

<b>West Lothian Local Development Plan 2 Evidence Report</b>	
<b>Schedule</b>	<b>28. Site Appraisal Methodology</b>
<b>Information required by the Act and NPF4 regarding the issue addressed in this section</b>	<p><b>Town and Country Planning (Scotland) (Act) 1997, as amended: Section 15 (5)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district.</li> <li>• The principal purposes for which land is used.</li> <li>• 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,</li> <li>• The availability of land in the district for housing, including for older people and disabled people,</li> <li>• The desirability of allocating land for the purposes of resettlement.</li> </ul> <p><b>National Planning Policy 4 (adopted 13 February 2023)</b></p> <p><b>Policy 16 Quality Homes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliverable land should be allocated to meet the 10 year Local Housing Land Requirement in locations that create quality places for people to live. Areas that may be suitable for new homes beyond 10 years are also to be identified. The location of where new homes are allocated should be consistent with local living including, where relevant, 20 minute neighbourhoods and an infrastructure first approach.</li> </ul> <p><b>NPF4 Policy 18 – Infrastructure First</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LDPs and delivery programmes should be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach. Plans should: be informed by evidence on infrastructure capacity, condition, needs and deliverability within the plan area, including cross boundary infrastructure; set out the infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy, informed by the evidence base, identifying the infrastructure priorities, and where, how, when and by whom they will be delivered; and indicate the type, level (or method of calculation) and location of the financial or in-kind contributions, and the types of development from which they will be required.</li> </ul>
<b>Links to Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Government, <a href="#">National Planning Framework 4</a> (2023)</li> <li>• Scottish Government, <a href="#">Local Development Plan Guidance</a> (May 2023)</li> <li>• Key Agencies’ Joint LDP Site Assessment and SEA Checklist</li> <li>• Homes for Scotland (HFS) draft Site Deliverability Checklist</li> </ul>
<b>Summary of Evidence</b>	

## **Purpose, scope and structure of this schedule**

This schedule focuses on a proposed Site Appraisal Methodology.

This schedule and its evidence are set out in the following sections:

- Part 1 – Site Appraisal Methodology Guidance
- Part 2 – Developing the Site Appraisal Methodology and Criteria
  - National Planning Framework 4 Outcomes and Policies
  - Infrastructure First
  - Deliverability and Viability
  - Equalities and Health
  - The Place Principle, Local Place Planning and Community Wealth Building
  - Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Appraisal
- Part 3 – The Site Appraisal Methodology
- Part 4 - Use of the Site Appraisal Methodology

### **Part 1 – Site Appraisal Methodology Guidance**

- 1.1 **National Planning Framework 4 (2023) Policy 16** requires that “deliverable land should be allocated within the next Local Development Plan to meet the 10-year Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) in locations that create quality places for people to live”. This is to meet the duty for a housing target and to represent how much land is required. Evidence on the proposed indicative 10-year Local Housing Land Requirement for West Lothian is set out in Schedule 10.
- 1.2 **The Scottish Government’s Local Development Plan Guidance (May 2023)** states that in allocating land for new homes that “no sites should automatically roll forward from one plan to the next” and that all sites for new homes should be assessed using a “site appraisal methodology which was considered at the Evidence Report and Gate Check”.
- 1.3 The guidance also states that whilst “detailed site appraisal will not be appropriate at the Evidence Report stage, but the authority could usefully establish a site appraisal methodology that will be used to appraise sites and inform allocations for the Proposed Plan”.
- 1.4 The guidance also highlights that the Site Appraisal Methodology is ideally integrated with the council’s approach to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

### **Part 2 – Developing a Site Appraisal Methodology**

- 2.1 A Site Appraisal Methodology uses criteria to assess the suitability of proposed development sites. The criteria for the Site Appraisal Methodology have been developed to ensure delivery of the following key priorities for the proposed plan:
  - Delivering the implications of NPF4 Outcomes and Policies
  - Thinking Infrastructure First
  - Improving Equalities and Health
  - Embedding Local Place Planning
  - Ensuring Deliverability and Viability

## Delivering the implications of the NPF4 Outcomes and Policies

2.2 In preparing its Evidence Report, West Lothian Council has assessed the implications for the Proposed Plan of each of the policies set out within National Planning Framework 4 and other relevant evidence. This is grouped into topic areas and set out in Schedules 1-27:

1. Climate Change	2. Biodiversity and West Lothian's Nature Network	3. The Water Environment and Flooding
4. Blue and Green Infrastructure and Open Space	5. Natural Places and Soils	6. Forestry, Woodland and Trees including Forestry Strategy
7. Green Belt	8. Historic Assets and Places	9. Health and Wellbeing
10. Indicative Local Housing Land Requirement	11. Affordable and Specialised Housing	12. Brownfield land
13. Rural Homes	14. Design	15. Tourism and Culture
16. Play, Recreation and Sport	17. Local Living	18. Town Centres and Retail Policy
19. Business and Industry, Community Wealth Building and Rural Development	21. Sustainable Transport	22. Education Infrastructure
23. Healthcare Infrastructure	24. Energy, Heat and Cooling	25. Broadband
26. Safety	27. Waste	28. Minerals

2.3 For each topic area, the council has identified priorities to be delivered by the policies, allocations and spatial strategy of the proposed plan. As an example, in relation to climate change, Schedule 1 Climate Change sets out the following implications for the proposed plan spatial strategy and site allocations:

**Climate Change** - To address the evidence relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation, the policies and spatial strategy in the Proposed Plan will be required to:

1. Ensure that new development is located in sustainable locations, includes mitigation and adaptation measures, sustainable design, and is resilient to current climate impacts and can adapt in future.
2. Support a modal shift away from petrol/diesel car use, reducing transport and travel trips to assist in reduction in emissions and implementing strategic, as well as local, active travel measures to help reduce or change journeys and tie into local living.
3. Support climate change adaptation by integrating the Central Scotland Green Network and identify local blue and green networks and open space. Increase the creation of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to mitigate and manage flooding.
4. Identify actions for LDP2 to reduce climate impacts, poverty and inequalities using the Neighbourhood Flood Vulnerability Index (Climate Just).
5. Manage West Lothian's land for carbon capture can support the mitigation of climate change. LDP2 will protect carbon rich environments including areas important for carbon sequestration including tree planting and peatland restoration.
6. Deliver the 14 potential Heat Network Zones across West Lothian.

- 2.4 To ensure that the implications of the evidence base is delivered by allocated housing sites, the proposed Site Appraisal Methodology identifies criteria to assess sites based on these priorities.

### **Thinking Infrastructure First**

- 2.5 **NPF4 Policy 18** states that LDPs and delivery programmes should be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach. The council's approach is to only allocate when infrastructure is available or where can be mitigated by development. Development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that provision is made to address the impacts on infrastructure. The Site Appraisal Methodology identifies criteria which will be used to assess proposals based on the infrastructure first principle.
- 2.6 For example, the evidence on Sustainable Transport (Schedule 20) sets out the plan should support a modal shift away from petrol/diesel car use, reducing transport and travel trips to assist in reduction in emissions and implementing strategic, as well as local, active travel measures to help reduce or change journeys and tie into local living (Schedule 17). Ensuring that the spatial strategy and allocations deliver this modal shift is therefore a key assessment criterion.
- 2.7 Schedules 22. Education Infrastructure and 23. Healthcare Infrastructure set out the council's evidence and approach to delivery.

### **Health, Wellbeing and Equalities**

- 2.8 The **Fairer Scotland Duty (the Duty)** came into force on 1 April 2018 and places a legal responsibility on named public bodies in Scotland to actively consider ('pay due regard' to) how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.
- 2.9 Having less access to resources can mean that individuals fare worse on outcomes including health, housing, education or opportunities to work or train, and these negative outcomes can reinforce each other. Adversity in childhood can have life-long impacts, and growing up in poverty is associated with poorer educational attainment, employment prospects and health inequalities.
- 2.10 Further evidence on health, wellbeing and equalities is set out in Schedule 9 and the background papers on health and planning and health and housing. Reducing equalities has been identified as a key priority for the proposed plan. The Site Appraisal Methodology therefore identifies criteria designed to specifically reduce inequalities, such as:
- Does the proposal include homes which meet identified needs?
  - Does the proposal include actions to reduce climate impacts?
  - Does the proposal provide added social value such as open space or healthcare infrastructure?

### **The Place Principle and Local Place Planning**

- 2.11 The **Place Principle** supports the **National Performance Framework's** collective purpose for Scotland. The principle requests that all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places.

- 2.12 Local Place Plans (LPPs) are community led plans that were introduced by The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 to encourage communities to be more active participants in planning for their futures. LPPs enable communities to submit ideas and proposals for their area.
- 2.13 If a LPP is submitted the council will place it on a register of LPPs and will take its content into account during the preparation of the proposed plan. To date, 7 local place plans have been submitted: Linlithgow, Bathgate, Mid Calder, Muireston, West Calder and Harburn, Blackburn, and Newton and Woodend.
- 2.14 The site appraisal methodology therefore identifies one key criteria which have been designed to specifically embed the collaborative approach to place: Does the proposal contribute or align with the community aspirations as set out a Local Place Plans?

### **Deliverability and Viability**

- 2.15 The **Local Development Plan Guidance** states that where sites are to be allocated for new homes, they should be confirmed as deliverable. NPF4 defines 'deliverable land' as being "Land that is free from constraints or there is a commitment to overcome constraints, and development is able to be delivered in the period identified for the site within the Deliverable Housing Land Pipeline."
- 2.16 The Site Appraisal Methodology sets out proposed criteria which will be used to assess deliverability and viability.
- 2.17 For allocation in the proposed plan, sites should be free of constraints as far as possible. Where constraints exist, sites can still be regarded as deliverable providing that the Delivery Programme sets out how constraints will be removed and the timeframe expected for this. Where necessary, additional infrastructure appraisal work may be undertaken to provide greater certainty for the site allocation process as part of the site appraisal.
- 2.18 For undeveloped allocated sites from LDP1, there will be no automatic roll forward from the current Local Development Plan to the emerging Local Development Plan. Consideration will be given if there is a realistic prospect of an allocated site being developed for its intended use.
- 2.19 If the council are not confident that the site can come forward for delivery within a specified timeframe, then there will be a presumption for the removal of the site and consideration afforded to alternative, suitable uses. Some sites may revert back to the current use, such as agriculture, greenfield or open space.
- 2.20 For sites that currently have a negative impact on the surrounding environment, such as under used, brownfield, vacant and derelict land that would benefit from redevelopment, consideration could be given to alternative uses and proposals that bring such sites into productive use.

### **Integrating Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Appraisal**

- 2.21 Development Planning Guidance highlights that the Site Appraisal Methodology is ideally integrated with the council's approach to Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Council considers it necessary to embed the SEA principles into the proposed methodology. The methodology therefore embeds the **Key Agencies' Joint LDP Site Assessment and SEA Checklist** into the criteria.

2.22 A **Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA)** is required for all plans deemed likely to have an adverse effect on a protected 'Natura 2000' site. Natura 2000 is the Europe-wide network of protected sites developed under the European Commission's Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive.

2.23 For SEA and HRA purposes, a comprehensive approach will help to avoid further assessment and delay at a later stage. If all of the sites are being evaluated in a systematic way to define whether they should be included in the plan, and that assessment fully assesses their environmental effects then there should be no need to duplicate this with a separate additional environmental assessment. The assessment findings will still need to be set out in the environmental report and HRA.

2.24 The site appraisal methodology therefore identifies key criteria which have been designed to specifically embed the requirements of SEA and HRA.

### **Part 3 – The Site Appraisal Methodology Criteria**

3.1 The proposed Site Appraisal Methodology Criteria are set out in Background Paper – Site Appraisal Methodology.

### **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.*

Once finalised, the Site Appraisal Methodology will be used to assess:

- Sites allocated in the existing Local Development Plan which the council considers can be delivered,
- Sites included in the Housing Land Audit,
- Sites included in the Employment Land Audit,
- Brownfield sites and those included in the Vacant and Derelict Land Survey,
- Proposals set out within registered Local Place Plans,
- Sites proposed through the Call for Ideas; and
- Sites the council has proactively identified as possible candidates.

It is not the purpose of the Site Appraisal itself to 'select' the sites to be taken forward in the proposed plan. Instead, the methodology is to be used to ensure the appraisal of site allocations is informed and undertaken in an objective, consistent and comprehensive way and sites meet the priorities of the proposed plan.

It is proposed that the Site Appraisal Methodology criteria are not weighted relative to one another. Good performance against a larger number of criteria does not automatically makes a site a 'better' option.

The methodology, instead could provide justification for discounting certain sites from future consideration where performance against one or more important criteria is so poor that it provides compelling grounds for its exclusion at this stage.

For example, there is no capacity or identified solution for education infrastructure, or if the site was to be developed it would have a destructive impact on environmental designations, or be impacted by flooding.

Following the site appraisal, further assessment of the proposed spatial strategy will be required including a cumulative Transport Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and HRA.

The site appraisal methodology criteria will be developed into a list of requirements to be submitted with proposals during the 'call for ideas'.