



**West Lothian
Council**

**Strategic Housing Investment Plan
(SHIP)**

2025/26 - 2029/30

December 2024

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1. Executive Summary

West Lothian Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) identifies priorities for investment over a five year period from 2025/26 – 2029/30.

In March 2021, the Scottish Government published its first long-term housing strategy 'Housing to 2040' which set an ambition to deliver a further 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, with at least 70% of these for social rent. Meeting this target is ambitious and will require increased investment by the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords and a step change in the pace of housebuilding in order that it is achieved.

The SHIP is the key document for identifying strategic housing projects towards meeting the Government's 110,000 affordable housing target. This document is updated annually to present up to date information on affordable housing investment plans. The SHIP provides an opportunity for the Council to:

- Set out investment priorities for affordable housing and identifies how these will be delivered;
- Identify the resources required to deliver these priorities; and
- Involve key partners in the delivery of new affordable housing.

The SHIP will continue to inform the allocation of resources from the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Investment Programme, which primarily supports the delivery of affordable housing via the Council and Registered Social Landlords.

The West Lothian Affordable Housing Programme to 2027/28 includes sites for the development of a minimum of 1,621 homes, including 383 additional council homes and 1,238 homes delivered by Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners. However, despite a proven track record of successful affordable housing delivery (over 4,000 additional affordable homes in West Lothian since 2012), West Lothian Council declared a housing emergency in May 2024. A Housing Emergency Action Plan has been developed within the context of existing resource available to the council.

There is a significant risk to the delivery of both affordable and market housing in West Lothian as a result of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme budget reduction in 2024/25. Budget assumptions provided by More Homes Division for 2025/26 and 2026/27 suggest a reduced level of available funding from that originally anticipated. Fewer affordable homes are likely to be delivered which will impact on tackling homelessness and providing people with settled accommodation.

2. Strategic Context

Local Authorities are required to produce a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) to supplement their Local Housing Strategy. The purpose of the SHIP is to set out how the investment in affordable housing will be directed over a five-year period, in this case, 2025/26–2029/30.

West Lothian Council's SHIP sets out the affordable housing investment priorities for the area as identified in the Local Housing Strategy 2023/24 to 2027/28. It demonstrates how these investment priorities will be delivered and the resources required. This SHIP has been developed in line with revised guidance issued by the Scottish Government, and it sets out the national and local context by identifying the council's investment priorities; the approach being taken to deliver these priorities; outlines potential risks and constraints; and how these can be mitigated.

The West Lothian Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023/24 - 2027/28 was approved at Council Executive in June 2023. A target of 1,580 affordable homes was set with a further target for private homes to be considered in the preparation of the new Local Development Plan over the next three years. The SHIP informs the Local Development Plan (LDP) through identifying sites that can be developed for affordable housing. It reinforces the role of the local authority as the strategic housing authority and informs Scottish Government investment decisions.

2.1 West Lothian Local Development Plan Update

It is West Lothian Council's intention to replace the existing West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP 1), which was adopted in September 2018 with a new plan, LDP 2. This will set out how West Lothian could grow over a ten year period.

The new plan, intended to be adopted in 2026 will set out planning policies and proposals for the use and development of land within West Lothian for a ten-year period. The council began the preliminary preparation of LDP 2 in 2022, all within the context of a new regulatory regime introduced by The Planning (Scotland) 2019 Act which makes substantive changes to the process for preparing development plans in Scotland and with the overarching aim of making them more effective, with greater community involvement and more focus on delivery.

The Scottish Government has reinforced key elements of the updated planning regime by bringing regulations into force on 19 May 2023. The regulations are supported by new detailed guidance setting out ministerial expectations of the new style LDPs. Three overarching aims for LDPs have been identified, that they fully require to be place-based, people-centred and delivery focused.

The most recent iteration of the council’s Development Plan Scheme (DPS No.15) anticipates the first significant stage of the LDP, the Evidence Report being prepared for submission in the late 2024.

Table 1: West Lothian Local Development Plan 2 Timetable

Plan Preparation Stage	Anticipated Date
Early Engagement	Ongoing
Council approval of the Evidence Report and submission to Scottish Ministers	Q3 2024
Gatecheck	Q3 2024
Call for ideas	Q4 2024 to Q3 2025
Council approval and publication of the Proposed Plan	Q3 2025
Proposed Plan Consultation period	Q3 2025
Submission of Proposed Plan (and a Modification Report if necessary) to Scottish Ministers for examination	Q1 2026
Examination	Q1 2026 to Q2 2026
Adoption	Q3 2026

The policies and proposals of the LDP will be focused on places and locations, working with the context provided by National Planning Framework (NPF4) adopted in February 2023. The National Planning Framework is authored by Scottish Government and sets out long-term spatial strategy for the development of Scotland as a whole and identifies what Scottish Ministers consider to be development priorities. NPF4 will have a significant bearing on how the council undertakes preparation of the next LDP, in particular how it quantifies future housing requirements.

NPF4 Policy 16 - Quality Homes – sets out a distinct, new approach to planning for new homes that focuses on delivering outcomes and more quality homes that meet diverse needs. The policy also promotes and reinforces a plan-led approach.

LDPs are expected to identify a Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) for the area they cover. This is to meet the duty for a housing target and to represent how much land is required. To promote an ambitious and plan-led approach, the LHLR is expected to exceed the 10 year Minimum All -Tenure Land Requirement (MATHLR). In West Lothian, this has been identified as 985 houses per annum.

As part of the development of the new Local Development Plan 2, the council will look to review the Affordable Housing Supplementary Guidance. Research is being undertaken to inform a revised approach and the council have appointed the District Valuer to carry out an assessment to value commuted sums to ensure that the correct income stream is obtained.

2.2 The Need for Affordable Housing in West Lothian

There is an established need for quality affordable housing in West Lothian, with a Housing Emergency being declared in May 2024. A Housing Emergency Action Plan has been developed within the context of existing resource available to the council. As of July 2024, there were 11,180 applicants on the Common Housing Register for social rented housing. Some RSLs operating in West Lothian also hold their own registers. The need for affordable social housing in West Lothian remains high due to the high number of applications for housing, high sustainability and low turnover of properties. Furthermore, supply pressures are not predicted to ease over the next 3 years with demand for homeless services predicted to remain high due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, increased mortgage costs, higher rent in the private sector and changes to homeless legislation.

There continues to be high demand for temporary accommodation including use of bed and breakfast accommodation to provide emergency accommodation for homeless households. The imbalance between supply and demand for permanent social rented accommodation continues to be a challenge in West Lothian and is the key driver of the ongoing breach of statutory duties and budget pressures that are experienced within the council due to the high reliance on unsuitable accommodation.

2.3 The Economic Climate

The housing market has shown signs of improvement in recent years. Many of the sites that were stalled are now starting to pick up with development continuing on a number of sites, particularly in the Core Development Areas. There were 790 private sector completions in 2023/24.

According to the Registers of Scotland, the median house price in West Lothian in May 2023 was £202,498, this had increased to £215,000 by May 2024. In comparison to the Scottish average, the median price in May 2023 was £185,000 and in May 2024 this had reduced to £182,475.

There continues to be uncertainty in the labour market and challenges on the supply chain, post pandemic. Increasing costs are also impacting heavily on the construction sector.

Development Constraints

The key development constraint centres on the reduction of funding through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) for affordable housing. This has meant that projects previously planned, cannot receive funding commitment. This is likely to have a significant impact on the current and future delivery of affordable housing.

Other methods of funding affordable housing may have to be considered. RSLs are investigating the option of front funding developments but if they do so they will require a funding commitment in the future which at present is uncertain. Consideration may be given to unsubsidised affordable housing and the involvement of institutional investors. This would require further analysis on the feasibility of housing provided through this route and whether it could meet the greatest need in West Lothian which is for social rented housing.

The majority of RSL projects coming forward in this SHIP are likely to be for social rent rather than mid-market rent. RSL's have identified sites for 274 homes for mid-market rent. This demonstrates the willingness of RSL's to consider tenures other than social rent.

Constraints identified by RSL's include inflation in the construction sector, abnormal costs, demolition and site clearance and developer contributions. To assist in trying to overcome these constraints, the council will continue to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders in relation to the provision of infrastructure.

Investment Outcomes

There are several key outcomes to be achieved in the course of the five year period of this SHIP:

- Completion of the programme of new council house building;
- Completion of an agreed number of RSL homes through the Strategic Local Programme Agreement (SLPA);
- Maximising employment and training opportunities through the provision of new build housing;
- Assisting with the provision of new infrastructure by making appropriate developer contributions through new build programmes;
- Implement the actions in the West Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028.

In light of the reduction in Scottish Government funding and the current housing emergency, the priority for the council will be developing as much affordable housing as possible within the economic constraints. Town centre investment in terms of affordable housing development is not currently a priority for the council as these projects often require a very high level of investment. However, should acquisition opportunities present in town centre locations these will be given due consideration.

3. Affordable Housing Delivery Update

Since the previous SHIP (2024-2029), there have been a number of new build completions delivered by both the council and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) operating in West Lothian. The sites noted in table 2 below were completed during 2024.

Table 2: RSL Full Site Completions at 30 September 2024

Site	RSL	No. of Units	Date of Completion
Livingston, Crusader Rise	ARK Housing Association	20	July 2024
Uphall, Station Village	Cairn Housing Association	20	June 2024
Longridge, Fauldhouse Road	Cairn Housing Association	52	July 2024
Winchburgh, Site 02A	Homegroup	55	July 2024
East Calder, Calderwood	Places for People	57	March 2024
Bonnington, Wilkieston	Places for People	12	August 2024
East Calder, Raw Holdings	Wheatley Homes East	63	April 2024
Total		279	

There are also a further nine sites currently under construction which are outlined in table 4 below;

Table 3: Affordable Housing sites under construction at 30 September 2024

Site	PROVIDER	No. of Units	Est. Completion Year
Blackburn, Mill Centre	Almond Housing Association	20	2025
Winchburgh, Site CC-FF	Homegroup	19	2025
Livingston, Sydney Street	Link Group	49	2025
East Calder, Raw Holdings	Link Group	75	2024
Armadale, Standhill North	Places for People	94	2026
Winchburgh, Site BB	Wheatley Homes East	81	2025
Bathgate, Sibbald's Brae	Wheatley Homes East	29	2025
Livingston, Deans South PH1A	Wheatley Homes East	6	2024

Site	PROVIDER	No. of Units	Est. Completion Year
Livingston, Deans South PH1	Wheatley Homes East	46	2024
Livingston, Almondvale Crescent	West Lothian Council	36*	2025
	Total	455	

*At Almondvale Cresecent there are a further 12 homes that are supported housing for young people

3.1 West Lothian Council Future Sites

The sites in the table below are identified for potential future new build development by WLC.

Table 4: Future West Lothian development Sites (Priority 1)

Site	Number of Units	Tenure	Timescale for Approval
Livingston, Houston Road	33*	Social Rent	2024/25
Livingston, Simpson Parkway	32	Social Rent	2024/25
Linlithgow, Deanburn	15	Social Rent	2024/25
Total	80		

*There is the possibility of two additional purchases at Houston Road, Livingston.

3.2 Affordable Housing Supply Programme in West Lothian

The Scottish Government has been unable to confirm the Resource Planning Assumptions (RPAs) for grant availability for the duration of this current SHIP. West Lothian Council's assumed RPA for 2024/25 was reduced from £15.430m to £11.674m, which is a reduction of approximately 24%. The Scottish Government announced additional funding of £80m, to be distributed across all 32 local authority areas, at £40m each year for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

West Lothian Council were advised in September of the uplift to funding of £2.002m for 2024/25. This equates to net reduction of over 11%. This additional funding is to be directed towards helping address temporary accommodation pressures, with a focus on acquisitions and bringing void properties back into use. Options are being considered for this funding.

Table 2: Resource Planning Assumptions

	2024/25 (£M)	2025/26 (£M)	2026/27 (£M)	2027/28 (£M)	2028/29 (£M)	2029/30 (£M)
Base RPA	11.674	9.339*	7.004*	4.669*	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
Additional Funding	2.002	<i>TBC</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
Total	13.676	9.339	7.004	-	-	-

*The assumptions for the future years resource allocation are uncertain. The Scottish Government have indicated that future years allocation should be based on an 80-60-40% of the confirmed RPA of 2024/25.

Furthermore, it is known that there is £40m to be allocated across all 32 local authorities for 2025/26. The Scottish Government have confirmed that in 2025-26, 80% of the addition £40m will be allocated to the five local authorities with the highest sustained temporary accommodation pressures using an agreed distribution methodology, based on the latest available data at that time. This means that West Lothian Council may not necessarily obtain additional funding and it is uncertain as to when the additional finding will be confirmed.

3.3 West Lothian Council's Investment in new housing supply

West Lothian Council is highly committed to partnership in the delivery of Local Housing Strategy outcomes. This is demonstrated through the provision of new build council housing and direct assistance to RSLs to enable their development proposals to proceed. Scottish Government direct funding remains important across the range of projects.

The approved Housing Capital Investment Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28 includes £31.436 million for new council housing supply. The council delivered 1,762 new build council homes between 2012/13 and 2023/24. The Scottish Government provided £3.925 million to the council to support new build council housing and open market acquisitions in 2022/23. This funding assisted in forward funding Open Market Acquisitions in 2023/24. The new council house building programme commenced on site in 2024/25 and grant funding is in the approved programme for 2024/25 to support this.

Developer Contributions

Developer Contributions are negotiated on Affordable Housing Policy sites where an on-site provision is not required or practical to deliver. Once agreed through the planning application process, the requirement for a commuted sum is detailed within the associated Section 75 Agreement. The council can allocate funds once Developer Contributions are received. Table

7 details the amount of Commuted Sums that have been collected and how they have contributed to the provision of affordable housing in West Lothian.

Table 3: Developer Contributions

	SUMS		
	RAISED OR IN HAND	USED TO ASSIST HOUSING	SUM CARRIED FORWARD TO SUBSEQUENT YEARS
PRE - 2018/19	211,785.12	250,000.00	0.00
2019/20	2,104.20	200,000.00	0.00
2020/21	307,545.18	250,000.00	0.00
2021/22	5,387.00	63,607.42	0.00
2022/23	723,879.31	25,000.00	0.00
2023/24	390,170.00	300,000.00	0.00
	£1,114,049.31	£1,088,607.42	

Housing Infrastructure Fund

West Lothian Council are considering the use of the Housing Infrastructure Fund, to fund a distributor road at Heartlands. This will help to open up areas of land and increase opportunities for future development. Development at Winchburgh would be enhanced by provision of the railway station, and discussion regarding this is ongoing.

Other funding

Charitable bond funding of £21.149m was secured in 2023/24. This supported the development of an additional 186 social rented homes for RSLs. This funding is administered by More Homes Division at the Scottish Government. Commitment was given to support seven projects through this type of funding.

4. Partnership Working

West Lothian Council continues to consult with key partners to develop and deliver quality affordable housing. There are regular updates on progress towards meeting the Local Housing Strategy objectives with stakeholders. Noted below is a breakdown of the partners involved in the delivery of affordable housing in West Lothian.

4.1 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)

West Lothian Council and RSL development partners have an ongoing dialogue in relation to the delivery of affordable housing. Over a five year period from 2023 to 2028, the proposal will be to deliver a minimum of 1,621 affordable homes. The council and RSL partners, through Homes for West Lothian Partnership will contribute to the delivery of this scale of housing. In regard to the development of the SHIP, the RSL partners were invited to meetings to discuss their input. Meetings were held with Almond Housing Association, Wheatley Homes East, Places for People, Home Group, Cairn Housing Association and Link Group. The key points discussed were in relation to identifying potential development opportunities and overcoming constraints to development including funding requirements and infrastructure. With reduced level of grant funding anticipated over the period of the SHIP, there are limited projects that can be supported during 2025/26 and into subsequent years unless additional funding is made available.

4.2 Homes for West Lothian Partnership

Homes for West Lothian Partnership has been set up to engage with RSLs operating in West Lothian. The purpose of this is to increase the supply of affordable housing. The number of RSLs seeking to develop housing in West Lothian has increased in recent years. The RSLs that have agreed to be involved in the Partnership are;

- Ark Housing Association
- Wheatley Homes East
- Places for People Scotland
- West Lothian Development Alliance Almond Housing Association
- Horizon Housing Association,
- Bield Housing and Care
- Hanover Housing Association
- Link Group
- Cairn Housing Association
- Trust Housing Association
- Homegroup

There is also representation from More Homes Division at the Scottish Government which encourages regular updates on programmes and policy to be discussed. Several meetings have taken place in 2024 and discussions are ongoing with RSLs in order that affordable housing development in West Lothian can continue be agreed and supported. In addition to discussions on new supply the partnership meetings also allow for discussions about emerging housing quality matters such as Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete.

4.3 Private Developers

West Lothian Council maintains regular dialogue with private developers in determining the most appropriate affordable housing contribution whilst taking significant factors into account for each individual development site. The ability to deliver some private sites may be compromised if there is reduced funding to deliver affordable housing. It may impact on the delivery of private housing, slowing down the rate of all new build housing. Fewer affordable homes are likely to be delivered as via the current planning process affordable housing is agreed as part of private developments via S75 agreements, and with fewer affordable housing projects being supported this may also reduce or slow the deliverability of market housing.

4.4 West Lothian Council Service Areas

West Lothian Council Service Areas including, Planning, Legal Services, Finance and Property Services and Housing maintain close working relationships to deliver affordable housing and to develop a strategic approach to provision. This helps to increase the speed of delivery of developments and the quality of housing provided.

There is ongoing liaison with Social Policy to identify requirements for specialist housing provision in West Lothian. There is close working on specialist housing provision to ensure that new build housing is future proofed to limit the need for adaptations in the longer term.

4.5 Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal

There is good collaborative working with West Lothian Council and other council partners in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. There is ongoing work in the development of a Regional Strategic Housing Investment Plan that sets out all the affordable sites that are being delivered in South East Scotland. There are regular updates on progress at the two strategic sites at Winchburgh and Calderwood to the City Region partners. Work has also been undertaken on development of alternative approaches for housing delivery, a procurement framework via the Regional Delivery Alliance and the development of a range of standard house types. A Strategic Sites Prospectus has been developed which sets out the economic benefits of the developments and also the key challenges and asks of the Scottish Government in relation to support for infrastructure and housing.

4.6 Collaboration across the Housing Market Area

West Lothian is a member of the South East Scotland Housing Forum. This group includes representation from housing and planning from the six SESPLAN member councils and Scottish Government. A Housing Need and Demand Assessment was completed in April 2022

and was approved as robust and credible by the Scottish Government Centre for Housing Market Analysis in July 2022. The six South East Scotland Councils worked collaboratively on this through the South East Scotland Housing Forum. The HNDA3 Core Project Team is accountable to the Regional Housing Board of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal.

The Homes for West Lothian Partnership was set up in 2018 to engage with RSLs operating in West Lothian. The purpose of this is to create a coordinated strategy of land assembly, finance, construction planning and targeted provision of homes based on need to increase the supply of affordable housing. Several meetings have been held with RSLs and all have been invited to contribute to the SHIP. Joint working with RSLs and the voluntary sector continues in relation to the implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to address homelessness in West Lothian. The aim will be to continue these actions through the development of the new Homeless Strategy. A key element of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) has Housing as a key pillar and awareness raising is being undertaken with Community Planning Partners in relation to duties on homeless prevention.

4.7 Government Assistance

The council welcomes the government funding to assist the provision of housing either through its own new build programme or to fund RSLs for site acquisition/off the shelf purchase. This funding has enabled significant numbers of affordable housing to be completed. The council has endeavoured to make best use of the sites identified to develop council housing that will optimise the use of the sites to meet a variety of housing needs.

5. Investment Priorities

Affordable housing provision is delivered in West Lothian via both council and RSL projects, which are part funded by the Scottish Government. West Lothian Council consider the following as priorities which would see projects supported in terms of SHIP funding and all funding allocations will be based on best value principles.

5.a Priority Areas

The Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 confirmed priority areas for affordable housing investment. These are noted below;

- Priority 1: Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh, East Livingston & East Calder, Linlithgow, Livingston North, Livingston South.
- Priority 2: Armadale & Blackridge, Bathgate, Whitburn & Blackburn.

- Priority 3: Fauldhouse & Breich Valley.

The priorities reflect the approach to housing development set out in the West Lothian Local Development Plan, specifically policy HOU4. The council will continue to give priority to sites in West Lothian in high demand areas such as the development of planned council projects in Linlithgow and Livingston.

5.b Core Development Areas (CDAs)

The SHIP will also aim to prioritise Core Development Areas. Progress is being made on the Core Development Areas (CDAs) at Winchburgh, and Calderwood. Developers have approached RSLs and WLC to discuss opportunities for development in the CDAs. In the current SHIP there are 5 new sites at Winchburgh being proposed and 5 new sites at Calderwood. These sites together could deliver up to 614 homes, subject to funding being made available.

5.c Ongoing Development

A further priority for the SHIP programme is to develop those sites that already have a funding commitment. The redevelopment of Deans South, Livingston is a key priority over the next five years for West Lothian.

West Lothian Council completed a site in Deans South for 54 houses in 2018 and a further 29 homes completed March 2023. In addition, Wheatley Homes East commenced development of their first phase of new homes in Summer 2023 and this is nearing completion. The remainder of the Deans South estate has been prioritised for investment in this SHIP in order for the site to be fully developed.

5.1 Homelessness

The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan commenced in 2019. The purpose of this was to transform homeless services and End Homelessness in West Lothian. The landscape for delivering RRTP has completely changed since it was initially developed and it has been impacted by significant environmental and economic pressures such as COVID and the cost of living crisis. The demand for homelessness and in particularly temporary accommodation remains high and the costs of providing these services now exceeds council budgets. There is further anticipated demand due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, humanitarian efforts to accommodate refugees and the Prevention of Homelessness Duties. This will widen the supply and demand gap leading to greater pressures on the homeless services and the ability to achieve rapid rehousing.

Despite the challenges there has been some notable successes;

- A strong partnership approach was developed
- An enhanced housing options approach was developed
- Health and wellbeing of homeless households has been addressed within the limits of the funding available
- Specialist housing options services developed for young people, woman fleeing domestic abuse and people with addictions
- The portfolio of temporary accommodation has increased including a range of different provisions such as shared, rapid access and PSLs
- There was an increase in housing supply
- New build supported accommodation for young people started on site in June 2024.
- A new programme of affordable housing for the council was approved in 2023
- RSLs continue to deliver new affordable homes in a number of locations in West Lothian.
- RSLs have let a higher proportion of houses to homeless households
- Specialist Support services have been developed including Housing First for Adults & Youths and Addictions Support
- A Tenancy Award SCF Level 4 was developed and rolled out across all secondary schools targeted at those at risk of homelessness
- A prevention of youth homeless service was developed
- A pilot Upstream prevention model was implemented in two secondary schools

As RRTPs were intended to be interim plans the council has now begun work on developing a new homeless strategy which will build on the success of the original RRTP, mainstream the ongoing activities and take a sharper refreshed focus on the key priorities needed to:

- Prevent homelessness where possible
- Increase and improve access to supply
- Improve the long-term outcomes for people who experience homelessness to avoid repeat homelessness

Engagement and consultation is currently underway on developing the new Homeless Strategy which will also align with the Local Housing Strategy and the SHIP.

The SHIP aims to support the actions of the Homeless Strategy in the following ways:

- Increasing the supply of permanent accommodation.
- Supporting RSL development.
- Prioritising support for new build affordable housing in areas of high demand.
- Delivering housing that meets a range of needs.

As the number of new build council completions decrease and the RSL completions increase, it is critical that all providers assist in meeting the needs of homeless households.

5.2 Child Poverty

West Lothian Council has developed an anti-poverty strategy that sets out a series of actions to support people affected by welfare reform and those at risk of poverty. The Scottish Government's Discretionary Housing Payment is being used in West Lothian to assist with housing costs and in particular to mitigate the effects of the removal of the spare room subsidy.

Reports were produced each month to ensure that all customers impacted by the "bedroom tax" received full mitigation for any period involved. Joint working with social sector landlords also identified any tenant in receipt of Universal Credit who was subject to a bedroom tax reduction.

During 2023/24 a total of 4,921 awards of Discretionary Housing Payment were made to customers impacted by under occupancy rules. The total amount of Discretionary Housing Payments awarded to mitigate the this was £3,060,851.63. In addition, there were 21 awards made to mitigate the effect of the benefit cap totalling £48,723.41, 43 awards made for Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reform totalling £22,776.65 and 555 awards made for financial hardship totalling £295,727.02.

The cost of living crisis is likely to continue to impact severely on many households in West Lothian with a large number of people who are in work at risk of poverty.

In June 2019, Council Executive approved the Local Child Poverty Action Report. This report was updated in August 2024.

Headline anti-poverty figures in West Lothian indicate that;

- 20% of West Lothian Population experience some form of financial hardship
- 23.9% of children experience relative poverty
- 78.4% of working age adults are in work
- 18% of employees earn below the living wage
- 18% of residents experience fuel poverty (fuel bill >10% of income after housing),
- 9% of residents experience extreme fuel poverty (fuel bill >20% of income after housing)

In West Lothian, activity to tackle poverty continues at a local level focused on the main drivers of poverty especially for key priority groups. While it is acknowledged that the rates of child poverty have not decreased in West Lothian, strong partnerships developed approaches that made a difference for families. Two such examples are:

- Anti-Poverty service. West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau and Social Security Scotland supporting families access income maximisation services and claim Scottish Benefits.

- Developing and delivery of a youth homelessness campaign with partners to ensure that young people facing homelessness had access to financial and housing support and advice.

In 2023, Advice providers in West Lothian successfully supported 328 tenants and homeowners at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes. This is achieved through income maximisation, negotiation of repayment of arrears and access to funds such as Discretionary Housing Payment.

By continuing to develop affordable housing, the council and RSL partners play a part in combating poverty through providing affordable homes for families. The need for larger family housing is a consideration on most sites in the SHIP, however, with a greater reliance on sites coming through the Affordable Housing Policy, there can be challenges securing sufficient land in the right locations to build housing for larger families. The aim is to encourage developers to provide a wider range of standard house types that are suitable for a range of needs including larger families.

3.4 Empty Homes and Open Market Acquisitions

The council are aware of 325 long term empty homes (one year or more) in West Lothian and 89 second homes. An Empty Homes Officer was appointed in February 2024 to work with owners of empty homes to bring their homes back into use. A draft Empty Homes Framework has been developed that sets out the scale and nature of empty homes in West Lothian and the mechanisms for tackling them. There is regular liaison with the council's Revenue Service and Environmental Health to investigate reports of empty properties and the owners can be contacted to establish their intentions for the property. A future focus of activity may be on considering how empty homes work could link with work on town centres.

A revised policy on Open Market Acquisitions was approved by Council Executive in June 2024. Between October 2016 and March 2024, the council has purchased 320 former council houses from the open market which increases the council's overall social housing stock. At least 70 of these were vacant at the time of purchase. In addition, Almond Housing Association have also purchased a small number of properties via their Open Market Acquisition Scheme. Scottish Government grant has been provided to enable both the council and Almond Housing Association to purchase empty homes through the Open Market Acquisition Scheme.

West Lothian Council have proposals for 11 open market purchases and Almond Housing Association have proposals for 10 Open Market purchases for the upcoming SHIP period. The additional funding from Scottish Government for acquisitions might also enable the council to purchase completed new build units if available in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

5.4 Specialist Provision

West Lothian Council acknowledge the requirement for a variety of house types to meet the needs of our residents. Since the last SHIP, there have been a number of new specialist housing provision completed or commenced, which are outlined in the table overleaf.

Table 4: Recent and Ongoing Specialist Provision in West Lothian

Housing Provider	Site	Specialist Housing	Status
Places for People	Calderwood, East Calder	30 bungalows	Complete
Ark Housing Association	Crusader Rise, Livingston	Accommodation suitable for people with complex needs	Complete
Cairn Housing Association	Fauldhouse Road, Longridge	24 bungalows	Complete
WLC	Almondvale Crescent, Livingston	Accommodation for younger people	Under construction

Wheelchair Accessible Housing

Targets for wheelchair accessible housing were set out in the West Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2023-28. A target of 10% wheelchair accessible homes was set over the duration of the Strategy. This currently applies to affordable housing; the longer-term ambition is to encourage private developers to provide more private housing that is wheelchair accessible housing. Further consideration will be given to this in the new Local Development Plan.

Table 5: Wheelchair accessible house completions

Provider	Wheelchair Accessible Bungalow Completions							
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
West Lothian Council	16	30	41	60	8	0	15	22
Almond Housing Association	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	0

Cairn Housing Association	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27
Places for People	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Wheatley Homes East	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	16	36	41	61	8	0	17	79

West Lothian Council provided the majority of wheelchair units between 2016/17 and 2022/23 as there was a large programme of new build council housing. RSLs are encouraged to provide homes that are suitable for people with a range of needs. RSLs and WLC have submitted proposals in the SHIP for 270 specialist provision units, including homes that would be suitable for wheelchair users and homes that could be suitable for older people or people who require amenity housing.

Funding for adaptations continues to be supported through the HRA for council tenants and through Scottish Government grant for homeowners, private tenants and through Scottish Government grants to RSLs.

The outcome of the consultation on “Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland’s Homes” is awaited and this will help to inform the approach to provision of accessible housing. Research is being undertaken on the need for accessible housing to inform the new Local Development Plan.

5.5 Gypsy Travellers

West Lothian Council no longer operates a site for Gypsy/Travellers. The council will engage with Scottish Government, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP) to support Gypsy/Travellers to assist in improving the understanding of requirements of Gypsy/Travellers coming to West Lothian.

6. Housing Delivery in SHIP 2025/26 – 2029/30

The tables included below provide a summary of specialist provision housing that will be delivered over the period of the SHIP. Table 10 outlines all current live Affordable Housing Projects which are under construction in West Lothian with five RSLs which have already secured funding via an earlier SHIP.

Following the reduction to the Affordable Housing Supply Programme in 2024/25 and uncertainty on future funding levels which will limit delivery of new homes, a limited number of sites can be taken forward. After 2026/27 it is likely that completions may start to fall away, due to there being less funding available to support further projects.

Table 11 sets out the 'Priority 1' sites which are most likely to obtain grant funding given the current funding position. Priorities have been determined on funding availability and deliverability. Should additional funding become available then the sites identified as Priority 2 (table 12) could be brought forward in future years. Priority 3 sites (table 13) would require a large increase in the amount of funding available to commence these projects and they would be phased over a number of years.

A summary of the total unit numbers included within each priority is set out below.

Ship Priority	Number of Units
Priority 1	145
Priority 2	173
Priority 3	1,839
Total	2,157

Table 6: Live New Build Developments, Tenure, and Estimated Year of Completion

Town, Site Name	Provider	2024/25		2025/26		2026/27		2027/28			
		Social Rent	MMR/SE	Social Rent	MMR/SE	Social Rent	MMR/SE	Social Rent	MMR/SE		
Blackburn, Mill Centre	Almond Housing Association			20							
Winchburgh, Site CC-FF	Homegroup			19							
Livingston, Sydney Street	Link Group					49					
East Calder, Raw Holdings	Link Group	42									
East Calder, Raw Holdings	Link Group		33								
Armadale, Standhill North	Places for People						37				
Armadale, Standhill North	Places for People					57					
Livingston, Deans South 1A	Wheatley Homes East	6									
Livingston, Deans South 1B	Wheatley Homes East	46									
Winchburgh, Site BB	Wheatley Homes East			52							
Winchburgh, Site BB	Wheatley Homes East				29						
Bathgate, Sibbalds Brae	Wheatley Homes East			29							
Livingston, Almondvale Crescent	West Lothian Council			36							
Sub Total		455		94	33	156	29	106	37	0	0

Table 7: Priority 1 - Funding Available and Estimated Approval Year

Site	PROVIDER	25/26	25/26	26/27	26/27	27/28	27/28	28/29	28/29	29/30	29/30
		Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE
Livingston, Houston Road	West Lothian Council	33									
Livingston, Simpson Parkway	West Lothian Council	32									
Linlithgow, Deanburn	West Lothian Council	15									
Winchburgh New Build Acquisition	West Lothian Council	16									
Livingston, Deans South Phase 2	Wheatley Homes East	38									
Open Market Purchases (2025/26)	West Lothian Council	11									
	Total	145									

Table 8: Priority 2 - Funding for Future Years

Site	RSL	25/26		26/27		27/28		28/29		29/30	
		Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE	Social Rent	MMR/ SE
Whitburn, Hen's Nest Road	Cairn HA	19									
Stoneyburn, Cannop Crescent	Homegroup	33									
Blackburn, Ashgrove (Mill Road)	Homegroup	28									
East Calder, Calderwood Site ALD	Homegroup	10*									
Livingston, Deans South Phase 3A	Wheatley Homes East	12									
Livingston, Deans South Phase 3B	Wheatley Homes East	25									
Livingston, Charlesfield Road	Wheatley Homes East	25	11								
Open Market Purchases	Almond Housing Association	2		2		2		2		2	
Total	173	154	11	2		2		2		2	

*Calderwood ALD may increase to 16 units.

Table 9: Priority 3 – Future Sites Approval Year – Currently Unfunded

RSL	Site	25/26		26/27		27/28		28/29		29/39	
		Social Rent	MMR/SE	Social Rent	MMR/SE	Social Rent	MMR/SE	Social Rent	MMR/SE	Social Rent	MMR/SE
Almond Housing Association	Livingston, Craigshill Refurbishment			24		25		26		24	
Homegroup	Winchburgh, Site DD/EE	36									
Homegroup	Broxburn, Dechmont			26							
Homegroup	Winchburgh, Site Q1N			12	31						
Link Group	Winchburgh, Site HH3	100	50								
Link Group	Whitburn, Heartlands			100	16						
Places for People	East Calder, Calderwood Town Centre	54									
Places for People	Bathgate, Whitburn Road	17	8								
Places for People	Bathgate, Wester Inch			18							
Places for People	East Calder, Hoghill Farm	23									
Places for People	East Calder, Calderwood, Valley Park	15									
Wheatley Homes East	Winchburgh, Site Plot P3	69	36								
Wheatley Homes East	East Calder, Calderwood					150					
Wheatley Homes East	Livingston, Brotherton Farm					71					
Wheatley Homes East	West Calder, Gavieside 1					125					
Wheatley Homes East	West Calder, Gavieside 2							110	50		
Wheatley Homes East	Winchburgh, Site X					28					
Wheatley Homes East	Livingston, Eliburn	28									
Wheatley Homes East	Bathgate, Linkston Road			62							
Wheatley Homes East	Livingston, Almondvale Phase 2					60	40				
TBC	Livingston, Trim Track							50			
TBC	Linlithgow, Clarendon Farm							30			
TBC	Bathgate, Guildiehaugh							65			
TBC	Dechmont, Bangour Village							160	39		
TBC	West Calder, Mossend K							19			
TBC	Livingston, Etrick Drive							12			
TBC	Livingston, Beatlie School Campus							30			
Total	1839	342	94	242	47	459	40	502	89	24	0

7. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A Strategic Environmental Assessment pre-screening report was undertaken and has determined that a full assessment is not required for the SHIP because it is unlikely to have significant environmental effect. Most of the sites that are included in the SHIP are allocated for housing in the West Lothian Local Plan and/or the West Lothian Local Development Plan which has been the subject of a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)

West Lothian Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity and eliminating discrimination and the Authority follows strict corporate guidelines which governs the manner in which these areas are approached. An Equalities Relevance Assessment has been carried out for the SHIP and this will be made available. Both the council and RSLs specify that all new build housing will aim to be constructed to housing for varying needs standards. The Housing for Varying Needs Standards are currently under review as part of the Scottish Governments Housing to 2040 route map.

9. Conclusion

This SHIP illustrates a range of approaches to the provision of affordable housing. The reduction in budget in 2024/25 has proved exceptionally challenging and will continue to impact on new housing supply going forward. While there are many opportunities for new build housing in West Lothian, both market and affordable, the budget reduction may compromise delivery of both in West Lothian.

The aim will be to continue to deliver affordable homes with the council sites being prioritised during 2024/25. Partner RSLs continue to provide much needed affordable housing in settlements across West Lothian helping to sustain investment in communities in difficult economic times, and they may consider innovative approaches to ensure continued delivery of affordable housing in West Lothian.

RSLs are identifying development opportunities and making use of the funding available in a assortment of ways to include a mix of both social rented and other affordable tenures. The council continues to work closely with housing association partners in a variety of areas including the common housing register, homelessness, support provision as well as housing development.

10. Appendices (not attached)

10.1. SHIP Templates

10.2 Integrated Impact Assessment

10.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment pre- screening report

11. References

Guidance on Preparing Strategic Housing Investment Plans June 2024

[Strategic Housing Investment Plan \(SHIP\) guidance note MHDGN 2024/01 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/ship-guidance-note/mhdgn-2024-01/pages/1-3.aspx)

Scottish Government's Housing to 2040

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/housing-to-2040/>

West Lothian Housing Emergency

<https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%95o%7B%8D>

West Lothian Council Housing Land Audit 2023

<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/housinglandaudit>

West Lothian Local Development Plan

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/27735/Adopted-West-Lothian-Local-Development-Plan/pdf/West_Lothian_Local_Development_Plan_-_Adopted_final.pdf

West Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2023-28

[Housing Policy and Strategies - West Lothian Council](#)

West Lothian Local Child Poverty Action Report 2023/24 August 2024

West Lothian Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Update 2023/24