

West Lothian Local Development Plan 2 Evidence Report	
Issue	14. Design, quality and place
<p>Information required by the Act and NPF4 regarding the issue addressed in this section</p>	<p>Town and Country Planning (Scotland) (Act) 1997, as amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 15(5)(a) ‘the principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district’ <p>National Planning Framework 4 (adopted 13 February 2023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy 14 - LDPs should be place-based and created in line with the Place Principle. The spatial strategy should be underpinned by the six qualities of successful places. LDPs should provide clear expectations for design, quality and place taking account of the local context, characteristics and connectivity of the area. They should also identify where more detailed design guidance is expected, for example, by way of design frameworks, briefs, masterplans and design codes. <p>Planning authorities should use the Place Standard tool in the preparation of LDPs and design guidance to engage with communities and other stakeholders. They should also where relevant promote its use in early design discussions on planning applications</p> <p>Linked Policies: All other policies</p> <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 Design are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue and Green Infrastructure Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Health and Wellbeing Local Living Town Centres and Retail
<p>Links to Evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Lothian Council, Local Development Plan 1 2018 West Lothian Council, Residential Development Guide Supplementary Guidance West Lothian Council, West Lothian Open Space Plan 2020-2024 West Lothian Council Draft Open Space Plan 2025-2034 West Lothian Council, West Lothian Active Travel Plan 2024-2029 West Lothian Council, Parking Strategy IN PREPARATION: West Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan

- Scottish Government, [Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods](#)
- Public Health Scotland, [Strategic Plan](#)

Summary of Evidence

Purpose, scope and structure of this schedule

This schedule focuses on design, quality and place within West Lothian. The schedule and its evidence are set out in the following sections:

1. Local Policy and Guidance
2. Related National Policy and Guidance

Part 1 – Local Policy and Guidance

West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP)

- 1.1 The current LDP at para 22 sets out an expectation that *“the design and layout of new developments to create buildings and places which respect their surroundings, establish a sense of place and identity, contribute positively towards the existing character of an area, are easy to get to and move around in, particularly for pedestrians, and incorporate the principles of sustainable development”*.
- 1.2 It is also stated in para 23 that *“the siting, design and layout of developments, including community growth areas, development framework sites and residential masterplan sites, should accord with the principles of placemaking”* and reference is made to the Residential Development Guide Supplementary Guidance for further design guidance.
- 1.3 The LDP seeks an outcome of new development creating *“valued and appreciated places people can identify with which can integrate the activities and services used by their community and where people will want to live, work, visit and enjoy. This will help communities fulfil their economic and social potential”*.

West Lothian LDP Policy DES 1 (Design Principles)

- 1.4 Policy DES 1 is the primary design policy for the existing West Lothian LDP for all developments from householder to major developments.
- 1.5 Policy DES 1 sets out criteria for assessing whether design of development proposals is acceptable across a wide range of matters, including impacts on adjacent buildings, landscape character, water environment, as well as ensuring proposals include appropriate open space and active travel links.
- 1.6 NPF 4 Policy 14 does not cover this range of matters and is lighter on detail than LDP Policy DES 1. Annex D of NPF 4 expands on the six qualities of successful places. The points in Annex D will need to be considered in the preparation of the LDP.
- 1.7 In this context, it should be considered whether a bespoke design/placemaking policy is required for the Proposed Plan to implement the aspirations of NPF 4 Policy 14.

Residential Development Guide (RDG) Supplementary Guidance (SG)

- 1.8 The RDG SG sets out the detailed criteria for residential developments of 10 or more homes, which builds on the criteria of Policy DES 1. The RDG reaffirms and requires adherence to the principles of Designing Streets and the six qualities of successful places (para 21).
- 1.9 The RDG sets out detailed requirements for the following:
- Layout design
 - Amenity and privacy
 - Gardens and private open space
 - Public open space
 - Landscape design
 - Trees
 - Parking standards
 - Provision of parking bays and charging points for ultra low emission vehicles
 - Garages and driveways
 - Bus stops and shelters
 - Public rights of way
 - Cycling and walking
 - Cycle storage and cycle parking
 - Transport assessments
 - Quality audits
- 1.10 The document also sets financial contributions required for open space upgrades in the vicinity of new developments. This circumstance arises where active open space is not being delivered through on-site provision.
- 1.11 Internal engagement with Development Management and Roads & Transportation highlighted below has indicated that the document generally works well for internal services.
- 1.12 Council parking standards for new development will be reviewed during the plan preparation process, as part of the implementation of the council's **Parking Strategy**. The Proposed Plan will need to take cognisance of this review, as any new, detailed applications and new site allocations will need to comply with any updated standards.
- 1.13 Although quality audits are mentioned in the RDG, these are intended to be developer led and submitted as part of a planning application package. There is no council quality audit, as part of the RDG or separately, that enables Planning to review the quality of developments and whether the principles and detailed requirements of the document are working on the ground. A council quality audit should be developed alongside the Proposed Plan to evaluate development quality. Such a tool will help inform whether any specific design policies are required for the Proposed Plan and measure the outcomes of the RDG and Policy DES 1 to evaluate these policies.

Masterplans

- 1.14 Masterplans within designated Core Development Areas (Armadale, East Broxburn/Winchburgh and Livingston and Almond Valley) were prepared by developers under the previous West Lothian Local Plan and submitted with planning permission in principle applications for approval.
- 1.15 Detailed applications that have since come forward under these masterplans have been required to comply with Designing Streets, the RDG and LDP Policy DES 1.
- 1.16 The areas of Core Development Areas that have been built would also benefit from the development of a quality audit to formally review the outcomes on the ground, and whether the aspirations of development plan policies and the original masterplans for these areas have been fulfilled. Such a review has not been carried out to date.
- 1.17 Reviewing existing masterplans will help to inform the preparation of site briefs for new sites in the Proposed Plan by learning lessons of how existing, larger scale sites have developed.

West Lothian Open Space Plan

- 1.18 The extant Open Space Plan 2020-2024 sets out standards for open space, in relation to quantity, quality and accessibility. The plan states that *“the standards are intended to:*
- *Be realistic rather than aspirational*
 - *allow Planning Officers to readily evaluate local and major development applications*
 - *provide a structured basis for assessing sites and settlements against a consistent methodology*
 - *allow priorities for capital investment in open space to be identified”*
- 1.19 The Open Space Plan set out the park hierarchy, play area hierarchy and typical features of classified open/natural spaces in West Lothian. If active open space is to be delivered on-site for new development then these features are what will need to be incorporated into any design of open space.
- 1.20 The Open Space Plan sets out the following, in terms of assessment of planning applications:
- “When the number of proposed properties and location is known, proposed new developments of more than ten properties are systematically assessed by council Open Space Officers in relation to the open space standards, by considering the following questions:*
- 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.*
1. *Will the relevant settlement continue to maintain an acceptable quantity standard with the anticipated increase in population?*
 2. *Are all proposed properties within accessibility standards of a play area and the various park types?*

3. Are all existing individual play areas and parks accessible from the new development fit for purpose?

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 (2018). 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.”

- 1.21 The above shows the link between the Open Space Plan and the Residential Development Guide SG in assessing what open space provision is required for new development, including upgrading of existing open space assets through developer contributions.
- 1.22 The council’s **draft Open Space Plan 2025-2034** was published in December 2024. This replicates the existing provisions of the extant existing Open Space Plan. However, this document may be subject to change during consultation. Any changes to the document will need to be considered in the preparation of the Proposed Plan.
- 1.23 In addition, a Play Park Strategy is also being produced by the council’s Open Space team in 2025.
- 1.24 The provision of open space within new development and upgrades to and provision of links to existing open space are important, in terms of integrating new development into existing communities, and from a health and wellbeing perspective.
- 1.25 Close liaison with the council’s Open Space will be required in the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

Active Travel Plan for West Lothian 2024-2029

- 1.26 The Active Travel Plan (ATP) for West Lothian 2024-2029 sets out a vision for the area to have accessible connections between communities that enable walking, wheeling and cycling as part of a cohesive active travel network.
- 1.27 The ATP has considered the current LDP allocations as key trip generators and attractors and has shown current and planned active travel infrastructure.
- 1.28 The ATP sets out a list of projects that form a primary and secondary network for West Lothian. There may be opportunities to deliver these links as part of LDP 2 allocations. The delivery of these links can potentially link to site/development briefs and how new development can be designed to enable and deliver such links. In addition, it will need to be considered where developer contributions can be used to deliver active travel improvements, where appropriate.

West Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan

- 1.29 West Lothian Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Working Together for Nature - West Lothian's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-35 outlines how our local biodiversity can contribute to these national/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.
- 1.30 Design and placemaking is important in ensuring that habitat connectivity is not compromised and that new development does not negatively impact existing habitats where they are in close proximity to new development. Any site/development briefs will need to take account of habitat connectivity and nature networks when they are being developed as part of a Proposed Plan.

Part 2 – Related National Policy and Guidance

Local Living

- 2.1 NPF 4 Policy 15 sets out that LDPs are required to support local living through the spatial strategy, associated site briefs and masterplans. Schedule 13 sets out the full summary of evidence on Local Living.
- 2.2 The Scottish Government Planning Guidance on Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods states the following at p.35 in relation to design and quality of place, in relation to local living:

“LDPs should provide clear expectations for design and quality of place, taking account of the local context, characteristics, and connectivity of the area. At masterplan and development planning level, alongside the principles of NPF4 including local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods, development proposals should be prepared in line with LDP expectations for the area. Masterplans and design proposals for individual developments should also be prepared, as appropriate, with reference to Scottish Government’s Creating Places policy statement. Development proposals should be designed with consideration of the impacts on local living overall and take action to address negative impacts that may otherwise happen.”

- 2.3 Any site/development briefs that are developed as part of the Proposed Plan will be required to incorporate Local Living principles and address any identified gaps in Local Living (if there are any) in an area, as well as taking account of local context characteristics and connectivity of an area.

Public Health Scotland Strategic Plan

- 2.4 The ‘Promote health and wellbeing’ chapter of the strategic plan notes that the places where we live shape our health, as well as a place nurturing good or poor health depends on a number of factors related to:
- the buildings, streets, public spaces and natural spaces that make up the physical environment of neighbourhoods
 - the relationships, social contacts and support networks that make up the social environment of neighbourhoods

2.5 Design policies shape the streets, public spaces and nature spaces of neighbourhoods. Any consideration of a bespoke design policy in the Proposed Plan should ensure that links are made to health and wellbeing and that new development is inclusive, accessible to all, aesthetically pleasing and reduce anti-social behaviour.

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

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

This section covers 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 is required to:

1. Consider whether a specific design/placemaking policy is required for West Lothian that builds on NPF 4 Policy 14 is required in the preparation of the Proposed Plan.
2. Review existing masterplans and developments alongside the preparation of the Proposed Plan through development of a quality audit. This review will also help inform preparation of development/site briefs for the Proposed Plan.
3. Take account of open space provision, and any gaps in provision or required upgrades when selecting site allocations for the Proposed Plan. A specific policy stating that developer contributions will be required towards open space should be considered for the Proposed Plan.
4. To take cognisance of the proposals in the council's Active Travel Plan in the development of the spatial strategy and whether some of these proposals can be delivered through the design of site allocations in the Proposed Plan.
5. Ensure site allocations and any development briefs take into account the proposed nature network and habitat connectivity when the Proposed Plan is being prepared.
6. Integrate design policies and site/development briefs with Local Living principles. Development briefs for site allocations could illustrate how gaps in Local Living could be addressed through new development.
7. Align design/placemaking policies to health and wellbeing principles and help create healthy places.