

## West Lothian LDP2 Evidence Report

### Schedule

### 13. Rural Homes

Information required by the Act and NPF4 regarding the issue addressed in this section

**Town and Country Planning (Scotland) (Act) 1997, as amended:**

Section 15(5)

- the housing needs of the population of the area, including in particular, the needs of persons undertaking further and higher education, older people and disabled people;
- the availability of land in the district for housing, including for older people and disabled people;
- the desirability of allocating land for the purposes of resettlement; and
- the extent to which there are rural areas within the district in relation to which there has been a substantial decline in population. Section 16(2)(ab)
- in preparing the LDP the planning authority are to have regard to the list published under section 16E of persons seeking to acquire land in the authority's area for self-build housing.

Regulation 9 have regard to

- any Local Housing Strategy which is required by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, as amended, to be informed by an assessment of housing provision that is carried out by a HNDA.

**National Planning Framework 4 (adopted 13 February 2023)**

**NPF4 Policy 17 Rural Homes**

- LDPs should be informed by an understanding of population change over time, locally specific needs and market circumstances in rural and island areas.
- LDPs should set out tailored approaches to rural housing and where relevant include proposals for future population growth – including provision for small-scale housing such as crofts and woodland crofts and the appropriate resettlement of previously inhabited areas. The Scottish Government's 6 fold Urban Rural Classification 2020 should be used to identify remote rural areas. Plans should reflect locally appropriate delivery approaches. Previously inhabited areas that are suitable for resettlement should be identified in the spatial strategy.

**NPF4 Policy 29 Rural Development**

- LDPs should identify the characteristics of rural areas within the plan area, including the existing pattern of development, pressures, environmental assets, community priorities and economic needs of each area. The spatial strategy should set out an appropriate approach to development in rural areas which reflects the identified characteristics. The Scottish Government's 6 fold Urban Rural Classification 2020 should be used to identify remote rural areas. Spatial strategies should support the sustainability and prosperity of rural communities and economies.

	<p>Previously inhabited areas which are suitable for resettlement should be identified in the spatial strategy.</p> <p>The Scottish Government Local Development Planning Guidance sets out;</p> <p>‘The information for the Evidence Report in relation to rural homes will be similar to the information outlined for the Quality Homes section above. Particular rural elements will relate to the consideration of areas where there has been a substantial decline in population and where there may be a desirability of allocating land for resettlement’. To prepare a plan that is informed by an understanding of population change over time, locally specific needs and market circumstances in rural areas, the Evidence Report can consider National Records of Scotland (NRS) data on population estimates.</p> <p>Previously inhabited areas which are suitable for resettlement should be identified in the spatial strategy.</p>
<p><b>Links to Evidence referenced in this schedule</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Lothian, <a href="#">Lowland crofting handbook 09.pdf</a></li> <li>• SRUC, <a href="#">West Lothian ‘Lowland Crofting’ and farm diversification research project</a></li> <li>• Scottish Government, <a href="#">Urban Rural Classification 2020</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Report on ‘Lowland crofting’ planning policy to the Development and Transport Policy Development &amp; Scrutiny Panel, 22 June 2022</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Development in the Countryside, Supplementary Guidance, 2018</a></li> <li>• Scottish Government, <a href="#">Housing to 2040</a></li> <li>• Scottish Government, <a href="#">Consultation Paper, Enhancing the Accessibility, Adaptability and usability of Scotland’s homes. June 2023</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Integration Joint Board, <a href="#">Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">South East Scotland Housing Needs and Demands Assessment 3 (HNDA3)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">National Planning Framework 4 and MATHLR figure</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Housing Land Audit 2023</a></li> <li>• Scottish Government, <a href="#">A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland’s changing population.</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Local Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP)</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Local Outcome Improvement Plan, 2023 - 2033</a></li> <li>• Link to developers and HFS engagement – publish feedback</li> <li>• Diffley / Rettie Report on behalf of Homes for Scotland (HFS) Existing Housing Need in West Lothian, January 2024</li> <li>• West Lothian Council and NHS Lothian PHHP Directorate, Health and Housing Background Paper.</li> <li>• DVS, Valuation Report: Affordable Housing Viability and Commuted Sum Exercise – West Lothian Council</li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Declaration of a housing emergency, Minute of Meeting of Council Executive held 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Housing Emergency Action Plan, October 2024</a></li> <li>• Age Scotland, <a href="#">Housing Survey, April 2023</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">West Lothian Council Corporate Plan 2023 - 2028</a></li> </ul>

- Scottish Government, [Local Development Planning Guidelines, May 2023](#)
- CHMA, [HNDA Estimating concealed family rates with overcrowding using Scottish survey data \(2016-2018\)](#)
- Scottish Government, [Letter from Chief Planner and Minister for Public Finance, June 2024](#)
- Scottish Government, [Planning and the housing emergency – Delivery Plan, November 2024](#)
- Letwin report – [Sir Oliver Letwin's final report on how to close the significant gap between housing completions and the amount of land allocated or permitted.](#)
- UK Government, [Competitions and Market Authority \(CMA\), Housebuilding Market Study, Scotland Summary, February 2024](#)
- National Record for Scotland (NRS), [household projections for Scotland, 2018 based](#)
- NRS Scotland, [West Lothian Council Area Profile \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](#)
- Scottish Government, [Scottish Household Survey, 2022](#)
- West Lothian Council, [Housing Land Audit 2023](#)
- West Lothian Council, [Delivery Programme, Adopted November 2024](#)
- [The Strategic Plan Needs Assessment, carried out by Axion on behalf of the West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership, September 2022](#)

## Summary of Evidence

### Purpose, scope and structure of this schedule

This schedule focuses on Rural Homes.

This section is structured in the following order:

- Part 1 - The Scottish Government 6 fold Urban Rural Classification 2020
- Part 2 - Current policy in LDP1
- Part 3 – Self build analysis

### Part 1 - The Scottish Government 6 fold Urban Rural Classification 2020

1.1 The [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020](#) provides a consistent way of defining urban and rural areas across Scotland. The classification is based upon two main criteria: (i) population, as defined by the National Records of Scotland (NRS), and (ii) accessibility, based on drive time analysis to differentiate between accessible and remote areas in Scotland. The classification is available in multiple forms, including a 6-fold classification which distinguishes between urban, rural, and remote areas through six categories.

Settlements can be grouped into the following categories:

- (1) Large Urban Areas - populations of 125,000 or more
- (2) Other Urban Areas - populations of 10,000 to 124,999
- (3) Small Towns - populations of 3,000 to 9,999
- (4) Rural Areas - populations less than 3,000

1.2 Accessibility is measured in terms of drive times to an urban area. This is done by calculating 30 and 60 minute drive times from the population weighted centroids of Settlements with a

population of 10,000 or more (i.e. Large and Other Urban Areas). The results allow areas to be classified in terms of accessibility by the following categories:

- (1) Accessible - Areas within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.
- (2) Remote - Areas that are more than a 30 minute drive time.

Table 1; Percent of population in each 6-fold Urban Rural category, by Local Authority

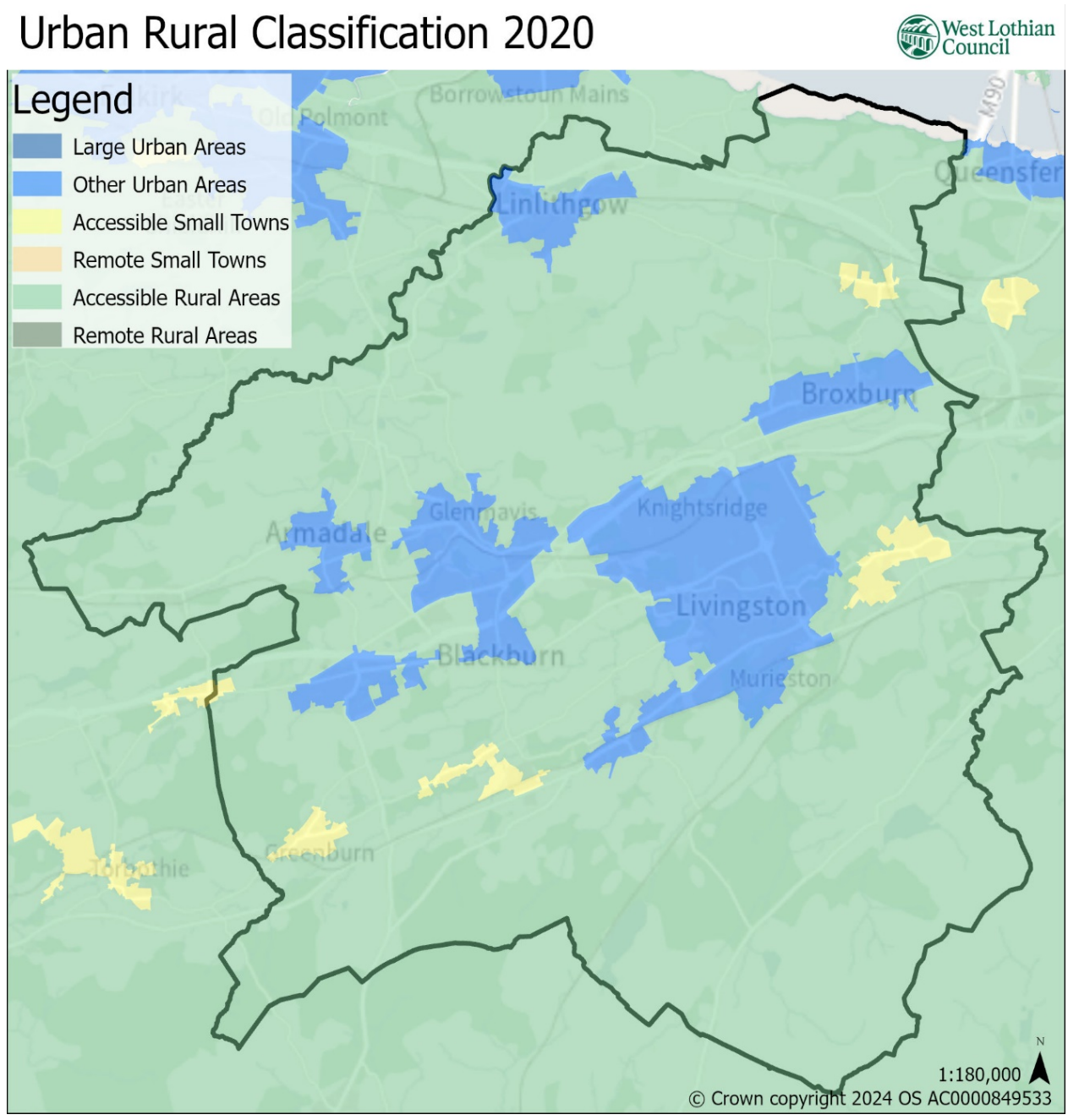
Local Authority	Large Urban	Other Urban	Accessible Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Accessible Rural	Remote Rural
Aberdeen City	96.3	0	2.1	0	1.5	0
Aberdeenshire	0	30.5	14.3	6.5	36.4	12.3
Angus	8.3	53.4	11.5	0	26.1	0.7
Argyll and Bute	0	17.7	4.3	30.4	4.4	43.2
Clackmannanshire	0	40.5	44.9	0	14.6	0
Dumfries and	0	29.8	20.1	5	25	20.1
Dundee City	99.1	0	0	0	0.9	0
East Ayrshire	0	42.2	29.3	0	22	6.4
East Dunbartonshire	59.8	27.5	7.5	0	5.2	0
East Lothian	22.7	39.9	12.2	0	25.2	0
East Renfrewshire	87.2	0	9	0	3.8	0
City of Edinburgh	96	2	1	0	1	0
Falkirk	0	89.7	1.9	0	8.4	0
Fife	0	64.1	17.7	0	18.2	0
Glasgow City	99.6	0	0	0	0.4	0
Highland	0	35.7	1.4	15.4	10.4	37
Inverclyde	0	85.2	9.6	0	5.1	0
Midlothian	0	76.3	12.3	0	11.4	0
Moray	0	26.2	26.9	4.8	32.6	9.5
Na h-Eileanan Siar	0	0	0	27.5	0	72.5
North Ayrshire	0	71.9	17.3	0	6.5	4.3
North Lanarkshire	38.8	48.4	4.2	0	8.6	0
Orkney Islands	0	0	0	33.5	0	66.5
Perth and Kinross	1.2	31.2	11	10.9	35	10.9
Renfrewshire	75.8	9.4	10.7	0	4.2	0
Scottish Borders	0	25.3	21.7	6	38.3	8.8
Shetland Islands	0	0	0	29.6	0	70.4
South Ayrshire	0	68.9	4.1	5.6	17.9	3.5
South Lanarkshire	19.2	59.4	11	0	8.7	1.6
Stirling	0	53.1	13.2	0	29.5	4.3
West Dunbartonshire	47.6	51.1	0	0	1.2	0
West Lothian	0	81.2	10.6	0	8.2	0
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>37.8</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>5.5</b>

1.3 The above table shows that the majority (81.2%) of West Lothian's population is located in other urban (settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people). The next most popular category is accessible small towns (Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more) where 10.6% of people in West Lothian reside. The third category is

'accessible rural' (areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30-minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more), where 8.2% of West Lothian's population reside.

- 1.4 No one resides in a large urban settlement (over 125,000 people), nor are located further than 30 minutes from a settlement of at least 10,000 people (remote areas).

Figure 1 Map of West Lothian's 6 fold urban rural classification



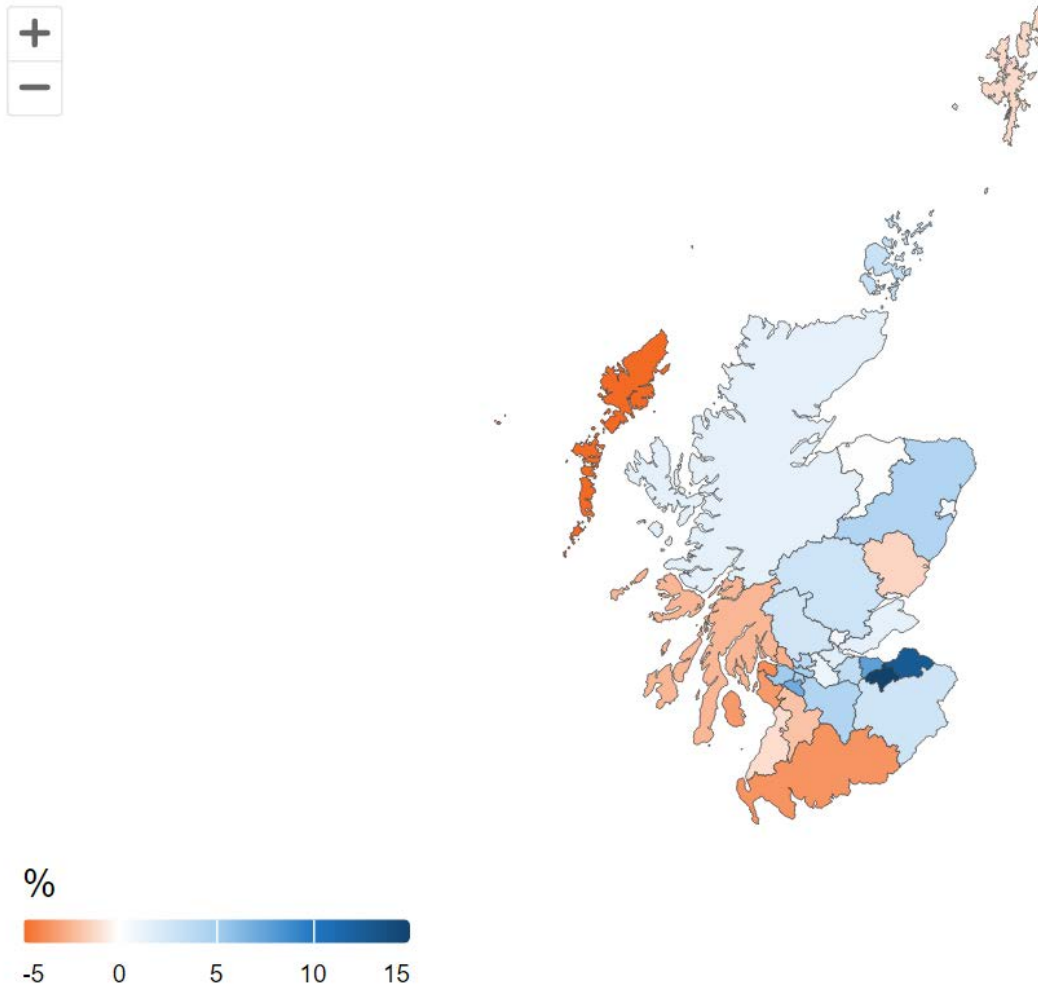
- 1.5 NPF4 sets out greater constraint will be applied in areas of pressure whilst in rural areas with fragile communities, a more enabling approach has been taken to support communities to be sustainable and thrive. LDPs are required to set out an appropriate approach to development in areas of pressure and decline informed by an understanding of population change and settlement characteristics and how these have changed over time as well as an understanding of the local circumstances including housing and travel.

- 1.6 As can be seen from Figure XX population decreases are concentrated in the West and South West of Scotland. Some areas of Scotland are expected to decline, the population of West Lothian is

however projected to increase. Rural areas in West Lothian, due to their high accessibility and proximity to Edinburgh are areas of pressure.

Figure XX Populations change 2011 – 2022 by Council Area

Source: [Scotland Census 2022 results](#)



- 1.7 West Lothian is not experiencing decline in its rural populations and as such does not consider rural population decline a significant issue. The current LDP policy on restricting rather than enabling homes in the countryside is considered to be appropriate. No previously inhabited areas that are suitable for resettlement have been identified

## Part 2 - Current policy in LDP1

- 2.1 The approach taken under LDP1 has sought to restrict development out with settlement boundaries unless specific criteria could be met. For housing this includes:

- Restoration of a brownfield site
- replacement of an existing house in the countryside which is of a poor design or in a poor structural condition
- Infill development
- the proposal involves the conversion or rehabilitation of existing rural buildings
- the proposal is supported by the council's lowland crofting policy.

- 2.2 The Council's **Lowland Crofting policy** allows for very low-density rural housing and woodland development. The policy was formulated and adopted in the 1990's. The aim was to divide up

poorer-quality farms to provide a small number of rural homesteads, and at the same time transform bleak areas into pleasant well-wooded landscapes.

- 2.3 The Lowland Crofting policy can be seen at odds to NPF4 namely, Policy 1 - significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises, reducing the need to travel by private car, local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods.
- 2.4 NPF4 Policy 17 (c ) sets out the circumstances where development proposals for new homes in remote rural areas will be supported. West Lothian does not have any areas that are remote rural areas under the 6 fold urban rural classification, therefore the LDP2 will require to clarify that there are no remote rural areas in West Lothian and therefore NPF4 Policy 17 (c ) will not be applicable in West Lothian.
- 2.5 Likewise, NPF4 Policy 17 (d) sets out development proposals for new homes that support the resettlement of previously inhabited areas will be supported where the proposal: i. is in an area identified in the LDP as suitable for resettlement. There are no previously inhabited areas in West Lothian for LDP2 to identify for resettlement.
- 2.6 NPF4, Policy 17 (a) sets out the circumstances where new homes in rural areas will be supported. This is a wider set of circumstances than what LDP1 currently allows for. During engagement with Development Management there has been concern raised that the NPF4 criteria is too broad and could lead to inappropriate development. Specifically, concerns regarding occupancy conditions not being enforceable and that exceptions such as homes for retired farmers is open to abuse. However, this will require to be considered in the context of meeting the housing needs of the population that require a particular rural location.
- 2.7 The current LDP1 approach to rural housing has been successful in directing new housing to sustainable locations and restricting inappropriate development in the countryside. An analysis to evaluate if the wider criteria set out by NPF4 Policy 17 (a) will lead to inappropriate development is an identified evidence gap.
- 2.8 A report was prepared by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), [SRUC, West Lothian 'Lowland Crofting' and farm diversification research project](#) under commission by West Lothian Council, to assess the impact of the Lowland Crofting Policy (LCP) on agricultural activity in the West of West Lothian throughout the duration of the scheme.
- 2.9 The LCP's aims have been to facilitate rural business and employment, provide higher-end housing, increase woodland cover and improve landscape in the West of West Lothian (WWL), as part of a wider strategy for rural development, and has been open to applications since 1990.
- 2.10 LDP1 target area was identified based on criteria for landscape enhancement and woodland planting, provision of rural housing, and poorer quality agricultural holdings. Within this 'Lowland Crofting area' 51 farms were marked as suitable for the scheme, of which 13 have participated between 1990 and the present day.
- 2.11 The last planning application for the scheme submitted in 2005 was approved in 2009, and there have been no new applications approved since. Across these 13 farms a total of 139 crofts have been built, or have received planning permission for housing (with a small number still being built).
- 2.12 The report examines reasons and barriers that have prevented the other eligible farms from using the LCP scheme. The workshop and interviews with stakeholders highlighted the complexity and time involved in diversification through the LCP, the main developer (New Lives, New Landscapes)

going into abeyance, a change to public grants for woodland, high construction costs associated with quality rather than quantity of the houses and large average plot sizes (4 acres) has meant that no new lowland crofting schemes have come forward since 2009.

2.13 The report notes the outcomes of the LCP. These include the creation of 139 new high-end, large houses in the WWL, including at least 12 small businesses from these properties, as well as an estimated 304 hectares of new woodland in the area, with associated access. Although it is noted some public access has proved controversial.

2.14 Since its inception, planning policy has moved to direct development to the right location. This includes minimising the need to travel by private car. The policy is out dated, is not actively used and is contrary to NPF4 policies. It is therefore recommended that the policy is removed in LDP2.

### **Part 3- Self- Build Analysis**

3.1 As at August 2024, there were 15 intimations of interest in self-build. Four of these specifically sought a rural location and a further three specifying the whole of West Lothian as a suitable location.

## **Summary of Stakeholder Engagement**

## **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;

- Removal lowland crofting policy from LDP1.
- Consider if NPF4 Policy 17 (a) is too broad and requires further constraints. (Support development proposals for new homes in rural areas where the development is suitably scaled, sited and designed to be in keeping with the character of the area and the development and support proposals for new homes in rural areas where the development will contribute towards local living and take into account identified local housing needs (including affordable housing), economic considerations and the transport needs of the development as appropriate for the rural location)
- Clarify that West Lothian do not have any remote rural areas, nor any areas of previously inhabited areas that are suitable for resettlement.