

## West Lothian Local Development Plan 2 Evidence Report

### Schedule

### 17. Local Living

#### 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)(a) ‘the principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district’
- section 15(5)(c)the size, composition, health and distribution of the population of the district,
- section 15(5)(ca)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,
- section 15(5)(cb)the availability of land in the district for housing, including for older people and disabled people,
- section 15(5)(cd)the health needs of the population of the district and the likely effects of development and use of land on those health needs,
- section 15(5)(ce)the education needs of the population of the district and the likely effects of development and use of land on those education needs,
- section 15(5)(cg)the capacity of education services in the district,
- section 15(5)(ch)the desirability of maintaining an appropriate number and range of cultural venues and facilities (including in particular, but not limited to, live music venues) in the district,
- section 15(5)(d)the infrastructure of the district (including communications, transport and drainage systems, systems for the supply of water and energy, and health care and education facilities),
- section 15(5)(e)how that infrastructure is used

National Planning Framework 4 (adopted 13 February 2023)

- Policy 15 - LDPs should support local living, including 20 minute neighbourhoods within settlements, through the spatial strategy, associated site briefs and masterplans. The approach should take into account the local context, consider the varying settlement patterns and reflect the particular characteristics and challenges faced by each place. Communities and businesses will have an important role to play in informing this, helping to strengthen local living through their engagement with the planning system

Linked Policies: 1, 2, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 25, 27, 28

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 Local Living are:

- Climate change
- Health and wellbeing
- Town centres and retail

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable transport</li> <li>• Blue and green infrastructure</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Healthcare</li> </ul>
<b>Links to Evidence referenced in this schedule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Government, <a href="#">Planning Guidance: Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods</a></li> <li>• Background Note on Local Living</li> <li>• <a href="#">Scottish Living Locally Data Portal</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, West Lothian Strategic Review of Town Centres – <a href="#">November 2022 Report</a>, <a href="#">June 2023 Report</a>, <a href="#">November 2023 Report</a>, <a href="#">September 2024 Report</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">West Lothian Active Travel Plan 2024-2029</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Local Outcomes Improvement Plan</a></li> <li>• West Lothian Council, <a href="#">Corporate Plan</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Local Place Plans</a></li> </ul>

## Summary of Evidence

### Purpose, scope and structure of this schedule

This schedule focuses on town centres and retail within West Lothian. The schedule and its evidence are set out in the following sections:

1. Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhood Planning Guidance
2. Local Living in West Lothian
3. Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Local Place Plans

### Part 1 – Local Living and 20 minute Neighbourhood Planning Guidance

- 1.1 Local Living (frequently referred to as 20-minute neighbourhoods) is a concept that people should be provided with the opportunity to meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home. The 20-minute neighbourhood concept is one method of supporting local living. The 20-minute neighbourhoods concept aims to provide access to the majority of daily needs within a 20-minute walk, wheel or cycle.
- 1.2 The Scottish Government published guidance on **Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods (2024)** in support of Policy 15 of NPF4 which advocates the delivery of liveable places where we can live better, healthier lives and identifies ‘local living’ as one of six spatial principles by which places should be planned.
- 1.3 The Scottish Government guidance references a previous report by **Climatexchange (2021)**, which sets out that local living/20 minute neighbourhoods have the potential to support the below four outcomes:



1.4 The guidance presents a Local Living Framework based on the 14 themes of the place standard tool. The framework is intended to provide a consistent structure for considering the key characteristics of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods in development planning, decision-making and in design proposals. which sits alongside a list of key considerations of how local living and daily needs can be met appropriately in a place.



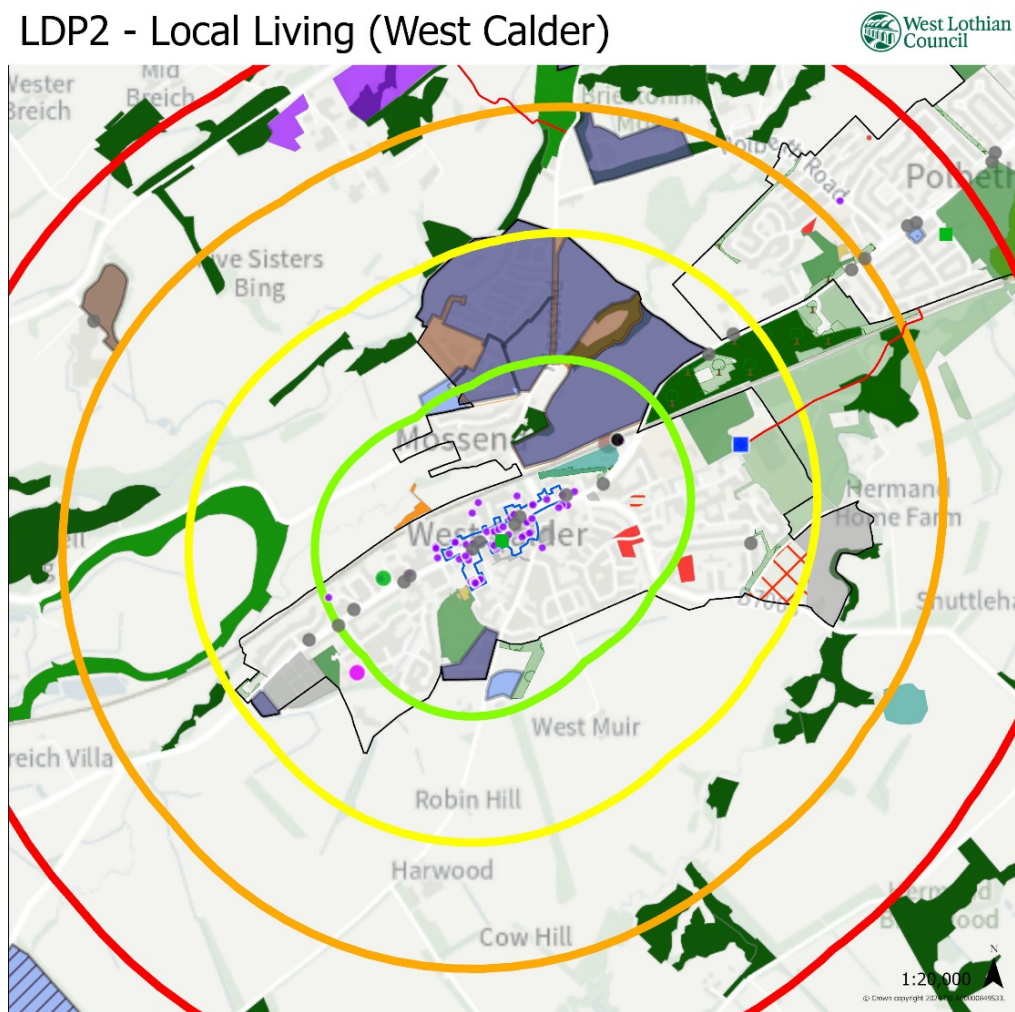
## Part 2 – Local Living in West Lothian

2.1 Policy 15 establishes that there is no standardised approach for applying the local living/20-minute neighbourhood concept; it is left to individual Local Authorities to determine how the approach will be applied in their areas to reflect local context.

- 2.2 The principles of Local Living cut across several policy areas, including health and wellbeing, open space, retail and town centres, transport and active travel, housing and infrastructure.
- 2.3 The implementation of local living policy will require significant cross service working with internal and external stakeholders. An LDP co-ordination group has been formed to act as a forum for discussion and actions around policy areas that will require cross service working and input, such as local living.
- 2.4 In developing an approach to Local Living within West Lothian, cognisance has been taken of the urban and rural nature of West Lothian. Not all villages and hamlets will be able to access all daily services within a 20 minute walk, wheel or cycle, and there will be a need to access services by car from these locations. Given the context of West Lothian, the term 20 minute neighbourhoods will not be used and the term 'Local Living' will be used.
- 2.5 The Background Note on Local Living sets out the methodology developed for Local Living. This is a scoring system with facilities ranked based on their importance of meeting daily needs. This methodology can provide analysis of where there are gaps in local living that can potentially be addressed through new development. However, if a town or village does not contain certain facilities, for example, a secondary school, then this should not prevent new development in an area, and there will need to be a recognition of existing infrastructure capacity for certain facilities. A high score for Local Living will not, on its own, lead to a site being selected for allocation in the Proposed Plan. A number of factors will influence site selection.
- 2.6 Scottish Government guidance on Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods (2024) in support of Policy 15 of NPF4 supports "approaches to local living seek to redevelop brownfield, vacant and derelict land, helping to bring land back into permanent or temporary productive use, encouraging investment in our communities". In supporting Local Living, the Proposed Plan will need to consider opportunities to redevelop vacant and derelict land and encourage re-use of empty buildings. The schedule on Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings sets out further evidence on this topic.
- 2.7 An analysis of towns and villages within West Lothian for local living/20 minute neighbourhoods has been undertaken. This includes the following:
- Town/Local centre uses – Shops, Restaurants, Pubs, Offices (based on 2018 retail survey)
  - Bus stops and railway stations
  - Core paths
  - Open space, including parks, play areas, allotments, woodland
  - Community hubs
  - Education facilities – primary schools, secondary schools and pre-schools
  - GP Surgery locations
  - Care home locations
  - Pharmacy locations
  - Recycling centres
  - Vacant and derelict land
  - Allocated housing sites from LDP 1
- 2.8 The outputs from this exercise have been mapped to ascertain what facilities are located within a 400m, 800m, 1200m and 1600m of town and local centres that will be the focal points for Local

Living. This aligns mapping with the scoring system set out in the Local Living Background Note, as mentioned in para 2.5. An example of this for West Calder is shown below:

## LDP2 - Local Living (West Calder)

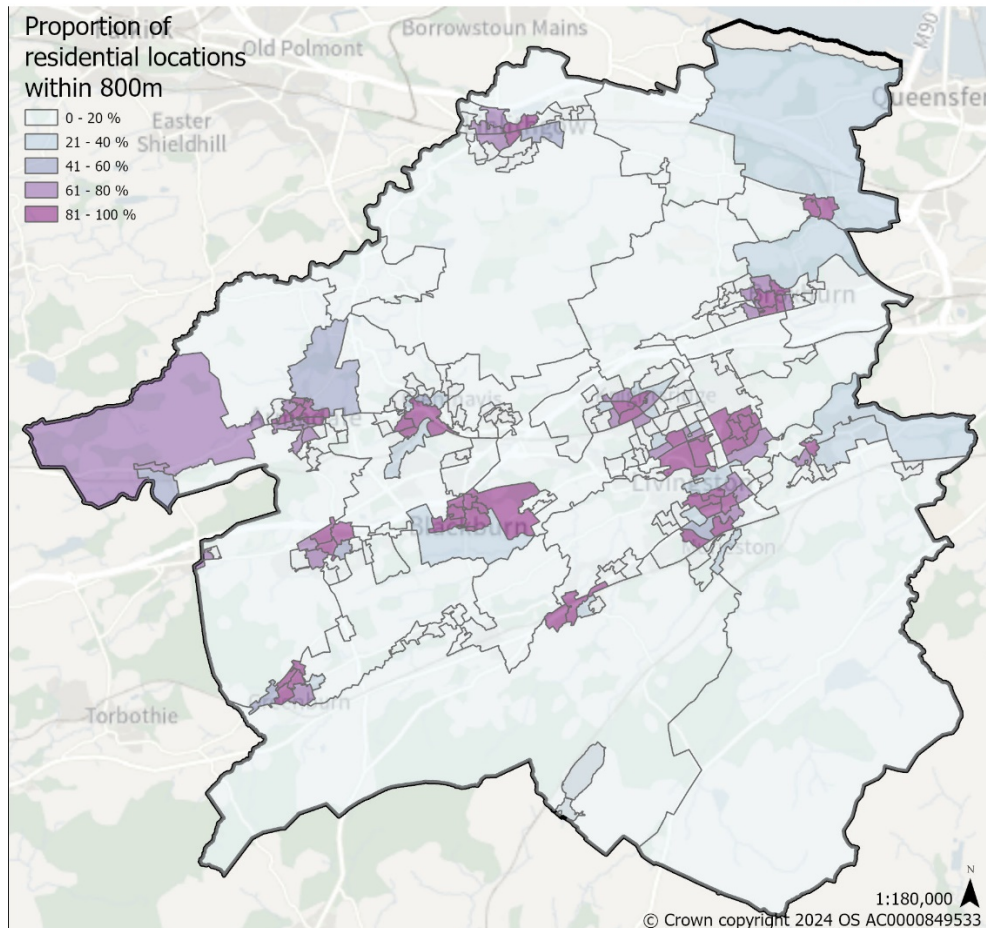


2.9 Data from the Scottish Living Locally Data portal has also been extracted and mapped to show the proportion of residential locations within 800m of the following facilities:

- Pharmacies
- Frequent Public Transport (five or more stops per hour)
- Recreational, sports pitches and facilities
- Financial (Cash machines, Banks and building societies or Post offices)
- Primary health care (GP surgery or NHS walk-in-centre)

2.10 An example of the mapping for primary health care is shown below:

## Local Living - Primary Health Care



- 2.11 As noted above, town and local centres will be the primary focal points for Local Living within West Lothian. Schedule 18 on town centres and retail provides full detail on evidence for town centres. As is noted within that schedule, a strategic review of town centres is being undertaken by the council's Economic Development service and that continued engagement with Economic Development is required on this topic. In addition, review of public realm design guides will be undertaken. Town and local centres will need to be attractive places to live and spend time in for Local Living to be implemented successfully.
- 2.12 The council will undertake a retail capacity study, in order to address the requirements of NPF4 Policy 28 and identify locations where there are "deficiencies in retail provision in terms of quality and quantity in an area". This study will also need to identify current retail catchments and if there are any gaps in neighbourhood convenience retail that link to Local Living.
- 2.13 The council's **Active Travel Plan** recognises the geography of West Lothian, and its urban/rural nature, presents challenges for the ability to promote active travel in substantial rural areas for every day needs. Public transport provision and connectivity is another challenge that West Lothian faces. As mentioned above, there will be some villages and hamlets where journeys by car will continue to be necessary for daily needs. The Active Travel Plan seeks to promote a strategic network for active travel. Of particular importance to Local Living will be the development of Community Active Travel Networks to support everyday journeys being made by active travel. The strategic network will need to be examined in the preparation of the Proposed LDP to see what projects could contribute to Local Living, as well as examining what other active travel interventions could be made to implement Local Living, especially in rural areas.

- 2.14 As part of the Proposed Plan, it will need to be ensured that new areas of open space are accessible and integrated with existing communities. Areas of a wide variety of open space have been mapped as part of evidence gathering, including country parks, neighbourhood parks, local parks, play areas, accessible green space and sports pitches. Provision of open space and accessibility to existing open space will need to be looked at carefully when selecting sites for new housing development. New development offers the opportunity to address existing gaps in open space provision from a Local Living perspective. As noted in the Design Policies schedule, the council's **Open Space Plan 2020-2024** is being updated and a **draft Open Space Plan 2025-2034** was published in December 2024. The finalised Open Space Plan 2025-2034 will also need to be taken into account from a Local Living perspective.
- 2.15 The Proposed Plan will need to provide a range of housing sites to meet West Lothian's housing need, including affordable housing. The site appraisal criteria (see schedule 28 and relevant background paper) will help to ensure that new housing development is located in the right places. At a certain scale, new housing sites may also be able to accommodate facilities, for example, shop units, to address gaps in Local Living. Release of land for housing in smaller villages may also help to sustain existing services and encourage services to locate in these areas. New housing development also needs to be accompanied by supporting infrastructure to enable Local Living to be a success. The schedules 21 and 22, on education infrastructure and healthcare infrastructure respectively, set out full detail on how capacity will be appraised for education and healthcare infrastructure, both of which are key to supporting Local Living.
- 2.16 The Core Development Areas that have developed have had varied success in being able to deliver facilities that could contribute towards Local Living. Winchburgh has delivered a new town centre, two primary schools and two secondary schools. East Calder has delivered one new and one extended primary school, but not a local centre yet.
- 2.17 The delivery of new commercial facilities requires a balancing of community desire for facilities to be in place as they move into new homes against the commercial requirement for a sufficient scale of development to allow facilities to operate viably. Delivery of such facilities will need careful support through the development management process.
- 2.18 The Delivery Programme will be important in ensuring facilities and infrastructure are delivered timeously alongside new housing development.
- 2.19 The Proposed Plan will need to be supportive of the local economy and the right opportunities to grow local economies to ensure Local Living is successful. The proposed LDP will need to ensure there is a sufficient supply of economic development land that will provide a range of property that can be utilised by businesses of varying size. The proposed LDP will also need to ensure the council's priorities in the soon to be published Economic Investment Plan are taken account of.
- 2.20 Taking the above areas together, successful of implementation of Local Living has the potential to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing through encouraging people to walk, wheel and cycle to meet daily needs, as well as providing access to good quality open space and housing. Data presented in the health and wellbeing and quality homes schedules show a clear link between good quality and secure housing with health and wellbeing. Convenient access to open space is also important in improving physical activity and mental health.
- 2.21 There are challenges in implementing Local Living within rural areas. As shown in the example above, and in the background note, services are less accessible to rural communities. Further qualitative evidence is required to see where specific rural communities access their services and

if the Proposed Plan can put forward proposals to better connect rural communities to their nearest services, for example, through new or improved active travel links.

### **Part 3 – Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, Corporate Plan and Local Place Plans**

- 3.1 The aims of Local Living fit well with the four **Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2023-2033** pillars, which are:
- Creating skills and jobs;
  - Creating affordable and sustainable housing;
  - Creating zero carbon communities; and
  - Improving health and wellbeing
- 3.2 The council's **Corporate Plan** has an priority of 'helping to create strong and sustainable communities'. To deliver this priority there is a focus on people being supported to live sustainably.
- 3.3 These themes and priorities tie into the cross cutting policy areas that relate to Local Living, which are mentioned above.
- 3.4 At the time of writing, there are seven registered local place plans. The following local place plans explicitly reference local living/20 minute neighbourhoods:
- Bathgate – It is stated at Appendix A that "Bathgate is an ideal size to enable planned, compact urban growth, optimising the use of land and sustaining/enabling true 20 minute neighbourhoods". Proposals and suggested amendments to the current LDP are then set out to deliver this.
  - Mid Calder – notes a need for a local shop giving easy access to affordable, healthy food to reduce car journeys and achieve a 20 minute neighbourhood. The Mid Calder LPP references an Age Scotland survey that found 32% of older people thought 20 minute neighbourhood were not achievable in their community due to lack of facilities.
  - Murieston – It is stated that Murieston's spatial profile lends itself to the development of a 20 minute neighbourhood with "the focal point of the community comprising Livingston South Railway Station, Bankton Retail Centre and Murieston Village Hall".

### **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.*

### **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 is required to:

1. Examine ways that rural areas can be better connected to services and facilities, for example, through active travel, in the production of the spatial strategy and delivery programme.
2. Ensure the spatial strategy takes cognisance of the proposals in the council's Active Travel Plan and whether some of these proposals can deliver improvements in Local Living.
3. Ensure sufficient open space provision. Any gaps in provision or required upgrades will need to be taken account of when selecting site allocations for the Proposed Plan to ensure that open space is integrated into existing communities and new development.
4. Ensure new housing development is located in sustainable locations. Where housing allocations could address gaps in Local Living the Delivery Programme should set out the programming of how these facilities will be delivered.
5. Make the network of town and local neighbourhood centres will form the focal points of Local Living. Further work is required to identify gaps in neighbourhood convenience retailing that could be addressed in the Proposed Plan.
6. Support the public transport network in the spatial strategy and ensure site allocations are located near to existing public transport, or be made accessible by public transport.
7. Ensure the spatial strategy contains site allocations that can deliver development with capacity, or capacity being created, in supporting infrastructure, such as education and healthcare.
8. Include statements of policies, and proposals, regarding the provision of public conveniences and water refill locations, In line with the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.