WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL LDP2 EVIDENCE REPORT

BACKGROUND PAPER

West Lothian Site Appraisal Methodology and SEA Criteria (DRAFT DECEMBER 2024)

West Lothian Site Appraisal Methodology and SEA Criteria

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

The criteria have been designed to integrate with the council's approach to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The criteria for the Site Appraisal Methodology are set out under the following headings.

Climate Change	Biodiversity and West Lothian's Nature Network	The Water Environment and Flood Risk
Blue and Green Infrastructure and Open Space	Natural Places and Soils	Forestry, Woodland and Trees including Forestry Strategy
Green Belt	Historic Assets and Places	Health, Wellbeing and Equalities
The Place Principle and Local Place Planning	Indicative Local Housing Land Requirement	Affordable and Specialised Housing
Brownfield land	Rural Homes	Design
Tourism and Culture	Play, Recreation and Sport	Local Living
Town Centres and Retail Policy	Business and Industry, Community Wealth Building and Rural Development	Sustainable Transport
Education Infrastructure	Healthcare Infrastructure	Energy, Heat and Cooling
Digital Infrastructure	Safety	Waste
Minerals	Thinking Infrastructure First	Ensuring Deliverability and Viability

These site appraisal methodology and SEA criteria will be developed into a list of requirements to be submitted with proposals during the 'call for sites'.

West Lothian Site Appraisal and SEA Criteria

Climate Change

1. Does the site support a modal shift in terms of the Transport Hierarchy?
    a. Does the site have good access to existing or proposed public transport and active travel network?
    b. Does the site have good proximity to services and meet or support local living requirements?
2. Will the development integrate the use of Electric Vehicles?
3. Does the site support the development of regional and local blue and green networks and open space, SUDS and flood mitigation?
4. Is the site in a sustainable location, will the building design integrate climate change mitigation an adaption measures, including sustainable design, be resilient to current climate impacts and be able to adapt in future?
5. Is the site located within an area of climate vulnerabilities using the Flood Vulnerability Index?
6. Is the site located within a carbon rich environment, or area important for sequestration?
    a. How could the site support carbon sequestration or protect soils?
    b. How would development of the site contribute to the tree planting or peatland restoration targets?
7. Does the site make best use aspect? solar gain? Is the site protected from prevailing winds?
8. Can the site be connected to be part of a heat network?
9. Does the proposal minimise demand for primary resources by reusing an existing building?

Biodiversity and West Lothian's Nature Network

1. Is the site located within an area important for the creation of West Lothian's Nature Network? How would development of the site contribute to the creation of the Nature Network?
2. Is the site a protected site (internationally, national or local designations)? To what extent will the proposal affect these sites including via connectivity?
3. Does the site contain important species or habitats?
    a. How would development of the site contribute to species protection or habitat creation? Protected Species–e.g. bats, otters, etc - can it be ascertained if protected species will be affected and will a site survey be required?
    b. How will habitat connectivity or wildlife corridors be affected by the proposal – will it result in habitat fragmentation or greater connectivity?
4. Does the site affect local geodiversity sites or wider geodiversity interests?
5. Does the site affect Non-designated – e.g. trees, TPOs, hedges, woodland, (including woodlands in the Ancient, Semi Natural and Long-Established Plantation Woodlands), species rich grasslands?
6. Is the site located within an area important for biodiversity including areas important for the 11 ecosystems services which will help West Lothian mitigate biodiversity loss?

7. Does the site contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, including where relevant, restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks and the connections between them? Proposals should also integrate nature-based solutions, where possible.
8. Is the site brownfield land which has been naturalised?

The Water Environment and Flood Risk

1. Can the site deliver opportunities to improve the water environment through flood risk management, nature networks and blue green infrastructure?
2. Could the site affect the condition of the water environment (water quality, physical condition, water resources, and the migration of wild fish)? See RBMPs for further detail on water condition.
3. Could the site have a direct impact on the water environment (for example, result in the need for watercourse crossings or a large-scale abstraction or allow the de-culverting of a watercourse? Is there a culvert downstream of the proposed connection that if blocked could cause surface water to back-up into the proposed development?
4. Is the site at risk of flooding (from any source) or result in additional flood risk elsewhere?
5. Has the site historically flooded?
6. Does the site benefit from informal flood defence measures?
7. Does the site integrate natural flood management (NFM) techniques and the integration of blue / green infrastructure to enhance flood resilience, biodiversity, and community amenity spaces?
8. Does the site increase flood risk or flooding to existing properties? Could the development of the site help alleviate any existing flooding problems in the area?
9. Is flood risk fully understood? If not a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) should be undertaken. Specify which of the following flood sources are applicable: fluvial, pluvial, sewer, groundwater or coastal.
10. Is there an emergency access/egress strategy in the event of a 200yr+CC event with worst case blockage scenario? Confirmation that 1:30 year+CC event remains in drainage features and that 1:200 year+CC remains attenuated on site safely (600mm freeboard)
11. Can the site connect to the public foul sewer? Is there Foul Connection Discharging, Surface Runoff Connection? Is either a private or adoptable pumping station required? Has the Simple Index Approach been used to demonstrate effective treatment train as per SuDS Manual?
12. Can the site connect to the public water mains? If not, is there a sustainable water source that is resilient to the periods of water scarcity? For large scale developments, are there any private or public water supplies within 250m of the site which may be affected?

Blue and Green Infrastructure (including open space)

1. Does the site support the development of regional and local blue and green networks and open space, SUDS and flood mitigation?
2. Does the site integrate natural flood management (NFM) techniques and the integration of blue / green infrastructure to enhance flood resilience, biodiversity, and community amenity spaces?

3. Does the site integrate new open space and is this open space connected to West Lothian's blue green network?
4. Does the proposal include space for food growing within the site? If not, can the development accommodate space for food growing?
5. To what extent will the proposal affect core path links or other key access networks such as cycle paths, coastal paths and rights of way?

Natural Places and Soils

1. Is the site a protected site (internationally, national or local designations)? To what extent will any designated sites be affected – including NSAs, Regional Scenic Areas, and local landscape designations?
2. Does the site ensure that development does not exceed the capacity of the landscape to accommodate it? Such as current settlement boundaries, existing townscape and character of surrounding area and its visual qualities?
3. To what extent will development of the site affect features of landscape interest, including the distinctive character of the landscape and the qualities of wild land?
4. Does development of the site result in the loss of prime agricultural land or land that is culturally or locally important for primary use as identified by the LDP?
5. Does the site make use of a brownfield site or contaminated and vacant and derelict land? If on brownfield, is the site naturalised?
6. Will the site support the management of West Lothian's land for carbon capture can support the mitigation of climate change such as peatland restoration? Is the proposal on peat or carbon rich soils and could the development of the site lead to a loss of peat or carbon rich soils?
7. Will the site be designed and constructed in accordance with the soil mitigation hierarchy?
8. Are there any contaminated soils issues on the site and if so, will the option employ remedial actions to ensure the site is suitable for use (as defined in PAN 33)?

Forestry, woodland and trees including Forestry Strategy

1. Is there a history of woodland or tree cover on the site: recent felling, forest soils, Ancient Woodland Inventory record; ancient and veteran trees; evidence of mature trees/ woods on aerial photos such as trees lost to Ash Dieback Disease or other tree pathogens?
2. Has the site tree and woodland protection through TPO, SSSI or previous planning condition?
3. Is the site in proximity of other woodland/ treed areas, LDP2 proposed Spatial Strategy, West Lothian Nature Network / Local Biodiversity Strategy, greenbelt designations, or areas important for carbon sequestration?
4. Does all or part of the site have a role to play as landscape setting/ character; offset of higher urban densities as open space for large parkland trees/ wooded areas; a role in a masterplan for urban tree /wooded feature, or other roles?
5. Is the site in an area of low tree equity and would be better in part or fully identified for tree planting, parkland or woodland creation?
6. Is the proposal for forestry which supports economic growth?

Historic Assets and Places

1. Does the site propose the sustainable repair and re-use of a historic asset?
2. Does the site protect or enhance the site and/or setting of a statutory designation (listed building, conservation area, scheduled monument etc) or non-designated heritage asset? Can any impacts be mitigated?
3. Does the site support proposals to enable historic assets to be more energy efficient and climate change resilient?

Greenbelts

1. Does the site have an adverse impact on the landscape setting or visual separation of settlements? Physical coalescence should be resisted to avoid coalescence.
2. Is the site located within a currently defined countryside belt? Would the site be located within the proposed West Lothian greenbelt?
3. Is there no alternative but to encroach into areas with high landscape character score? In such cases, high standards of design and landscape will be required to minimise impacts on landscape setting and character.

Health, Wellbeing and Equalities

1. Does the site propose a range of house types that meet the housing need for West Lothian?
2. Does the proposal include open space provision or is well connected to existing open space? If not, can open space be provided on site or links made to existing open space?
3. Is the site in a sustainable location that is close to existing facilities and services? Can the site address any gaps in Local Living through its design?
4. Does the proposal have good access to public transport and the active travel network? If not, can the site address a gap in the active travel network or public transport provision?
5. Does the proposal include space for food growing within the site? If not, can the development accommodate space for food growing?
6. Is the site located within an area of climate vulnerabilities (using the Flood Vulnerability Index)
7. Does the proposal contribute to identified need, i.e gypsy travellers, young people, older people or for those with disabilities?

The Place Principle and Local Place Planning

1. Does the proposal contribute or align with the community aspirations as set out in a Local Place Plan?

Local Housing Land Requirement / Specialist Housing

1. How many homes will the site deliver?
2. HNDA3 outlined 44% of homes will require to be affordable. What percentage of the site is being proposed to be affordable homes?
3. Are there any other tenures, such a mid-market rent being proposed?
4. What is the proposed mix?

5. Are any homes being proposed and designed with older and disabled people in mind? If so, how many and what special design features are being incorporated?
6. What constraints have been identified that will require to be resolved prior to delivery? What are the proposed actions and timescales to resolve any identified constraints?
7. What is the proposed first completion date? What is the proposed build out rate for a) affordable and b) market homes? Does the proposal include measures to accelerate the proposed build out rate beyond market absorption rates?
8. The Evidence Report reveals a shortfall in the provision of care homes – does the proposal include a care home?

Brownfield land

1. Does the site include the opportunities for the sustainable reuse of brownfield land including vacant and derelict land and empty buildings?
2. Does the site ensure that the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land, the biodiversity value of brownfield land which has naturalised should be taken into account?
3. Does the site ensure that where land is known or suspected to be unstable or contaminated, development proposals will demonstrate that the land is, or can be made, safe and suitable for the proposed new use?

Rural Homes

1. Does the site support 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?
2. Does the site consider how the development will contribute towards local living and consider identified local housing needs (including affordable housing), economic considerations and the transport needs of the development as appropriate for the rural location?

Design

1. Does the site create a high-quality development?
2. Does the site include open space provision or is well connected to existing open space? If not, can open space be provided on site or links made to existing open space?
3. Does the site have good access to public transport and the active travel network? If not, can the site address a gap in the active travel network or public transport provision?
4. How would development of the site contribute to the creation of the Nature Network? How would development of the site contribute to species protection or habitat creation?
5. Is the site in a sustainable location that is close to existing facilities and services? Can the site address any gaps in Local Living through its design?

Tourism and Culture

1. Does the site include an element of public art? If not, could this be included in the site or the site contribute towards its provision?

2. Does the site protect or enhance the site and/or setting of a statutory designation (listed building, conservation area, scheduled monument etc) or non-designated heritage asset? Can any impacts be mitigated?
3. Does the site promote or enable the retention, maintenance and sustainable use or re-use of historic buildings and infrastructure? Support the repair and appropriate retrofit of historic buildings?
4. Does the site support the transition to green energy supply in historic buildings?
5. Does the site include adaptation measures to make the historic environment assets and places more resilient to the effects of climate change (e.g. coastal erosion, flooding etc)?
6. Does the site enable the historic environment to support creation of high-quality places and spaces?
7. Does the proposal contribute to sustainable tourism and/or creative/cultural activities?

Play, recreation and sport

1. The Play Sufficiency Assessment found the community feedback in connection with new developments was not always satisfactory. Does the site provide:
   - Play opportunities near to home.
   - Play opportunities for younger children
   - Play opportunities for older children
   - Play and leisure opportunities for disabled people and those with additional needs
   - Sports facilities, such as football, basketball hoops, running or biking trails, or outdoor gyms that are free to access.
   - Opportunities for natural play
   - Opportunities for socialising such as swings for all or benches.
   - Proposals to remove barriers or improve access to existing play spaces.
   - Food growing opportunities

2. Does the development of the site result in the loss of outdoor sports facilities?
3. Does the site result in the quantitative and/or qualitative loss of children's outdoor play provision?
4. Does the site incorporate well designed, good quality provision for play, recreation, and relaxation that is proportionate to the scale and nature of the development and existing provision in the area?
5. Does the site include new streets and public realm designed to be inclusive and enable children and young people to play and move around safely and independently, maximising opportunities for informal and incidental play in the neighbourhood?
6. Does new, replacement or improved play provision i. provide stimulating environments; ii. provide a range of play experiences including opportunities to connect with nature; iii. be inclusive; iv. be suitable for different ages of children and young people; v. be easily and safely accessible by children and young people independently, including those with a disability; vi incorporate trees and/or other forms of greenery; vii. form an integral part of the surrounding neighbourhood; viii. be well overlooked for passive surveillance; ix. be linked directly to other open spaces and play areas?

7. Does new or enhanced play or sport facilities provide effective management and maintenance plans covering the funding arrangements for their long-term delivery and upkeep, and the party or parties responsible for these?

Local Living

1. Does the site support town centre living or is located close to facilities in an identified centre?
2. Does the proposal include open space provision or is well connected to existing open space? If not, can open space be provided on site or links made to existing open space?
3. Does the proposal have good access to public transport and the active travel network? If not, can the site address a gap in the active travel network or public transport provision?
4. Does the proposal have sufficient education and healthcare infrastructure capacity? If not, can impacts be mitigated through: building re-organisation; extension; or new build school or health centre.

Town Centres and Retail

1. Does the site support the town centre first principle or the aims of the Town Centre Action Plan?
2. Will the site enhance the vitality and viability of an identified centre?
3. Does the site support town centre living or is located close to facilities in an identified centre?
4. Will the site fill a gap in terms of quality and quantity of retail provision or neighbourhood convenience shopping?
5. Does the proposal promote healthy food options?

Business and Industry, Community Wealth Building and Rural Development

1. Will the site support the aims of the iRSS, which supports investment along key transport corridors – M8, M9 and existing rail corridors and in business clusters at Newbridge, Livingston, Winchburgh, Bathgate and Whitburn?
2. Will the site contribute to strategic employment land in West Lothian and ensure that a range and choice of marketable sites of differing sizes and quality to meet the needs of business and industry? Would the loss of an allocated employment site have a detrimental impact?
3. Will the site contribute towards community wealth building?
4. Will the site support the identified needs of a rural area?

Sustainable Transport

1. Does the site support a modal shift in terms of the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy? Does the site have good proximity to services and good access to existing or proposed public transport and active travel network? Does the site meet local living requirements?
2. Will the development integrate the use of Electric Vehicles?
3. Does the site address the difficulties in West Lothian due to its urban/rural characteristics, the challenges faced in promoting active travel and connectivity for everyday journeys due to its substantial rural landscape, including the difficulty in proving north-south connections

via Bathgate Hills, expanding urban developments, aging population and the extensive strategic road infrastructure within the area?

4. Does the site support the regional strategy within the iRSS which focuses strategic growth corridors along key transport routes, M8, M9 (Winchburgh) and rail corridors (Linlithgow / Bathgate / Livingston South lines to Glasgow and Edinburgh) and core development areas/strategic allocations at East Broxburn/Winchburgh, Armadale, Livingston and Almond Valley (Calerwood, Gavieside and Mossend) and Heartlands?

5. Does the site deliver enhanced public transport including rail enhancement?

6. Does the site support Livingston will continue in its role as a strategic town centre providing a mix of retail, residential, leisure and commercial uses whilst promoting the 5 traditional town centres – Armadale, Bathgate, Linlithgow, Whitburn, Broxburn to continue to thrive as town centres.

Energy

1. Is the site free from gas or electricity constraints?
2. Does the proposal integrate EV infrastructure?
3. Does the proposal connect to one of the 14 potential heat network zones?
4. If the proposal is for wind energy, will it be located within one of the eight potentially acceptable locations for wind energy identified in the Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy Development in West Lothian (2011).
5. If the proposal is for a solar farm or battery storage proposal, is the site located on previously developed land, and avoid prime agricultural land, highly prominent locations and areas designated as 'Special Landscape Areas (SLAs).

Safety

1. Is the site located within a Development High Risk Area (DHRA) with one or more recorded coal mining features at surface or shallow depth and which pose a potential risk to surface stability and public safety? In former mining areas, mine gas may be an issue in confined spaces.
2. Is there the potential for contamination on the site?
3. Is the site located in proximity to major accident hazard installations, pipelines, and high voltage overhead lines or at risk from radon gas?
4. Could the development of the site lead to Local Air Quality Management thresholds being breached in an existing Air Quality Management Area? Could the proposal lead to the designation of a new Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) Does the proposal introduce a new potentially significant air emission to the area (e.g. combined heat and power, an industrial process, large scale quarry etc.) How can the site contribute to air quality?
5. Will the development of the site lead to a sensitive use being located close to a site with noise/odour issues or a site regulated for emissions to air by SEPA (e.g. new housing adjacent to a large manufacturing factory)
6. How can the site prevent, control and mitigate the impact of noise?
7. How will the site facilitate safe active travel routes?

Waste

1. Will the site integrate waste management infrastructure to support the circular economy and meet identified needs in a way that moves waste as high up the waste hierarchy as possible?
2. For waste infrastructure and facilities (except landfill and EFW) does the site comply with the criteria listed in NPF4 policy 12 d)?

Minerals

1. Will the site impact on workable mineral resources which are of economic or conservation value?

Infrastructure First

1. Does the site support a modal sustainable transport shift?
2. Is the site in a sustainable location that is close to existing facilities and services? Can the site address any gaps in Local Living through its design?
3. Does the site support the development of regional and local blue and green networks and open space, SUDS and flood mitigation?
4. Can the site connect to the public foul sewer?
5. Can the site connect to the public water mains?
6. Does the site incorporate well designed, good quality provision for play, recreation, and relaxation?
7. Is there existing infrastructure availability based on the council's Education Infrastructure capacity hierarchy?
8. Does the site have any healthcare capacity constraints?
9. Is the site free from gas or electricity constraints?
10. Does the proposal integrate EV infrastructure?
11. Does the proposal connect to one of the 14 potential heat network zones?
12. Does the site have digital infrastructure connectivity?
13. Will the site integrate waste management infrastructure to support the circular economy and meet identified needs in a way that moves waste as high up the waste hierarchy as possible?

Deliverability and Viability

1. Is the site ready to progress to planning consent? Has there been any historic planning issues where site has not progressed due to design, constraints or due to S75 viability factors? Has an adequate explanation been provided for the lack of delivery? Has the landowner / agent / developer provided a clear action plan that removes any constraints or circumstances that has to date inhibited delivery?
2. Does a developer own or have a legal interest in the site? Establish ownership and control of the site – is the site under control of a developer, an agent/intermediary party, or not in the hands of a developer? Is the site identified in a strategic programme (such as the Strategic Housing Investment Programme or Capital Programme)? Clarify extent of land

that is within their ownership / control. Is any third-party land required? Is there is a title restriction (has a title search been undertaken and satisfied) or any leases / tenants?

3. For allocated sites, has the site stalled, or not progressed since the adoption of LDP1? Is the council confident that the site will come forward for delivery within the plan period?

4. For allocated sites, is there evidence that the site has been actively marketed for the intended use. For new sites, is the site marketable? Sales potential within an area must be considered, as must a developer's expectation for a reasonable return from a site. For example:
   - Type and value of product onsite.
   - Historic demand for residential development in that location.
   - Developer's intentions to remix sites.
   - Scale of annual and total programmed completions

5. Are there any issues with viability that would constrain the site from delivering the priorities of the proposed plan?
   - build costs
   - abnormal costs, including those associated with treatment for contaminated sites or listed buildings,
   - site-specific infrastructure costs, which might include access roads, sustainable drainage systems, green infrastructure, connection to utilities and decentralised energy,
   - affordable housing and infrastructure, biodiversity net gain and any other relevant policies or standards,
   - general finance costs including those incurred through loans,
   - professional site fees and project contingency costs.

6. Is the site programmed to delivered within the plan period?

7. Are there any other site servicing constraints, e.g. electricity pylons, underground gas pipelines etc.