 & 76, river corridors, the Union Canal.
 - **Settlement-wide** - the settlement wide green networks, particularly within Livingston, and also the settlements within close proximity to the core development areas (CDAs).
 - **Local-level** - more local or minor scale networks that form an important part of the wider green network but are perhaps more appropriately dealt with at a site or neighbourhood scale.
- 2.4 Draft **West Lothian Green Networks maps** at of the green networks across West Lothian were prepared for the SG alongside a **schedule of opportunities** for greenspace, active travel, riparian, recreation and biodiversity improvements. The SG also identifies opportunities to join up Local Biodiversity and Local Geodiversity Sites with the green network.
- 2.5 The **Livingston North Blue Green Network** aims to enhance the quality and improve the connectivity and functionality of the ‘Greenways’ through Livingston North for the benefit of local people, visitors and wildlife. The network identifies blue/green network opportunities through 5 separate blue/green corridors surveyed, audited with potential costed environmental improvements.

Part 3 - Open Space and Core Paths in West Lothian

- 3.1 West Lothian Council's **Open Space Plan 2020-24** provides an overall vision for the provision, development, regeneration and management of open spaces throughout West Lothian. A new Open Space Plan is currently under preparation and a draft will be available for the final Evidence Report to be submitted for Gatecheck.
- 3.2 The Open Space Plan is supported by a detailed **Open Space Audit and GIS mapping database** and includes urban parks, play areas, food growing, sports facilities, public arts, country parks, trees and woodlands, cemeteries, biodiversity/geodiversity sites, green and blue networks and the core path network.
- 3.3 The Open Space Plan is being refreshed by the council's Open Space team in 2025. Any changes to the existing Open Space Plan will need to be considered in the preparation of the Proposed Plan. The West Lothian Council [Draft Open Space Plan](#) and map [West Lothian Map](#) are currently out for consultation.
- 3.4 The **West Lothian Food Growing Strategy 2020-2025** is an annex to the council's Open Space Plan. The strategy's vision is that, by 2040, food growing will be embedded into principal council policies and everyday formal education, to have easy access to locally produced fresh fruit and vegetables, support for local enterprise, and easy access to land on which to 'grow your own'. It is noted in the 'barriers to growing' section that barriers to food growing include securing suitable land for sites, land contamination, soil tests and planning applications.
- 3.5 **Scotland's GreenSpace map** provides information on the location, extent and type of greenspace across all of Scotland's towns and cities with a population of 3,000 or more. It categorises greenspaces into 23 different types including public parks, play areas, allotments, amenity greenspace and private gardens.
- 3.6 West Lothian Council's **Core Path Plan** provides a framework of routes for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout a particular area for walking, cycling, horse riding and other non-motorised activities.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

This will summarise the steps taken by the planning authority to seek the views of all relevant stakeholders. This will also summarise the views expressed, and explain how they have been taken account of in the Evidence Report. (hyperlinks to records of engagement may be added where appropriate)

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

This will include statements from stakeholders highlighting their agreement or the areas they dispute

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

This will cover what the evidence means for the plan, e.g. the spatial strategy, the Delivery Programme or plan preparation.

Based on the evidence the proposed plan will be required to:

1. Deliver the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN), one of 18 National Developments identified in NPF4
2. Deliver local blue and green networks and open space across the proposed plan area, and as part of new development.

3. Ensure that new development will integrate natural flood management (NFM) techniques and achieve the integration of blue / green infrastructure to enhance flood resilience, biodiversity, and community amenity spaces.
4. Ensure that new development will integrate and deliver open space to meet the requirements of the Council's open space plan and ensure any new open space is connected to West Lothian's green network.
5. Ensure that new development will promote healthy food options as part of blue and green networks, in line with the West Lothian Food Growing Strategy.