



# LINLITHGOW

## A Plan for the Future

2022-32

**DRAFT**

Linlithgow Planning Forum  
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## Executive Summary

*This document is a draft 'Local Place Plan' in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Local Place Plans) Scotland Regulations which came into force on 22 January 2022 with the objective of "giving local people the opportunity to engage meaningfully and have a positive influence in the future planning of development in their areas". It has been prepared by Linlithgow Planning Forum (a sub-committee of Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Community Council involving several other local groups or stakeholders) as an update to a previous version of the 'Plan for the Future' which was the subject of well-publicised public consultation in November 2015 and amended accordingly.*

*In the spirit of the abovementioned regulations, the Planning Forum intends to work collaboratively with councillors and officials of West Lothian Council with a view to this plan's provisions being seriously considered as an input to the Council's next Local Development Plan for the county.*

Linlithgow gained royal status as a burgh in 1388 and, for centuries, was a thriving market town and the county town of Linlithgowshire, now West Lothian, the latter function having been lost in recent years.

The town's population has more than trebled over the last 50 years, largely through becoming a commuter town for burgeoning Edinburgh and to a lesser extent Glasgow. However, more recent 'restraint' on development has led to a significant decrease in the population over the past ten years which has not yet been reversed to any great extent

by West Lothian Council's allocation, in its 2018 Local Development Plan of sites capable of accommodating at least 569 houses on the outskirts of the town.

Linlithgow's town centre is already congested with car and lorry traffic and is suffering from serious air pollution; the town recognises a need, as does Scotland as a whole, to come to terms with climate change through moving towards a low carbon economy. The town also needs to support its own people as well as those who work elsewhere. In a word, the town needs a well-balanced future.

This document analyses the town's current situation and comes forward with holistic remedies, looking to its future over the next 10 to 20 years. Its fabric is not just its built and urban environment; it is the wellbeing of all its inhabitants, young and old, business and social, education and leisure.

This Plan is divided into two sections – Section A and Section B:

### Section A

This section discusses the main problems and threats which face Linlithgow, set against the strengths and opportunities that the Planning Forum believes exist. It highlights the serious housing shortage for the less well-off and the failure to protect, develop and capitalise on the town's historic settings and buildings. As well as stemming population decline, new development, if properly handled, can assist in providing much needed infrastructure through exploitation of



Linlithgow Loch with the Palace, St Michael's Parish Church and the tower of the Burgh Halls.



*The Cross.*

'planning gain' legislation. Poor infrastructure should be seen as a problem to be resolved not a block to new building projects. Other issues requiring urgent resolution include roads, parking and transport services, education facilities, improvements to the townscape, the provision of community and cultural facilities and the need for development to fill prominent town centre gap sites. A major opportunity exists in the possible redevelopment of part of the Vennel area which, if handled sensitively, could restore much of the town's lost character and provide a suitable balance of development to help meet the town's needs. The lack of services for the younger and older people is highlighted, as is the need to actively promote tourism in Linlithgow including the re-establishment of a good tourist information centre.

It is important to protect and develop shopping facilities, (especially the small independent stores) and to expand general business opportunities, in order to increase the economic wealth of the town. With Linlithgow being so well placed between Glasgow and Edinburgh it should be an appealing centre for new businesses.

All development should be placed in the context of environmental sustainability, and problems such as existing poor water and air quality, over-use of cars, and non-renewable sources of energy have to be tackled, in a collaborative way, by all interested bodies and the community.

## **Section B**

This section deals with the actions recommended for the future, in order to protect the town, whilst suggesting ways in which the town needs to grow and thrive in a vibrant and sustainable way, maintaining Linlithgow as one of the most attractive places to live and work in Scotland. This

section concentrates on concrete and pragmatic proposals for action, including:

1. ways in which the fantastic heritage of historic Linlithgow can be conserved and promoted to increase tourism
2. ideas on how to attract new business and create more jobs
3. ways to increase the housing stock and especially provide social housing
4. road improvements to relieve the town centre of through traffic and facilitate public transport
5. provision of the right amount of parking to cater for commuters, customers for town centre businesses and tourists, and for tourist buses
6. upgrading of cycle paths and the creation of new cycle networks as part of West Lothian Council's wider Active Travel Plan
7. development of local bus services, linking up with rail transport
8. proposals for retailing, cultural, sports and youth facilities, education and health provision.

The report concludes with a section on the financing of the recommendations, and how the implementation of the plans should be scrutinised and monitored.

This *Plan for the Future* was originally formulated to provide informed input to West Lothian Council as it brought together its 2018 Local Development Plan, but it was not heeded to any significant extent. It is hoped that the thinking behind this version will be better understood and taken forward through the Scottish Government's 'Local Place Plan' procedures in order that the next West Lothian Local Development Plan properly takes into account the needs, aspirations and opportunities presented by the town and community of Linlithgow.



# Introduction

AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMUNITY OF LINLITHGOW, we present this document as a prospective 'Local Place Plan' which recent Scottish Government legislation requires will have to be constructively considered by West Lothian Council in the preparation of its next Local Development Plan. It reflects input from individuals, groups and organisations representing interests such as younger and older people, churches, farmers, parents and health professionals and, in general terms, was supported strongly by the considerable number of local people who took part in public consultation. It has since been significantly amended to take account of changed circumstances, in particular the public consultation on the future of the eastern part of the Vennel summarised in a report published in September 2018 by the Linlithgow Planning Forum. It will be further amended in response to comments received in response to the June 2022 public consultation.

The main inspiration for this community plan was Linlithgow Civic Trust's *Vision for Linlithgow* document, the first version of which was a ten-year plan produced in 2005 as a constructive response to the then finalised draft of the West Lothian Local Plan. The resulting Local Plan, adopted as the local development plan covering Linlithgow on 13 January 2009, was considered by many not to address problems of congestion and under-capacity in local services which continue to the present day.

In 2013, the adoption of the Strategic Development Plan for South East Scotland (SESplan) removed the specific requirement for planning 'restraint' in Linlithgow and allowed West Lothian Council to proceed with the production of the first version of the West Lothian Local Development Plan which covered Linlithgow in more detail.

The first version of the *Plan for the Future*, covering the period 2015-30, was intended to influence the content of that Local Development Plan, but again it proved not to be influential, despite the *Plan for the Future* being widely cited as an excellent example of a community-produced planning document.

Accordingly, the Planning Forum now welcomes the abovementioned planning legislation which gives community plans, such as this, statutory recognition in the planning system.

As before, this document has been produced as a collaborative effort between various local organisations constituted into the Linlithgow Planning Forum, led by the Community Council. After the latest round of public consultation and the incorporation of relevant amendments, it is to be regarded as a representative view of a wide section of the community of Linlithgow. Linlithgow Planning Forum brings together the following groups:

- Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Community Council

- Linlithgow Burgh Trust (including Linlithgow Civic Trust and Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow)
- Linlithgow Business Association
- Linlithgow Community Development Trust
- One Linlithgow BID.

## Reasons for the Preparation of this Plan

The Planning Forum and its affiliated community groups, through this Plan, aim to influence positively the proposal and policy content of the West Lothian Local Development Plan as it relates to the conservation, enhancement and development of Linlithgow. Based on extensive consultation over many years within the community of Linlithgow, this document presents a vision of how the Planning Forum sees the town developing over the next ten years. Its concepts and proposals therefore provide a benchmark against which further development proposals can be assessed.



The Preston Road entrance to Linlithgow.

# SECTION A - STRENGTHS, PROBLEMS, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## 1. Linlithgow's Strengths

The attractiveness of Linlithgow as a place to live and work is well-known to its 12,840 residents (2020). It has a strong sense of identity as an ancient royal burgh and as the traditional county town of West Lothian, formerly Linlithgowshire. Its pleasant lochside situation, its hilly rural surroundings and its wealth of historic buildings and features give the town a unique character, making it one of the most attractive towns in central Scotland.

Linlithgow has a strong feeling of community, as indicated by the enthusiastic continuation of traditions such as the Marches and its support for 164 voluntary organisations and groups. Its location convenient for Edinburgh, Glasgow, Livingston, Falkirk, Grangemouth and Stirling has led to it becoming a popular commuter town, more than trebling its population over the past fifty years. 41% of employed residents are classed as

professional or managerial and 31% as white collar, administrative, supervisory or clerical. 44% of residents have a degree or higher degree. The standards of housing and education are notably high.



*St Michael's Parish Church and the Palace from the east.*

## 2. The Main Problems, Needs and Unfulfilled Potential

The recent over-development, without obvious benefits to the community, has meant that the town's infrastructure and services are struggling to cope. There has been under-investment to cater for the housing needs of the less well-off and, to some extent, in improvements to capitalise on the town's historic environment. This has meant that the advantages of Linlithgow as a place to live are being eroded.

Until the adoption of the 2018 West Lothian Local Development Plan, the lack of educational capacity was the main reason why West Lothian Council prevented much development in Linlithgow. At the same time, the rise in house prices and consequent increase in the value of potential housing land have created a demand to develop, for residential use, sites outwith the currently defined "settlement boundary" and practically every vacant site within the town.

The main problems or issues needing resolution can be listed as follows:

### 1. Roads, Parking and Transport

Traffic congestion, mainly in the High Street, is causing unacceptable conditions for walking and cycling and curtailing potential community activity. There is a lack of adequate short-stay

parking facilities (including that for tourist buses) in the town centre, and problems associated with commuter car parking are experienced in the streets around the railway station. Recent lack of enforcement of parking regulations has aggravated the congestion problem. Bus services, which could otherwise help to combat the strong reliance on the private car, are limited, both within the town, and to Livingston and Glasgow. There is also a need for continual improvements to the foot/cycle path network to encourage active travel.



*High Street traffic congestion.*

## 2. Education

Insufficient education capacity at Linlithgow Academy has been used as the main means of controlling or preventing town expansion. This situation has not changed in that the recent increase in the capacity of Linlithgow Academy has been allocated mainly to cater for housing developments outside the town. In August 2022, a new Winchburgh Academy will accommodate pupils currently travelling to Linlithgow Academy, effectively permitting housing development in Linlithgow up to approximately 550 houses. Low Port Primary School lacks a nursery and there is limited provision for adult education in the town.

## 3. Heritage/Townscape

Whilst the potential is there, and despite some good improvements to street furniture, paving, signage and floral displays, the town centre of Linlithgow (overall) does not compare favourably with similar historic towns in Scotland in terms of street/pavement surfaces (unacceptably poor towards the west end of the High Street), condition of buildings, parking arrangements, etc. There are particular townscape issues with the gap sites resulting from the demolition of the Victoria Hall and the offices in front of Templars Court at The Cross. There are several significant High Street properties lying empty and awaiting re-use. The eastern part of the Vennel area gives a major opportunity for redevelopment. It is essential that the design of any developments on these sites is sympathetic to Linlithgow's traditional historic character.

## 4. Housing

The years of planning 'restraint' on the expansion of Linlithgow, as prescribed by successive Council Local Plans, have resulted in the demand for housing exceeding supply despite recent population decline. There is currently pressure for more housing development in Linlithgow and no shortage of developers wishing to capitalise on the demand. The Council's 'Call for Sites', as an initial part of the last Local Development Plan process, brought forward the existence of a significant number of potential housing sites around Linlithgow but all are constrained by existing infrastructure.

Only 11% of the town's housing stock is social rented housing (79% being owner-occupied and 10% private rented). There have been no council houses completed in Linlithgow since 1975, except for the 15 units at Avalon Place, Linlithgow Bridge, built in 2017.

Although welcome, these 15 new council flats/houses have done little to reduce the average waiting time for a council house in Linlithgow which is currently approximately 10 years. No further council housing in Linlithgow will be considered before 2028 according to the latest West Lothian Council Strategic Housing Investment Plan. There is presently very little Housing Association and other affordable housing available in Linlithgow making it difficult, if not impossible, for people of limited means to acquire suitable property in the town, adding to the loss of young people, especially in the 20 to 39 age group

**Table 1 - New Housing in Linlithgow from 1997 until approval of West Lothian Local Development Plan, 4 September 2018**

Site with Planning Permission or Development Completed	No. of houses	Date
Avalon Gardens	55	2000
Avonmill Road	18	2003
Barkhill	40	1997
Barons Hill	1	2013
Blackness Road	66	2004
Boghall Steading	3	1999
Braehead Place	25	2002
Braehead Road	66	2006
Clarendon House. Manse Road	6	2018
East Mill Road	14	2013
Edinburgh Road (Former Yard)	14	2003
Falkirk Road Linlithgow Bridge	42	2005
Friars Brae	1	2012
High St Bus Depot	41	2013
Highfield House	2	2001
Lingate, Falkirk Road	1	2002
Lochside Mews	10	2008
Longcroft	1	2017
Mains Road	1	2003
Mill Road (Council housing)	15	2015
Mill Road	1	2017
Preston House	6	2000
Riccarton Drive	5	2009
St Magdalenes Distillery	33	1998
Union Road	4	1997
West Port School	23	2004
Westerlea, Friarsbrae	5	2012
Williamsraig	1	2018
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	



**Table 2 - New Housing in Linlithgow with planning permission since West Lothian Local Development Plan, 4 September 2018**

Site with Planning Permission	No. of houses	Date
Boghall, Springfield	54	2019
Edinburgh Road (Jet Station)	48	2019
Victoria Hall	16	2019
West Port House garden flat	1	2019
Parkley Craigs	1	2019
Stuart House High St	6	2021
Deanburn Road	60	2021
<b>Total</b>	<b>186</b>	

One result of the high demand for housing has been the construction of 500 new houses (Table 1) despite the policy of restraint instituted by the Linlithgow Area Local Plan of 1994. West Lothian Council itself acknowledged (in the last Local Plan's Main Issues Report, paragraph 3.86) that: "significantly, none of these developments has added to the supply of affordable housing". This is of particular concern since Linlithgow is identified in the 2018 Local Development Plan as a Priority 1 area for affordable housing investment. In Linlithgow, only 18% of the population are aged between 20 and 39 as compared to Bathgate where 28% are in this age band. This distortion of Linlithgow's population is a direct result of West Lothian Council's housing policy, a situation exacerbated by those houses in Table 2 constructed or under construction being sold for in excess of £½million.

An additional concern is the Council's allocation, through the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan, of various significant housing sites around the town's outskirts without apparent thought to the infrastructural implications and without understanding of the reasons why the previous version of this *Plan for the Future* concentrated future development opportunities to the south-east of the town centre. This lack of appreciation was exacerbated by the questionable later allocation by the Scottish Government's Reporter (after the Local Development Plan Inquiry) of an additional large housing site (Cemex at Kettilstoun) which would elongate the town to the west.

### 5. Youth and Elderly Provision

There is a lack of accessible services for young and elderly people in Linlithgow and, despite the achievements of the Linlithgow Young Peoples Project (LYPP), a lack of support and resources for existing projects. Almost half of Linlithgow's

residents are now over 50 and the growing elderly population will need more day care, health care and organised activities.

### 6. Lack of Realisation of Business Opportunities

More encouragement for small business is needed, taking advantage of modern technology to improve local business diversity, to make the town less vulnerable to downturns in the economy, to capitalise on the well qualified people who are residents in the town yet commute to Edinburgh and Glasgow, and to realise the potential for high-end technological and consultancy businesses close to Edinburgh, Glasgow and the airport. The reported downsizing of Oracle in Blackness Road will represent a major potential asset for business development. Account needs to be taken of post-Covid changes to working patterns.

### 7. Tourist Potential

Linlithgow has the potential to attract many more tourists, based mainly on its history, heritage and physical attractiveness, and its proximity to Edinburgh and its airport. This is recognised in the



*Entrance to the Oracle complex at Blackness Road.*

current West Lothian Local Development Plan but it does not address the "promotion of the district as a visitor destination" through any sort of concrete proposals. Linlithgow has, by far, the greatest potential for increased tourism in West Lothian. Tourism and associated businesses provide the most significant opportunity for economic development in the town.

### 8. Shopping

The town's High Street shopping area suffers from poor vehicular access, inadequate off-street car parking, on-pavement parking, lack of rear service facilities and excessive through traffic, all of which detract from the enjoyment of using /visiting the retail area. The effect of the general increase in online retailing also needs to be assessed.



## 9. Health Facilities

Existing health provision in Linlithgow is inadequate to cater for the inevitable rise in the town's population which will result from the new housing development allocated in the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan. This will be exacerbated by the recent increase in care homes and flatted developments for the retired, in addition to the aging population previously described.

## 10. Community and Cultural Facilities

Although the refurbishment of the Burgh Halls, to form an arts centre for the area, was completed to a high standard in 2010, this resulted in a loss of much-needed community meeting rooms and the tourist information facility that formerly existed in the building. However, two community hubs are being promoted by different local churches, and this needs to be co-ordinated with other existing facilities, in order that they can properly cater for a full range of needs. There is a lack of provision for arts and craft workers.

## 11. Deprivation

Although Linlithgow is relatively prosperous compared with many other West Lothian communities, there are a small number of areas in the town where unemployment and other indicators of disadvantage are higher than the average. The needs of these areas and the people living in them need to be considered through the provisions of this Plan.

## 12. Environmental Sustainability

With global and national temperatures again reaching record highs in 2022, and in line with the Scottish Government's ambitious Net Zero targets, Linlithgow must play its part in mitigating and adapting to climate change by 2045. To quote,

West Lothian's own Community Action for Climate Change: "The only way we're going to reduce carbon emissions, minimise the adverse effects of climate change and achieve a better quality of life is if we all take action". Cooperation between West Lothian Council, our many businesses, property developers, community organisations working together and individual residents taking action is the way to achieve Net Zero for our wonderful town. The Planning Forum considers that changes in the areas of Transport, Energy, Waste and Consumption, as well as Biodiversity and Food are necessary. This, combined with mitigation measures, to tackle, for example, flood and drought risks, will all be essential in the transition to Net Zero.

- *Transport* – a shift to active travel, with improvements in cycling, walking and wheeling infrastructure; public transport and facilities for electric vehicle charging
- *Energy* – a decrease in reliance on fossil fuels and improving energy efficiency by harnessing the potential of low/zero carbon energy sources, maximising solar potential both at a commercial and domestic level, retrofitting homes with insulation and zero carbon heating solutions, and ensuring that all new developments are genuinely sustainable.
- *Waste and Consumption* – increase opportunities to promote a circular economy, encourage repair and re-use, and improve recycling infrastructure.
- *Biodiversity and Food* – greening spaces and decreasing food miles wherever possible, increasing local food production, rewilding and tree planting where appropriate, and repurposing vacant and derelict land.

### 3. Threats to the Environment and Well-Being of Linlithgow

The main threats to the future shape of Linlithgow can be addressed through a more radical approach to solutions to planning problems than so far adopted in statutory Development Plans for Linlithgow.

#### 1. Results of Development 'Restraint'

From 1994 to 2018, West Lothian Council operated a policy of development 'restraint' in Linlithgow. Despite this policy, 500 extra houses were built, leading to the problems outlined above. More recently, the 'restraint' policy has led to a population decline due to the natural ageing of heads of households with the almost inevitable requirement that their offspring find somewhere to live outside of Linlithgow, the Scottish Government's 2020 population estimate being 12,840 (13,462 in 2011). It is recognised that a continuation of this trend is detrimental to the town's economic and social well-being and run counter to Linlithgow being sustained as a vibrant and well-functioning community with significant tourist potential. However, any land allocations for new housing development should be appropriately located to tie in with essential infrastructural improvements, not allocated in random fashion as in the 2018 West Lothian Local Development Plan.

#### 2. More Housing without Community Benefit

The previous policy of development restraint, applied over the period from 1994 until the adoption of the Council's Local Development Plan, did not preclude the development of sites within the existing Linlithgow settlement boundary. As a result of the demand for housing, 500 houses were granted planning permission between 1997 and the adoption of the West Lothian Local Development Plan on 4 September 2018. This has almost exhausted the supply of infill sites, some of which may have had better uses when viewed from a social and environmental perspective. The lack of any constructive planning by West Lothian Council since 1996 has had significant social and infrastructure consequences and does not reflect the potential community benefits that a development of 500 houses could have potentially brought to the town. Instead, the disadvantages of congestion, potential gridlock and loss of amenity look set to continue unless a different approach is taken.

#### 3. Effects of Proposals for expanding Winchburgh into a New Town

Development is now well under way on the expansion of Winchburgh, a 'Core Development

Area', albeit without a railway station so far. This may take some pressure off Linlithgow as a possible development location in the M9 corridor, but the opening of a non-denominational secondary school in the 'new town' is due in August 2022. This new school should release capacity at Linlithgow Academy and potentially allow further housing development at Linlithgow. The promised new Winchburgh Station (to be funded by developers) could significantly reduce Linlithgow's commuter parking problem were it to go ahead.

#### 4. Effects of Potential Large-Scale Developments at Bo'ness and Whitecross

Although outwith the West Lothian Council area, there are possible large-scale housing developments at Bo'ness and at Whitecross. The Bo'ness waterfront proposals for 700 houses plus marina, etc, and the proposals by Morston Assets Ltd for 1,500 new houses at Whitecross seem to be on the 'back burner' at present. If implemented in addition to the current easier-to-develop housing sites on the south-eastern outskirts of Bo'ness, they will add further to congestion and parking problems in Linlithgow, particularly with regard to those wishing to drive into the town and commute from the railway station.

#### 5. Effects of Edge-of-Town Retail Developments

The Stockbridge Retail Park, off Falkirk Road, has had an undoubted detrimental effect on the High Street shops (albeit two units are currently empty). Loss of trade was originally estimated to amount to up to a sixth of the existing revenue, but this is hard to quantify overall. Some businesses have been severely affected, but some new ones have opened. There always exists the threat of further out-of-centre retail development, although previous proposals for such development on sites off Blackness Road and in Edinburgh Road have not come to pass – the former attracted an unprec-



*Site at Blackness Road which was recently the subject of a withdrawn planning application for a major supermarket and housing development.*



edented 1,000 individual letters of objection – and the supermarket given planning permission on the Edinburgh Road site has been superseded by planning permission for 48 flats given on appeal to the Scottish Government Reporter despite strong opposition.

## 6. Challenge of the Loss of County-wide Administrative Functions

Although some minor administrative functions still remain in the former County Buildings (now the Linlithgow Partnership Centre), Linlithgow's traditional role as the administrative centre for the County of West Lothian (formerly Linlithgowshire) has come to an end with the removal to Livingston of nearly all Council departments, along with the Sheriff Court and Procurator Fiscal – together with all the local jobs they once provided. Trade for local businesses, especially at lunchtime, has declined as a result and, while the 'Partnership Centre' is beneficial to the community, the new uses are unlikely to make up for the employment loss that the town has sustained.



*The former County Buildings (now the Linlithgow Partnership Centre) and the former Sheriff Courthouse (now a hotel), once major sources of employment in Linlithgow.*

## 7. High, and Increasing, Car Use

The private car plays an important role in the daily lives of most Linlithgow residents. Car ownership in Linlithgow is extremely high with 44% of households having one car and a further 40% of households with two or more cars. If the town is allowed to grow further at its extremities, then use of the car to get to the station and the town centre is likely to grow. Stretching the town has already started with the retail park at Stockbridge, spreading out the shopping zone beyond practical walking distances, and the above-mentioned allocation of housing land on the 'Cemex' site and at Deanburn provides more houses beyond easy walking distance of the town centre. Residents of more recent housing developments in Bo'ness,

routinely drive to Linlithgow each working day to catch the train.

Car use is exacerbated by the lack of an effective local bus service and of safe, attractive provision for 'active travel'. Reaching Scottish Government targets of 10% of all trips by active travel by 2020 has failed for want of better footpaths, more cycle routes, and active promotion of the benefits of their use. Linlithgow's local bus services could be greatly enhanced, and capacity needs to be developed for car-clubs, bike hire and electric vehicle charging points. There is a clear need for a strategy in relation to the provision of charging points, particularly where car owners live in flats.

However, research shows that modal shift from car is most likely to succeed when such measures are complemented by disincentives to car use. Introduction of effective parking charges and the decriminalisation of parking offences would be steps in that direction.

## 8. Climate Change

Linlithgow will undoubtedly be affected by Climate Change. The town must both adapt to changing local weather patterns and reduce its carbon emissions from fossil fuels and other greenhouse gases.

**Adaptation** - The main changes in West Lothian may include an overall rise in temperature, a decrease in summer rainfall and an increase in winter rainfall. There may also be an increased likelihood of experiencing extreme weather events.

**Table 2 - Met Office UKCP09 Climate Projections for West Lothian based on a Medium Emissions Scenario** (see <http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk/23161>)

UKCP09* Projected changes in summer and winter temperature and precipitation for West Lothian (Grid 805 - Medium Emissions)					
		2020s	2050s	2080s	Trend
Winter	mean temperature	1.2°C (0.5°C - 2.0°C)	2.0°C (1.0°C - 3.0°C)	2.6°C (1.4°C - 4.1°C)	warmer
	precipitation	5% (-2% - 14%)	12% (-2% - 24%)	15% (2% - 32%)	wetter
Summer	mean temperature	1.5°C (0.6°C - 2.5°C)	2.5°C (1.2°C - 4.1°C)	3.7°C (2.0°C - 5.8°C)	warmer
	precipitation	-6% (-17% - 7%)	-14% (-28% - 1%)	-17% (-34% - 0%)	drier

Linlithgow needs to prepare for changing weather with flooding, heatwaves, storms and drier weather all possible. Development must be avoided in areas at risk of flooding; existing buildings in flood risk areas will need protection or even relocation. Increased shelter from the sun could be gained by planting more street trees, for example. Building designs could minimise overheating, avoid the need for energy intensive cooling, etc.

**Mitigation** – Linlithgow’s gross carbon emissions need to be on a steep decline in the next 10-20 years and beyond. Buildings need to be better insulated with controlled ventilation. Boiler replacement, combined heat and power and district heating should be investigated and much more focus is needed on solar and other forms of renewable energy resources. New development must be ‘zero carbon’ from the outset if the town is to stand a chance of reducing emissions.

Linlithgow is surrounded by prime agricultural land, predominantly fields rented out for commercial farming and mono-cropping. Not only must these soils be protected for future generations as far as possible, but our farmland needs to diversify into more local food production. The single biggest carbon savings come from changes to our diet, methods of production and the distances that food travels from field to fork. Loss of prime agricultural land due to development should be minimised when planning decisions are made.

Other measures should include a shift to more ‘active travel’ (see section 7 above), including implementation of West Lothian Council’s Active Travel Plan.

Waste processing is fairly effective in Linlithgow but more could be done to reduce the need to drive to the recycling centre. Home collection services, and enterprises formed to make best use of unwanted goods would reduce the need for landfill. Residents of High Street flats have no recycling bins provided by the Council due to lack of space. The combination of reduced opening hours at the Community Recycling Centre and increasing population from proposed housing developments will increase pressure on landfill and may increase fly-tipping.

The Linlithgow Community Development Trust’s Linlith-go-solar project started by installing solar panels on the roofs of the Rugby Club, Golf Club

and Sports Club as part of a community energy enterprise and it is hoped that this will expand to include other projects such as a solar carport at Kettilstoun.

It is recognised that district heating and combined heat and power plants are not insignificant in size and impact when installed. Any such plants would need careful planning to minimise disruption. Other developments that may block future installation should be rejected. All new development should consider energy balancing with neighbouring built areas and not just presume to meet its own energy needs. As examples, housing adjacent to the Leisure Centre or Union Canal could partner on heat and power solutions assuming of course the cooperation of the relevant statutory bodies

## 9. Air Quality

Air quality monitoring equipment installed in the High Street has shown that Linlithgow has issues which are impacting on public health. While roughly 50% of Linlithgow’s air pollution comes from outwith the town, the remainder is locally generated by road fuels and combustion of other fossil fuels in the area. The form of the townscape acts as a funnel and concentrates pollution at certain locations in the High Street. A range of short and long-term measures are required to mitigate the poor air quality and to reduce any risk to public health.

## 10. Water Quality in Linlithgow Loch

Linlithgow Loch is increasingly suffering from toxic and unsightly algal blooms, particularly during periods of warm weather, caused by pollutants such as run-off of fertilisers and pesticides from fields, effluent from septic tanks, occasional sewage overflows and bread thrown into the loch to feed the ducks and swans. This poses risks to the wildlife, human health and may also affect fishing and other loch recreation activities.



*Linlithgow Loch, Linlithgow Palace and St Michael's Parish Church (Calum Smith).*



## 4. Opportunities to Remedy the Situation

Taking into account the town's strengths and the various issues outlined above, there appears to be four distinct options worthy of consideration to remedy the situation:

- a) Reintroducing a policy of development restraint as promoted in West Lothian Council's previous local development plans
- b) continuing and enforcing restraint in such a way that it stops development, accepting the current stress on infrastructure, that housing needs will not be met and that the population will continue to decline/age, while attempting to arrest deterioration
- c) relying on local authority and other initiatives to respond to the town's needs, providing new infrastructure as required without it having to be related to new housing development (fairly unlikely in the current economic climate)
- d) community-advocated planned change, balancing new development opportunities against town improvements but with the proviso that no new development takes place without prior infrastructure improvement.

All of these options could be supplemented by other ways of raising funds, including the possible establishment or (preferably) the reconstitution of an existing Trust to purchase and allocate development land.

Groups represented in the Linlithgow Planning Forum do not favour significant new development *per se*. The prospect of further large-scale residential development will cause considerable concern to many people, on the basis of their current experience of the increasing strains under which the town operates.

However, with housing land in the Linlithgow area estimated to be worth at least £1,100,000 per hectare (£440,000 per acre), there exists the potential for much of that value to be transferred into town improvements through 'planning gain'. In other words, planning permission for a fixed extent of housing development could be conditional on the provision of a list of priority community requirements which might include some or all of the following:

- adequate educational capacity
- redevelopment of the eastern part of The Vennel in keeping with Linlithgow's traditional character

- a four-way junction at Burghmuir
- traffic reductions in, and environmental improvements to, the High Street (would need new road construction to divert all through traffic)
- greatly improved conditions for active travel and other forms of sustainable transport
- a solution to the car parking problem related to Linlithgow railway station
- the construction of sufficient social-rented housing to cater for the needs of the expanding community and to allow young people growing up in the town to remain or return
- provision of a range of housing choice to ensure access to affordable housing for first time buyers, currently resident within Linlithgow
- provision of adequate range of youth facilities and better-coordinated community facilities
- provision of enhanced health service facilities
- appropriate upgrading and extension of the sewer network, including any necessary works to mitigate pollution of Linlithgow Loch.

Projects from the above list would be chosen for implementation depending on their relative value to the community in Linlithgow as well as their financial cost.

Funding for such an ambitious programme would be most likely to come from a significant residential land release on the south-east outskirts of the town, programmed and phased as part of the one overall masterplan for the development area, as advocated extensively in planning advice from the Scottish Government. Planning permissions in accordance with such a masterplan would be granted by West Lothian Council, the local authority being satisfied that adequate funding, would be in place to ensure that all the priority community requirements were timeously provided before or during the residential developments.

The alternative will be a community which continues to creak under the strain of inadequate infrastructure, which loses population, and which is unable to house its young people, whilst its potential as a business centre, as a distinctive specialist retail centre and/or as a key tourism focus in the Central Belt remain unfulfilled.

**Do nothing/do the minimum is a distinctly unattractive option.**

## 5. Summary Diagram

This section, Section A, has identified the strengths, problems, threats and the opportunities that are available to establish Linlithgow's future in the short, but also in the longer, term. The following section, Section B, sets out a Plan for Action. The Actions focus on what needs to be established in the immediate future; actions which will ameliorate the current problems and threats, and will build on the strengths inherent in the town.

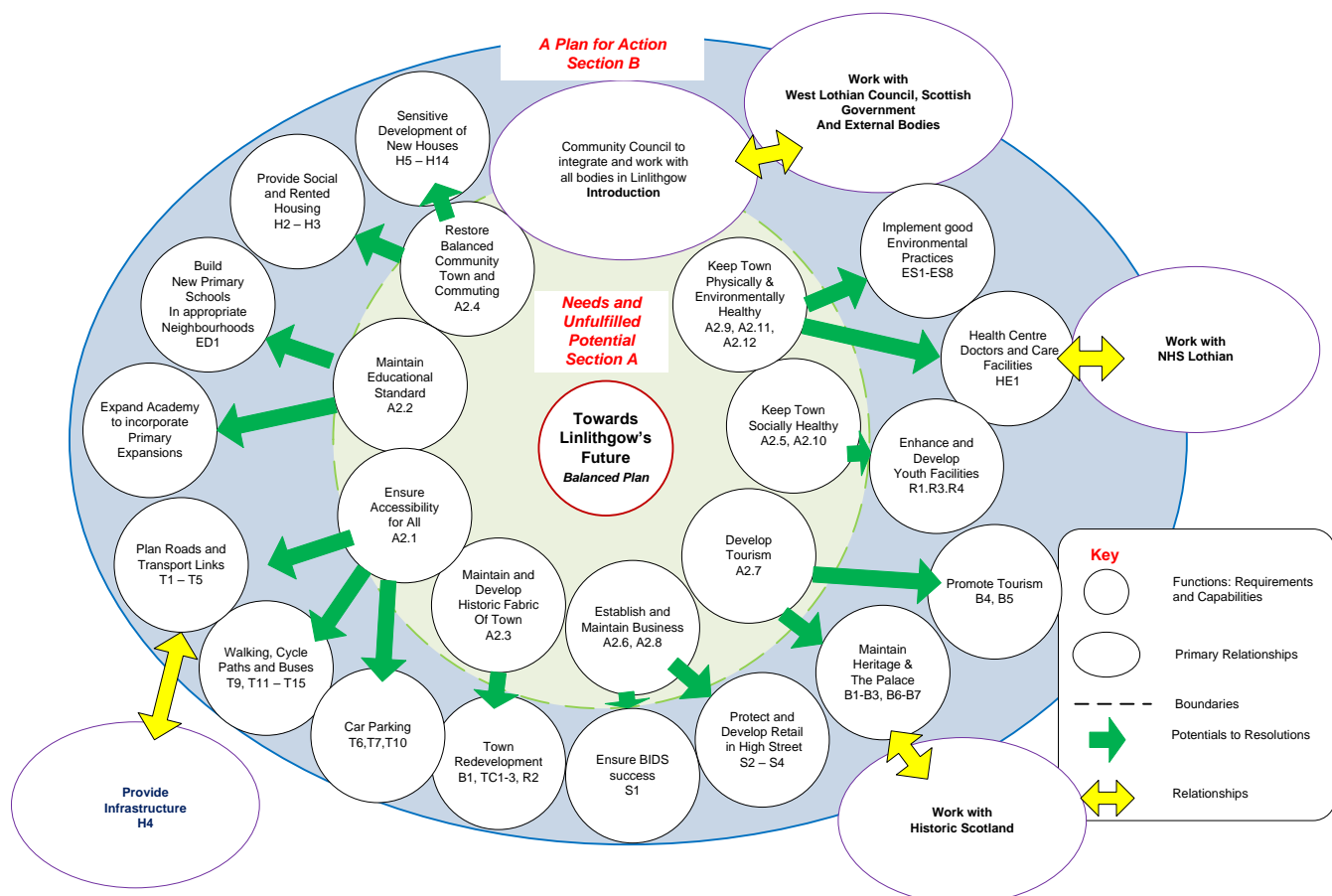
The following diagram is intended to encapsulate both the Unfulfilled Potential set out in Section A and the Plan for Action presented in Section B.

The diagram is to be read as the Unfulfilled Potential in the inner circle in light green; the identifiers are references to the paragraphs within Section A, while the outer circle in light blue sets out the actions as taken forward in Section B; the identifiers are references to the Recommendations in Section B. Sub-circles of the outer circle have been positioned adjacent to the sub-circles of the inner circle, thus 'The Future of Mill Road (Industrial Estate)' and 'Protect Retail High Street' sub-circles are positioned next to 'Establish and Maintain Business' of the inner circle, and the relationships have been made explicit by directional arrows in green.

A number of ovals (rather than circles) are included being:

- Community Council – the primary driver of this Plan
- West Lothian Council, Scottish Government and External Bodies – being the organisations that Linlithgow needs to interface to and work with. See subsection 9 of Section B for how the Plan for Action may be implemented in practice
- NHS Lothian - an integral part of the health provision to Linlithgow
- Historic Environment Scotland – the town realises that it needs to work closely with Historic Environment Scotland if it is to establish its rightful place in Scotland's tourist industry.

At the centre of diagram is the goal of this document, *Linlithgow - A Plan for the Future 2022 - 2032*. Linlithgow has recognised that what is required is a 'balanced' plan that seeks to benefit all its inhabitants, young and old, commuter and local, and to build on its heritage, recognising that new technologies need to be assimilated whilst protecting the environment.





## 6. Objectives and Founding Principles for this Plan

This *Plan for the Future*/'Local Place Plan' aims to:

- provide a community-led perspective on the future development of Linlithgow, and a mechanism through which local people can have a say in input to West Lothian Council's Local Development Plan consultations
- set out parameters for the council's forthcoming second version of its Local Development Plan
- protect heritage and the environment where appropriate, to increase sustainability and to adapt to changing needs
- welcome development proposals which align with the philosophy and content of this document.

The founding principles of the planning content of this document are that:

- Linlithgow supports limited and controlled development that enhances the heritage and character of the town, increasing its attractiveness both to tourists and as a place to live and work
- Linlithgow supports controlled expansion of housing and other development within the town whilst retaining the character of the town and protecting the environment
- any development must provide the means to ensure that the additional services and facilities required by the increase in population are provided. No development should proceed without the funding for additional services and facilities being guaranteed
- it seeks to ensure that all developments contribute with maximum impact to Scotland's overall Net Zero ambitions in line with West Lothian Council's Climate Change Strategy 'ensuring that Climate Change is addressed in all future relevant council strategies, policies, management and action plans' (Climate Change Strategy 2021-2028)
- Any development, in line with the recent review 'A new Future for Scotland's Town Centres' (February 2021), should follow a similar approach to 'Town Centre First', the 'Place Principle' and, in particular, the '20 Minute Neighbourhood' (see chart below).



## SECTION B - A PLAN FOR ACTION

The present field-by-field planning strategy, the continued determination of uncoordinated planning applications and the perpetuation of the present problems are unsustainable, as proved by experience over the past thirty years. Inevitable large-scale growth needs to be properly planned and managed, with a clear link between extra housing development and community benefit to the people of Linlithgow. **It is a prerequisite that no further infill housing development, and no expansion whatsoever beyond the present town boundaries, will be acceptable unless it forms part of a comprehensive plan which forces the developers to carry out (or, in the case of infill developments, contribute to) the priority community requirements as outlined above.**

The overall aim will be to keep and enhance the town of Linlithgow as a reasonably balanced community, combining the following roles:

- a place to live and learn - continuing to attract new residents (preferably through more local employment) and catering for the needs of existing residents
- a place to visit - making the most of its potential to attract more visitors and capitalising on the existing range of small, privately-owned shops
- a place to work – with more emphasis on promoting more local employment opportunities.

At the outset, it will be necessary for West Lothian Council to address three fundamental concerns:

- development and delivery of a comprehensive transportation strategy for the town and its setting, primarily addressing the problems of

through traffic in the High Street, and car parking

- a heat and energy strategy in the context of the need to address climate change
- provision of proportionate educational and health care facilities, sufficient to indefinitely support the expanded population.

The proposals of this Plan for Linlithgow are set out under the following headings:

1. Environmental Sustainability
2. Built/Archaeological Heritage and Tourism
3. Business and Employment
4. Housing
5. Transport and Accessibility
6. Town Centre and Retailing (including Redevelopment Opportunities)
7. Community, Cultural & Sports Facilities and Open Space
8. Education
9. Health Facilities
10. Funding
11. Implementation

Under each heading, all proposals are accompanied by an analysis of the present situation, needs and opportunities, giving reasoned justification. The proposals are all numbered, giving easy reference to the proposals map (Map 2) at the end of the document. In some cases, alternatives are indicated.

At the end, before Map 2, is a section on the implementation/financing of the plan and how the implementation of the proposals could be scrutinised and monitored. This includes a table indicating proposals which might be financed directly by housing development. Other projects should generally be self-financing.



# 1. Environmental Sustainability

Underlying this Plan for Linlithgow is a desire to minimise the consumption of fossil-fuel derived energy, consistent with the reasonable expectations of the community, and striking a balance between opposing needs in such a way that the visual appearance of the town and its surroundings is not unnecessarily compromised.

Current thinking favours solid measures to make the best use of land, save energy, produce/consume locally, encourage community involvement and foster civic pride.

The main 'sustainable' features of this Plan for Linlithgow, many of which are outlined in the following sections, are:

- encouraging local employment to cut down the dependence on commuting elsewhere, and to make the town more self-sufficient economically
- discouraging car use by promoting public transport, provision of an attractive and safe cycle and footpath network with easy routes to town amenities and the railway station, and the introduction of long-stay parking charges
- encouraging retail and business development in locations most accessible by foot, cycle or public transport, particularly the town centre
- upgrading the town centre environment, including the planting of trees for cooling and shading, and improving air quality
- encouraging tourism via the railway



Street trees in South Street, St Andrews (Ron Smith).

- encouraging the use of natural building materials wherever possible, coupled with avoidance of materials with high embodied energy and short life expectancy such as plastic wall cladding and uPVC window frames, as circumstances permit
- incorporating sustainable drainage systems involving the installation of underground filter

drains/water storage, and, in new developments, the provision of storage ponds which can function as high-quality landscape features and havens for wildlife

- high levels of thermal insulation and controlled ventilation in buildings, improving comfort and minimising heating costs and energy usage
- re-use of materials wherever possible
- remediation of ground contamination where appropriate, for example at Doomsdale
- designating 'green wedges' and other development-free areas
- conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and corridors, including the protection of mature trees
- provision of green space to grow community food, including allotment gardens and community orchards
- in addition to Grow Wild Organics/Locavore, creation of further market gardens, food-growing nurseries, smallholdings and orchards on the town outskirts, and encouragement of 'community supported agriculture' to produce local food and create local employment
- high levels of community engagement in all aspects of development.

Specific proposals arising from the above and from the introductory content on Climate Change, Air Quality and Loch Quality in Section A are as follows:

## **Proposal ES1 – Installation of District Heating Systems in New Housing Developments**

Housing proposals H5 and H6, involving the construction of new housing to the south-east of Linlithgow could be provided with district heating, powered by one or more appropriately sited combined heat and power plants. These systems should be supplemented by appropriately powered heat pumps and deep geothermal sources as appropriate. For all other new developments, such provision should be considered.

## **Proposal ES2 – Installation of District Heating Systems in Existing Built-up Areas**

District heating should be promoted for suitable groups of buildings, anywhere in the town, care being taken to site the heat and power plant in an appropriate location.

## **Proposal ES3 – Development of Solar Farm**

The Planning Forum would support the installation of a solar farm (intensive arrangement of solar

panels) in the upper part of the former CEMEX sand/gravel quarry to the west of Mill Road/Avontoun Park. The Planning Forum opposes the use of this site for housing.

#### **Proposal ES4 – Development of Hydro-Electric Power Plants on River Avon**

One or more hydro plants with accompanying weirs should be promoted on the River Avon to provide power to local homes and industry, for example Mill Road Industrial Estate.

#### **Proposal ES5 – Sustainable Design of New Developments**

All new developments should aim to be 'carbon neutral' including provision for solar gain, maximum insulation and controlled ventilation. As part of housing proposals H5 and H6, developers should positively consider making provision for co-housing with shared facilities and should provide a range of smaller accommodation. All developments should provide parking spaces for community-owned car club vehicles, electric charge points and bike hire hubs.

#### **Proposal ES6 – Small Farms and Tree Planting**

Existing large agricultural units around the town fringes could be subdivided into small farms to grow food for the local market. Tree loss should be reversed through the planting of shelter belts and hedgerows.

#### **Proposal ES7 – Mitigation of Loch and Watercourse Pollution**

Pollution of Linlithgow Loch by fertiliser and pesticide run-off from fields and other pollutants should be minimised through such measures as the installation of reed beds, silt traps and retention

ponds and the designation of protection strips at the edges of fields. The remaining combined sewer overflow by the side of the loch should be diverted via a new pipe to the Loch Burn.

See also Proposal H5 with regard to measures to reduce septic tank effluent.

#### **Proposal ES8 – Measures to Cut Down High Street Air Pollution**

In order to mitigate high levels of traffic exhaust pollution in the High Street, the following short-term measures should be taken:

- elimination of features which cause traffic to pause and leave engines idling such as double parking - improved streetscape, space for buses and delivery vehicles to park in dedicated zones, organising waste collection at off-peak traffic times
- active promotion and support for alternative lower carbon forms of travel such as local bus service improvements, electric car charge points, community shared vehicles and bike storage
- switching to charged short term parking on the High Street and allowing free off-street parking for up to four hours
- kerbside planting (and retention) of street trees to soak up pollutants
- community home delivery service
- changing parking fines at the Regent Centre car park to allow free parking for up to four hours
- proper enforcement of parking restrictions, facilitated by decriminalised parking penalties enforced by West Lothian Council.

In addition, a full traffic study should be undertaken to assess where vehicles are travelling, and for what purpose, to ascertain what other changes are possible and beneficial.



*Linlithgow's landscape setting, something to be cherished (Ron Smith).*



## 2. Built/Archaeological Heritage and Tourism

Linlithgow's attractiveness as a tourist destination is inextricably linked to its history and built heritage. The heritage aspects are considered first, followed by 'Tourism' under a separate heading.

### Heritage

Linlithgow is often quoted as the 'jewel in the crown' of West Lothian, and includes the only conservation area in the county designated as 'outstanding' by the Scottish Government. The superb juxtaposition of Linlithgow Palace, St Michael's Parish Church, the Peel, the Loch and the ancient Royal Burgh make it one of Scotland's most attractive towns. Strict development and advertisement control continues to preserve the historic fabric (although not, unfortunately, in relation to the Vennel and West Port flats), and some good-quality streetscape work has been carried out at the Cross, leading up Kirkgate to the Palace, and in the High Street.

A new Heritage Trail, Pub Trail and 'Perambulation of the Marches' route have been established, street furniture and sign-posting have been improved, and Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow adds colour to the town centre through floral displays. In late 2009, West Lothian Council was successful in securing a Scottish Government grant for town centre improvements, including £857,000 for Linlithgow. This sum was spent on a range of projects including paving improvements, street furniture, upgrading the Rose Garden, Heritage Trail and public art. Unfortunately, these works were insufficient to comprehensively address the overall issues of street design, pavement surfaces, street lighting columns, condition of buildings and so on. The approach to the railway station from the High Street could be given greater prominence, and the area improved, to give visitors a better first impression of the town (see Proposal T8).

Linlithgow Burgh Trust has recently completed a public art project, further to the successful 'Dudley' sculpture at the Canal Basin, unveiled in 2018. Over 2019-20, two new sculptures depicting Linlithgow's traditional civic insignia, the 'Black Bitch' and St Michael, were installed on prominent town centre sites; it is intended that these will form part of a new Public Art Trail. The main funding for the two new sculptures has come from the Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Town Management Group and the former Town Centre BID and various other sources, including a local 'crowd-



*New stone paving and planters have greatly improved the environment of the eastern parts of the High Street, but western stretches still await enhancement to the same standards – and 'official' parking on pavements is still a bugbear for many.*

funding' campaign, with the funding package having been completed by a grant from the Scottish Government's 2019 Town Centre Fund.

This fund also provided a generous grant for tree planting, completed in 2022, mainly along the High Street. This project was managed by Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow.

Further upgrading of the High Street in particular (but also of some of the wynds and footpaths leading southwards) is vital to make the best of the historic environment, to help sustain the shops from competition elsewhere, and to set the scene for floral enhancement. The remaining tarmac pavements in the High Street provide a standard of street environment well below that now expected in historic towns, many of which have benefitted from generous grant aid from organisations such as Historic Environment Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

A Conservation Area Appraisal for the Linlithgow Palace and High Street Conservation Area (which would have identified improvement opportunities) was commenced around ten years ago by West Lothian Council but was never completed. There is currently no budget allocation for the continuation of the study into townscape heritage improvement.



The following essential proposal is included in the package of town improvements, some to be funded by the Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Town Management Group and some to be financed by private developers as appropriate:-

#### ***Proposal B1 - Conservation Area Enhancement***

*Continued upgrading of street/pavement surfaces in the High Street, wynds and links up to the Station/Union Canal to the standards of other historic towns, planting of more street trees, installation/ completion of a more suitable, consistent style of street furniture, improvement of the condition/appearance of buildings which have been allowed to fall into poor repair or are out of keeping, revision to parking arrangements, shopfront improvements, etc.*

See related proposals:-

T1 Traffic Management to 'Reclaim' the High Street.

### **Linlithgow Palace**

The heritage and tourist potential of Linlithgow Palace has not been fully realised. The expenditure on the reconstruction of the ancient courtyard fountain is welcomed; however spending by Historic Environment Scotland at the Palace is a fraction of that spent at properties such as Stirling and Edinburgh Castles. There is no interpretative centre and no toilets, and, although a new statue of Mary, Queen of Scots has recently been unveiled, there is no indication of her likely birthplace. Most recently, the building has been closed to visitors because of concerns about stonework condition.

#### ***Proposal B2 - Restoration and Re-use of Linlithgow Palace***

*Provision of a visitor interpretation centre, with adequate toilet provision and access for the disabled is proposed. Options appraisals are required to investigate the potential to reroof and restore appropriate parts of the Palace.*

### **Riggs**

Over the years, while many of the rigg gardens behind the built frontages of the High Street have been built upon, some are kept in good condition. However, many, particularly those behind commercial premises, are severely neglected. A strategy is required to save the ancient rigg walls and ensure better cultivation of the rigg gardens for food production and ornamental purposes rather than new development. In this context, the Planning Forum was concerned about the loss of the rigg garden of Annet House as a heritage and tourism resource but, unfortunately, community action on this has come to nothing. However,



*Linlithgow Palace and the recently unveiled statue of Mary, Queen of Scots (Calum Smith).*



*The rigg garden at Annet House (Kirsty Leonard)*

West Lothian Council's condition in relation to the sale of Annet House to effectively prevent development of the rigg is welcomed.

#### ***Proposal B3 - Preservation of Riggs***

*Production and approval by West Lothian Council of a strategy that promotes the preservation and better use of the historic riggs behind the High Street frontages.*

### **Tourism**

Visitors to Scotland, and even those from within the country, tend to bypass West Lothian on their way to Scotland's better-known destinations, but, for a community of its size, Linlithgow has a disproportionate wealth of resources of interest to the tourism market. However, the full potential of these resources is not realised - there is an invaluable opportunity to plan and market Linlithgow as the prime focus of tourism within West Lothian, and to target Linlithgow as a travel base, complemented by its rail links to Edinburgh and Glasgow, local bus services and the houseboat holidays on the Union Canal. Linlithgow needs to be marketed more to the myriad of tourists who

visit Edinburgh, many of whom could be easily tempted to visit such an attractive town for a day trip.

As well as the Palace, the Royal Burgh has the impressive St. Michael's Church, a wealth of other historic buildings, Linlithgow Loch and the Union Canal where the Linlithgow Union Canal Society (LUCS) offers boat trips. Linlithgow also offers a good range of specialist retail outlets, restaurants, tearooms, pubs and carry-out establishments. Other attractions include the Linlithgow Museum, recently relocated into Linlithgow Partnership Centre by Linlithgow Heritage Trust, the West Lothian Local History Library with its facilities for genealogical research, and a wealth of outdoor activities such as walking, golf, canoeing and fishing. For walkers, the John Muir Way, inaugurated in 2014, passes through the west end of Linlithgow. The Union Canal towpath is another popular long-distance walking and cycling route.



*Perambulation of the Marches, 2015 (David Shirres).*

The ancient traditions of Linlithgow should also be a greater draw for visitors - the annual Marches celebrations and associated events, including the Perambulation of the Marches, held for the first time in 2014. Other, increasing, notable activities include 'Scotch Hop' events, the Canal Fun Day, historical events and 'Party at the Palace', concerts in St Michael's Parish Church, the Linlithgow Book Festival, the Linlithgow Folk Festival and the Advent Fair. Specialist tours of the area are offered by Mary's Meanders. Despite the large variety of visitor attractions, tourist accommodation in the immediate area is limited to three small hotels (including the new Court Residence Aparthotel in the former Sheriff Courthouse) and around nine bed and breakfast establishments. Surprisingly, attempts to promote a high-quality hotel on two sites overlooking the east end of Linlithgow Loch have not come to fruition, and the international Laetare Centre has closed.

A good tourist information centre (TIC) is a 'must' for a tourist destination like Linlithgow. However, the former excellent facility located within the ground floor of the Burgh Halls, directly facing the Cross and featuring an audio-visual display on the area's tourist attractions, was closed in 2007 and replaced with short-lived provision in the County Buildings and then the Burgh Halls. The former TIC had approximately 17,800 visitors in 2004 (April to October) and arranged in excess of 600 accommodation bookings. Scottish Government funding was granted for a new volunteer-led tourist information facility in the current foyer of the Burgh Halls, although this has not been implemented, and the Planning Forum continues to prefer the idea of recreating direct pedestrian access from The Cross as a long-term aspiration.

#### ***Proposal B4 – Provision of Tourist Information Centre on Ground Floor of the Burgh Halls***

*The Planning Forum supports the re-establishment of Linlithgow's Tourist Information Centre at the entrance of the Burgh Halls, with clear signage from the Cross.*

In order to maximise the tourism potential of the town, the following must be given serious consideration.

- Early reopening of Linlithgow Palace.
- Resolution of the High Street traffic congestion/parking problems and their impact on conditions for walking and cycling. ***See Transport and Accessibility Section.***
- Encouragement of specialist retail outlets. ***See Retailing and Town Centre Section.***
- The upgrading of the High Street 'public realm' to appropriate standards. ***See Proposal B1.***
- Restoration of the Tourist Information Centre (as above).
- Promoting rail-based day trips from Edinburgh and Glasgow through a 'Linlithgow' ticket combining train travel, palace entry, shop/café discounts and the use of local bus services.
- Continuing to raise the community's awareness of the significance of Linlithgow's heritage assets to enhance civic pride and support promotion of the town.

For Linlithgow to be the focus of tourism within West Lothian, it also requires a larger hotel with adequate parking and conference facilities. Rather than a chain hotel, an independently-owned 'theme' hotel might be more appropriate for the promotion of year-round tourism in Linlithgow.



### ***Proposal B5 - Promotion of Larger Hotel in Linlithgow***

*The Planning Forum would be in favour of the establishment of a suitably situated larger hotel, perhaps in relation to development related to the Union Canal or the M9 motorway junction.*



*Fun Day at the Canal Basin (Chris Long).*

Although canal-side development at Linlithgow would be very desirable, no suitable opportunities to do this exist within the built-up area, without spoiling what is there already. The Clarendon/St Michael's Hospital area is likely to offer the best opportunities for canal related development in Linlithgow, but their scale, location, access and design parameters would be better established through the Local Plan process, rather than in response to one-off planning applications. The canal bank between Manse Road and St Michael's Hospital should ideally be kept free of development (see proposal R3 and policy proposals for 'green wedges'), but ground below the hospital itself would lend itself to carefully-designed canal-related development, sympathetic to the

conservation area. Even greater potential exists eastwards towards Park Farm where a marina development was suggested in the 'Union Canal Moorings Study' completed a few years ago for Scottish Canals. In the meantime, Scottish Canals has provided mooring facilities for houseboats at Back Station Road and west of Preston Road.

### ***Proposal B6 - Canalside Facilities near St Michael's Hospital***

#### ***Proposal B7 - Canal Marina near Park Farm***

*On the site below St Michael's Hospital, possible facilities could include a small hotel, a pub/café/restaurant, marine supplies, boat repair yard, etc. The main vehicular access would have to be taken from the Edinburgh Road, south-east of the canal bridge, via an improved access road, and a footbridge over the canal would be needed to facilitate non-motorised access from the towpath on the north bank. The proposed marina to the east would have direct vehicular access from the Eastern Local Distributor Road (Proposal T4).*

To co-ordinate and execute these tourism proposals, it is suggested that a management group be set up and co-ordinated by One Linlithgow BID, involving all other major interests in the town such as retailers, the Community Council, Linlithgow Civic Trust, Scottish Canals, Linlithgow Heritage Trust and LUCS, plus Visit West Lothian. A comprehensive town guide is regularly published by One Linlithgow BID and past initiatives have included the installation of two webcams (at The Cross and the Canal Basin) and the creation of the MyLinlithgow.com website by the Linlithgow Community Development Trust.

See related proposals:-

T1 Traffic Management to 'Reclaim' the High Street



### 3. Business and Employment

This section sets out proposals to:

- consolidate current business activity and build on it
- replace lost local employment opportunities
- reduce travel time to work
- provide facilities for home based businesses
- promote Linlithgow as an ideal, central, well connected location to do business.

Over the past fifty years, Linlithgow has progressively lost its traditional industrial base with the closure of paper mills, distillery, electronics factories, etc. Their sites have been redeveloped for housing occupied by commuters to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Grangemouth and elsewhere, reflecting the burgh's transformation into a dormitory town.

The main employers remaining are Oracle (in a much depleted form with much vacant floorspace) and West Lothian Council (services and education). Employment numbers have greatly declined and the trend continues for industrial and commercial businesses throughout the town to close or relocate, capitalising on the high residential value of their vacant sites. Recent examples have included the former builder's yard, petrol station, etc on Edinburgh Road and the former abattoir at Preston Road, thus increasing the number of houses and decreasing employment opportunities locally.

There is, however, a thriving small business sector in the town, mainly concentrated in the High Street (see also section on 'Retailing & Town Centre') and Mill Road Industrial Estate. This is reflected in the existence of the Linlithgow Business Association and One Linlithgow BID (Business Improvement District) which strives to promote the whole town as a successful business location.

The town has particular potential for the establishment of high-tech small business, serving as an attractive base for people who might otherwise commute. The encouragement of such businesses would:

1. establish a better balance of businesses in the town, including a wider range of shops
2. make the town less vulnerable to downturns in the economy
3. minimise commuting and promote local productivity.

For several years, Mill Road Industrial Estate has been the main focus for new industrial/business development in Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge, but nearly all the land available has now been developed. Road access to the Industrial Estate is not ideal, either through a residential area, via a narrow, winding country road with a very poor access on to the A706 and/or along the High Street (see Transport and Accessibility Section for a possible solution to this problem - Proposal T2B). Better office accommodation and business facilities are desirable, with particular regard to car parking. From 2014, the industrial estate was designated as a separate Business Improvement District (BID), the members of the Board of which pursued common interests and made improvements to the area. Now that it is part of the One Linlithgow BID, the estate will benefit from greater attention generally.

As stated above, the Mill Road Industrial Estate, with its windowless sheds, is not the ideal environment for many of the high-tech and professional small businesses that the town should attract and foster. Accordingly, other opportunities should be pursued within the town and towards the north-east.

Looking to the longer term, the West Lothian Local Development Plan continues to allocate greenfield land for further industrial development to the north-east of the present Oracle building, but this is currently inaccessible and any development there would establish an unsatisfactory precedent. However, if developed comprehensively, and given that space for new development at Mill Road is now extremely limited, this whole area, extending to the proposed four-way motorway interchange at Burghmuir (see Proposal T2A), is seen as the best location for future economic development in the longer term, perhaps 20 or 30 years hence. In the meantime, its development potential should be protected from alternative uses such as housing, since a better, more conveniently-located site for large-scale business development is unlikely to present itself. A planning application for a major supermarket, housing and a petrol filling station on this site was withdrawn a few years ago in the face of public protest (as well as being contrary to the Development Plan).

#### **Proposal E1 - Establishment of Burghmuir Business Park**

*The whole area between Bonsyde Road and the M9 junction, including the Oracle (formerly Sun Microsystems) building, should be reserved for 'high-*

*amenity' business or light industrial development, including offices, hotel, petrol filling station, etc. In the first instance, surplus floorspace at the Oracle premises could be subdivided to provide suitable employment space, and extension eastwards on to current agricultural land should only be contemplated when these premises are substantially occupied. Vehicular access to later phases would be by means of roundabouts on Blackness Road at the east end of Springfield Road, and at the road leading to Kingsfield (Proposal T3). The landscape structure of the site should be established from the outset and high-quality building design should be mandatory. The development needs to be carefully phased to ensure that land is kept in productive agricultural use for as long as possible.*

In the meantime, there are two more specific proposals for business development in Linlithgow, recognising the desirability of providing communal

services and the significant increase in home-based business start-ups in recent years:

#### ***Proposal E2 - Establishment of Business Centre in Town Centre***

*Opportunities exist in the Town Centre for the creation of/conversion into office suites for professional businesses. Such development, possibly to be provided as part of the redevelopment of the east part of the Vennel area, should include hireable desks and meeting rooms to cater for home-based businesses and a modern mobile workforce.*

#### ***Proposal E3 – Home/Business Accommodation***

*All substantial new housing developments should be required to include provision for suitably-located home/business accommodation – houses with rooms or outbuildings from which can be operated small businesses compatible with a residential area.*

## 4. Housing

### Introduction

Linlithgow's attractive environment, strategic location for road and rail commuting and its high achieving schools result in a strong demand for all types of housing. Since the early 1960s, when the former Linlithgow Town Council was keen to promote new private housing development, there has been large-scale expansion to the south, south-west and east. Between 1951 and 2001, the population increased from 3,929 to 13,370 and the number of dwellings increased from 1,187 to 5,243. The 2011 census records a population of 13,462 in 5,573 dwellings. Over the ten-year period 2001-2012, the population stayed relatively stable but the 2018 Adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan (Local Development Plan) reports that the number of houses and flats increased by 307. This reflects an increased number of smaller, usually older, households. The 2011 census shows that 62% of properties are occupied by one or two persons. Current population estimates suggest that, despite the additional households, the population has fallen, with a Scottish Government estimate of 12,840 in 2020.

In 2007, West Lothian Council began a new build council housing programme. The current West Lothian Council New Build Programme of 1,000 homes started on site in summer 2013 and will be completed shortly. Twenty-two sites have been fully completed and two are under construction. A further 398 houses are to be commenced on allocated sites before the end of 2024, but none of these houses are to be built in Linlithgow. Yet Local Development Plan Housing Policy HOU 4 has identified Linlithgow as a priority 1 area for new affordable housing.

The "Right to Buy" in Scotland was established by the Tenant's Rights, etc (Scotland) Act 1980, with council tenants offered a 33% to 50% discount, depending on how long they had lived in their home. It was extended to housing association tenants six years later. Subsequent legislation by the UK Parliament and, following devolution, the Scottish Parliament, made various amendments to the terms under which tenants could exercise their right to buy. In November 2007, Scottish ministers brought about the end of right to buy for new council homes as until 2007 there was a considerable disincentive for local authorities to build new council houses on the basis that they could then be bought by tenants at a discount. The

right to buy scheme ended on 31 July 2016 marking the end of a two-year notice period after the Scottish parliament voted to abolish it.

In 2002, two blocks of council flats in St Ninian's Way were found to be structurally unsound and were demolished. Because of the right to buy policy, these were replaced by private housing. The right to buy policy significantly affected the number of West Lothian Council houses in Linlithgow which fell by over 50% between 2002 and 2018, reducing the total to a current 428. The significant shortage of council houses in Linlithgow has not been addressed by West Lothian Council. At the end of 2018, there were 1,750 listed for Linlithgow on the common housing register, of these 280 households are seeking a council house in Linlithgow and of these 280, 140 households are currently (2018) sharing with others in Linlithgow.



*Council flats at St Ninian's Way, demolished in 2002 to make way for private housing.*

Based on the number of Linlithgow lets per year, families will currently have an average wait of eight to ten years for a council house. Weslo is the only mainstream housing association with property in the town, renting out 47 three and four apartment houses in the Braehead area. Cala Homes is partnering with Wheatley Group in the provision of social housing on their Springfield and Deanburn sites.

Owing to rising house prices, there are now very few properties for sale within the financial reach of people with modest incomes, including but not exclusively the younger generation. Many with modest incomes who have been brought up and educated in Linlithgow must look elsewhere to purchase a house, most notably in Polmont, Falkirk and Bo'ness. The 2018 Local Development Plan has ended the 20-year planning policy of restraint in Linlithgow. Although the policy of planning



restraint, introduced by the then Linlithgow Local Plan, was never designed to end housebuilding entirely, it could be argued that the houses which were built were outside the financial reach of people with modest incomes and that this policy has contributed to an unsustainable community as the young move out and generally families with the breadwinners in well paid employment move in. There is a growing elderly population but, with no plans to build property suitable for the retired, there is little movement in terms of downsizing.

## **West Lothian Council: Housing Policy**

The 2018 Local Development Plan describes the allocated housing sites which meet the effective housing land requirement for the plan period to 2024. For a definition of effective land supply, see Appendix 1.

In addition to the allocated housing sites identified, the housing policy (HOU 3) recognises that there will be instances where other sites within the settlement boundary come forward. These 'windfall' sites may be eligible to receive planning permission and assist in maintaining an effective supply of housing land. With reference to the Proposals Map at the end of the document, windfall sites in Linlithgow are located at Doomsdale and Listloaning (H8 & H9), the Vennel (H11), Victoria Hall site (H12) and on the frontage of Templars Court (H13).

The South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan 2013 identifies Linlithgow as being part of the West Lothian Strategic Development Area and as such it is not automatically afforded any special exemption from development. It is anticipated that development land in Linlithgow will be released sequentially, governed by availability of school capacity during the current development plan period which ends in 2023. Special supplementary planning guidance will be prepared for:

- The impact of increased housing on Linlithgow Academy.
- The impact of increased housing on Linlithgow Loch.
- Developer contributions towards transport mitigation measures,

As stated above, the 2018 Local Development Plan describes Linlithgow as a Priority 1 area for affordable housing. This means that new market housing developments in excess of 25 houses must provide 25% of housing numbers specifically aimed at those households which cannot afford a market

solution to meet their housing needs. 'Affordable housing' is defined in Appendix 2.

Developments of less than 25 houses for sale will not be subject to the affordable housing requirement. Instead, the developer will pay West Lothian Council a commuted sum to represent the worth of the affordable housing portion. Although commuted sums have been paid to West Lothian Council in respect of smaller developments in Linlithgow, no such sums have been directly allocated to new affordable housing in Linlithgow. For details of West Lothian Planning Policy, see Appendix 3.

## **West Lothian Council – Other Policy Factors with an Impact on Housing Development**

### **Education**

During the period of restraint, Linlithgow Bridge Primary School opened, and Low Port Primary School was refurbished and expanded. The capacity of Linlithgow Academy was also increased through mainly internal alterations, to its current student role of 1,320. This increase in capacity accommodated children from the first 550 houses to be constructed at Winchburgh. In 2019, an agreement was reached which will enable the construction of a new Winchburgh Academy which will open in August 2022. As Linlithgow Academy is predicted to be at capacity until the opening of the new Winchburgh Academy, future housing in Linlithgow had to be phased until 2022. The phasing governed by the take up of places at Winchburgh Academy will allow the construction of approximately 569 houses planned for in the Local Development Plan. Further housing in Linlithgow beyond that number will require either more secondary school capacity or changes to Linlithgow Academy catchment area.

### **Infrastructure**

New supplementary planning guidance is currently in preparation to augment the policies in the Local Development Plan. Included in this planning guidance will be the provision for gathering developer contributions towards the cost of the four-way junction at Burghmuir. This will be funded through a £12,000 per unit "roof tax" on all new housing units; the subject of a 'Section 75' agreement with developers. In Linlithgow, infrastructure planning will be based on a growth rate of 569 houses over the Local Development Plan period. However, a suspensive condition arises in respect to this growth plan in that the growth in infrastructure will be determined by the

rate at which current pupils and siblings from the Winchburgh development work their way through the Linlithgow Academy system. Therefore, a developer's obligation to provide infrastructure improvement only arises when houses are built which in turn is linked to the populating of Winchburgh Academy.

### Funding

For housing development in Linlithgow, it is anticipated that developers will partner with housing associations to provide affordable housing. Housing associations (registered social landlords – RSL's) receive grant funding for the provision of new houses from Scottish Government at the rate of £70,000 per new build unit (2019). Housing associations will be important contributors towards the 3,000-unit social housing provision in the current strategic housing investment programme although housing association rents tend to be higher than those of West Lothian Council.

West Lothian Council currently owns approximately 13,000 houses in West Lothian. The day-to-day costs of West Lothian council housing is funded from the Housing Revenue Account which receives its income from tenant rents, garage rents and other miscellaneous income. This account must be self-sustaining as money may not be transferred from general West Lothian Council funds to the Housing Revenue Account. In the year 2019/20 the budgeted income was £50,724,000 of which £49,725,000 is from tenant rental income. The West Lothian Housing Capital Programme, which funds the provision of new build council homes as well as maintaining the existing council housing stock, is funded from borrowing, Scottish Government grants of £57,000 per new build unit, contributions from the Housing Revenue Account, developer contributions and council tax on second homes. In the year 2019-20, the budgeted income is £40,250,000 of which £29,762,000 is from borrowing and £6,195,000 from housing revenue account contributions. Scottish government grants total £3,843,000.

New council housing attracts a slightly higher rent than existing council housing and currently new council housing is offered only to those who are existing tenants of West Lothian Council.

### Land for Affordable Housebuilding

In Linlithgow, the land for the construction of affordable housing will be provided by developers as a part of their 25% affordable housing allocation and must be described in the Local Development Plan as land for housing development. Officers will oppose planning applications for affordable

housing on other land suitable for housing but not so described in the Local Development Plan. This opposition is based upon the need to stay within the total housing provision of 569 houses.

## Recommendations

In edition 1 of the Plan for the Future, it was stated that any substantial expansion of Linlithgow should take place to the south-east of the current built area (north and south of the Edinburgh Road) to avoid elongating the town still further and to allow housing development that is more likely to be within easy walking or cycling distance of the town centre, railway station and other facilities. Planning applications should include for the provision of new infrastructure. West Lothian Council's preferred plan is for 280 houses in the west/south west, 225 houses in the east and the remainder on infill sites. There are no plans by West Lothian Council to build any council houses in Linlithgow during the plan period.

The Planning Forum believe that controlled town expansion as detailed below would give a major opportunity to cater for the unsatisfied housing needs of the less well-off:

### **Proposal H1 - Social-Rented and 'Affordable' Housing**

*Six interlinked strategies are recommended to increase the number of social rented and 'affordable' homes in Linlithgow:*

1. *The construction of approximately 150 new council houses in Linlithgow in accordance with Proposals H2 and H3 below.*
2. *Increasing the profile of the 'mortgage to rent' scheme which allows those with mortgage difficulties to opt to sell their house to West Lothian Council in exchange for the right to remain as a tenant and pay a council house rent. This scheme currently has a budget which is more than enough to satisfy current demand.*
3. *West Lothian Council to establish a Linlithgow based organisation to encourage development by housing associations.*
4. *An investigation into the possibility of a Linlithgow based Housing Association.*
5. *Recognise Linlithgow as a Priority 1 special case for affordable housing and ensure that all tenure options described in West Lothian Council's affordable housing guidance are available.*
6. *The council to continue requiring that 25% of the number of houses being built on private housing sites are provided in the form of 'affordable' housing*

### **Proposal H2 – Local Authority Housing**

Despite the previous sale to developers of Council owned housing land in Linlithgow, there remain three sites with significant potential, sufficient to provide around 135 more Council houses:

1. **The Vennel** - the proposed Vennel redevelopment (proposal H11) offers an exciting opportunity to revitalise the town centre and provide commercial and residential opportunities. With or without the demolition of the existing Cross flats, there is the potential for approximately 10 additional social rented dwellings.
2. **Doomsdale** - This 6½ acre site was previously suggested for housing development by West Lothian Council (in the Main Issues Report for the current Local Development plan), with a potential of up to 90 houses. It is now appropriate for the decontamination of most of this old waste tip and the construction of up to 40 social rented dwellings and landscaped open space (Proposal H8). The reduced number of dwellings and landscaping will allay the possibility of dwellings overtopping the hill and allow retention of the wooded part of the site which is rich in wildlife.
3. **Listloaning Playing Field** – The site at Listloaning comprises one of the two football pitches on this playing field which also includes a fenced children’s play area. The football pitch in question has in the past been used by Linlithgow Thistle football club. However, the football pitch in question is on an area of ground which cannot accommodate a football pitch of regulation size. Linlithgow Thistle now play exclusively at Kettilstoun. The site could accommodate up to 35 council houses/flats (Proposal H9).

### **Proposal H3 – Social Rented Homes – Additional 180 Housing Association Dwellings.**

The figure of 180 social rented Housing Association dwellings represents 25% of the total number of potential houses on sites H5 and H6.

### **Proposal H4 – Infrastructure**

Recognising the problems which have resulted from large-scale development in the past, it is considered essential that any further development is incremental and supplemented by infrastructure improvements. Whilst there has been some progress in bringing infrastructure forward to support current development proposals in West Lothian generally; further investment and commitment on the part of the public and private sectors will be required in Linlithgow to deliver the level of

development proposed over the 2018 Local Development Plan period and beyond. Indeed, it is recommended that key road infrastructure improvements precede further housing development and that no development should proceed without the funding for additional services and facilities being guaranteed under a legal agreement in accordance with Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

## **West Lothian Council 2018 Adopted Local Development Plan**

The following housing sites designated in the 2018 West Lothian Local Development Plan are supported subject to the necessary road infrastructure being provided:

- Boghall East, Blackness Road. This site received planning permission on 28 October 2019 for 54 houses of which 14 are to be rented by a housing association. The site is almost complete (June 2022).
- Land east of Manse Road (1.2 hectares). This site is supported (Proposal H7) conditional on the provision of the Eastern Distributor Road from Manse Road (opposite Riccarton Drive) to Edinburgh Road (Proposal T4).
- Falkirk Road (Woodyard site, 0.7 hectare). This site is supported (Proposal H10).
- Clarendon House grounds. This site received planning permission on 8 February 2019 for 6 houses and has been completed (February 2022).
- Wilcoxholm Farm, Edinburgh Road (north and south of canal). This site is supported conditional on the Eastern Distributor Road from Edinburgh Road to A803 at Burghmuir (Proposal T4) and other factors listed in Proposal H5.

The following sites are included in the 2018 West Lothian Local Development Plan but cannot be supported for the reasons stated:

- Preston Farm, Preston Road. The Preston Farm site is located at the top of Preston Road hill and it is a site of great landscape value and amenity. Any development will be very dominant when viewed from the western approach to the town. It is a long arduous walk or cycle from the town centre, existing shops and railway station. Preston Road is served by an hourly bus service only between 9.30 and 15.30. Despite many objections including from the Planning Forum, councillors decided in



August 2021 to grant planning permission subject to a section 75 agreement.

- Cemex site, Kettilstoun. This site was added to the 2018 Local Development Plan by the Reporter appointed by the Scottish Government minister without any consultation with the Linlithgow community. The site extends the town beyond its western limit and is far from the town centre. It is currently served by two bus services and is a short walk to Stockbridge Retail Park and a further bus service. Only a small part of the site is suitable for housing due to the low-lying nature of the site and the proximity to the River Avon.

## Housing Development Sites preferred by Linlithgow Planning Forum

The preferred housing sites are illustrated on the Proposals Map at the end of this document as follows:

### Proposal H5 – Mixed housing, Wilcoxholm Farm

The Planning Forum supports the development of this greenfield site on either side of the canal, to the north of Edinburgh Road but conditional upon:

- a) the construction of the Eastern Local Distributor Road (Proposal T4), a formal boulevard linking Edinburgh Road and Blackness Road, to which at least any development north of the canal should be linked
- b) sensitive landscaping of the canal to retain an undeveloped 'green wedge'/wildlife corridor; this to include a new pedestrian/cycle path along the south bank of the canal
- c) provision of allotment gardens and local orchards commensurate with the number of houses to be built in the area
- d) provision, at the western end of the site, of a formal pedestrian/cycle path linking the canal towpath to Maidlands (see Proposal T1)
- e) the layout being subject to a detailed design brief/master plan requiring a high standard of urban design, character, building materials and landscaping
- f) sequential development being from the town centre outwards
- g) a commensurate contribution to the improved infrastructure of Linlithgow.

Any development proposals should take account of flood risk in any appropriate parts of the site. This site has the potential to accommodate 220 houses, of which 55 would be 'affordable'/social rented in accordance with West Lothian Council's policy. A

substantial proportion of the private housing mix should constitute smaller houses for first-time buyers and others with a modest income.

### Proposal H6 – Mixed Housing, Clarendon to Edinburgh Road

The Planning Forum supports the development of housing in the general area between Manse Road and Edinburgh Road, subject to:

- a) the construction of link/access roads between Manse Road and Edinburgh Road, and from Edinburgh Road to Burghmuir (the Eastern Local Distributor Road - Proposal T4) to relieve traffic congestion/improve road safety at the Manse Road canal bridge, at the railway bridge and aqueduct on Edinburgh Road and the vicinity of the Low Port roundabout
- b) no development to be permitted to the south of the Eastern Local Distributor Road, to ensure that the skyline is protected from development as far as possible
- c) allowance for a generous 'green wedge'/wildlife corridor, free of development, running generally from the countryside down to the canal
- d) generous landscaping on all boundaries with the Eastern Local Distributor Road along the southern edge in the form of a formal boulevard (Proposal T4)
- e) provision of cycle/footpath links to the railway station and town centre via the Clarendon 'green wedge'
- f) provision of a highly-accessible local centre with one primary school, a community hall and at least two shops (in accordance with the '20-minute neighbourhood' concept, also to serve Proposal H5)
- g) provision of allotment gardens and local orchards commensurate with the number of houses to be built in the area
- h) the layout being subject to a detailed design brief/master plan requiring a high standard of urban design, character, building materials and landscaping
- i) sequential development being from the town centre outwards
- j) a commensurate contribution to the improved infrastructure of Linlithgow
- k) only the first 100 houses (of which 25 will be 'affordable') to be constructed during the forthcoming five-year Local Development Plan period.

A particular requirement would be that all edge and 'structure' tree planting should be completed before the sale of the first house on the site - this is to ensure that the site acquires a wooded character in line with the part of Linlithgow already existing on the north-facing slope to the south of the Union Canal. Up to 500 houses would be acceptable on

this site, of which 125 would be ‘affordable’/social rented in accordance with West Lothian Council’s policy and 100 would be provided as part of its council house-building programme. A substantial proportion of the private housing mix should constitute smaller houses for first-time buyers and others with a modest income.

#### **Proposal H7 – Private Housing - Linlithgow Glebe Land, Manse Road**

This site referenced as H-LL4 in the 2018 Local Development Plan comprises two blocks of land of approximately 3 acres in total with a potential for 25 houses, of which four could be ‘affordable’/social rented in accordance with West Lothian Council’s policy. No planning application has been made. Housing on this site must be accessed from, and include the construction of a sufficient length of, the eastern distributor road as illustrated in Map 2 in this section and on the Proposals Map at the end of this document (Proposal T4). The Planning Forum recommends that this site be treated as an additional part of Proposal H6 for planning permission purposes. It should not be developed without provision being made for the new distributor road.

#### **Proposal H8 & H9 – Council Housing – Doomsdale and Listloaning**

These two sites of 8½ acres combined are owned by West Lothian Council and could easily accommodate 75 social rented dwellings. These are discussed in Proposal H2 above.



Part of the potential housing site at Listloaning.

#### **Proposal H10 – Private Housing, Sawmill Site, Falkirk Road.**

The Community Council supports the development of this brownfield infill site. This site has the potential to accommodate 10 homes.

#### **Proposal H11 – Mixed Housing – Vennel Redevelopment**

The proposal by West Lothian Council to redevelop land in the centre of Linlithgow forming a part of the Vennel is the subject of current (February 2022) discussion. There is the opportunity for up to 103 dwellings to be built, including 38 social-rented houses, comprising 28 to replace existing, plus an additional 10.

#### **Proposal H12 – Private Housing – Site of Victoria Hall**

Part of Proposal TC2 in Town Centre and Retailing Section – 16 flats.

#### **Proposal H13 – Private Housing – Cross Frontage at Templars Court**

Part of Proposal TC3 in Town Centre and Retailing Section – 5 flats.

**Table 4.1 – Summary of Above Housing Proposals for 10-year Period of Plan for the Future**

Site		Number of houses & flats		
		Social	Private	Total
H5	Wilcoxholm Farm	55	165	220
H6	Clarendon to Edinburgh Road	125	375	500
H7	Glebe, east of Manse Road	0	25	25
H8	Doomsdale	40	0	40
H9	Listloaning, part of playing field	35	0	35
H10	Wood yard, Falkirk Road	0	10	10
H11	Vennel	38	65	103
H12/TC2	Victoria Hall site	0	16	16
H13/TC3	Cross frontage of Templars Court	0	5	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>293</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>954</b>

## **Conclusions**

This section sets out the potential for housing in Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge. It is feasible to build 954 houses and flats within the 10-year horizon of the Plan for the Future. Of these, 293 (almost a third) would be social rented houses. There is the potential for 85 of these additional social-rented houses to be constructed on Council owned land in Linlithgow. West Lothian Council is ignoring the current housing crisis in Linlithgow and citing the slow transfer of pupils from



Linlithgow Academy to Winchburgh Academy and the current arrangements for Linlithgow Academy as the reason for restricting Linlithgow to an addition of 569 houses. The Planning Forum wishes to see a more innovative approach to Linlithgow Academy including investigation for the potential for an S5/S6 building on the same campus and for revisions to the catchment area. Solutions such as these will be required to meet the 954-house target which is important to contribute towards the required improvements to Linlithgow's infrastructure.

## Looking to the Future

Looking beyond the 10 year period of this Plan, there would be further housing potential in the Edinburgh Road area and on a limited area of land east of Springfield, all contained within the line of the Eastern Local Distributor Road (Proposal T4). However, any such land would have to be strictly rationed as the development of these sites would bring the town close to its natural limits in terms of its landscape setting and the need for recreational land at the east end of the town (to counterbalance the Kettilstoun facilities at the west end, Proposal R5) will have to be assessed.

## Design of New Housing

Much concern has been expressed about the generally poor design quality of the widespread private housing developments elsewhere in West Lothian and Central Scotland, with the general use of standard speculative house-types which, in many cases, pay scant regard to local tradition in

detailing and materials. It will be essential for new housing developments in and around Linlithgow to follow best practice in design, layout and materials, and guidelines for these should be incorporated in development/planning briefs for all but the smallest developments. New housing should also pay due regard to meeting standards of environmental sustainability (see Section 1), the aims being to minimise energy consumption during both construction and occupation. The aim should also be for 10% of all new housing to be potentially wheelchair accessible. All new housing, including flats, should incorporate adequate bicycle storage capacity.

### **Proposal H14 – Quality and Design of New Housing**

*All housing sites capable of accommodating more than 10 houses should be the subject of detailed planning/development briefs which should emphasise the need for high quality of design and the creation of places of individual character. Design and layout should reflect current Scottish Government policy and local tradition. At focal points, the buildings should incorporate materials and detailing to a standard normally associated with conservation areas. 10% of all new housing should be potentially wheelchair accessible and all should be provided with adequate bicycle storage capacity.*

**A table showing Possible Planning Gains from Housing Development can be found in the Funding Section**

## 5. Transport and Accessibility

Linlithgow's attractiveness and consequent success in attracting new residents and activity has, ironically, exacerbated the endemic problem of traffic congestion, mainly in the High Street. Pedestrians often find it difficult to cross the street at convenient points because of the seemingly incessant traffic flow which effectively creates a barrier in the High Street. This problem is not aided by the lack of both a westbound access to the M9 at Burghmuir and an immediately obvious location for a local traffic relief road. There is also a lack of adequate parking facilities in the town centre, and problems associated with commuter car parking are experienced in the streets around the railway station.



*Traffic in the High Street can be incessant.*

There are, of course, strongly opposing views on transport matters – on one hand, there is a view that considerably more car parking needs to be provided; on the other that walking, cycling and public transport should be encouraged, alongside disincentives to car use. This *Plan for the Future* document attempts to provide an appropriate balance between both views.

The traffic and parking problems significantly detract from:-

- Linlithgow as a shopping centre (with particular additional problems related to on-pavement car parking and lack of rear access for servicing - see Section 6 on Retailing)
- Linlithgow's heritage and townscape (see Section 2 on Heritage issues)
- realisation of the town's tourist potential (particular problems being experienced from lack of provision for the parking of tourist buses)
- the potential to maintain a vibrant town centre through the establishment of facilities which

might be deterred through worries about inadequate visitor parking.

There is a need for residents and visitors to 'reclaim' the High Street as an attractive place to walk, cycle, shop, and visit the many visitor attractions, pubs, restaurants, etc. The most attractive historic towns to visit are easy and pleasant to walk around, but Linlithgow has fairly narrow pavements, a busy High Street, and no simple solution to traffic diversion. Additionally, the High Street is not attractive for cyclists. Reduction in through-traffic is the key – a relief road could allow an attractive alternative route for non-essential vehicles. The upgrading of the paving and general environment to the standard one would expect in an outstanding conservation area (see Proposal B1 of this plan) is vital. Some sections of pavement have split levels or are very narrow, sometimes forcing pedestrians on to the road, while pavements immediately across the road can be very wide, requiring the need for carriageway realignment where practical.

A traffic management scheme should be introduced in the High Street from the West Port to the Low Port which would:

1. improve facilities for pedestrians by widening footways and introducing additional pedestrian crossings
2. rationalise on street parking so that it is compatible with carriageway and footway widths, pedestrian crossing points and commercial access requirements, including prohibition of on-pavement parking
3. improve conditions for cyclists with the provision of safe cycling lanes where practicable
4. convert the priority junction of Preston Road/ St Ninian's Road/ West Port to a signal-controlled junction incorporating pedestrian crossing facilities

### ***Proposal T1 - Traffic Management to 'Reclaim' the High Street'***

*Introduction of restrictions on through traffic in High Street as outlined above and the conversion of the St Ninian's Road / Preston Road / West Port junction to signal control incorporating pedestrian crossing facilities.*

Crucial to relieving the High Street from through traffic is the provision of alternative, more appealing routes for vehicles. Three measures to meet this challenge are considered important and feasible (subject to full traffic analysis) – the provision of additional slip roads at the



M9/Blackness Road (A803) interchange at Burghmuir and/or a High Street Relief Road hidden away to the north of Linlithgow Loch, and the provision of link roads between Blackness Road and Edinburgh Road and between Edinburgh Road and Manse Road in association with the residential development of the Wilcoxholm, Edinburgh Road and Clarendon areas.

These proposals would allow traffic generated in the east part of the town to reach destinations in the west (and vice versa) without passing along the High Street. The new link roads to the south-east would be built to local distributor standards as appropriate, and financed by the developments which they served, while the upgrading of the Burghmuir motorway junction could be financed by a service station and hotel at that location or, in the shorter term, by housing.

Ideally, in addition (or instead of the four-way motorway interchange at Burghmuir), new development might finance a new High Street relief road which could be built on an unobtrusive line north of Linlithgow Loch. This would cater for local traffic in either direction between the eastern and western parts of the town, including cars and lorries associated with the retail park at Linlithgow Bridge and the Mill Road Industrial Estate, as well as through traffic from the Burghmuir interchange to Bathgate, Armadale, Lanark, etc, thus allowing more radical traffic management arrangements for the High Street to be considered, to improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists and increase its attractiveness for tourism. The Planning Forum recommends a traffic study to determine the most effective solution from both operational and financial points of view.

#### **Proposal T2A - Four-way Motorway Interchange at Burghmuir**

*Provision of east-bound off-ramp and west-bound on-ramp to the M9, including roundabouts tying in with existing slip roads. As well as helping to relieve through traffic within the town, the roundabouts would have significant road safety benefits, as compared to the existing T-junctions.*

#### **Proposal T2B - High Street Relief Road**

*This would be a single-carriageway, unlit road starting from the Bonnytown Farm Road over the M9, then running westwards beyond the north side of Linlithgow Loch, behind Parkhead Holdings and thus largely hidden from view from Linlithgow by the landform, except near the eastern end where particular attention would have to be devoted to earthworks and tree planting to screen the road. A*

*roundabout junction with St Ninian's Road (the road to Bo'ness), and a continuation to meet Mill Road where it crosses the M9 would be required. This continuation would replace the existing poor-quality, narrow, winding country road.*

In order to encourage right-turn movements to link in with the four-way interchange, and to enhance road safety, the following two roundabouts are proposed. They would also have the useful functions of slowing down traffic entering the town and giving an opportunity for vivid floral enhancement. In order to minimise the problems of the roundabouts for pedestrians and cyclists (for whom traffic lights are preferable), they would require dedicated cycle lanes outwith the junction area, and safe pedestrian/cycle road-crossing points.

#### **Proposal T3 - Roundabouts on Blackness Road at the eastern entrance to Springfield Road and at the Kingsfield Road Junction**

*These would be fairly large feature roundabouts at the town entrance.*

With the development of housing sites H5 and H6 to the east and south-east of the town, there will be a need for a new road linking the Burghmuir four-way motorway junction to Edinburgh Road in the vicinity of Kildimmery. As stated under Proposals H5 and H6, the parts of the road through the housing areas should be designed as a formal tree-lined boulevard with separate cycle lanes and footpaths. The route will have the advantages of allowing an alternative route for high vehicles approaching Linlithgow on the old Edinburgh Road, avoiding the canal and railway overbridges, and, in the longer term, it would allow traffic from proposed housing along Edinburgh Road and perhaps existing housing around Manse Road to by-pass the Low Port area and link directly to the M9. It would allow closure or restriction of the Manse Road canal bridge to traffic (Proposal T5 below).

#### **Proposal T4 - Eastern Local Distributor Road**

*Single-carriageway road from Burghmuir (proposed Kingsfield roundabout - Proposal T3) to Edinburgh Road at Kildimmery, crossing both railway and canal, extending along the southern edge of proposed housing area (Proposal H6) to Manse Road at its junction with Riccarton Drive.*

The Planning Forum and its constituent groups have for some time been concerned about the risk of serious damage to the narrow Manse Road canal

bridge. The implementation of Proposal T4 (Eastern Local Distributor Road) would give the opportunity to close the bridge to all but pedestrians and cyclists, restrict flow to one-way traffic or perhaps close Manse Road elsewhere.



*Lorry trying to turn in Back Station Road, stuck between the low bridges in Edinburgh Road and the awkward turn at the Manse Road canal bridge (David Tait).*

### **Proposal T5 Relief of traffic over Canal Bridge at Manse Road**

*Traffic relief for the Manse Road canal bridge should be considered in the context of Proposal T4 above.*

## **Car Parking**

The lack of available car parking spaces in the town centre for potential shoppers, tourists and other visitors to the town centre, and the clogging up of streets around the railway station with parked cars (albeit somewhat reduced post-Covid) reflect the fact that dedicated parking for shoppers, tourists and rail users is insufficient to meet demand. Rail users wishing to travel off-peak are frequently unable to find a parking place anywhere near the station, which is a disincentive to using rail as an alternative mode. Residents and visitors to the town have problems in locating convenient parking spaces during the day. This reduces footfall in Linlithgow, impacts negatively on shops and tourist attractions, and spoils the visitor experience. Although many argue that providing more car parking spaces only stimulates further car use, it is considered that, in the case of Linlithgow, there is a need to address the problem.

The current West Lothian Local Plan includes a policy (Policy TRAN 34) that a parking management scheme will be developed for Linlithgow Town Centre and that this will look at detailed issues including rationalisation of parking spaces in the High Street, enforcement of parking

regulations, and (presumably) charging to ensure a turnover of spaces. This policy led to the consultation paper 'Parking Proposals for Linlithgow', published in June 2006, which contained numerous ideas to solve the various problems, but has been taken no further except that a limited number of additional spaces have been created at Linlithgow Sports Club and at St Ninian's Way. However, even with the increased provision, demand often still outstrips supply.

The only solutions so far identified which would provide a large number of parking spaces in relatively unobtrusive locations, on a permanent basis, are decking over the car park behind the Regent Centre and the use of the former petrol station site in Edinburgh Road (albeit it is recognised that the latter site now has planning permission for housing). The Regent Centre parking proposal would cater primarily for shoppers, visitors to the town, and off-peak railway travellers, partly on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis, while the Edinburgh Road car park, if ever built, would be provided for commuters, in many cases displaced from elsewhere. The number of decks at the Regent Centre car park would be decided bearing in mind the car park's impact on the conservation area. At present, the car park is far from ideal as a supermarket car park on account of its slope. There is potential to link the upper deck directly to the railway station eastbound platform by means of a footbridge.

It is recommended that:

- a charge be levied for commuter all-day parking, to encourage those who live fairly close to walk or cycle to the station. Note that such a charge already exists at many stations, for example Falkirk
- only once adequate commuter parking is provided, should new parking restrictions be introduced on roads currently clogged by commuter parking, particularly where this is causing any form of nuisance
- cycle parking arrangements at the station be significantly upgraded, with potential for future growth if justified by usage
- the station car park adjacent to the south platform be dedicated for the use of off-peak railway travellers and collection/drop-off. A hefty charge for all-day parking here could enable this
- park and ride facilities, served by buses, be considered on the edge of town, if justified by likely demand
- the new Winchburgh Station, if provided, should have adequate all-day parking, to reduce

pressure on Linlithgow roadside parking.

- Enforcement of parking restrictions, where appropriate, by West Lothian Council, through a decriminalised parking scheme.

**Proposal T6 - Decked Car Park at Regent Centre**  
*Levelling of the existing car park and the erection of two decks on top. This would need traffic lights at the Blackness Road entrance and should be accompanied by suitable parking restrictions on nearby roads and the upgrading of cycle parking provision at the railway station.*

In addition, there would be strong benefits in providing some more car parking for tourists specifically visiting Linlithgow Palace and The Peel. An opportunity to meet such a demand exists in the underused grounds of St Michael's RC Church, from which direct access to The Peel could be provided. The Vennel car park is ideally suited for visitors to the tourist attractions and services in the High Street. The proposed redevelopment of the Vennel and Car Park (Proposal TC1) should include an increase in short-stay parking in this central location.

**Proposal T7 - Tourist Car Parking at Blackness Road and The Vennel**

*Construction of a tourist car park behind St Michael's RC Church, Blackness Road, with direct pedestrian access to The Peel. Increased availability of short-stay parking at The Vennel as per Proposal TC1.*

## Station Access and Railway Services

Having a town centre station is a major bonus for Linlithgow in terms of sustainable transport and access, for visitors, commuters, recreation, shoppers, etc. The station platforms have been extended to accommodate new, longer electric trains. However pedestrian access is not good and this, together with signing, should be improved. There should be a high-quality shared surface on Station Road and the presence of the station should be made more obvious by signing on the building and direction signing from other points in the town.

Representations should be made to ScotRail to provide the following:

- a) more services from Glasgow direct to Fife via Linlithgow
- b) a circular service, via Linlithgow, from Edinburgh and Glasgow via Stirling, Alloa and Dunfermline

**Proposal T8 - Improvements to Access to the Railway Station and to Rail Services.**

*Pedestrian access and signing should be improved to encourage use of rail travel. The service provider should be approached to extend the range of services from Linlithgow.*

## Bus Services and Parking for Tourist Buses

Bus services within the town of Linlithgow are, at present, poorly developed and little used, partly because the town's layout mitigates against a good and viable circular service. The road links proposed in this document should overcome some of the problems in this respect. The proposed Eastern Local Distributor Road (Proposal T4) would allow Edinburgh-Falkirk through bus services the option of routing certain journeys via Springfield with the potential of using double-deck buses. Lack of information about times, frequency and cost of bus services is one of the main disincentives to bus patronage, and there is a need to radically improve the local L1 bus service, hence the following proposal:

**Proposal T9 - Improvements to Bus Services**

*New bus routes and the re routing of existing services should be considered to take advantage of new local distributor roads associated with housing development in the east of the Town. All bus stops in Linlithgow should be provided with full relevant timetable and fares information. In the short term, the operating hours of the local L1 bus service should be extended for local people going to work.*

The lack of specific provision for the parking of tourist buses has been identified as a significant issue. More use should be made of the extended lay-by on Blackness Road, possibly through improved communications between the tour bus operators through the proposed new tourist information facility. The roundabout at the Blackness Road/Springfield Road junction allows this lay by to be used on a drop off/ call up basis.

**Proposal T10 - Parking for Tourist Buses**

*Tour buses should be encouraged to use the extended Blackness Road lay-by through better communications with the tour operators possibly via the proposed new tourist information facility.*



## Cycle and Pedestrian Links

A draft cycle network for Linlithgow was drawn up by the former Lothian Regional Council but was not subsequently pursued. Implementation of West Lothian Council's recent Active Travel Plan should, however, potentially lead to the following improvements:

- incorporating better facilities for cyclists on the High Street as part of any traffic management scheme, (see Proposal T1)
- high quality cycle routes, segregated where possible, to the town centre and railway station from all existing and new residential areas
- ensuring similar high-quality connections to all important facilities outwith the centre - such as the Leisure Centre, Oracle building, schools, etc
- 'home-zone' design should be considered for all new residential areas, and where possible in existing areas, with slow-speed mixed-use areas not normally requiring cycle lanes
- links between Linlithgow and the Round-Forth route, and Linlithgow being on its map
- a round-Linlithgow easy leisure route for families and day visitors, possibly associated with any bike hire scheme at Linlithgow Station
- Wider publicity/ availability for the Linlithgow active travel map originally produced by Transition Linlithgow
- Improved signage to the John Muir Way.

A recent project to improve cycle provision (as well as conditions for pedestrians) has been the hard-surfacing of the whole length of the Union Canal towpath. Towards the west end of the town, cycle/footpath ramps have been provided to link with Linlithgow Academy and the Linlithgow Leisure Centre, and Cellars Road has been upgraded for the use of cyclists and pedestrians. A similar link is needed to the east of the Edinburgh Road aqueduct, linking the canal towpath to Maidlands and hence the Springfield area (see also Proposal H5). Also recognised is the lack of direct cycle and pedestrian links to Livingston.

### **Proposal T11 - Creation of Cycle Network**

*A cycle network should be drawn up for Linlithgow in accordance with the principles set out above, including preferred cycle-rack locations. Safe and welcoming routes between residential areas and the town centre are a particular priority.*

### **Proposal T12 - Provision of Cycle Route/Footpath Link between Union Canal Towpath and Maidlands**

*The existing informal path between the canal towpath and Maidlands should be upgraded to provide a formal cycle route/footpath link.*

### **Proposal T13 - Cycle/Footpath Link to Livingston via Beecraigs Country Park**

*The existing footpath and bridleway from Linlithgow to Beecraigs Country Park should be extended to form a footpath/cycle route to Livingston via Bangour.*

The Scottish Government's Planning Advice Note PAN75 refers to setting modal share targets (that is, the projected relative amount of walking, cycling, public transport use and car use) for whole areas, and mentions the appointment of a Travel Co-ordinator. Already Sustrans (the 'green' transport charity) has set up experimental government-funded 'active travel' schemes to encourage sustainable transport (walking, cycling, bus, rail) at household level, and there might well be interest in testing out similar ideas from the planning stages onwards in a new area-wide development.

### **Proposal T14 - Modal Share/Active Travel Policy for New Housing Areas**

*Consideration could be given to an experiment to attempt to maximise the use of walking and cycling in the two completely new development areas (proposals H5 and H6), by innovative measures in addition to the provision of high quality walking and cycling routes.*

The proposed 'Green Wedge' running north-south east of Clarendon would accommodate cycle and pedestrian links to the station and town centre. In addition, it would reduce dependence on car use.

### **Proposal T15 - Cycle and Pedestrian Links across 'Green Wedge' at Clarendon**

*Provision of an interesting network of footpaths and cycle paths to link new housing area to the railway station and town centre. This will require a canal crossing (for both pedestrian and cycle use) unless the existing underpass at Staney Road can be used.*

## 6. Town Centre and Retailing (including Redevelopment Opportunities)

Town centre vitality is essential to both reflect and create civic pride. Empty premises, badly maintained property, bare gable ends and gap sites can severely detract from the character and attractiveness of the High Street, deterring both local people and visitors from walking around and patronising local businesses.

Linlithgow's popularity has helped to stem High Street vacancy rates, but the recent closure of a number of banks and shops is of concern, although many are being replaced by other types of business which provide very welcome vitality.

This section takes a comprehensive view of the potential to sustain and improve opportunities for retailing and other businesses in the town centre, in the context of the redevelopment opportunities which exist to restore, as far as possible, the traditional High Street frontages.

### Retailing

The general aims for the future of retailing in Linlithgow are:

- to promote Linlithgow's much admired High Street and town centre
- to encourage a diverse High Street economy which minimises the presence of chain stores and betting shops
- to promote a local 'circular economy', involving the sharing, re-use, refurbishment and recycling of products where appropriate
- to work with One Linlithgow BID (Business Improvement District) to create a business-friendly town centre, facilitated by liaison with the general community as facilitated by having community representatives on the BID Board
- to actively seek niche businesses to come into the High Street
- to actively seek knowledge, expertise and best practice in town centre development
- to encourage creativity and interest on the High Street
- to maximise the benefits of being an outstanding conservation area
- and thereby plan a rejuvenated High Street.

It is vital that community and commercial facilities which attract large numbers of people are located, whenever possible, in the town centre, to encourage multi-purpose trips and a lively centre. The role of inward commuting to town centre

workplaces, as part of the mix, is extremely important, bringing revenue to existing businesses. This whole philosophy is supported by Scottish Government guidance on town centres (SPP8) and endorsed by the proposals and preferences stated in this draft *Plan for the Future*/'Local Place Plan'.

As in most towns, some planning decisions have worked against the volume of High Street trading, not least the introduction of out-of-town centre supermarkets, although at least it can be said that the first large supermarket (William Low, now Tesco) was situated in the town centre at a time when planners were rightly aware of the worse effects of out-of-centre outlets. At the time of their opening, there was considerable impact upon the fortunes of the affected individual High Street traders, although this has now largely stabilised with total relevant turnover likely to be at a considerably lower level. As the influence of such dominant supermarket outlets can still be felt, the pressures on independent retailers are unrelenting.

This process was more recently replicated in relation to 'comparison shopping' (for occasional, more major purchases), with the opening of the Stockbridge Retail Park at Linlithgow Bridge, occupied primarily by national chain stores, a development which West Lothian Council's own committee report suggested could impact upon remaining High Street trade by between 7% and 16%. Of course, the impact on individual outlets must have been much greater, but it is significant to note that the previously existing DIY store in the High Street has outlived its Stockbridge counterpart. Online retailing will inevitably have an impact, but it also provides an opportunity for



*The High Street provides a good shopping and business environment, but one which much potential for improvement.*

some local businesses to grow, albeit not contributing much to the vitality of the High Street. However, there are problems with internet connectivity in many High Street premises, making it necessary in many cases to go outside to receive a mobile phone signal. This needs to be addressed.

Despite the competing pressures, and the loss of several bank branches, Linlithgow's High Street appears, until now, to have been remarkably resilient, compared to the experience in other similar towns. Although many shop unit occupancies tended until recently to be short-lived, and the average turnover in retail outlets has declined, there is a clear evolution towards the provision of services that are not available online or in soul-less retail parks, such as a restaurant meal, a drink with friends, a cup of coffee and a fresh cake, beauty treatments and hair cuts, fresh sandwiches, browsing in bookshops, professional services and personal expertise. Even so, vacancies in shop units and other commercial premises are generally short term, often with successful businesses moving to larger premises being replaced by new concerns.

The continuing success of the High Street in attracting new businesses is to be welcomed. The One Linlithgow Business Improvement District (BID) will continue to play an important part in promoting business vitality and making the High Street a more attractive destination for customers. Good past examples of this are the previous Town Centre BID's promotion of improved Christmas lights and the pub trail, while it is hoped that the resumption of regular monthly markets will successfully add to the retail offering.

#### **Proposal S1 – Investigation of Successful Retail Business Initiatives Elsewhere**

*The One Linlithgow Business Improvement (BID) Board is recommended to consult retail businesses in similar towns to ascertain their experience and participation in the promotion of varied and vibrant High Streets.*

Rent reductions for Council-owned shop units must still be considered to help re-invigorate the retail sector in Linlithgow. The Council, through its current Local Development Plan, advocates support for change of use of vacated retail outlets to consolidate (reduce the size of) the retail area, with implications for the townscape quality which will have to be closely monitored; of great importance is the quality of the shopping environment – the attractiveness of the buildings, the existence of trees and flowers, and the quality

of the paving and street furniture (see 'Heritage and Tourism' section).

The Council has made a good start on the necessary improvements, aided by the activities of Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow, but a more comprehensive approach is still required (Proposal B1). The shopping environment also suffers badly from the level of traffic (both moving and parked on footways) which detracts greatly from the ambience of the High Street and in particular sometimes makes crossing the High Street to shops on the other side frustrating and stressful.

Current redevelopment proposals and opportunities in the town centre, particularly in the Vennel area (see below), provide opportunities for specialist retail outlets - such an initiative might prove a catalyst to attract other independent specialist retailers, perhaps focused on the tourism market. The development of themed specialist retailing has been successful elsewhere - one need only visit Aberfeldy (a 'Fairtrade Town' before Linlithgow), Wigtown (Scotland's Booktown) or Castle Douglas (Foodtown) to see how such initiatives can transform the fortunes of previously declining communities. Linlithgow already has specialised craft and hobby shops for embroidery, patchwork, knitting, artwork and DIY and, with the town's history of manufacturing skills particularly in connection with the leather industry, there may be opportunities to market Linlithgow as a craft and hobby shop centre.

Within the existing shopping area, opportunities exist to promote the evolution of 'quarters' of specialist retailing. One example might be the western end of the High Street which has the potential to become an 'arts retail quarter'.

#### **Proposal S2 – Establishment of Arts Retail Quarter**

*The Planning Forum would support efforts to create an 'Arts Retail Quarter' towards the west end of the High Street, with a distinctive 'public realm' of high-quality paving and street furniture.*

The new housing areas resulting from Proposal H6 (along with H5) will require local convenience shops, and the provision of shop units should be a requirement of the relevant housing developers. The school, community hall, shop(s) and other such facilities should be located centrally, possibly with other community facilities, and easily accessible by foot/cycle from the whole housing area, in accordance with the currently-promoted concept of the '20-minute neighbourhood'. Having these facilities/services together will "encourage



multi-purpose trips and reduce distances travelled by car by bringing together related land uses” (Scottish Government’s Planning Advice Note PAN75, paragraph 24). Such a grouping would also help foster economic and social success, for example with parents and schoolchildren using a shop next to the school, whilst waiting or at lunchtimes. These should be ‘key locations ... with a sense of place” (paragraph 26 of PAN75).

### **Proposal S3 - Neighbourhood Shops within New Housing Areas**

*At least two new shop units should be provided within the new housing areas ('20-minute neighbourhood') proposed for the south-east fringes of the town (see Proposal H6).*

## **Town Centre Redevelopment Opportunities**

Currently, there are three major development opportunities in the High Street which would improve the town centre environment, provide retail or commercial units to serve increasing numbers of residents and visitors and allow for much-needed flats in the town centre, possibly also alleviating the shortage of car parking spaces for those making use of town centre facilities.

The most notable of these opportunities to improve the town is the redevelopment of the eastern part of the Vennel area; the others are the development of new frontage buildings to replace the Victoria Hall and in front of Templars Court.

### **Vennel Redevelopment**

During the summer of 2017, West Lothian Council conducted a nine-week consultation on its draft ‘Planning Guidance’ for the redevelopment of the part of the Vennel which includes the former public library, the ‘Guyancourt Vennel’ walkway and the car park. In order to explore the development and improvement opportunities in greater detail and allow further public debate, the Linlithgow Planning Forum conducted an exhaustive public consultation exercise, including two survey questionnaires and an exhibition.

The Planning Forum’s consultation was carried out in two main phases, supplemented by leaflet distribution at the Cross on two Saturday mornings, a barbecue with Vennel residents and a door-to-door survey of Vennel residents. Phase 1 was an online and paper-based initial survey of preferences for the site, administered by the Community Council, which received 259 replies.



*Above and below:  
Pictures of the west side of The Cross prior to the 1960s redevelopment and more recently in 1994, just before refurbishment about twenty years ago.*



These activities and responses all informed the content of Phase 2 – an exhibition at the Low Port Centre of possible development ideas on 29 August 2017, prepared by Linlithgow Civic Trust, attended by about 150 visitors who were invited to complete a more detailed questionnaire. 120 questionnaires were completed. The development ideas were not intended as a definite development proposal, only as a stimulus to public response; however, they were supported by 89% of respondents.

The draft plans for discussion envisaged the possibility of the construction or provision of at least the following:

- A wide, traffic-free and tree-lined pedestrian link between the High Street and the loch, lined by buildings of up to four storeys
- Restoration of a more traditional building line along the High Street, with potential to re-create the historic building frontages on at least the west side of The Cross
- Up to approximately 100 flats, sufficient to rehouse all current home owners and tenants, with additional social-rented housing
- Retail/commercial units to accommodate all currently existing on site, plus additional units

for specialist outlets and workshops as mentioned above, and community/youth facilities

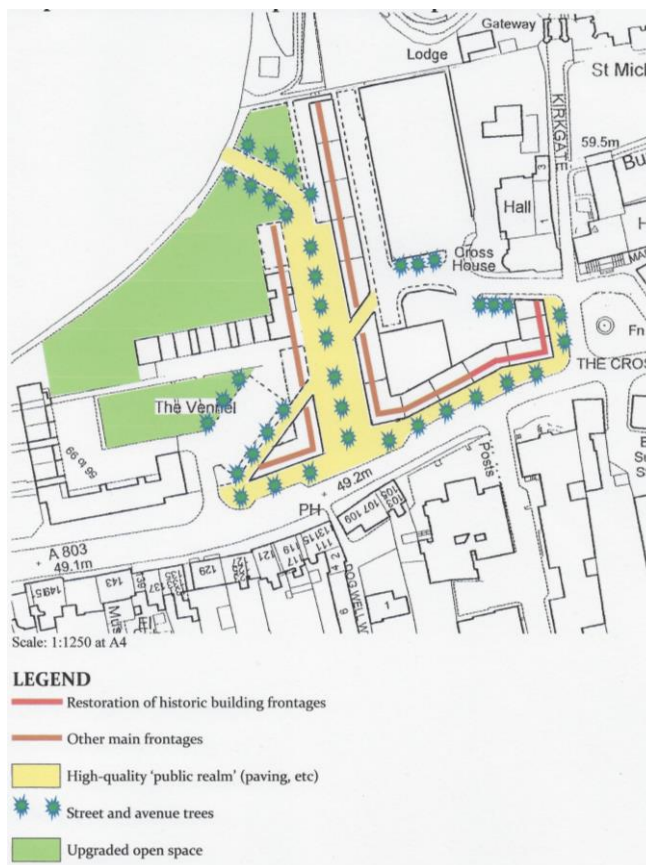
- A hotel overlooking the loch with catering facilities and up to about 40 bedrooms
- Up to 280 car parking spaces in a new three-deck structure replacing the current Vennel car park.

In summary, the main findings from the public response were:

- A rare opportunity to substantially improve the centre of Linlithgow.
- 95% wish to see a design sympathetic to Linlithgow's traditional buildings in terms of built form and building materials, and support new/attractive links between the High Street and the loch, making the area more attractive to tourists, upgrading the quality of existing open space and preserving important views across the site.
- There is 90% support to extend the redevelopment area from the Council's selected area around the library/toilets to as far as the west side of The Cross.
- 81% support at least a quarter of the houses in any redevelopment scheme being social-rented and 91% would like to see housing for younger people such as first-time buyers. Room sizes larger than the minimum standard are supported by 82%.
- 83% want more car parking than at present, 92% want public toilets included in the scheme and 88% would like existing shopkeepers to be given new shop units on site.
- Vennel residents strongly supported a private shared garden area being fenced off for their use
- There was lesser, but still substantial support for: housing for the elderly (60%), a small hotel/restaurant overlooking Linlithgow Loch (67%), shop units for specialist/tourist-related businesses (62%) and a 'business centre' or similar (61%).
- In both survey questionnaires, over 80% of respondents wanted the Linlithgow community to be actively represented throughout the development of the project brief.

Further to the public endorsement of these ideas, the Planning Forum has followed up with a detailed 'Options Appraisal' dated September 2018 to determine the economic viability of each element of the redevelopment proposal. In the meantime, both the Community Council and Linlithgow Civic Trust communicated to West

Lothian Council the detailed results of the comprehensive public consultation exercise, emphasising the 90% public support to extend the development area as far as The Cross. Including this added area at this stage would give an obvious opportunity to rehouse/relocate residents and businesses within the overall site – an opportunity which would be much more difficult to achieve once the area currently identified by the Council has been redeveloped.





It is essential that the redevelopment of this nationally important site should be carefully considered. The Council has been urged to recognise the very strong wish of the Linlithgow community to actively participate in all stages leading up to and including the formulation of the Development Brief and masterplan for the redevelopment of The Vennel site and its extension towards The Cross.

The community-favoured redevelopment plan for the site is accordingly incorporated in this document as follows:

### **Proposal TC1 - Redevelopment of the Eastern Part of The Vennel**

*Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment with ground-floor retail and commercial units and community/youth facilities, housing on upper floors, a hotel and an extended car park, the form of development to include a wide traffic-free link between the High Street and the loch and restoration of the line of traditional frontages to the High Street and the Cross.*

### **Redevelopment of Victoria Hall Site**

The former Victoria Hall, on the north side of the High Street east of The Cross, was demolished in 2018 after a lengthy period of dereliction, creating the unsightly gap site that a condition attached to a planning permission for redevelopment was intended to prevent. Previous to that, the Linlithgow Victoria Hall Trust had been established to try to expedite redevelopment and pursued the idea of a community theatre/cinema. The Trust awaits with interest a start on the landowner's proposals for flats above retail units on the ground floor; once a substantial amount of building has taken place, the Trust will be dissolved, its main purpose of pushing for redevelopment or refurbishment having been achieved.

Current proposals are for two shop units and 16 flats (14 one-bedroom and two two-bedroom), although it is understood that the landowner/developer wishes to amend this before starting on site. It will be interesting to see the impact of the glass-walled top-storey which the Civic Trust and other groups felt to be out of keeping with the conservation area, particularly when viewed from the east.

### **Proposal TC2 - Redevelopment of Victoria Hall Site**

*Construction of two shop units and 16 flats.*



EXISTING



PROPOSED

*'Before' and 'after' drawings of the Victoria Hall site, as proposed by the site-owners, Montreal Property Ltd.*

### **Redevelopment of High Street Frontage at Templars Court**

For around four years, there has been an ugly gap site in Linlithgow High Street on the site of the old bus depot (SMT) offices, in front of the McCarthy and Stone residential development at Templars Court. The planning permission granted to McCarthy and Stone included the redevelopment of an attractive frontage for shops and flats, as shown in the illustration below. Some subsidence of the adjacent property occurred when the SMT building was demolished, leading to the temporary installation of timber shoring (now replaced with a more attractive, but still temporary, treatment of the gable end).



*Sketch drawing of the High Street frontage at The Cross on the basis of which McCarthy & Stone received planning permission for its housing complex, now known as Templars Court.*



McCarthy and Stone claims that it cannot complete the frontage development as planned because of ground instability, even though the site has been developed at least twice before, and wants to landscape the site through an amendment to the planning permission. The shoring has been removed following lengthy stabilisation of the adjacent building but the gap site remains at this very important location in the centre of the town.

The Planning Forum considers this to be entirely unacceptable and considers that it is vital that the site is redeveloped on the lines of the existing planning permission, to reflect the continuous building frontages which are traditional to the High Street.

### ***Proposal TC3 - Redevelopment of Frontage to The Cross at Templars Court***

*Construction of two shop units and three flats in traditional style, on the lines of the planning permission granted to McCarthy & Stone.*

## **Shopfronts and Advertisements**

In December 2019, the Council approved updated guidance on its policies towards shopfronts and advertisements in conservation areas. The guidance is intended to help retailers, commercial operators and their agents improve the quality of design when altering or replacing shopfronts and associated advertisements in the Linlithgow (Palace and High Street) conservation area.

Against a background of substantial change and challenges facing the retail sector, the need for

visibility and advertising is fully acknowledged. However, it is important that shopfronts and adverts are in keeping with the historic streetscape of Linlithgow High Street and its many listed buildings, and that changes are carried out in a way that does not have a detrimental impact on the character of the area. It is widely acknowledged that there is a clear link between the quality of the built environment and the economic success of a place. Good design is a good advertisement and can enhance the status of a shop.

The planning regulations around advertisement consent are complex and it is strongly recommended that shop-owners/business operators always consult the Council's Development Management team for guidance. The Council requires proposals to be implemented in accordance with approved plans and can take enforcement action against breaches of planning control.

It is likely that all adverts and shopfront changes in the conservation area will require planning consent. Alterations to a shopfront that is part of a listed building will normally need listed building consent as well as planning permission. It should be noted that unauthorised works to a listed building constitute a criminal offence.

See related proposal:-

T1 Town Centre Traffic Management to 'reclaim' the High Street

## 7. Community, Cultural & Sports Facilities and Open Space

### Community Facilities

The refurbishment of the Burgh Halls as a community and arts centre was a considerable achievement by West Lothian Council and should be applauded. However, the implementation of the proposals meant a loss of community meeting rooms. This exacerbated the perceived shortage of community meeting space in Linlithgow, as did the removal of the old huts at Low Port Primary School. The Low Port Centre which accommodated many Linlithgow groups and provided Care Commission approved accommodation to Lochside Playgroup has closed and is currently (2022) for sale. The Planning Forum supports the proposed asset transfer which has a chance of bringing the building back into more community use.

#### **Proposal R1 – Low Port Centre**

*The Planning Forum fully supports the retention of the Low Port Centre as a community and recreational centre and recommends that an asset transfer to a community organisation represents the best value solution for its continuing use.*

### Audit of Community Facilities

There is a need for an audit of current and potential community facilities, taking into account accommodation in the Burgh Halls, the Linlithgow Partnership Centre and current proposals from both St John's and St Michael's (Parish) Churches for the Low Port Centre and Cross House respectively. The Planning Forum would like to see collaboration across community organisations to ensure an appropriate breadth of provision and avoid duplication.

### Victoria Hall Site/Community Theatre

There is still a latent proposal for the site of the Victoria Hall to be developed as a community theatre/cinema, should it become apparent that the landowner's proposals for new flats and retail units do not come into fruition (see Town Centre and Retailing Section of this document). There is, in any case, a perceived need for a community theatre in the town.

### New Park at Clarendon

The opportunity exists for the creation of a new public park in the Clarendon area, east of Clarendon House and grounds. This would form a wide buffer ('green wedge' on the Proposals Map) dividing the groups of housing proposed in this area. This would help to retain the open aspect to the part of the conservation area on the south bank

of the Union Canal between Manse Road and St Michael's Hospital. The new park could include ornamental planting as well as woodland planting/community orchards and would be crossed by footpaths and cycle routes. It would also have the important function of being a 'wildlife corridor' from the countryside to the canal.

#### **Proposal R2 - Formation of Clarendon Public Park with Woodland Planting and Community Orchards**

*Preservation from development of a strip of land to the east of Clarendon/Oatlands Park to retain a 'green wedge' from the countryside to the town centre, and extending along the south bank of the Union Canal towards St Michael's Hospital; formation of public park with woodland planting, community orchards and through footpaths and cycle routes (see Proposal T16).*

### West Lothian Cycle Circuit and Other Leisure Facilities at Kettilstoun

To complement recent investment (2015) at the Linlithgow Leisure Centre, providing an extension, additional car parking and a cycle ramp up to the Union Canal towpath, Linlithgow Community Development Trust is about to commence construction of the new West Lothian Cycle Circuit to the south and west.

The site for the cycle circuit will be leased from West Lothian Council. Planning permission was granted in September 2018 for the circuit, together with possible additional facilities including a wheeled park area for skateboards, bikes and scooters, and athletics facilities consisting of a sprint track, high jump, long jump, javelin and shot putt areas. The further facilities will be the subject of liaison with local children and young people, schools, Linlithgow Young People's Project, the Linlithgow Athletics Club, amongst others.

#### **Proposal R3 – West Lothian Cycle Circuit and Associated Facilities, Kettilstoun**

*The Planning Forum supports the above proposals by the Linlithgow Community Development Trust.*

### Green Wedges and Other Development Free Areas

There is a strategic need to preserve and enhance the landscape setting of Linlithgow entirely free of urban development. The following areas are identified:



Above: Current proposals by the Linlithgow Community Development Trust for recreational and community facilities at Kettilstoun (Proposal R5), in conjunction with the extension of the Linlithgow Leisure Centre.

- **Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV)** - the Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV, extending right up to the town's southern and south-western boundaries and the Airngath Hill AGLV which provides the backdrop to Linlithgow Loch and includes the policies of Bonnytown House and the open area on the opposite side of Blackness Road
- **Conservation Areas** - the Linlithgow Palace and High Street Conservation Area and the Upper Linlithgow and Union Canal Conservation Area which, between them, include undeveloped land around the loch and south of the Union Canal at Rosemount Park and eastwards towards St Michael's Hospital
- **the Canal Corridor** eastwards of the Edinburgh Road aqueduct and Maidlands - another 'green wedge' on both sides of the canal, extending out to the countryside
- **broad landscaped strips** on either side of Blackness Road and Edinburgh Road.

## Youth Provision

The current West Lothian Local Development Plan makes no specific provision for the development of youth facilities in Linlithgow despite the increase in numbers of young people in the town. There are approximately 1,800 young people between the ages of 12 and 21 years. A lack of facilities is one factor which leads to the increasing rate of anti-social behaviour and binge drinking reported by

Police Scotland. Although community-based youth provision is essential to provide opportunities for young people to build confidence, self-esteem, skills and knowledge, such provision has in fact decreased over the last ten years with a number of council and voluntary youth groups closing due to a number of factors. While the uniformed and sporting youth organisations are strong in the town, they too suffer from a lack of resources, staffing and rely on the commitment of a few individuals to continue to run. However, such organisations are often viewed as 'elite' by young people who have the perception that a certain level of ability, income and dedication is needed to participate.

There is an apparent lack of facilities for young people in Linlithgow who do not necessarily wish to join clubs or to participate in the organised sports provision available in the town. It is possible that youth-friendly recreational and pastime facilities such as a youth centre or a cyber café might be beneficial, but precise needs will be best defined through appropriate research.

### **Proposal R4 - Establishment of Permanent Youth Centre**

*The Planning Forum supports the appropriate provision of youth facilities and it is proposed that a study be undertaken into the need for appropriate provision.*

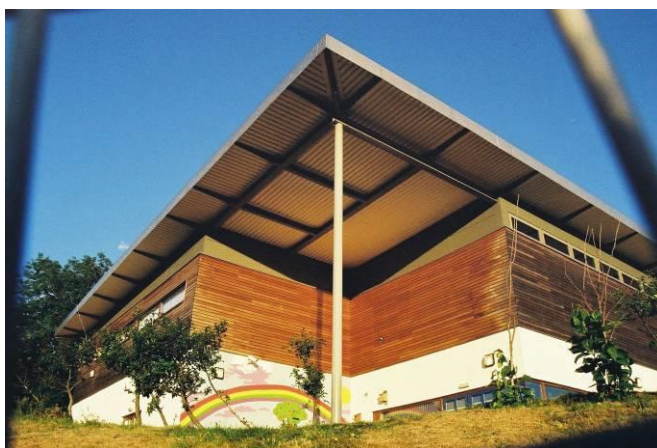


## 8. Education

The current educational context is that Linlithgow is served by two secondary schools – Linlithgow Academy (non-denominational) and St Kentigern's RC Academy in Blackburn. Linlithgow Academy is fed by eight primary schools, four in the town plus Bridgend, Torphichen, Westfield and Winchburgh Primary Schools. St Joseph's RC Primary School is the only local school associated with St Kentigern's.



*Assembly hall, Low Port Primary School.*



*Corner of Linlithgow Bridge Primary School.*

Linlithgow's schools have an extremely high reputation and are undoubtedly a significant factor in attracting people to move into the area. The high demand for places is a chronic problem for Linlithgow Academy which is likely to remain until

the completion of the proposed new non-denominational secondary school at Winchburgh, due for completion by August 2022, thanks to 'City Deal' funding from the UK Government. Primary school rolls wax and wane to some degree, but the four Linlithgow non-denominational primaries are constantly under some pressure, necessitating from time to time the adjustment of the catchment area for each school.

Lack of school capacity was used for several years as way of justifying the policy of 'restraint' on development in Linlithgow, and, until recently, this meant that capacity problems were not addressed by extending local schools. Therefore, the only tools available to deal with school capacity problems were development control and management of intakes through 'roll capping'. However, around 2010, the Council increased the capacity of Linlithgow Academy by 110 to 1,320 pupils, to cater for a planned expansion in the catchment area to include Torphichen and Westfield. Previously, these primary schools fed Bathgate and Armadale Academies respectively. Additionally, the extra accommodation in Linlithgow Academy was designed to accommodate pupils from the initial phases of the large-scale residential expansion of Winchburgh.

When the non-denominational secondary school for Winchburgh (with 660 pupil places) is opened, this will allow the removal of Winchburgh and probably Bridgend from Linlithgow Academy's catchment area, reducing pressure on the Academy and freeing up some places to cater for new housing development in Linlithgow. Additionally, there is potential to re-zone Torphichen and Westfield Primary Schools to feed once more into more conveniently-located secondary schools in the Armadale/Bathgate area. Either or both of these eventualities would allow the housing proposals in this Plan to be implemented without the need to provide an additional secondary school in Linlithgow.

However, it is considered that one new primary school will be required to serve the proposed new housing, and this is proposed to be sited in the proposed new housing area at Edinburgh Road.

### ***Proposal ED1 - New Primary School at Edinburgh Road***

*Construction of a single-stream non-denominational primary school.*

## 9. Health Facilities

Current best practice, as exemplified by facilities at Livingston, Blackburn, Bathgate and Broxburn, is to integrate the provision of health and social care services in order to allow all groups of people to live as independently as possible. Past increases in Linlithgow's population have placed a heavy demand on health and social care provision in the town, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups such as children, older people and those with disabilities.

The present Linlithgow Health Centre, situated in Linlithgow's High Street, was created by converting the previous co-operative supermarket and is physically incapable of fulfilling an integrated healthcare role. As a result, there is no resident social work support available. The Health Centre has limited rooms for consultation and for staff meetings, and vital therapy space is at a premium. Resident General Practitioners and those providing locum cover are presently required to share existing consultation rooms.

In order to overcome the space limitations and create a 'one stop' facility for the town where health and social care can be provided in one building, it is necessary to either relocate or extend the present Health Centre. At the outset, the Planning Forum believes that the resulting health facility should, from the community point of view, remain in the town centre where it would be more convenient for patients, being centrally situated near the shops and other facilities, and easily reached by public transport. Additionally, it would contribute to the vitality of the town centre. The most obvious solution would be to demolish the Health Centre and construct a new purpose-built health and social care facility in a phased redevelopment on the existing site and adjacent land, perhaps with three floors, lift, loch view, etc. Associated with any new facility should be parking arrangements which permit surgery visits to be done without stress on finding a parking location, while maintaining parking for doctors. A site outside the town centre is not favoured.

### **Proposal HE1 – Creation of Integrated Health Centre**

*The Planning Forum supports the construction of a new Health Centre (with combined health and social care facilities) on an appropriate site in the town centre, preferably through redevelopment of its current site.*

Consideration should be given to increasing capacity to deal with minor ailments locally – this would relieve pressure on Accident & Emergency services at St John's Hospital.

**Care for Older People** - Linlithgow's capacity to support a growing ageing population and to increase the quality and capacity for local healthcare needs consideration in the future development of the town. As well as being accessible for all ages and abilities, it is vital to ensure there are adequate buildings and infrastructure to cope with these changes. To this end, St. Michael's Day Care Centre has been relocated to the new Partnership Centre in the former County Buildings.



*The former St Michael's Day Centre (Chris Long).*

- St. Michael's Hospital, while owned and run by NHS, should be factored into any new integrated health development, either to permit replacement of the existing building in the current location or to find suitable land for a new building to be created.
- Rooms and buildings to facilitate activities for older people – this is mostly covered by existing rooms and halls for hire but few have good access for infirm or disabled people. A review is required of the type of space needed and accessibility/toilets/etc.

## 10. Funding

The implementation of this suggested Plan for Linlithgow will depend crucially on the realisation of land value, as described earlier in this report. The following table gives an idea of rough development costs which would have to be met through Section 75 agreements with developers and other means. Proposals not included in this table are to be regarded as self-financing, would be financed as an integral part of adjacent development (for example road access to a housing site), or would be entirely funded from other sources such as the Scottish Government, West Lothian Council, or a community trust.

For the purposes of this Plan document, it is estimated that around £19,800,000 of development works for the benefit of the community would have to be raised through the realisation of land value. Based on Government figures suggesting that the average value of bulk housing land in Scotland is around £1,100,000 per hectare, it can be deduced

that, based on a gross density of 25 houses per hectare, the value per housing plot is £44,000.

Assuming for the purposes of this exercise that £29,000 per plot can be extracted from the land value, it would be necessary to build 683 houses to fund the £19,800,000 share of the cost of development works. Rounded up to 700, this would take up 28 hectares/69 acres of land which could be comfortably accommodated into the proposed development areas to the south-east of the town and which would be facilitated by 'land pooling' by landowners working together, and with a chosen consortium of developers, to deliver a 'masterplan' for the whole town expansion area, providing a level of certainty for the community, as well as the landowners and developers, all of which would benefit. Of course, additional ground provision within the development areas would be needed for a primary school and for generous landscaping, allotments, etc.

**Table 10.1 – Possible 'Planning Gains'**

Proposal Number	Description of Proposal	Notional cost	Contribution from value of housing land	Other, alternative or additional sources of finance
Br and T1	Conservation Area Enhancement & Traffic Management to 'Reclaim' the High Street	2,500,000	1,250,000	Heritage Lottery Fund; Historic Environment Scotland
H3	Social-Rented Housing by Housing Associations (50% of usual subsidy @ £35,000 per house) 200 houses	7,000,000	3,500,000	Scottish Government (other 50%, bringing total per house to £70,000)
T2A	Four-way Motorway Interchange	8,500,000	1,500,000	Scottish Government and developers of Business Park (Proposal E2)
T2B	High Street Relief Road	7,000,000	7,000,000	
T3	Blackness Road Roundabouts	200,000	100,000	Business Park
T6, T7	Car Parking at Regent Centre, Edinburgh Road and Blackness Road (tourist buses)	2,000,000	1,500,000	ScotRail
T12, T13, T14, T15	Cycle Network (outwith new development areas)	400,000	200,000	Sustrans, West Lothian Council
H5, H6	'Green Wedges' at Clarendon and by canal	1,750,000	1,750,000	
R4	Permanent Youth Centre	500,000	500,000	(LYPP)
ED1	New Primary School	2,300,000	2,000,000	West Lothian Council
HE1	Integrated Health Centre	4,000,000	500,000	NHS, West Lothian Council
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>36,150,000</b>	<b>19,800,000</b>	

Note – Eastern Local Distributor Road is taken as part of Housing Proposals H5 and H6, not counted as a 'planning gain'.



## 11. Implementation

As a first step, it is essential that this document, *Linlithgow – A Plan for the Future/Local Place Plan*, is not seen as a document restricted to ‘planning’; for, as the title indicates, the document is about the holistic future of the town. The document has to be seen as a purposeful document and the major contributor to the West Lothian Local Development Plan as it applies to Linlithgow. The Town and Country Planning (Local Place Plans) (Scotland) Regulations 2021, which came into force on 22 January 2022, will give legitimacy to this document as Linlithgow’s Local Place Plan which should be the subject of positive consideration by the West Lothian planning authority.

But the document needs to be not only accepted by West Lothian Council as a corporate body, but by other relevant public agencies; it therefore needs to be presented to and underwritten by the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership. As a minimum, new planning applications affecting the town will need to be carefully scrutinised by the planning and service departments of West Lothian Council to ensure they are consistent with the recommendations of this Local Place Plan.

However, we believe that there is a need to go further than await piecemeal planning applications from property developers; rather we consider that the way forward is by landowners working together with West Lothian Council and/or setting up a development consortium or development trust (existing or newly constituted) to oversee and manage the implementation of this Plan.

If the way forward is through a consortium of landowners/developers, full use of binding legal agreements between West Lothian Council and any such consortia should be invoked, most likely under Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, tied to a masterplan or detailed development brief. Such agreements would set out the construction of the public works, and of the housing developments that would pay for them. Consortia would be expected to adhere

to performance or contract completion bonds. Unless already in public ownership, consortia would be required to buy the necessary land to carry out the public works, and West Lothian Council would assist acquisition through the use of agency compulsory purchase powers.

If the way forward is through some form of development trust, then the trust would acquire and take ownership and resultant control of the development land. This approach would be in line with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the opportunities afforded by that legislation should be thoroughly investigated.

At the outset, the overall development package would have to be the subject of a detailed development brief/masterplan - the Council and/or Development Trust would involve and consult the citizens of Linlithgow on its contents in accordance with current best practice.

It would be essential that a dedicated Steering Group be established to oversee relevant aspects of the implementation of this Local Place Plan.

- If led by West Lothian Council, it could be attended by the three local councillors (as appropriate to avoid conflicts of interest in relation to decision-making on planning applications), relevant Council officials, representatives of the development consortium and any development trust, Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council, Linlithgow Civic Trust, representatives of West Lothian Community Planning Partnership, and any individuals able or willing to contribute positively to the project.
- If community led, a similar approach could be taken. Day-to-day co-ordination and enforcement would be the responsibility of an officer reporting to the Steering Group, and employed for this purpose by either the Council, the development consortium or any development trust.

## Appendix 1 – Effective Housing Land Supply

For housing land to be effective it must be:

- In the ownership or control of the party which can be expected to develop it.
  - Free from physical constraints which would preclude its development.
  - Contamination free.
  - Economically viable with any public funding required being committed by the public body concerned.
- Free of infrastructure constraints, or any required infrastructure can be provided realistically by the developer.
  - The site can be developed in the period under consideration.
  - Housing is the sole preferred use of the land.

## Appendix 2 – Definition of Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is defined as:

- Social rented housing
  - Shared ownership -- the owner purchases part of the dwelling and pays an occupancy payment to a Registered Social Landlord on the remainder.
  - Shared equity -- the owner purchases a majority share (typically 60%), the remaining equity is owned by a Registered Social Landlord. The owner is responsible for maintenance and pays no rent but upon sale of the property receives only a share of the sale price e.g. 60%.
- Low-cost housing for sale -- dwellings sold at below market price but at an affordable level. This may be subsidised or unsubsidised, built to a higher density or smaller than average.
  - Mid-market rent -- housing let at rents which are higher than social rents but lower than full market rents. These are usually developments by RSLs or joint venture between developers and RSLs.

## Appendix 3 – West Lothian Council Planning Permission Policy

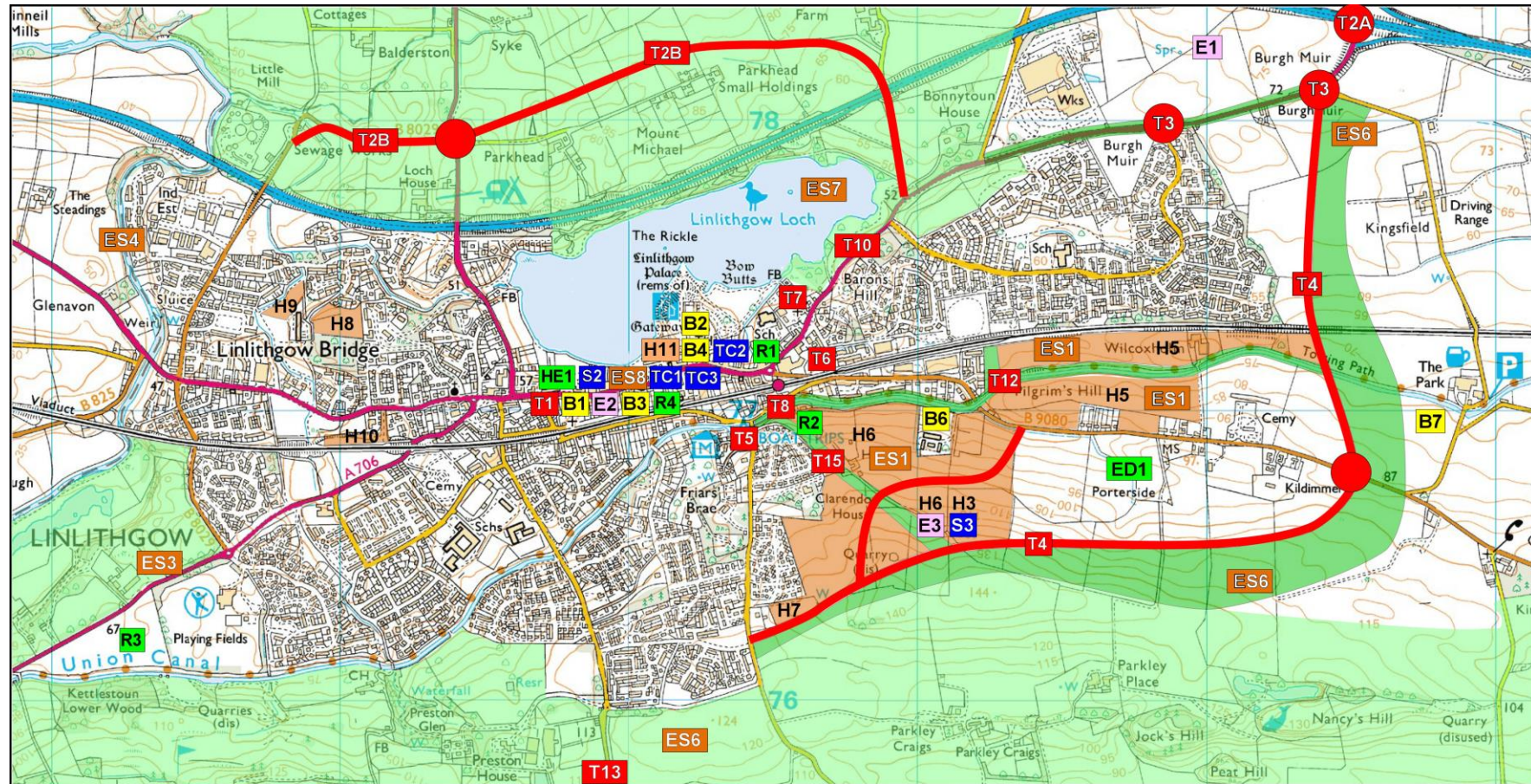
There are two approaches to planning permission for housing development; full planning permission and planning permission in principle. There are also other types of consent related to development including listed building consent, conservation area consent, advertisement consent and hazardous substances consent.

Developers may submit a full application giving all details of the proposed development. The application is decided upon by the Chief Planning Officer under delegated powers or by the Development Management Committee. The decision will be to grant planning permission, grant planning permission subject to conditions or refuse planning permission.

Developers may apply for planning permission in principle which establishes the acceptability of a particular type of development on a site without requiring a significant level of detail about the proposed development. This is usually used where the likelihood of planning permission being granted is uncertain or in the case of major development proposals to avoid the initial high cost of detailed design work. Granting planning permission in principle will have conditions attached which require the submission of further details of the proposal to the planning authority for their approval. This further application is referred to as an application for approval of matters specified in conditions (AMSC) and is decided by the Planning Officer.



# PROPOSALS MAP



## Map Legend and Colour Key

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Areas of Great Landscape Value                                | <span style="background-color: #FF0000; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Tx Transport/Accessibility Proposals           |
| <span style="background-color: #00FF00; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> 'Green Wedges', Wildlife Corridors and Development Free Areas | <span style="background-color: #FF0000; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Road Links                                     |
| <span style="background-color: #FFA500; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Hx Housing Proposals  | <span style="background-color: #0000FF; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Sx TCx Proposals for Retailing and Town Centre |
| <span style="background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> ESx Proposals for Environmental Sustainability                | <span style="background-color: #00FF00; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Rx Community/Recreation Proposals              |
| <span style="background-color: #FFFF00; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Bx Proposals for Built/Architectural Heritage and Tourism     | <span style="background-color: #00FF00; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> ED1 Education Proposal                         |
| <span style="background-color: #FF00FF; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Ex Proposals Relating to Business and Employment              | <span style="background-color: #00FF00; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> HE1 Health Facility Proposal                   |



# List of Proposals

*Note: Proposals which have general application across the town are not indicated on the Proposals Map above.*

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- ES1** Installation of District Heating Systems in New Housing Developments
- ES2** Installation of District Heating Systems in Existing Built-up Areas
- ES3** Development of Solar Farm
- ES4** Development of Hydro-Electric Power Plants on River Avon
- ES5** Sustainable Design of New Developments
- ES6** Small Farms and Tree Planting
- ES7** Mitigation of Loch and Watercourse Pollution
- ES8** Measures to Cut Down High Street Air Pollution

## BUILT/ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM

- B1** Conservation Area Enhancement
- B2** Restoration and Re-use of Linlithgow Palace
- B3** Preservation of Riggs
- B4** Tourist Information Centre
- B5** Promotion of Larger Hotel in Linlithgow
- B6** Canal Side Facilities near St Michael's Hospital
- B7** Canal Marina near Park Farm

## BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

- E1** Burghmuir Business Park
- E2** Business Centre in Town Centre
- E3** Home/Business Accommodation

## HOUSING

- H1** Social-Rented and 'Affordable' Housing
- H2** Local Authority Housing
- H3** Social rented Homes – Additional 180 Housing Association Dwellings
- H4** Infrastructure
- H5** Mixed Housing – Wilcoxholm Farm
- H6** Mixed Housing – Clarendon to Edinburgh Road
- H7** Private Housing – Glebe Land, Manse Road
- H8** Council Housing – Doodsdale
- H9** Council Housing – Listloaning
- H10** Private Housing - Woodyard Site, Falkirk Road
- H11** Mixed Housing – Vennel Redevelopment
- H12** Private Housing – Site of Victoria Hall (shown as Proposal TC2 on map)
- H13** Private Housing – Cross Frontage, Templars Ct (shown as Proposal TC3 on map)
- H14** Quality and Design of New Housing Developments

## TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

- T1** Traffic Management to 'Reclaim' the High Street
- T2A** Four-way motorway interchange at Burghmuir
- T2B** High Street Relief Road
- T3** Roundabouts on Blackness Road at eastern end of Springfield Road and at Kingsfield Road junction
- T4** Eastern Local Distributor Road
- T5** Relief of Traffic over Canal Bridge at Manse Road
- T6** Decked Car Park at Regent Centre
- T7** Tourist Car Parking at Blackness Road
- T8** Improvements to Access to the Railway Station and to Rail Services
- T9** Improvements to Bus Services

- T10** Parking for Tourist Buses
- T11** Formation of Cycle Network
- T12** Provision of Cycle Route/Footpath Link between Union Canal Towpath and Maidlands
- T13** Cycle/Footpath Links to Livingston and Bathgate via Beecraigs Country Park
- T14** Modal Share/Active Travel Policy for New Housing Areas
- T15** Cycle and Pedestrian Links across 'Green Wedge' at Clarendon

## RETAILING AND TOWN CENTRE

- S1** Investigation of Successful Retail Business Initiatives Elsewhere
- S2** Establishment of Arts Retail Quarter
- S3** Neighbourhood Shops within New Housing Areas
- TC1** Redevelopment of Eastern Part of The Vennel
- TC2** Redevelopment of Victoria Hall Site
- TC3** Redevelopment of Cross Frontage, Templars Ct

## COMMUNITY, SPORTS, EDUCATION & HEALTH FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE

- R1** Low Port Centre
- R2** Formation of Clarendon Public Park with Woodland Planting and Community Orchards
- R3** West Lothian Cycle Circuit, etc
- R4** Establishment of Permanent Youth Centre
- ED1** New Primary School at Edinburgh Road
- HE1** Creation of Integrated Health Centre

