

**LINLITHGOW**  
**Local Place Plan**  
**2024-34**

**Linlithgow Planning Forum**  
**October 2023**

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## Introduction

This document is a ‘Local Place Plan’ in accordance with the requirements of 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”. Reflecting input from a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations, representing interests as diverse as younger and older people, churches, farmers, parents and health professionals, it has been prepared by Linlithgow Planning Forum (a sub-committee of Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Community Council, an eligible ‘Community Body’ under the Regulations) which brings together representatives of 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.

It incorporates changes made to previous versions of this plan, formerly titled ‘Plan for the Future’, in response to comments made during well-publicised processes of public engagement in November 2015 and June 2022, including more specific consultation on the future of the Vennel area and wider surveys by St Michael’s Parish Church and the Linlithgow Community Development Trust. Details of consultation activity and results can be found in Appendix 1.

In the spirit of the abovementioned regulations, the Planning Forum considers that this document can be regarded as a representative view of a wide section of the community of Linlithgow and intends to work collaboratively with councillors and officials of West Lothian Council with a view to this plan’s provisions being registered and seriously considered as an input to the Council’s next Local Development Plan for the county.



### Your opportunity to get involved in forming a new Community Plan for Linlithgow!

All Linlithgow residents of all ages are invited to contribute their views and ideas for the future of Linlithgow. Let us know what you want and what you do not want. New Scottish legislation means that your voice **will** be heard.

A large exhibition of ideas and proposals for comment will be held in the Burgh Halls on:

**Thursday, 16 June 2022 from 10am to 8pm**

**Tuesday, 21 June 2022 from 10am to 8pm.**

See the presentation and talk with members of the Linlithgow Planning Forum. Discover what this means for you and how you can influence what is decided.

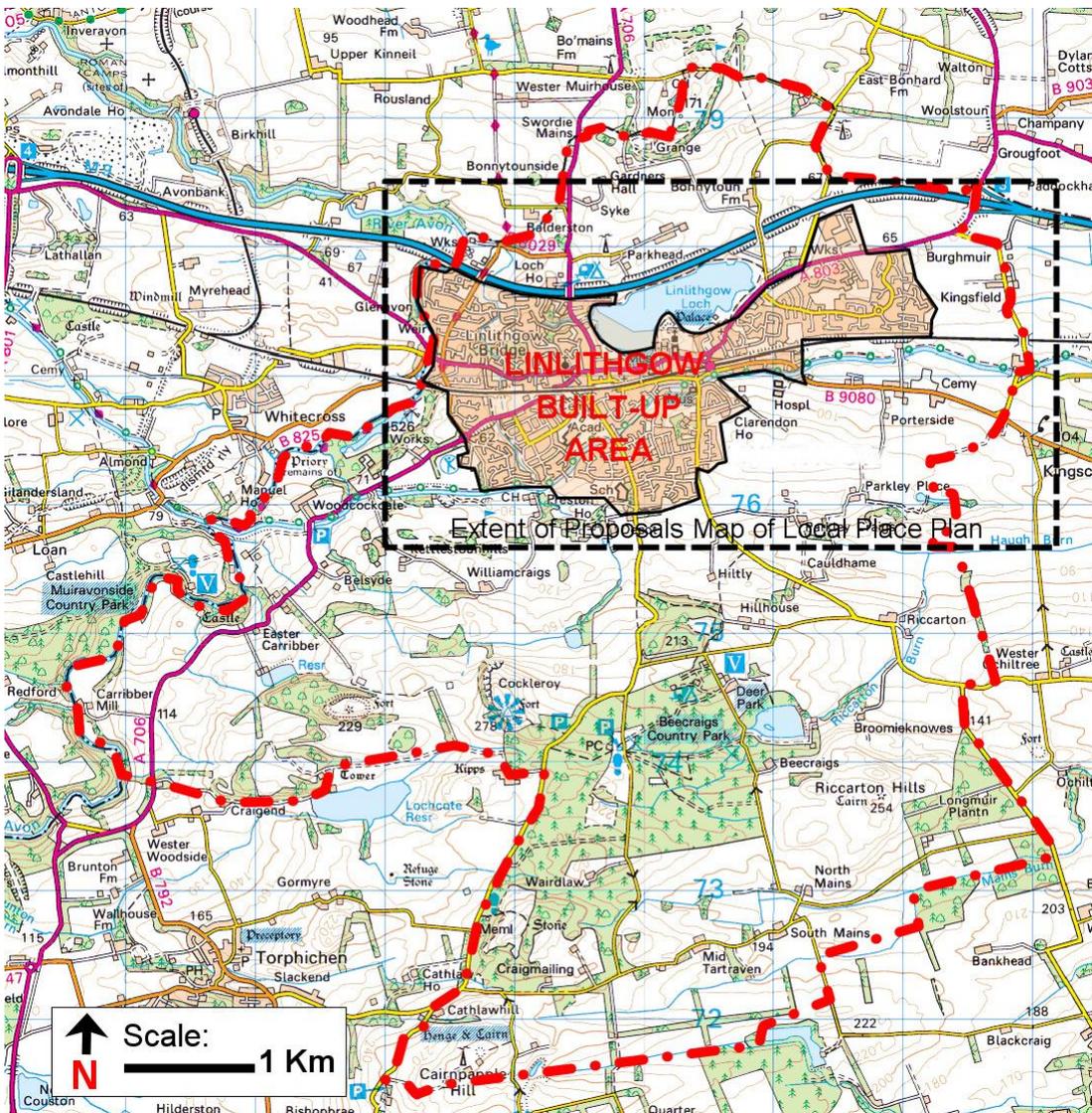
Questionnaires will be available for your comments and to give your views on what is included in (or missing from) the Draft Plan. Your views will be carefully noted, then analysed in a report which will be used to amend and finalise the emergent ‘Local Place Plan’, prior to submission to West Lothian Council for inclusion in its next Local Development Plan.

Keep up with progress over the summer in the Linlithgow Community Magazine – the ‘Black Bitch’, and through social media.

This notice is issued by the Linlithgow Planning Forum and empowered by 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”.

The opportunity to comment will remain until mid-September through a small display and availability of questionnaires near the entrance to the Burgh Halls.

Front and back of the publicity flyer for the June 2022 public consultation on the Linlithgow Local Place Plan.



Left:  
**Map One – Area covered by this Local Place Plan** (the same as that of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council).

[The base map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown Copyright 2023 OS 1000XXXXX.]

As required by the relevant legislation, the preparation of this Local Place Plan has included reference to:

- West Lothian Council’s current Local Development Plan, variations from which are examined and justified in detail in Appendix 2 of this document.
- The National Planning Framework (NPF4), the content of which is reflected particularly in this Local Place Plan’s proposals for compact urban growth, infrastructure first, housing in sustainable places, affordable housing, liveable places/20-minute neighbourhoods, improving town centres/historic environments, community wealth building and design/quality/place.

There are no current Locality Plans, prepared under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, known to have a bearing on Linlithgow.

## ABOUT LINLITHGOW

Linlithgow is a historic town, having been granted Royal Burgh status around 1138. For centuries, it



*The Cross.*

was a thriving market town and the county town of Linlithgowshire, renamed West Lothian about a century ago. Since the local government reorganisation of 1975, its administrative functions have been lost to Livingston.

Between around 1960 and 2000, Linlithgow’s population more than trebled, largely through becoming a commuter town for burgeoning Edinburgh and, to a lesser extent, Glasgow.



*The Preston Road entrance to Linlithgow.*

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 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 summary, 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.

## **AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND FOUNDING PRINCIPLES FOR THIS PLAN**

The Planning Forum and its affiliated community groups, through this plan, aim 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

- provide a benchmark against which the West Lothian Local Development Plan, and future development proposals and planning applications, can be measured and assessed
- influence and align the West Lothian Local Development Plan with a strategy for community wealth building for Linlithgow. Spatial strategies address our community wealth building priorities by identifying and including community assets, facilitating opportunities to remove economic disadvantage and inequality, and seeking to provide benefits for all members of the Linlithgow community.

The **objectives** of this Local Place Plan are to:

- influence positively the proposals and policy content of the West Lothian Local Plan as it relates to the conservation, sustainability, enhancement and development of Linlithgow
- protect Linlithgow’s 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:

- Linlithgow requires an ‘infrastructure first’ approach. A coordinated infrastructure plan must precede future development
- 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 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
- 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).

## CONTENT OF THE LOCAL PLACE PLAN

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 community believes exist. It highlights the congested and polluted High Street, 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 careful, considered exploitation of '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. Problems such as over-use of cars, polluted air, poor water quality in Linlithgow Loch 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 and applying the previously-mentioned concept of the '20-minute neighbourhood'. 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 to 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 the West Lothian-wide 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 Local Place Plan concludes with a section on the financing of the recommendations, and how the implementation of the plans should be scrutinised and monitored.

This document 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 by the Council. 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.



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

# 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 which, together with its pleasant lochside situation, its hilly rural surroundings and its wealth of historic buildings and features, gives the town a unique character, making it one of the most attractive towns in central Scotland. In the 2022 Church/Community Development Trust survey, 52% responded to the question "what do you like about Linlithgow?" by making the unprompted positive comment that they appreciated the natural environment, including easy access to the countryside. Of this group, 78% referred to the Loch, Palace, Peel and Canal in the context of walking, cycling or simply relaxing. 43% warmly referred to the High Street, with 68% of this group mentioning the mix of shops, cafes and pubs.

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. When it came to the town's problems, the recent church/trust survey revealed a large majority concerned about the amount of traffic in the High Street. Since the opening of the M9 in 1972, there has been some relief from through traffic, but no further mitigation has materialised. There can be no towns of equivalent size in Scotland with the High Street still functioning as an 'A' road, the main shopping street, a busy distributor road and a residential street. When the High Street is closed, local medium/heavy traffic has to go through Bo'ness and our most intensive bus services either miss the town completely via the M9 or cease operation completely.

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 compromised.

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 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 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 where road geometries/low bridges often pose a problem, and to places like Livingston and Glasgow. There is also a need for continual improvements to the foot/cycle path network to encourage active travel.

In response to the 2022 'Plan for the Future' questionnaire, 75% of responses/comments refer to the need for traffic management in the High Street. The general view can be summarised as: "Linlithgow's major planning problem is the High Street. No development should take place without resolving this problem". It was also said that: "Linlithgow is an old historic town and therefore changes to traffic management must be treated sensitively".



*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 2023, the new Winchburgh Academy started to accommodate pupils formerly 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 (and some social rented houses being provided by CALA homes) 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.

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

**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 adoption of West Lothian Local Development Plan, 4 September 2018**

Site given Planning Permission	No. of houses	Date
Boghall, Springfield (complete)	54	2019
Edinburgh Road (permission expired)	48	2019
Victoria Hall (permission expired)	16	2019
Deanburn Road (under construction)	60	2022
Care home, Falkirk Road	60	2023
<b>Total</b>	<b>186</b>	

**Table 3 - New Housing in Linlithgow proposed in current West Lothian Local Development Plan, but not yet with planning permission, October 2023**

Site	No. of houses
Land east of Manse Road	25
Falkirk Road	18
Wilcoxholm Farm (planning permission not granted because of access problems)	200
Avontoun Quarry/Cemex (not included in this Local Place Plan)	210
Clarendon Farm (not included in Local Development Plan; planning permission refused on appeal)	110
<b>Total</b>	<b>563</b>

One 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 houses at Boghall and Deanburn, 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 this Plan's predecessor, the *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) which would further 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 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 already 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 reaching record highs, 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 and 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. 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 runs 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 a master plan 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 the Expansion of 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

recent opening of the non-denominational secondary school at Winchburgh 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 large-scale housing developments at Bo’ness and potentially 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, was originally thought to have had a detrimental effect on the High Street shops. Loss of trade was originally estimated to amount to up to a sixth of the existing revenue, but shop keepers in the main have not seen this and in fact look favourably on a retail offering which encourages people to shop in the town. 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 unprecedented 1,000 individual letters of objection – and the supermarket given planning permission



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

on the Edinburgh Road site was superseded by planning permission for 48 flats granted on appeal by a Scottish Government Reporter, despite strong opposition, and now by a planning application including a care home.

## 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 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 allocations of housing land at Deanburn Road and on the 'Cemex' site provide, or would provide, 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 vehicle charging points, particularly where car owners live in flats.

However, research shows that modal shift from the 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 4 - 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 biggest carbon savings related to this would result 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 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 some 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 could 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 for Community Wealth Building, Improvement and Development

Linlithgow provides fertile ground for sowing the seeds of a planned approach to community wealth building. Community wealth has two strands:

- Locally centred economic development and the recirculation and retention of economic benefit within the Linlithgow community
- Locally provided accessible services and facilities for social and emotional support to ensure physical and mental wellbeing.

Taking into account the town's strengths and the various issues outlined above, there appear to be six distinct options or differing approaches worthy of consideration to masterplan the infrastructure for community wealth building, improvement and development in the short and medium term:

- a) In 2022, two wide ranging community surveys were undertaken. In both surveys, the majority response, 93% in one survey, identified the problems with the High Street as being Linlithgow's primary problem to resolve. A planning solution must be found, and this must precede or be an integral part of any future development in Linlithgow. The High Street is the nucleus of the town, which is where the planning of future community wealth building can start
- b) building on the work of the Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Town Management Group and West Lothian Council's Linlithgow Local Area Committee to expand local democracy in planning and wealth building
- 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
- d) recognising 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
- e) in the medium term, refocussing the role of tourism in community wealth building, in addition to a new Linlithgow business park
- f) planning for active travel and sustainable transport to support the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods.

The Planning Forum believes that this Local Place Plan should influence and align the West Lothian Local Development Plan with a strategy for community wealth building for Linlithgow. Spatial strategies should address our community wealth

building priorities by identifying and including community assets, facilitating opportunities to remove economic disadvantage and inequality and seeking to provide benefits for all members of the Linlithgow community.

The Planning Forum believes that all of these options could be supplemented by innovative 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 bulk housing development land in the Linlithgow area estimated to be worth around £3,000,000 per hectare (£1,250,000 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 include some or all of the following:

- traffic reductions in, and environmental improvements to, the High Street (would need new road construction to divert all through traffic)
- 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
- adequate educational capacity
- redevelopment of the eastern part of The Vennel in keeping with Linlithgow's traditional character
- a four-way junction at Burghmuir
- greatly improved conditions for active travel and other forms of sustainable transport
- a solution to the car parking problem related to Linlithgow railway station
- 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 would 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 would remain unfulfilled.

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

## SECTION B - A PLAN FOR ACTION

West Lothian Council's present adopted Local Development Plan 2018 began life with a request to landowners to identify sites for development. Only these sites were considered for inclusion in the Local Development Plan. This field-by-field planning strategy, plus the continued determination of planning applications for sites not included in the Local Development Plan and the failure to resolve the present infrastructure problems, are an unsustainable planning approach. This has been 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 of this Local Place Plan that no further infill housing development, and no expansion whatsoever beyond the present town boundaries, will be acceptable unless it meets the priority community requirements. As emphasised by the community surveys of 2022, this means that a resolution of the traffic problems in the High Street is essential, and this can only be achieved by an overall 'infrastructure first' planning approach.**

The overall aim of the Local Place Plan is 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 alleviating the problems of through traffic in the High Street
- 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 support an expanding 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 3) at the end of the document. In some cases, alternatives are indicated.

At the end, before Map 3, are sections on the 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

The underlying principles of this Local Place Plan are a reflection of the results of the 2022 Planning Forum survey and are three-fold:

1. To reduce current high levels of pollution in Linlithgow Loch and watercourses (92% of respondents mentioned this)
2. To reduce air and noise pollution in the High Street (mentioned by 81% of respondents)
3. To minimise the consumption of fossil-fuel derived energy (over 80% of respondents highlighted this requirement in various forms).

Clearly, these goals must strike a balance between opposing needs in such a way that the visual appearance of the town and its surroundings is not compromised.

Solid measures are required to make the best use of land, save energy, produce/consume locally, encourage community involvement and foster civic pride. The main 'sustainable' suggestions 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 more trees for cooling and shading, and improving air quality
- encouraging tourism via the railway
- encouraging of 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 or underground storage cells which can function as high-quality landscape features, havens for wildlife and green open space
- 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 and listing 'green spaces' and other development-free areas within the Linlithgow settlement boundary
- conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and corridors, including the maintenance of existing trees and hedgerows within the town and in new development areas
- 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.

## Community Solar Power

Linlith-Go-Solar, formed under the Transition Linlithgow Initiative but now part of the Linlithgow Community Development Trust, has a four-year history of delivering bond-funded (Scottish Communities Finance Ltd) roof solar projects for local community sports clubs, saving to date around 50 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. During the life of this Local Place Plan, the aim is to continue engaging with landowners and building owners in Linlithgow and, by raising capital through community bonds, establish community owned solar farms, solar PV roof and ground systems, battery storage and EV charging systems. Linlith-Go-Solar is also planning additional community engagement, employment, education and training activities, especially for young people, through the Young Energy Enterprise Group, involving local schools, colleges and universities. The long-term plan is to create a 25-year community revenue surplus fund from selling solar electricity at a lower cost than the grid to building owners, to fund home energy improvement and other community energy projects. This Local Place Plan advocates a conducive statutory environment to enable and encourage Linlith-Go-Solar.

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Specific proposals arising from the above and from the introductory content on climate change, air quality and loch water 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. 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 Hydro-Electric Power Plants on the 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 ES4 – 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 ES5 – Small Farms and Tree Planting**

Discuss with owners/tenants of agricultural units around the town fringes, the potential of diversifying to include small plots for community groups to grow food for the local market. Tree loss should be reversed through the planting of new shelter belts and hedgerows.

### **Proposal ES6 – 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 overflows (CSOs) 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 ES7 – 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 parking in some car parks for up to four hours
- kerbside planting (and retention) of street trees to soak up pollutants
- changing parking fines at the Regent Centre car park to allow free parking for up to four hours
- proper enforcement of parking restrictions, possibly 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.

See also the undernoted proposals related to the preservation of green open space:

Proposal R4 – Designation and Listing of Green Spaces

Proposal R5 – Preservation as Green Space of Kettilstoun Mains Field, the Lagoon and the Banks of the River Avon.

## 2. Built/Archaeological Heritage and Tourism

The 2022 public consultation surveys reflect a sense of pride in Linlithgow's attractiveness as a tourist destination, 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 parts of the High Street.

New Heritage Trail, Pub Trail and 'Perambulation of the Marches' routes 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 and street furniture. More recently, the Council upgraded the street lighting with columns of a suitable design. Unfortunately, these works have been insufficient to comprehensively address the overall issues of street design, pavement surfaces, 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 (Proposal T9).

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 came from the Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Town Management Group and the former Town Centre BID and various other sources, including a local 'crowdfunding' campaign,



*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.*

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, especially the Covid-related temporary pavement to the east of Water Yett, 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 twenty years ago by West Lothian Council but was never completed. There is currently no budget allocation for the completion of this study into townscape heritage improvement.

The following essential proposal is included in this Local Place Plan's package of town improvements, some to be funded from public sources similar to those outlined above, 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. Although a new statue of Mary, Queen of Scots was recently unveiled, there is no interpretative centre and no toilets. Most recently, the building was temporarily closed to visitors because of concerns about stonework condition, but has since been partially reopened.

#### ***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, West



*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***

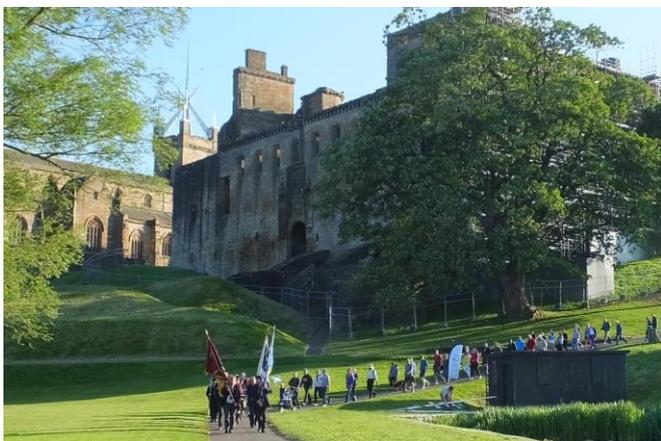
*Production and approval by West Lothian Council of a strategy that promotes the preservation and better use of the historic riggs behind the High Street frontages.*

### **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 tourists. 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, 2023 (Ron Smith).*

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 Further From Festival, the Linlithgow Folk Festival, the Advent Fayre and the Beecraigs Festive Forest. 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 currently limited to two small hotels (including the new Court Residence Aparthotel in the former Sheriff Courthouse), around six bed and breakfast establishments, five self-catering businesses and two caravan sites. Surprisingly, attempts to promote a high-quality hotel on two sites overlooking the east end of Linlithgow Loch have not come to fruition, but the Low Port Centre will shortly reopen under community ownership.

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 part-time volunteer-led tourist information facility in the current foyer of the Burgh Halls, now in operation, but the Planning Forum continues to prefer the idea of recreating a dedicated full-time tourist office 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 a full-time tourist office in the Burgh Halls, with clear signage from the Cross.*

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

- 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*.**
- 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, the Vennel redevelopment 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 through the proposed development area, 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 Link Road (Proposal T3).*

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, Burgh Beautiful, 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

Around 60% of those responding to the 2022 Planning Forum survey stated that they wished to see more business and employment opportunities in Linlithgow. In the aftermath of Covid, it is clear that more needs to be done to recognise the needs of those who work from home, either on a full-time or part-time basis.

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 and home working
- 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 closure of 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 at Mill Road Industrial Estate. This is reflected in the existence of the Linlithgow Business Association and One Linlithgow BID (Business Improvement District) which strive 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 T2). 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 T4), 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 Bonyde 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 T5). 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 a Business Centre in the 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.

West Lothian Council's new build council housing programme has resulted in the completion of 1,627 houses on 38 sites between 2013 and 2023, only 15 of which (less than 1%) were provided in Linlithgow. Additionally, 127 houses on three sites are under construction elsewhere in the county, with a further four sites providing 118 houses at the planning stage. No council houses are to be built in Linlithgow as part of the current Local Housing Strategy which ends in 2028, 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 422. The significant shortage of council houses in Linlithgow has not been addressed by West Lothian Council.

At the time of writing (August 2023) there are 710 applications for a council house in Linlithgow or Linlithgow Bridge. In the year 2022-23, there were 13 lets and in the year 2023-24 so far, only 2 lets.



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

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 Boghall and Deanburn Road 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.

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, such 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).

Special supplementary planning guidance will be prepared by West Lothian Council for:

- The impact of increased housing on Linlithgow Academy.
- The impact of increased housing on Linlithgow Loch.
- Developer contributions towards transport mitigation measures (this had been prepared, and approved by the Council Executive, but not adopted as statutory guidance).

As stated above, the 2018 Local Development Plan describes Linlithgow as a Priority 1 area for affordable housing. This means that new private housing developments in excess of 25 houses must provide 25% of housing numbers specifically aimed at those, including the elderly and the disabled, who cannot afford a market solution to meet their housing needs.

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.

## 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 enabled the construction of the new Winchburgh Academy which opened in August 2023. As Linlithgow Academy is predicted to be at capacity until the new Winchburgh Academy is fully functional, future housing in Linlithgow was to have been phased according to the Local Development Plan. The phasing was to have allowed 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 the catchment area of Linlithgow Academy.

### Infrastructure

New supplementary planning guidance is currently in preparation to augment the policies in the Local Development Plan. Included in this planning guidance, when adopted, will be the provision for gathering developer contributions towards the cost of the four-way motorway junction at Burghmuir. This will be funded through a £15,938 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.

### 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 with a baseline benchmark of £91,182 per new build unit (2023). Housing associations will be important contributors towards the 3,000-unit social housing

provision in the Council's 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. 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 with a baseline benchmark (2023) of £83,584 per new build unit, contributions from the Housing Revenue Account, developer contributions and council tax on second homes.

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**

As previously mentioned, developers of housing sites in Linlithgow, intended to accommodate over 25 houses, must allocate land for the construction of affordable housing amounting to 25% of the number of houses within the development. It is vital that this land, and any such land associated with smaller private housing developments, is situated in Linlithgow and not elsewhere in West Lothian, and that the land concerned is zoned for housing in the Local Development Plan.

### **Recommendations**

It is considered 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, in the spirit of the '20-minute neighbourhood'. Planning applications should allow for the provision of new infrastructure.

West Lothian Council's preferred plan, on the other hand, is for 280 houses in the west/south west, 225 houses in the east and the remainder on infill sites. Currently, there are no plans by West Lothian

Council to build any council houses in Linlithgow during the plan period.

The Planning Forum believes 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**

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

- 1. The construction of approximately 300 new social-rented houses in Linlithgow in accordance with Proposals H2, H3 H8, H9, H11 and H13 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 encourage a Linlithgow based organisation to investigate the possibility of establishing a Linlithgow based Housing Association.*
- 4. 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.*
- 5. 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 113 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. There is the potential for approximately 38 new social rented dwellings, including 10 additional to the present number.*
- 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 to be contemplated (Proposal H8). The reduced number of dwellings and landscaping will allay the possibility of dwellings overtopping the hill and allow retention of most 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, but the extent of the ground concerned is insufficient to accommodate a football pitch of regulation size. Linlithgow Thistle now plays exclusively at Kettilstoun. The site could accommodate up to 35 council houses/flats (Proposal H9). The green space sacrificed would be replaced by the remediated Doomsdale.



Part of the potential housing site at Listloaning.

### **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, as currently identified.

### **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 new 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 legal agreements, most likely 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 rented out by a housing association. The development of this site has been completed.
- Land east of Manse Road (1.2 hectares). This site is supported (Proposal H7) conditional on the provision of the Eastern Link Road from Manse Road (opposite Riccarton Drive) to Edinburgh Road and Burghmuir (Proposal T3).
- 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 development has been completed.
- Wilcoxholm Farm, Edinburgh Road (north and south of canal). This site is supported conditional on the construction of the Eastern Link Road from Edinburgh Road to the A803 at Burghmuir (Proposal T3) and other factors listed in Proposal H5.

The Cemex site at Kettilstoun is included in the 2018 West Lothian Local Development Plan, having been 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. Only part of the site is suitable for housing due to the low-lying nature of the site and the proximity to the River Avon. The development of this for housing is not supported (see alternative Proposal:

*Proposal R4 – Preservation as Green Space of Kettilstoun Mains Field, the Lagoon and the Banks of the River Avon).*

## New Housing Sites preferred by the Linlithgow Planning Forum

The preferred housing sites are shown 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 Link Road (Proposal T3), 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 T13)
- e) the layout being subject to a detailed design brief/master plan requiring a high standard of urban design, character, building materials, landscaping and provision of public art
- f) sequential development being from the town centre outwards
- g) a commensurate contribution to the improved infrastructure of Linlithgow
- h) in conjunction with Proposal H6, provision for the connection of all existing houses in Edinburgh Road (east of the canal aqueduct) to the public sewerage system, to reduce pollution of Linlithgow Loch by septic tank effluent.

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; also there should be provision of home/business accommodation (Proposal E3).

### **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 Link Road - Proposal T3) 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 Link 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 Link Road along the southern edge to be in the form of a formal boulevard (Proposal T3)
- 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, landscaping and provision of public art
- i) sequential development being from the town centre outwards
- j) a commensurate contribution to the improved infrastructure of Linlithgow
- k) in conjunction with Proposal H5, provision for the connection of all existing houses in Edinburgh Road (east of the canal aqueduct) to the public sewerage system, to reduce pollution of Linlithgow Loch by septic tank effluent.

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 in the plan period, of which 125 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; also there should be provision of home/business accommodation (Proposal E3).

### **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 Link Road as shown on the Proposals Map at the end of this document (Proposal T3). 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.

### **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 was the subject of recent consultations. 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 (see Proposal TC1 in Town Centre and Retailing Section).

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

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

### **Proposal H13 – Housing Association Development – Cross Frontage at Templars Court**

Part of Proposal TC3 in Town Centre and Retailing Section – 7 flats.

## **Conclusions**

This section sets out the potential for housing in Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge. It is thought feasible to build 956 houses and flats within the 10-

**Table 4 – Summary of Housing Proposals for the 10-year Period of the Linlithgow Local Place Plan**

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	7	0	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>956</b>

year horizon of the Local Place Plan. Of these, 300 (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 956-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 Link Road (Proposal T3), and as indicated on the Proposals Map. 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. The need for recreational green space at

the east end of the town (to counterbalance the Kettilstoun facilities at the west end) would have to be assessed and satisfied as part of any development proposals, as well as catering for any extension to Kingscavil Cemetery that may be required by West Lothian Council. To maximise the benefit of infrastructural benefit for the town, it would be essential that this land is developed in phases, working eastwards from the H6 Clarendon site; the area north of the railway would only be developed if absolutely necessary, beyond the foreseeable future.

## 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, for the benefit of the town, can be found in Section 10 (Funding).**



*Photographs of well-designed new housing at Tornagrain, Chapelton of Elsick and Longniddry, encouraging examples of a departure from standard housing types.*

## 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.*

In the Planning Forum survey, 74% of respondents focused on the need to rehabilitate the High Street as a pleasant place for people. 61% of respondents chose to supplement their questionnaire preference with comments on the need for less traffic, wider pavements, space for cyclists and less pollution. In the church/trust survey when asked to identify Linlithgow's problems 30% of the 215 respondents focused on the High Street.

There was relief from through traffic with the opening of the M9 in 1972, but there has been no other mitigation since that time. There are no towns of equivalent size in Scotland where the High Street is an 'A' road, the main shopping street, a local distributor road, a residential street and, when it is closed (several times annually), there is no alternative route for medium/heavy traffic without diverting via Bo'ness, or, for buses, without missing out the town (and its approaches) entirely, via the M9.

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. Responding to the extensive consultations, this Local Place Plan attempts to provide an appropriate balance between contrary 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.

### Proposals for the High Street and Traffic Relief

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 and Public Realm Improvements 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, including heavy vehicles travelling to and from Mill Road Industrial Estate and the top of Preston Road. Three interlinked measures to meet this challenge are considered important and feasible (subject to full traffic analysis). These are listed in order of effectiveness/priority/importance in relation to relief of traffic from the High Street (although they would all have other benefits):

- a High Street Relief Road hidden away to the north of Linlithgow Loch
- the provision of a link road or roads between Blackness Road at Burghmuir and Edinburgh Road, and between Edinburgh Road and the top of Manse Road
- the provision of west-facing slip roads at the Junction 3 on the M9 (Blackness Road/ Burghmuir).

Each of these proposals is now considered in turn:

#### **High Street Relief Road**

This proposal, which could be built on an unobtrusive line north of Linlithgow Loch, would allow traffic generated in the east part of the town, and traffic approaching the town from the east, to reach destinations in the western part of the town (and vice versa) without passing along the High Street. It could be built in addition to (or instead of) the west-facing slip roads at the M9 Burghmuir interchange and could be partly or fully funded from the housing sites to be served by the Eastern Link Road described below. This High Street Relief Road would be far the most effective method of catering 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. An important additional benefit of the High Street relief road would be to allow through buses to serve the town on occasions when the High Street is closed to traffic.

#### **Eastern Link Road from Burghmuir to Riccarton Drive**

This proposal, with any associated linkages, would allow traffic generated in the south part of the town, and traffic approaching the town from the south, to reach the M9 motorway junction and destinations beyond/to the east without passing the bottleneck at the canal bridge or being constrained by poor roads geometry and low bridges at High Port/Edinburgh Road. It would also provide traffic relief in the Low Port area at the east end of the High Street, as well as allowing an alternative route for high vehicles approaching Linlithgow on the old Edinburgh Road (again avoiding the canal and railway overbridges) and giving extra flexibility for public transport routes through and within the town. Mainly, though, it would have to accompany the High Street Relief Road as it would provide access to housing sites H5 and H6 to the east and south-east of the town (the Wilcoxholm, Edinburgh Road and Clarendon areas), the development of which could finance both the relief roads and thus play a part in relieving the High Street of unnecessary through traffic. This link road was recommended for serious consideration as a practical solution by a Scottish Government Reporter in his consideration of an appeal against refusal of planning permission. It would be built to local distributor road standards as appropriate and, 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 road would allow closure or restriction of the Manse Road canal bridge to vehicular traffic (Proposal T6 below).

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

This long-standing proposal, the upgrading of which to include west-facing slip roads, needs to be considered along with the relief roads described above, however its construction should really be the responsibility of Transport Scotland, finance



*How a 'boulevard', as mentioned on the previous page, might look.*

most appropriately coming from either the Scottish or UK governments.

The Planning Forum recommends a traffic study to determine the most effective overall solution from both operational and financial points of view. Alternative alignments for the High Street Relief Road and the Eastern Link Road are considered in Appendix 3 to this document.

#### **Proposal T2 - High Street Relief Road**

*This would be a single-carriageway, unlit road possibly starting from the Bonsyde Road under the M9, then running westwards beyond the north side of Linlithgow Loch, perhaps behind Parkhead Holdings and thus largely hidden from view from Linlithgow by the landform. 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.*

#### **Proposal T3 - Eastern Link Road from Burghmuir to Riccarton Drive**

*Single-carriageway road from Burghmuir (proposed Kingsfield roundabout - Proposal T5) to Edinburgh Road at Kildimmery, crossing both railway and canal, then extending along the southern edge of proposed housing area (Proposal H6) to Manse Road at its junction with Riccarton Drive.*

#### **Proposal T4 - Four-way Motorway Interchange at Burghmuir**

*Provision of west-facing slip roads at M9 Junction 3, 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.*

#### **Associated Road Improvements**

In order to encourage right-turn movements to link in with the four-way interchange (if provided), 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 T5 - 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.*

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. 75% of respondents to the Planning Forum survey raised the inadequacy of the Manse Road bridge. A typical comment was "High priority should be given to solving the Manse Road canal bridge problem". In the church/Community Development Trust survey, a typical comment was "Encourage walking and cycling. Widen canal towpath so it can take bikes and pedestrians easily. Create a bridge over canal for pedestrians at the canal centre to avoid busy roads and dangerous



*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).*

crossing at Manse Road”. The implementation of Proposal T<sub>3</sub> (Eastern Link 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.

#### **Proposal T6 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 T<sub>3</sub> 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. A consultation paper, ‘Parking Proposals for Linlithgow’, published in June 2006, 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 and an application for a care home). 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 finally 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.

#### **Proposal T7 - 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. 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 TC<sub>1</sub>) should include an increase in short-stay parking in this central location. Further short-stay car parking should be considered within easy reach of the town centre.

#### **Proposal T8 – Tourist Car Parking at The Vennel and other Town Centre Location**

*Provide for increased availability of short-stay parking at The Vennel as per Proposal TC<sub>1</sub>, and investigate further short-stay car parking opportunities within easy reach of the town centre.*

It is further 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, possibly through a decriminalised parking scheme.

## 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 T9 – 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

The main bus service for Linlithgow is the X38 from Edinburgh to Falkirk, generally every half hour, but hourly in the evening, supplemented by an hourly F1 service to Whitecross and Maddiston. Post Covid, the hourly 31 through bus from Livingston to Bathgate is now enjoying increased custom bringing people into Linlithgow from neighbouring villages. By comparison, the two-hourly (non-evening) service to Bo'ness and the L1 bus service within the town of Linlithgow are poor, the latter only running six hourly services Monday to Friday and four hourly services on Saturday. 10%

of respondents to the church/Community Development Trust survey addressed the subject of bus services, with a typical comment being “the town service does not run often enough; it should be every 15 minutes to tie in with the trains”. This comment was replicated in the Planning Forum survey.

The present 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 Link Road (Proposal T3) 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 T10 – 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 T11 – 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 more 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 where cycle lanes would not normally be required
- 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 T12 - 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 T13 - 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 (as part of housing proposal H5).*

#### **Proposal T14 - 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 T15 - 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 to the 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 T16 - 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.

In the church/Community Development Trust survey, comments on shops were reserved for the question on favourite things about Linlithgow. 43% of respondents warmly refer to the High Street, with 68% of this group specifically referring favourably to the mix of shops, cafes and pubs. 50% of respondents to the Planning Forum survey would like to see a more strategic study of what draws people to Linlithgow's High Street, supplemented by comments on the unsightly gap sites.

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 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 detrimental 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



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

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%. It is significant to note that the previously existing DIY store in the High Street has outlived its Stockbridge counterpart and moved to a more central, larger location. Online retailing will inevitably have an impact, but it also provides an opportunity for 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 a regular monthly market 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, a pottery studio, 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 25 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:

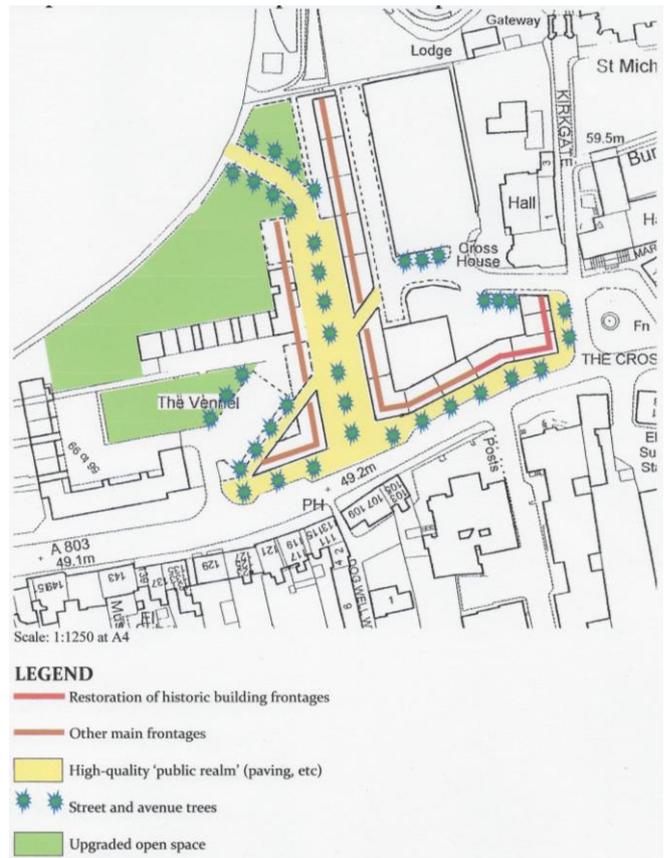
- A wide, traffic-free and tree-lined pedestrian link between the High Street and the loch, lined by buildings of up to four storeys
- Restoration of a more traditional building line along the High Street, with potential to re-create the historic building frontages on at least the west side of The Cross
- 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:

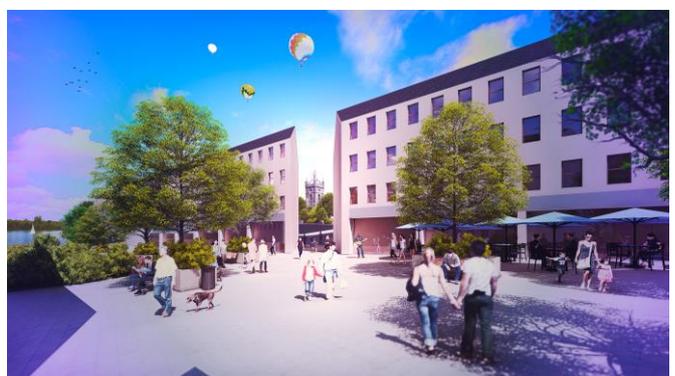
- A rare opportunity to substantially improve the centre of Linlithgow.
- 95% wish to see a design sympathetic to Linlithgow's traditional buildings in terms of built form and building materials, and support new/attractive links between the High Street and the loch, making the area more attractive to 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,



Above: Possible Landscape and Townscape Framework for the Vennel Redevelopment.



A sketch giving an idea of the form (not the architectural design) that the Vennel redevelopment might take, kindly produced by Andrew Taylor of :That Studio, Architects.

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 operation 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**

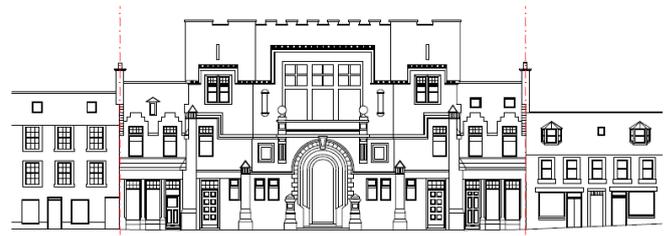
*Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment with ground-floor retail and commercial units and community/youth facilities, housing on upper floors, a hotel and an extended car park, the form of development to include a wide traffic-free link between the High Street and the loch and restoration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

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

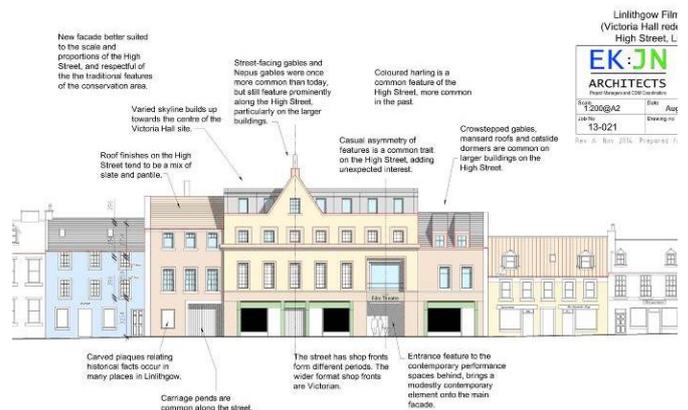
The former Victoria Hall, on the north side of the High Street east of The Cross, was demolished in 2018 after a lengthy period of dereliction, creating the unsightly gap site that a condition attached to a planning permission for redevelopment was intended to prevent. Previous to that, the Linlithgow Victoria Hall Trust had been established to try to expedite redevelopment and pursued the idea of a community theatre/cinema, the subject of a feasibility study financed by members of the local community, but this was stymied when West Lothian Council refused to consider making a necessary compulsory purchase order. The Trust is dismayed that a more recent planning application for two shop units and 16 flats has been allowed to lapse, meaning that once again there is no plan from Montreal Property Ltd, the landowner, to fill the unsightly gap site. It is considered that West Lothian Council should take a much more active role in promoting a suitable redevelopment of the site, especially given its prominent location in an Outstanding Conservation Area.

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

*The Planning Forum urges West Lothian Council to take an active role with a view to achieving a high-quality redevelopment of this prominent gap site in the High Street.*



**SITE FRONTAGE BEFORE DEMOLITION**

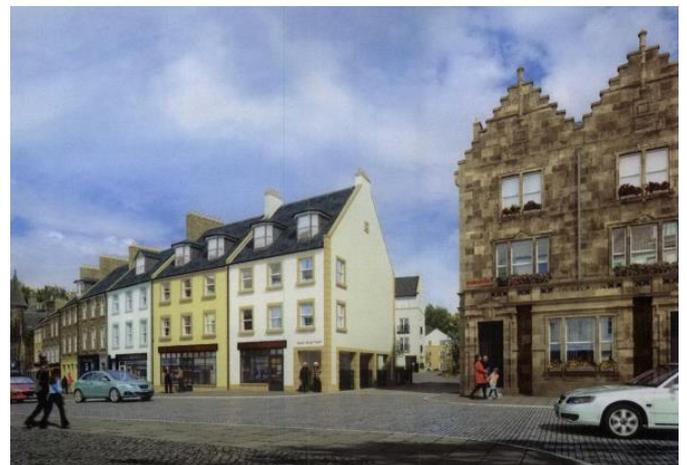


**PROPOSED SITE FRONTAGE**

*'Before' and 'after' drawings of the Victoria Hall site, as proposed in the past by the Linlithgow Victoria Hall Trust.*

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

For around eight 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



*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.*

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 on the previous page. 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).

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 (but changing the content to seven flats).

### ***Proposal TC<sub>3</sub> - Redevelopment of Frontage to The Cross at Templars Court***

*Construction of seven 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 and Public Realm Improvements 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 (2023) the subject of an asset transfer. 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 considers 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 investment 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 has completed the construction of the new West Lothian Cycle Circuit to the south and west, on land to be leased from West Lothian Council.

The planning permission granted in September 2018 allows for 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 and the Linlithgow Athletics Club, amongst others.

#### **Proposal R3 – Additional Facilities at West Lothian Cycle Circuit**

*The Planning Forum supports the above proposals for additional facilities to be provided 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. Using the former designation of 'Areas of Great Landscape Value', the following such areas are identified in this Local Place Plan:



Above: Aerial photograph of the former Avontoun Quarry (Cemex), including Kettilstoun Mains Field, the lagoon and the banks of the River Avon, which is proposed for formal designation as 'green space' (Images Above Ltd at [www.facebook.com/imagesaboveLtd](http://www.facebook.com/imagesaboveLtd)).

- **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 Bonnytoun 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/Maidlands - another 'green wedge' on both sides of the canal, extending out to the countryside (to be provided as part of Proposal H5)
- **broad landscaped strips** on either side of Blackness Road and Edinburgh Road.

Within the town, it is important to preserve as open space a wide range of recreational areas and amenity space. To this end, all such green space should be formally designated and listed.

#### **Proposal R4 – Designation and Listing of Green Spaces**

*The Planning Forum considers that all open spaces and development-free areas coloured green on the Map 2 should be safeguarded from development.*

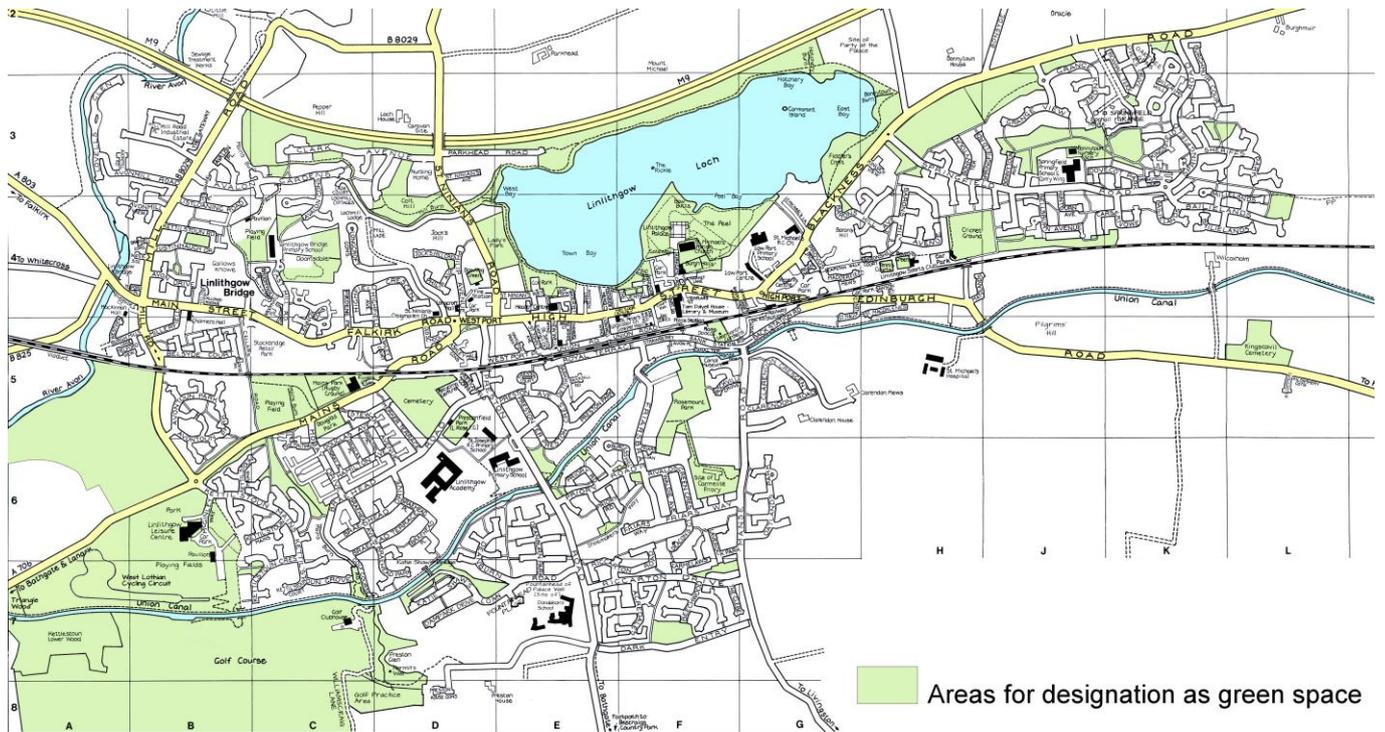
In particular, the local community favours the retention, as green open space, of the former

Avontoun Quarry (now known as Kettilstoun Mains Field), including the lagoon and the banks of the River Avon. Sand and gravel extraction by Cemex on the 38-hectare site ceased in the year 2000, following which a comprehensive habitat restoration and planting management plan was developed and implemented over a ten-year period, funded by private and public organisations. By 2014, a high-quality planting and rewilding scheme was successfully established, earning a nomination for a Mineral Site Restoration Award from the Central Scotland Green Network (and a commendation for Scotland's Finest Woods Award for New Native Woodland). Bearing in mind the advanced stage of site restoration and the considerable use made of the site for recreational purposes, it is considered that it can no longer be regarded as a brownfield site and thus the allocation for housing development made by the Reporter (without any form of public consultation) is superseded by the policy provisions of NPF4 relating to biodiversity, natural places, woodland, 'blue and green infrastructure' and recreation. Accordingly, the whole site should be designated as green space for recreation and the encouragement of biodiversity and wildlife.

#### **Proposal R5 – Preservation as Green Space of Kettilstoun Mains Field, the Lagoon and the Banks of the River Avon**

*It is proposed that this site (formerly a sand and gravel quarry) shall be designated as green space in place of the current designation for housing development in the current West Lothian Local Development Plan.*

## Map 2 – Linlithgow - Areas for Designation as Green Space



[The base map is based upon Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown Copyright 2023 OS 1000XXXX and © R P A Smith.]

### 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 fifteen years with a number of Council facilities 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 R6 - Establishment of a 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 or three secondary schools – Linlithgow Academy (non-denominational) and St Kentigern’s RC Academy in Blackburn (except St pupils who now attend the new Sinclair Academy in Winchburgh). 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 Academy/Sinclair Academy.



*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 should have reduced following the completion of the new non-denominational Winchburgh Academy. 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.

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 by the NHS, is currently closed, but the need for such a facility 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 Local Place Plan for Linlithgow will depend crucially on the realisation of land value, as described earlier in this document. The following table gives an idea of rough development costs which could be met through legal agreements in accordance with Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 with landowners/developers and through other forms of agreement or other means ('Section 75 agreements'). 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 £34 million of development works for the benefit of the community could be raised through the realisation of land value. Based on commercial data (Ryden's Scottish Property

Reviews for 2022 and 2023), the value of greenfield development sites for 50 or more family houses, in and around Edinburgh, lies in the range, £1.25 - £2.25 million per acre. Assuming the lower figure for Linlithgow, it can be deduced that, based on a gross density of 10 houses per acre/25 houses per hectare, the rough value per housing plot may be £125,000.

Assuming for the purposes of this exercise that £50,000 per plot can be extracted from the land value, it would be necessary to build 680 private houses to fund the possible £34 million 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

**Table 5 - Possible Planning Obligations or 'Planning Gains' related to Housing Development**

Proposal Number	Description of Proposal	Notional total cost	Contribution from value of housing land	Other, alternative or additional sources of finance
B1 and T1	Conservation Area Enhancement & Traffic Management to 'Reclaim' the High Street	3,000,000	1,500,000	Heritage Lottery Fund; Historic Environment Scotland
H3	Subsidy for Social-Rented Housing by Housing Associations (50% of usual subsidy of £91,182) - 180 houses at £45,591 per house	16,412,760	8,206,380	Scottish Government (other 50%, bringing total subsidy per house to £91,182)
T2	High Street Relief Road	25,000,000	10,000,000	West Lothian Council as per Cross Tay Link, £118m scheme by Perth & Kinross Council
T5	Blackness Road Roundabouts (eastern roundabout at Burghmuir only)	£125,000	£125,000	
T7	Car Parking at Regent Centre (2 decks above existing) - 250 extra spaces at £10,000 each	2,500,000	1,250,000	ScotRail West Lothian Council Property owner
T12	Cycle Network (outwith new development areas)	300,000	150,000	Sustrans, West Lothian Council
R2	Clarendon Public Park	1,750,000	1,750,000	
R4	Permanent Youth Centre	500,000	500,000	
ED1	New Primary School	12,000,000	10,000,000	West Lothian Council
HE1	Integrated Health Centre	4,000,000	500,000	NHS, West Lothian Council
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£65,587,760</b>	<b>£33,981,380</b>	

### NOTES

1. Proposal T3 - Eastern Link Road (Proposal T3) is taken as part of Housing Proposals H5 and H6, not counted as a 'planning gain'.
2. Proposal T4 - West-facing slip roads at M9 Junction 3 interchange at Burghmuir - estimated £10 million cost would be met by the Scottish Government and by the developers of the Business Park (Proposal E2).
3. Public art and any necessary cemetery provision are covered by Proposals H5/H6 and the 'Looking to the Future' statement on pages 31 and 32 of this Local Place Plan.

well as for 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.

The figure of 700 is slightly higher than the whole-town total of 656 private houses for the period 2024-2034 as shown in Table 4 on page 31. This reflects the fact that the land at Edinburgh Road within the line of the proposed Eastern Link Road (Proposal T3) would be capable of development well beyond the ten-year plan period, and it would be necessary to regulate the pace of development over the longer term through strict Local Development Plan requirements, in order that the available land is not developed all at once.

The figure of 656/700 houses should also be compared with the number of new houses programmed in existing adopted Local Development Plans for other Lothians towns similar in general size or character to Linlithgow: Bo'ness (1,324 houses), Queensferry (approx 1,360), Penicuik/Auchendinny (1,313), North Berwick (805), Haddington (1,509) and Dunbar (1,402).



*Simple diagram to illustrate the elements which make up the final development value of a housing development.*

## 11. Implementation

Many of the proposals in this Local Plan can be developed conventionally and independently, but, in order to achieve proper coordination and logical phasing of the larger-scale housing developments and related infrastructural works, there is a need to go further than simply awaiting piecemeal planning applications from property developers. Instead, it would be essential for landowners, developers and agents to work together with West Lothian Council and/or set up a development consortium or development trust (existing or newly constituted) to oversee and manage the implementation of the relevant proposals.

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 required details for 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 it is 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

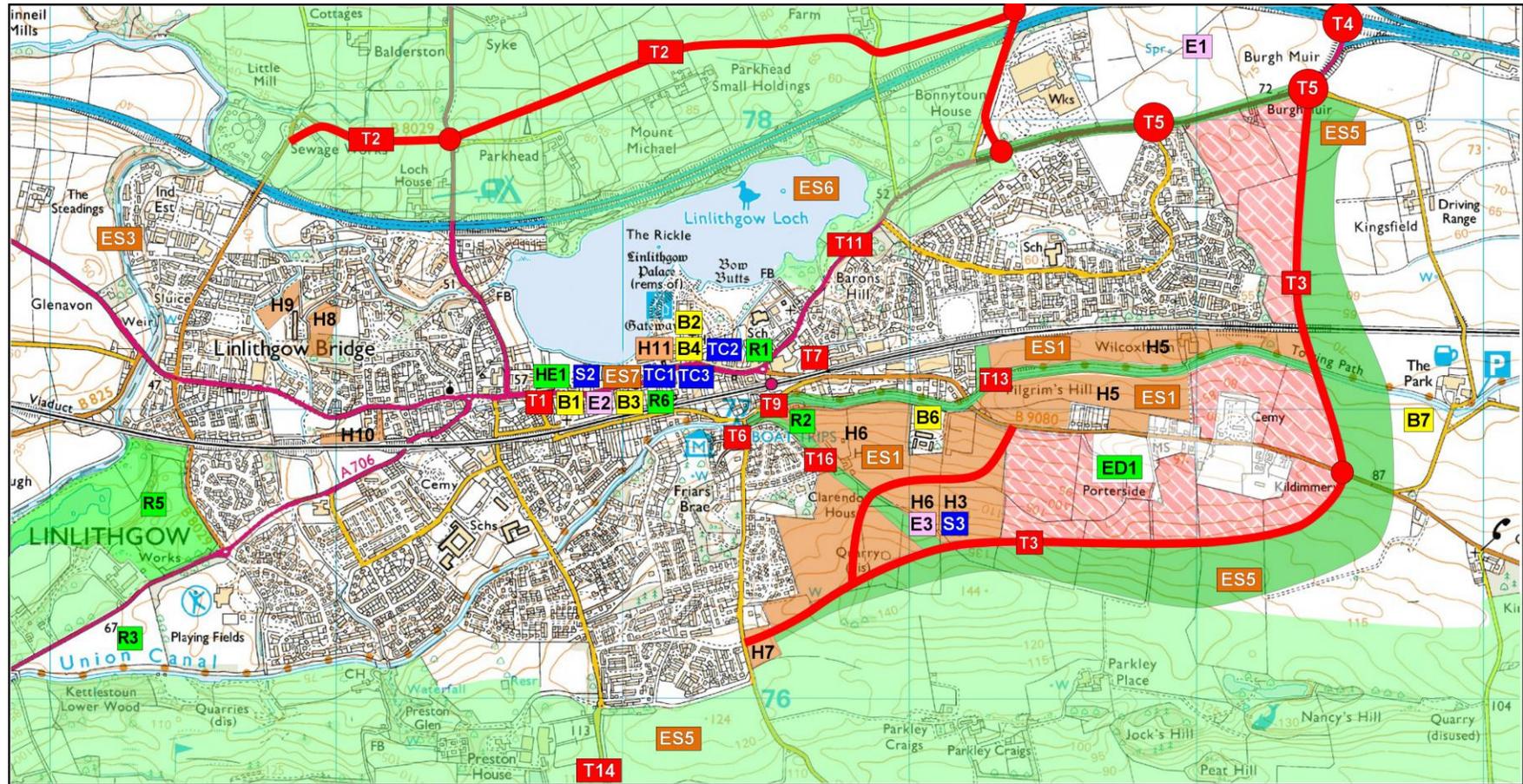
development land. This approach would be in line with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the opportunities afforded by that legislation should be thoroughly investigated.

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/or any development trust, Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council, Linlithgow Civic Trust 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.

# Map 3 - PROPOSALS MAP



## Map Legend and Colour Key

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d9ead3; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Areas of Great Landscape Value                                   | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4cccc; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>Tx</b> Transport/Accessibility Proposals           |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d9ead3; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> 'Green Wedges', Wildlife Corridors and Development Free Areas    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4cccc; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Road Links  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #fce4d6; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>Hx</b> Housing Proposals                                      | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d9ead3; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>Sx TCx</b> Proposals for Retailing and Town Centre |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #fce4d6; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Areas for Housing Development beyond 10 Years (See p 31)         | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d9ead3; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>Rx</b> Community/Recreation Proposals              |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #fce4d6; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>ESx</b> Proposals for Environmental Sustainability            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d9ead3; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>ED1</b> Education Proposal                         |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #fce4d6; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>Bx</b> Proposals for Built/Architectural Heritage and Tourism | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d9ead3; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>HE1</b> Health Facility Proposal                   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #fce4d6; border: 1px solid #000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>Ex</b> Proposals Relating to Business and Employment          |   |

*[The base map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown Copyright 2023 OS 1000XXXXX.]*

# 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 Hydro-Electric Power Plants on the River Avon
- ES4** Sustainable Design of New Developments
- ES5** Small Farms and Tree Planting
- ES6** Mitigation of Loch and Watercourse Pollution
- ES7** 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 the 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 – Doomsdale
- 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** Housing Association 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 and Public Realm Improvements to 'Reclaim' the High Street
- T2** High Street Relief Road
- T3** Eastern Link Road from Burghmuir to Riccarton Drive
- T4** Four-way motorway interchange at Burghmuir
- T5** Roundabouts on Blackness Road at eastern end of Springfield Road and at Kingsfield Road junction
- T6** Relief of Traffic over Canal Bridge at Manse Road
- T7** Decked Car Park at Regent Centre
- T8** Tourist Car Parking Opportunities
- T9** Improvements to Access to the Railway Station and to Rail Services
- T10** Improvements to Bus Services

- T11** Parking for Tourist Buses
- T12** Formation of Cycle Network
- T13** Provision of Cycle Route/Footpath Link between Union Canal Towpath and Maidlands
- T14** Cycle/Footpath Links to Livingston and Bathgate via Beecraigs Country Park
- T15** Modal Share/Active Travel Policy for New Housing Areas
- T16** 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** Additional Facilities at West Lothian Cycle Circuit
- R4** Designation and Listing of Green Spaces
- R5** Preservation as Green Space of Kettilstoun Mains Field, the Lagoon and the Banks of the River Avon
- R6** Establishment of a Permanent Youth Centre
- ED1** New Primary School at Edinburgh Road
- HE1** Creation of Integrated Health Centre

