

## APPENDIX 4



West Lothian  
Council

# West Lothian Council Local Development Plan (LDP) – *Proposed Plan*

## Position Statement: *Local Landscape Designation*

JUNE 2016

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## Non-technical Summary

This statement sets out the council's position in support of its approach to local landscape designation, including policy and identified Special Landscape Areas, as set out in the West Lothian Local Development Plan – *Proposed Plan* (CD093: Pages 41, 42, 268 and Maps 1 - 5) 2015.

Background evidence, the review process and main arguments for Special Landscape Areas as portrayed in the Proposed LDP are set out. Compliance of this spatial designation and related planning policy with regional and national planning policy is demonstrated.

In summary, the key points regarding local landscape designation for West Lothian in the Proposed LDP are:

- the exercise was carried out by Land Use Consultants following a proven methodology and supported by steering group including advisors from Scottish Natural Heritage;
- 7 Special Landscape Areas (SLA) have been identified through an 'all landscape approach' consultancy commission – i.e. not a straight review of existing designations – though the new designations largely correspond to and support the existing Areas of Great Landscape Value;
- Special Landscape Areas offer superior landscape protection through their robust approach to designation, clear identifiable boundaries and 'Statements of Importance' for each SLA;
- the adoption of the single tier approach to landscape protection is in accordance with national guidance and results in the loss of the lower tier of landscape designations known as Areas of Special Landscape Control (AoSLC) though these were largely devised to support environmental and access improvements and many have protection through overlapping designations such as "Countryside Belts" and through the policy framework of the plan ;
- public consultation has been undertaken in parallel with the Proposed Plan; and
- minor additions and deletions to the Special Landscape Areas proposed in the LDP have been itemised, justified and recorded.

Policy ENV 1: *Landscape Character and Special Landscape Areas* continues principles in the adopted local plan, has been condensed into one policy, seeks to accord with best practice and complies with the current national and regional guidance on landscape planning designations.

Unresolved issues arising from representations to the LDP public consultation have been raised regarding the Bathgate Hills SLA and the Blackridge Heights SLA as well as Policy ENV 1 and addressed through Schedule 4s. All issues raised have been addressed in the council's response and no modifications to the proposed plan are recommended.

A systematic approach to review and compliance with national and regional planning policy has been completed to bring forward robust and purposeful local landscape designations and supporting policy for the proposed plan.

The council believes that its position on local landscape designations and Policy ENV 1: *Landscape character & Special Landscapes Areas* in the LDP is sound and justified. There are no outstanding issues in the LDP Schedules 4s. No modifications are required.

In Appendix 5 of the Proposed LDP an Express Statement is provided for subsequent Planning Guidance on "*Landscape Character and Local Landscape Designations*". This is where the council intends to publish finalised citations for each Special Landscape Area - subsequent to the outcome of the LDP Examination - incorporating the West Lothian Landscape Character Classification (CD102, 2014).

## 1.0 West Lothian Local Development Plan context

### 1.1.0 Landscape protection and the Local Development Plan

1.1.1 In support of Examination of the proposed local development plan for West Lothian by the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA), this statement provides background to the council's approach to local landscape designation, including policy protection and identified Special Landscape Areas (SLA). Position Statement: "*Local Landscape Designation*" describes the steps taken by the council to audit its adopted two tier local landscape designation system and progress towards a nationally compliant single tier of Special Landscape Areas to offer protection through designation to identified areas of West Lothian of such merit.

1.1.2 This position statement further advises of the outcome of consultation on the West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review (LLDR, Land Use Consultants, 2013) in parallel with the Main Issues Report in the late summer of 2014. Responses received following consultation have informed the proposed plan for the West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) and its integration with the West Lothian Local Development Plan at proposed plan stage.

1.1.3 Public consultation on the landscape designations and policy as integrated into the West Lothian Local Development Plan – *Proposed Plan* (CD093: Pages 41, 42, 268 and Maps 1 - 5) was undertaken in October and November 2015. The position statement further facilitates the council's response to 'Schedule 4s for Unresolved Issues' arising from the public consultation by consolidating background information and evidence on landscape protection in West Lothian into one document.

1.1.4 The starting point for any review of local landscape designation in Scotland is the 'Guidance on Local Landscape Designations' published by Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic (Environment) Scotland in January 2006. It defines the main terms as follows:

*"Landscape" means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. (CD143, p. 8)*

*"Landscape protection" means actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity. (CD143, p. 8)*

*"Landscape character" means the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape. (CD143, p. 30)*

*"Landscape character assessment" means the process of systematic description, classification and assessment analysis of landscape, in order to identify, describe and understand its character. (CD143, p. 30)*

*"Landscape evaluation" means the process of attaching value to a landscape, through the application of a consistent methodology and agreed criteria. (CD143, p. 30)*

*"Landscape sensitivity" means the degree to which the character and qualities of the landscape are affected by specific types of development and land-use change. (CD143, p. 30)*

## 1.2.0 Adopted local landscape designations in West Lothian

1.2.1 There are no National Scenic Areas designated in West Lothian. The adopted West Lothian Local Plan (CD107, WLLP 2009, pp. 26 - 30) designates six Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and six Areas of Special Landscape Control (ASLC), a two-tier system with AGLVs being the premier designation. The adopted designations are shown in the plan below and are listed as set out in the adopted local plan:

*Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley Area of Great Landscape Value*

*Forth Shore Area of Great Landscape Value*

*Airngarth Hill Area of Great Landscape Value*

*Blackridge Heights Area of Great Landscape Value*

*Almond and Linhouse Valleys Area of Great Landscape Value*

*Pentland Hills Area of Great Landscape Value*

*The Brieich Valley Area of Special Landscape Control*

*Levenseat, South Fauldhouse Area of Special Landscape Control*

*The River Almond Area of Special Landscape Control*

*Livingston Area of Special Landscape Control*

*Boghead House Policies Area of Special Landscape Control*

*Barbauchlaw Glen, Armadale Area of Special Landscape Control*

*Figure 1 – Map of local landscape designations in the West Lothian Local Plan 2009 (source: West Lothian Local Plan 2009) (See end of document for all Figures)*

1.2.2 The policy framework of the adopted local plan (CD107, WLLP 2009, p. 28) is extensive and includes three specific policies which apply to the Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and Areas of Special Landscape Control (ASLC) as below.

### **Policy ENV 19**

*Within the six AGLVs shown on the proposals map there is a presumption against development which would undermine the landscape and visual qualities for which the areas were designated.*

### **Policy ENV 20**

*Development proposals outwith an AGLV which would affect its setting from important viewpoints will be subject to detailed visual appraisal and will not be supported if it adversely affects the designated area.*

### **Policy ENV 21**

*The council will protect the six Areas of Special Landscape Control shown on the proposals map from intrusive development in order to retain their landscape character.*

*The council will promote opportunities to enhance the six Areas of Special Landscape Control and their accessibility to the public for recreational and educational purposes in a manner that does not undermine their landscape character and biodiversity value.*

1.2.3 The first two policies for AGLVs control development within and without the designation and cite protection of their landscape and visual qualities which are related in a short paragraph for each designation. The lower tier policy for Areas of Special Landscape Control offers protection for retention of landscape character whilst encouraging enhancement and access.

### 1.3.0 Update of local landscape protection and policy for the LDP

1.3.1 In January 2013, the council engaged Land Use Consultants to undertake a review of landscape protection from a first principles approach, , rather than a more limited review of existing local landscape designations. A main feature of the approach is the use of landscape character as an established methodology for classifying, analysing and evaluating landscape. A steering group was formed from council officers with the expert guidance of landscape advisors from Scottish Natural Heritage to oversee the process of moving from an outdated set of local landscape designations to a more robust and policy compliant set of landscape designations in accordance with the aims of the project brief and to inform the preparation of the new LDP for West Lothian.

1.3.2 The finalised report for the *West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review* (CD103 – LLDR, Land Use Consultants, 2013) was delivered in June 2013 to the project steering group and produced a single tier of designations to be known as Special Landscape Areas when finally adopted. Seven candidate Special Landscape Areas resulted as listed and shown in map form below:

*Airngarth Hill* candidate Special Landscape Area  
*Forth Coast* candidate Special Landscape Area  
*Avon Valley* candidate Special Landscape Area  
*Bathgate Hills* candidate Special Landscape Area  
*Blackridge Heights* candidate Special Landscape Area  
*Almond and Linhouse Valleys* candidate Special Landscape Area  
*Pentland Hills* candidate Special Landscape Area

*Figure 2 – Map of local landscape designations in the LDP (See end of document for all Figures)*

1.3.3 As can be seen at a glance, the lower tier of Areas of Special Landscape Control has disappeared and the upper tier of Areas of Great Landscape Values have largely been vindicated with some adjustments to their form and the division of the largest AGLV, the unwieldy *Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley* Area of Great Landscape Value, into its constituent parts of the *Avon Valley* candidate Special Landscape Area and the *Bathgate Hills* candidate Special Landscape Area. The detailed reasons for why and how the local landscape designations in the adopted local plan were subjected to review are covered in sections 3.0 and 4.0 of this paper.

1.3.4 Along with the revised local landscape designations, the related policy framework was revised and updated to be compliant with national policy guidance and following examples of best practice. A single policy reflecting the importance of landscape character and linkage to National Planning Framework 3 (CD092, 2014) for the Central Scotland Green Network has emerged and is outlined below.

#### ***Policy ENV 1 Landscape character and special landscape areas***

*Development will not be permitted where it may significantly and adversely affect local landscape character. Where development is acceptable it should respect this landscape character and be compatible in terms of scale, siting and design. New rural development will be required to incorporate design elements to maintain the diversity and distinctiveness of local landscapes and to enhance landscape characteristics where they have been weakened.*

*Within the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) shown on the proposals map there is a presumption against development which would undermine the landscape and visual qualities for which the areas were designated.*

*Development proposals 'outwith' these areas which would affect its setting from strategic viewpoints will be subject to detailed visual appraisal and will not be supported if it adversely affects the designated area.*

*Development proposals which are likely to have a significant landscape impact must be accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment demonstrating that, with appropriate mitigation, a satisfactory landscape fit can be achieved.*

*The council will seek to protect and enhance landscape character and local landscape designations in accordance with Supplementary Guidance 'Landscape character and local landscape designations' and 'Green Networks'.*

## 2.0 Regional & national context

### 2.1.0 Regional context

2.1.1 Working outward from the Local Development Plan, the next planning policy level up is regional policy. The Strategic Development Planning Authority for Edinburgh and South East Scotland (SESplan) adopted its' Strategic Development Plan in 2013 (SDP1) (CD114). However, the SDP is not a guiding document for landscape protection, probably due to the lack of regional or conjoined local landscape designations to designate.

2.1.2 There are eight local landscape designations adjacent to the council's boundary in the neighbouring local authority areas of: City of Edinburgh, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire and Falkirk Councils which have a bearing on the formation of designations in West Lothian. Through the *West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review* (CD103, pp. 31-32), Land Use Consultants illustrate the cross-play of these designations on plan, in table form and in text. At the time of writing, (Spring 2013) neither Falkirk nor North Lanarkshire councils had undertaken a review of their landscape designations following the process set out in the SNH/HS Guidance on Local Landscape Designations (CD143). At that time, Falkirk and North Lanarkshire council's had yet to update their local landscape designations in accordance with national guidance.

2.1.3 Since the LLDR for West Lothian was undertaken, Falkirk Council has produced supplementary guidance in support of its local development plan based on landscape character principles and has renamed and repurposed its existing Areas of Great Landscape Value as Special Landscape Areas. For all intents and purposes, the boundaries of the renamed SLAs for the Falkirk area remain unchanged and are highly unlikely to have any significant effect on the adjacent designations in West Lothian. (CDxxx) SG09 *Landscape Character Assessment & Landscape Designations*, Falkirk Council, July 2015

2.1.4 As far as can be ascertained, North Lanarkshire Council has not updated its local landscape designations and there do not appear to be any which adjoin the West Lothian Council area.

### 2.2.0 National context

2.2.1 The Guidance on Local Landscape Designations produced by Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland in January 2006 (CD143) was a watershed moment for local landscape designations across Scotland because it offered an 'all-landscapes approach' through inclusive use of landscape character assessment across a planning authority area, as opposed to selected areas; and offered roles for local landscape designations to be used as tools for different roles:

- *to safeguard important landscape and landscape features which are particularly valued and may have limited capacity for change;*
- *to promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of the landscape of a local authority area;*
- *to promote some of the most important outdoor settings for recreation and tourism within a local authority area; and*
- *to contribute to wider policies for guiding urban expansion, specifically identifying and safeguarding areas of landscape within, or close to, existing settlements.* (CD143, pp. 12 – 13)

2.2.2 Critically, a clear process for reviewing local landscape designations is detailed through eight key steps:

- I. describe the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape of the local authorities area
- II. develop objectives to underpin all-landscape approach
- III. review role of, and need for, local landscape designation
- IV. develop criteria to select areas of search for designation
- V. identify and agree areas of search
- VI. identify and agree specific areas for designation
- VII. identify and agree boundaries for each area to be designated
- VIII. develop planning and other policies for each designated area. (CD143, p. 20)

2.2.3 The council took heed of this guidance and the process can be seen in detail in the pages of the consultancy report “*West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review*” (CD103, June 2013).

2.2.3 Since the council carried out its consultancy work on local landscape designations, the second version of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP, 2014) (CD078) was released which had greater influence on the policy development stage and finalisation of special landscape areas for the proposed plan. The lead policy principle in the “Valuing the Natural Environment” section (CD078, para. 194) suggests that the planning system should: “*facilitate positive change while maintaining and enhancing distinctive landscape character*”.

2.2.4 Guidance for development plans in Scottish Planning Policy (CD078, paras. 196 -201) sets out the purposes for areas of ‘local landscape value’ as threefold:

- *safeguard and enhance the character and quality of a landscape which is important or particularly valued locally or regionally; or*
- *promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of the local landscapes; or*
- *safeguard and promote important local settings for outdoor recreation and tourism.*

2.2.5 Policy ENV 1 *Landscape character and special landscape areas* and the Special Landscape Areas as set out in Maps 1 – 5 and pages 41 – 42 of the Proposed Plan take cognisance of national guidance. Of note is that most local authorities have preferred the ‘*special landscape area*’ nomenclature to the ‘*areas of local landscape value*’ suggested in SPP (CD078, p. 197).



### **3.0 Reasons for the review of local landscape designations**

#### **3.1.0 Compliance with national policy and landscape character approach**

3.1.1 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP2014, CD078, p. 45) identifies the European Landscape Convention (2000) as a key document in local landscape designation and as the cornerstone of modern landscape protection through a standardised 'landscape character' approach. Landscape character assessment is a process which classifies, evaluates and analyses landscape as a basis for decision making. The aim of SPP2014 is for a consistent, methodical and robust approach yielding a single-tier of local landscape designation across Scotland.

3.1.2 West Lothian's current set of local landscape designations – Areas of Great Landscape Value and Areas of Special Landscape Control – are neither single tier nor based on a landscape character approach. Landscape protection of the Forth coastal area, the Pentland Hills and Torphichen and Bathgate Hills (as they were known) are many decades old and predate the current local authority boundaries and arise from the original guidance for local landscape designations that was prepared by the Scottish Office in 1949.

#### **3.2.0 Deficiencies in current set of landscape designations**

3.2.1 The current set of local landscape designations in West Lothian evolved over many decades and lacked clearly defined boundaries, justification for selection of areas, and clarity over the landscape qualities and values for which they were designated. These weaknesses leave potential for challenges at planning appeal or inquiry.

3.2.2 These and other deficiencies were addressed in the landscape protection section of the adopted local plan (CD107, WLLP 2009, p. 26) and commits the planning authority to undertaking a review of local landscape designations during the plan period. The consultancy project with Land Use Consultants and Scottish Natural Heritage was undertaken to meet this commitment and produced the West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review in June 2013 (CD103).

#### **3.3.0 Mapping issues**

3.3.1 Maps for the earlier style of Local Plans focus on mapping urban change and addressing development issues within or near settlements. Thus, the West Lothian Local Plan does not have an overview map of all the local landscape designations it covers and in the case of the *Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley Area of Great Landscape Value* this designation cannot be viewed in its entirety and exists in sections on five different plans at different scales. This is a very unhelpful position for the assessment of development against local landscape designations.

3.3.2 The current set of adopted local landscape designations exist as paper maps or scanned images. The migration of local landscape designations from static graphics packages to the iterative and digitised Geographical Information Systems further required the review and update of mapping techniques.



## 4.0 Approach to and outcomes of review of local landscape designation

### 4.1.0 Process

4.1.1 The review of local landscape designations in West Lothian is based on the following three documents and accompanying project work:

*Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy Development in West Lothian* (David Tyldesley Associates, December 2011) (CD165) (LCS, DTA)

*West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review* (Land Use Consultants, 2013) (CD103) (LLDR, LUC)

*West Lothian Landscape Character Classification* (West Lothian Council Planning, 2014) (CD102) (WLLCC, WLC Planning)

4.1.2 An update of landscape character classifications for West Lothian was a starting point for the review and a report on revised landscape character classifications in West Lothian was published in 2011 as part of the work undertaken by David Tyldesley Associates for the council's landscape capacity study into wind energy. For the Local Landscape Designation Review, Land Use Consultants (LUC) undertook survey work and analysis which updated and confirmed these classifications and informed the LLDR.

4.1.3 The revised landscape character classification for West Lothian form the baseline for the review of landscape protection and designation for the authority and can be seen in the figures below.

*Figure 3 – List of revised landscape character units (Source: CD 102 – WLLCC, p. 10)*

*Figure 4 – Map of landscape units and types in West Lothian (Source: CD 102 – WLLCC, p. 11)*

(See end of document for Figures and maps)

4.1.4 Land Use Consultants (LUC) undertook the West Lothian LLDR under the direction of a steering group which included representatives from Scottish Natural Heritage and relevant council services. The steering group was keen to support a positive view of the cultural heritage evidenced in West Lothian landscapes from the Neolithic landscape of the Bathgate Hills to the distinctive red shale bings of the recent industrial past.

4.1.5 The methodology followed by Land Use Consultants was based on that set out in the Guidance on Local Landscape Designations (CD143) and comprised five principal stages:

- establishment of the landscape baseline;
- quantitative evaluation of the landscape baseline;
- qualitative analysis of the evaluation results and selection of core areas;
- refinement of core areas through application of practical criteria; and
- written statements of importance.

4.1.6 The LLDR was conducted as an exercise from first principles. A ranking mechanism for qualitative analysis scored the top third of landscape units as strongly correlated to the existing AGLVs. The Western Pentland Hills landscape unit ranked highest at 29/30.

## 4.2.0 Status of documents and landscape designations

4.2.1 The West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review (LLDR, CD103) together with the West Lothian Landscape Character Classification (WLLCC, CD102) act as supporting documents to the proposed plan and have had consideration and approvals through the council's democratic processes as set out below.

4.2.2 The process by which Candidate Special Landscape Areas (cSLA) move forward to becoming Special Landscape Areas (SLA) involves many steps which are set out in the time-line below. Due to the requirements of the spatial strategy for the LDP, effectively the allocation of new sites and identification of required infrastructure, candidate SLA are unlikely to be adopted exactly as recommended through the LLDR report. The LLDR consultancy report is an expert view based primarily on landscape and visual analysis which feeds into the formation of the settled approach to the council's Local Development Plan, along with a range of specialist input on other factors and land uses such as transport, education and employment. Targets for the allocation of land for housing and employment are a prime driver of the shape of the spatial strategy for the LDP with potential sites assessed against a range of factors including the recommended candidate Special Landscape Areas.

4.2.3 In the case of the West Lothian candidate Special Landscape Areas, it is plan requirements and the balancing of the broad range of factors which feed into the formation of the Proposed Plan and at time require the amendment and integration of designations to result in Special Landscape Areas. The LDP Proposed Plan is a material consideration in the determination of any planning applications for development in West Lothian; thus the Special Landscape Areas in the Proposed Plan take a step towards finalisation and adoption. The amended SLAs are shown on LDP Proposals Maps 1-5.

4.2.4 Thus cSLA become SLA through integration with the LDP spatial strategy. The LDP Examination will confirm or make amendments to the Special Landscape Areas in the proposed plan confirming their final boundaries and details. The subsequent publication on-line of the adopted Special Landscape Areas as ratified by council in planning guidance will be the point when existing AGLVs and ASLCs will be superseded by a single tier of robust Special Landscape Areas. Until that time, the current local landscape designations as set out in the adopted West Lothian Local Plan of 2009 remain in force.

**Figure 5 – Time-line of process for progress of local landscape designations from two to single tier stage**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Committee / LDP stage</b>
January – June 2013	<i>West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review</i> (Land Use Consultants, 2013) (CD103) (LLDR, LUC) – consultancy project undertaken led by steering group formed from Scottish Natural Heritage and relevant council officers recommending Candidate Special Landscape Areas (SLA).
5 June 2014	LLDR approved by the West Lothian Council Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) for forwarding to the Council Executive for approval for consultation alongside the Main Issues Report for the West Lothian Local Development Plan.
19 June 2014	The Main Issues Report (MIR) was approved by the Council Executive for consultation (including Candidate SLA in LLDR).
24 August – 17 October 2014	Consultation on LLDR was undertaken in parallel with the MIR publishing Candidate Special Landscape Areas.
14 April 2015	The MIR consultation was reported to the PDSP (including comments related to Candidate SLA in the LLDR).

Autumn 2014 – Summer 2015	Preparation of detailed spatial strategy for the LDP and integration of other spatial designations including any necessary amendments to Candidate Special Landscape Areas.
Spring / Summer 2015	Preparation of the <i>West Lothian Landscape Character Classification</i> (West Lothian Council Planning, 2014) (CD102) (WLLCC, WLC Planning) in support of the LLDR and Proposed LDP.
07 September 2015	Summary of Public Consultation Responses and Proposed Changes to Special Landscape Areas reported to PDSP as an Appendix to the West Lothian Local Development plan – Proposed Plan.
15 September 2015	Council Executive approved the public consultation for the West Lothian Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan (including the West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review).
12 October – 22 November 2015	The Proposed LDP (including Special Landscape Areas) was published on the 12 October 2015 for consultation.
21 June 2016	Approval at Council Executive for the Proposed LDP and supporting documentation to be submitted to Scottish Reporters for LDP Examination stage (including the LLDR & WLLCC, and this Position Statement).
Summer / Autumn 2016 (estimated)	Examination of the proposed plan including supporting documents, examination documents and this Position Statement.
Autumn 2016 / Winter 2017 (estimated)	Preparation of Planning Guidance “ <i>Landscape Character and Local Landscape Designations</i> ”.
Winter 2016 - 2017 (estimated)	Report back from Scottish Reporters on the LDP Examination for West Lothian including confirmation of, or amendments to, Special Landscape Areas.
Winter 2016 – 2017 (estimated)	Publication of Planning Guidance <i>Landscape Character and Local Landscape Designations</i> including finalised Special Landscape Areas.

4.2.5 In Appendix 5 of the Proposed LDP, an Express Statement is provided for Planning Guidance *Landscape Character and Local Landscape Designations* to be produced subsequent to the outcome of the LDP Examination. This planning guidance is where the council intends to publish finalised citations on each Special Landscape Area. It will also incorporate the West Lothian Landscape Character Classification (CD102, 2014) including “Important Viewpoints” as well as identified views from transport routes identified earlier in the Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy (CD166, 2012). The intention is to provide one informative document primarily in on-line form for Landscape and Visual Impact Analysis for the planning application process for users of the council’s planning services.

### 4.3.0 Main outcomes of the review: Candidate Special Landscape Areas

4.3.1 The main finding of the LLDR is the identification of seven Candidate Special Landscape Areas (cSLA) as follows:

- Pentland Hills cSLA
- Almond and Linhouse Valleys cSLA
- Blackridge Heights cSLA
- Avon Valley cSLA
- Bathgate Hills cSLA
- Airngarth Hill cSLA, and
- Forth Coast cSLA.

4.3.2 Critically, Section 7 of the LLDR gives a “*Statement of Importance*” for each of the cSLAs including statements of significance, forces for change, management recommendations and plans showing defensible boundaries. These will be the basis for presentation of the finalised Special Landscape Areas through supplementary guidance.

4.3.3 Further outcomes from the draft LLDR include:

- compliance with national requirements for single tier local landscape designations;
- evaluation of 'views' criteria shows that West Lothian landscapes are highly visible due to the many transport corridors which traverse the area; and
- evaluation of 'settlement setting' criteria shows how landscape setting is vital for local towns and villages throughout West Lothian.

4.3.4 The eventual replacement of the existing AGLVs and ASLCs in the West Lothian Local Plan by Special Landscape Areas through the review of landscape protection in West Lothian is a complex process. Figure 7.9 of the LLDR "*Candidate Special Landscape Areas and Existing Designations*" illustrates the differences between the existing landscape designations and the proposed designations. LUC estimates that the existing coverage of all local landscape designations is 15,830ha, 37% of the council area, with AGLVs covering 13,845ha, most of the total. Coverage by proposed single-tier cSLA is 12,894ha, 30% of the council area. Therefore, while there would be a 7% loss in landscape protection from re-designations there would be a significant increase in quality through the more robust single-tier Special Landscape Areas.

4.3.5 A comparison with existing designations and other relevant factors, such as overlapping designations, has been undertaken to assess the implications of the proposed move to a single-tier. The main findings of this comparison of the existing AGLVs and AoSLCs with the proposed cSLAs are that:

- the seven proposed cSLA reflect the existing AGLVs and provide a stronger basis for their designation through justification and clear boundaries as set out in each *Statement of Importance*; and
- none of the six current AoSLCs are taken forward, however, other protection is available from overlapping spatial designations, development plan policy and potential environmental improvements resulting in a limited loss of protection. Inappropriate areas such as quarries and waste disposal sites have been identified as not warranting landscape protection.

4.3.6 The West Lothian LLDR has been produced to comply with Scottish Government policy and to provide a comprehensive investigation of the appropriate level of landscape designation for West Lothian. The existing local landscape designations – AGLVs and AoSLCs - adopted through the West Lothian Local Plan will remain in force until the proposed cSLAs complete the process for adoption through the West Lothian LDP and associated supplementary guidance.

#### 4.4.0 Public consultation at Main Issues Report stage

4.4.1 The draft LLDR was the subject of public consultation in parallel with the Main Issues Report for the West Lothian LDP. Consultation was undertaken over an eight week period commencing on 25 August and ending on 17 October 2014. Consultation was undertaken with community councils, landowners, developers, key agencies such as SNH and SEPA and with local communities.

4.4.2 Of the 254 comments received on the MIR, 21 were related to the LLDR report and were reported to the council's Development & Transportation Policy and Development Scrutiny Panel tabled in Appendix 1: *Summary of consultations to LLDR*.

4.4.3 Key points to note from the consultation on the LLDR at MIR stage are that:

- the preferred approach to landscape designation as set out in the MIR is well supported;
- support for the alternative approach to landscape designation (i.e. the status quo) as set out in the MIR is limited and unclear;

- the preferred approach to the West Lothian natural environment set out in the MIR for the LDP allows for the usage of LLDR as a criterion with other relevant factors in the consideration of the release of greenfield sites for development;
- there is general support for the methodical and rational approach of the Local Landscape Designation Review; hence, the preferred approach has been refined and is to be taken forward to the Proposed Plan;
- proposed supplementary guidance relating to landscape designations should explain what is meant by candidate Special Landscape Areas (cSLA) and what the process is for a cSLA to become a SLA; and, reflect paragraph 197 of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP2014) on areas of local landscape value and consider the role of local landscapes in West Lothian in contributing to the purposes outlined in the SPP2014; and
- landscape criterion is one of a range of criteria in site assessment for LDP purposes and as SNH states there will *'inevitably be issues where landscape designations about urban areas'*.

4.4.4 No significant issues were raised on the LLDR report or the candidate Special Landscape Areas at MIR stage which could not be addressed through the Proposed LDP or subsequent planning guidance. The general level of positive comments was welcomed at MIR stage.

#### 4.5.0 Integration of Special Landscape Areas with Proposed LDP

4.5.1 It was reported to the 7 September 2015 that a number of changes to Candidate Special Landscape Areas (cSLA) would be required to take them forward from the Main Issues Report as described in the Local Landscape Designation Review to be incorporated into the Proposed Plan.

4.5.2 The main changes required to bring forward and adopt Special Landscape Areas (SLA), arise primarily from the strategic and spatial needs of the LDP. The key amendments require that:

- minor adjustments are to be made to three of the seven candidate Special Landscape Areas;
- several adjustments to the Bathgate Hills cSLA boundaries will be required to accommodate development identified in the spatial strategy for the LDP;
- due to GIS mapping of the new landscape designations for the Proposed Plan, further minor boundary changes to SLAs may be required at supplementary guidance stage to avoid inconsistencies, overlaps or gaps; and
- where these changes to cSLA impinge on high quality landscape, a correspondingly high quality of on-site landscaping will be required, including a detailed landscape plan.

4.5.3 Technical issues including GIS mapping were identified through meetings with planning staff to identify changes to Candidate Special Landscape Areas which would be required to accommodate the allocations required as part of the spatial strategy for proposed plan.

4.5.4 Appendix 1: *Integration of SLAs with LDP* includes two detailed tables which give background and further understanding to the complexities of a wholesale change from an adopted two tier to a single tier system of local landscape designation consistent with national guidance as described in Section 2 of this position statement. The aim of the tables in Appendix 1 is to summarise and identify issues raised by this process.

4.5.5 Table 1 describes the candidate Special Landscape Areas which ranked high enough to be worthy of designation as Special Landscape Areas and which relate well to the adopted Areas of Great Landscape Value which they replace. Table 2 summarises the adopted landscape designations – Areas of Special Landscape

Control - which the process was not able to support with reasons and mitigating circumstances. For further information refer to the following tables in Appendix 1 *Integration of SLAs with LDP*:

TABLE 1: *Amendments to candidate SLA required for integration with proposed plan.*

TABLE 2: *Further background information arising from Local Landscape Designation Review process related to formation of the Proposed LDP.*

#### 4.6.0 Landscape settings and spatial protection of West Lothian towns and villages

4.6.1 The 'Views' and 'Settlement setting' criteria for the assessment of landscape character used in the LLDR (CD103, p. 38, 40) shed a positive light on the role of landscape character and the settings of West Lothian's towns and villages.

4.6.2 The evaluation criteria for 'Views' shows that only the two most incised of the Lowland River Corridor units, the landscape character areas for the Avon and Almond (lower area) Valleys, do not score as 'medium' or 'high' in terms of their visibility, reflecting the limited views inward and outward of the landform. Paragraph 4.9 of the Local Landscape Designation Review states that.....

*This reflects the high visibility of West Lothian from several key transport corridors radiating out from Edinburgh. The M9, M8, A71 and A70, as well as several train lines, all traverse West Lothian, and its landscapes are seen by large numbers of people using these strategic routes. Landscapes containing hills or other upstanding landmark features, such as prominent bings, were ranked most highly.*

(CD103, p. 34)

4.6.3 'Settlement setting' is another of the ten evaluation criteria which positively reflects on the role which landscape setting and landscape character play in supporting the visual environment of towns and villages in West Lothian. The point is made that all but one landscape character area or unit, North-west Pentland Fringe, have a role in settlement setting demonstrating the 'extent of settlement across' the local authority area.

*The hills of West Lothian provide the setting for many of the settlements in the area, and were ranked high. The Pentlands (unit 1) provide a backdrop to several settlements across the southern and central parts, while the Bathgate Hills and fringes (units 5, 20 and 21) form a more immediate setting to Linlithgow, Bathgate, Livingston and Broxburn/Uphall. The Blackridge Heights (unit 12), Greendykes Bing (unit 15), and the Breich Water valley (unit 19) all play key roles in local settlement setting. Otherwise, all but one of the landscape units (unit 2) were ranked medium, reflecting the extent of settlement across West Lothian.*

(CD103, p. 34, para. 4.13)

4.6.4 Section 4.5.0: Spatial protection of West Lothian towns and villages in the LDP in the Position Statement on Countryside Belts (CDxxx) offers information and discussion regarding this topic. Suffice it to say that, there is a range of towns where settlement setting is heavily protected by a range of spatial designations including Special Landscape Areas, and, there is a comparable range of unconstrained communities largely or completely surrounded by 'white land'.

## 5.0 Key issues arising from representations to the LDP in Schedule 4s

### 5.1.0 Schedule 4: 26J - Policy ENV 1: *Landscape character & special landscape areas*

5.1.1 Issues raised in this Schedule 4 concerning the policy component of landscape protection include:

- Policy wording – addition;
- Policy ENV 1 preamble wording – revision;
- Status of supporting documents;
- Housing allocation conflicts with terms of Policy ENV 1;
- West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review – omission of landscape protection from areas adjacent to Westfield and Bridgecastle; and
- West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review – omission of landscape protection from woodland in Barbauchlaw Glen.

5.1.2 The Schedule 4 states in summary that the council does not agree to any modifications of Policy ENV 1 in response to the above representations. For further details see Schedule 4 – 26J Policy ENV 1: *Landscape character & special landscape areas*.

### 5.2.0 Schedule 4: 1B - Spatial designations for local landscape protection and Countryside Belts

5.2.1 Issues raised in this Schedule 4 concerning local landscape designation for the Bathgate Hills and Blackridge Heights include:

#### *Bathgate Hills Special Landscape Area – issues at Linlithgow*

- Objections / reservations to site H-LL 12 Preston Farm, Linlithgow on the basis that it has AGLV status / recommended as Special Landscape Area;
- Object to site H-LL 12 Preston Farm, Linlithgow on the basis that it is “Green Belt”;
- Objections to site H-LL 4, Manse Road on the basis of loss of local landscape protection; and
- Objections to site H-LL 11 Wilcoxholm on the basis of landscape impact.

#### *Bathgate Hills Special Landscape Area – support at Linlithgow*

- Support for current areas of landscape protection for Linlithgow; and
- Support for site H-LL 12 Preston Farm, Linlithgow on the basis of acceptable landscape mitigation / outcomes.

#### *Bathgate Hills Special Landscape Area – issues at Bathgate*

- Objections to extension of local landscape protection in vicinity of EO1 – 126 Dykeside Farm, Bathgate.

#### *Blackridge Heights Special Landscape Area – issues*

- Objection to removal and reduction of local landscape protection in vicinity of Westfield and Bridgecastle.



5.2.2 The Schedule 4 summary states that with respect to Special Landscape Areas as set out in the Proposed Plan, the council does not agree to any modifications. For further details see the relevant sections of Schedule 4: 1B - *Spatial designations for local landscape protection and Countryside Belts*.

5.2.3 There were five local landscape designations as set out in the Proposed LDP where no issues or challenges were received:

- Airngarth Hill Special Landscape Area;
- Almond and Linhouse Valleys Special Landscape Area;
- Avon Valley Special Landscape Area;
- Forth Coast Special Landscape Area; and
- Pentland Hills Special Landscape Area.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

### **6.1.0 Local landscape designation**

6.1.3 The West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review project of early 2014 is the first rigorous study undertaken across West Lothian since the landscapes were designated for protection with the importance of the Forth coast, Bathgate and Pentland Hills landscapes recognised as early as the end of the Second World War.

6.1.2 The updated Landscape Character Classification of West Lothian and the Local Landscape Designation Review are integral to the formation of the West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) and other initiatives and service requirements across the council where landscape character is used as a baseline.

6.1.3 Through a clear methodology, landscape analysis and evaluation process, a robust and coherent single-tier of Special Landscape Areas has been produced.

### **6.2.0 Finalisation of Special Landscape Areas**

6.2.1 Candidate Special Landscape Areas as consulted upon at the Main Issues Report stage and identified in the West Lothian LLDR have, with minor amendments in support of the spatial strategy for the LDP, were published in amended form as Special Landscape Areas in the Proposed Plan for the LDP. The amended SLAs are shown on Proposed LDP Maps 1-5.

6.2.2 Finalisation of Special Landscape Areas will occur through the outcome of the LDP Examination and their subsequent publication on-line in planning guidance when existing AGLVs and AoSLCs will be superseded by a single tier of robust Special Landscape Areas. Until that time, the current local landscape designations as set out in the adopted West Lothian Local Plan of 2009 remain in force.

6.2.3 The project to revise the adopted local landscape designations will have achieved its aims when the new set of Special Landscape Areas come into force as adopted designations for landscape protection.

## References

CD143 – *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations* (Scottish Natural Heritage / Historic Scotland, 2006)

CD107 – *West Lothian Local Plan* (West Lothian Council, 2009)

CD165 - *Landscape Study for Wind Energy Development in West Lothian* (David Tyldesley Associates, December 2011)

CD103 - *West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review* (Land Use Consultants, 2013)

CD114 – *Edinburgh and South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan* (SESplan, 2013)

CD078 – *Scottish Planning Policy* (Scottish Government, 2014)

CD094 – *Main Issues Report: West Lothian Local Development Plan* (West Lothian Council, 2014)

CD102 - *West Lothian Landscape Character Classification* (WLC Planning, 2014)

CD093 – *West Lothian Local Development Plan* (Proposed Plan) (and supporting documents including SEA) (West Lothian Council, 2015)

## APPENDIX ONE: *Integration of Special Landscape Areas with Proposed LDP*

**TABLE 1: Summary of amendments to candidate SLA required (cSLA) for integration with proposed plan**

Proposed change to candidate SLA for progress to Special Landscape Area	LDP formation source of potential change	Justification & mitigation if required to adopt as Special Landscape Area	Mapping change
<b>Pentland Hills cSLA</b>			
No change.			
<b>Almond and Linthouse Valleys cSLA</b>			
No change.			

Proposed change to candidate SLA for progress to Special Landscape Area	LDP formation source of potential change	Justification & mitigation if required to adopt as Special Landscape Area	Mapping change
<b>Blackridge Heights cSLA</b>			
No change.			
<b>Avon Valley cSLA</b>			
H-WF 1 North Logie Brae & South Logie Brae, Westfield – remove small section of cSLA where site extended across B8047	LDP proposed housing site	To accommodate land adjacent former papermill site and improve east entrance to village  Appropriate high quality of on-site landscape will be required including a detailed landscape plan	Yes – GIS database
<b>Bathgate Hills cSLA</b>			
H-LL 4 Land east of Manse Road, Linlithgow – remove small section of cSLA	LDP proposed housing site	Housing site is to go forward to support LDP housing allocation and strategy  Appropriate high quality of on-site landscape will be required including a detailed landscape plan	Yes – GIS database
H-LL 10 Clarendon Farm with amended boundary, Linlithgow – remove small section of cSLA	DPEA/ LDP proposed housing site	DPEA appeal (PPA-400-2046) decision indicates that although of some landscape value; with appropriate screening and landscape design housing development could go forward at this site  Appropriate high quality of on-site landscape will be required including a detailed landscape plan	Yes – GIS database
H-LL 12 Preston Farm site with amended boundary, Linlithgow – remove small section of cSLA	LDP proposed housing site	A housing allocation at Preston Farm of a smaller scale than that identified in the MIR is proposed for inclusion in the LDP to support LDP housing requirements and the spatial strategy for the LDP  Appropriate high quality of on-site landscape will be required including a detailed landscape plan	Yes – GIS database

Proposed change to candidate SLA for progress to Special Landscape Area	LDP formation source of potential change	Justification & mitigation if required to adopt as Special Landscape Area	Mapping change
H-DE 3 Burnhouse, Dechmont – remove small section of cSLA	LDP proposed housing site	A housing allocation at Burnhouse is proposed for inclusion in the LDP as a site to assist delivery of the adjacent Bangour Hospital site.  Appropriate high quality of on-site landscape will be required including a detailed landscape plan	Yes – GIS database
<b>Airngarth Hill cSLA</b>			
No change.			
<b>Forth Coast cSLA</b>			
E-LW 1 Newton North Newton by South Queensferry - remove small section of cSLA to accommodate site	LDP proposed employment site	For continuity with WLLP and clarity it is proposed to alter the cSLA boundary to reflect.	Yes – GIS database

**TABLE 2: Further background information arising from Local Landscape Designation Review process related to formation of the Proposed LDP**

N.B. References relate to CD103 - *West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review* (Land Use Consultants, 2013)

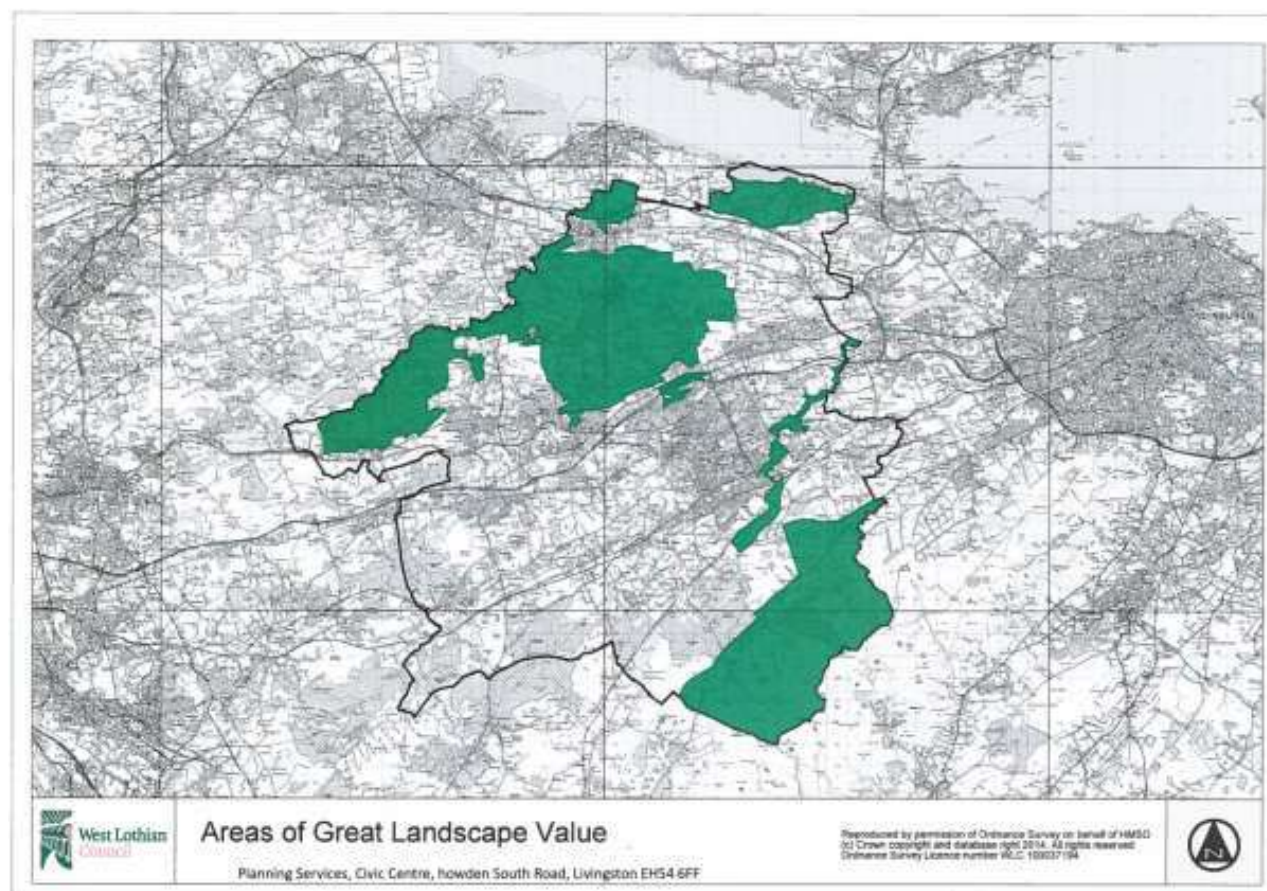
LLDR Issue	Details (LLDR source location)	Comments  Potential actions for MIR and / or LDP
Livingston ASLC - not designated as cSLA	Acceptable change as entirely covered by Open Space and Countryside Belt designations; ranked below cSLA designation cut-off.	No action required
Levenseat ASLC - not designated	Acceptable change: no overlapping designations; not appropriate to have designation partly focused on Levenseat Quarry; ranked below cSLA designation cut-off.	No action required
Breich Valley ASLC - not designated	Acceptable change; other designations present i.e. Skolie Burn SSSI, North Addiewell Bing Scottish Wildlife Nature Reserve; ranked below cSLA designation cut-off.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy support for water environment and biodiversity protection</li> <li>Include as initiative in CSGN</li> </ul>
River Almond ASLC - not	Acceptable change; overlaps with parts of Countryside Belts at Whitburn, Blackburn and Livingston; Polkemmet Park in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy support for water environment</li> </ul>

designated	west; ranked below cSLA designation cut-off.	<p>and biodiversity protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider with review of Countryside Belts</li> <li>▪ Include as initiative in CSGN</li> </ul>
Boghead House Policies ASLC - not designated as cSLA	Acceptable change as entirely overlapped by Bathgate-Whitburn Countryside Belt designation; ranked below cSLA designation cut-off.	Consider with review of Countryside Belts
Barbauchlaw Glen ASLC - not designated cSLA	Acceptable change; ranked below cSLA designation cut-off.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policy support for water environment and biodiversity protection</li> <li>▪ Include as initiative in CSGN</li> </ul>

## FIGURES / MAPS

**Figure 1 – Map of local landscape designation in the West Lothian Local Plan 2009**

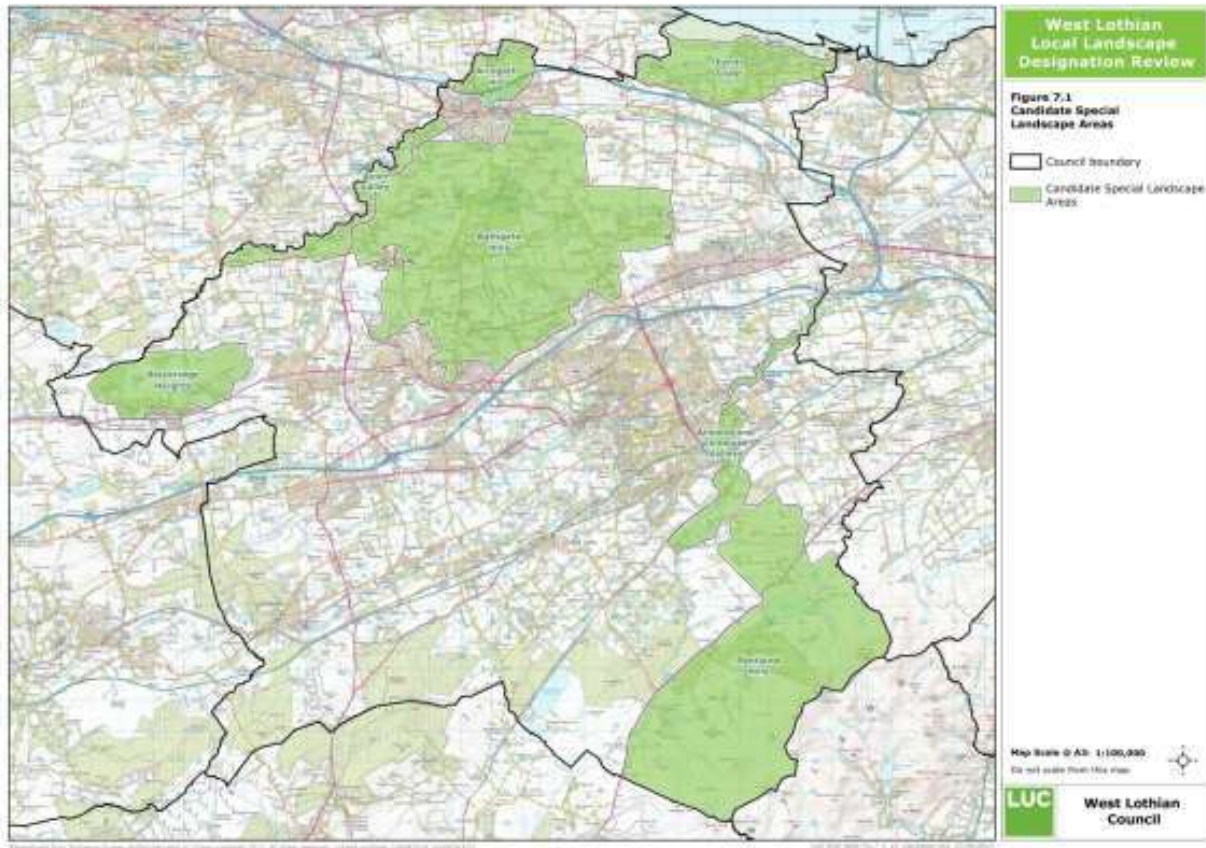
(P. 3 - text reference, p. CD107, mapping)





**Figure 2 – Map of local landscape designation in the LDP**

(P. 5 - text reference; CD103,LLDR)



**Figure 3 – List of revised landscape character units***(P. 8 - text reference; CD102, p. 10)*

No.	Landscape unit name	Landscape type
1	Western Pentland Hills	Upland Hills
2	North-west Pentland Fringe	Upland Hill Fringes
3	Gladsmuir/Woodmuir/Camilty Fringe	Upland Hill Fringes
4	Harburn/Hartwood Fringe	Upland Hill Fringes
5	Bathgate Hills	Lowland Hills & Valleys
6	Upper Almond Valley	Broad Valley Lowlands
7	Coustoun Valley	Broad Valley Lowlands
8	Polkemmet Moor	Lowland Plateaux
9	Armadae / Bathgate Plateau	Lowland Plateaux
10	Livingston / Blackburn Plateau	Lowland Plateaux
11	Avonbridge to Armadae Plateau Edge	Lowland Plateaux
12	Blackridge Heights	Lowland Plateaux
13	Kirknewton Plain	Lowland Plains
14	East Calder / Livingston / Broxburn Plain	Lowland Plains
15	Winchburgh/Niddry Plain	Lowland Plains
16	Avon Valley	Lowland River Corridors
17	Almond Valley	Lowland River Corridors
18	Murieston / Linhouse / Camilty Waters	Lowland River Corridors
19	West Calder Burn and Breich Water	Lowland River Corridors
20	Linlithgow Fringe	Lowland Hills Fringes
21	Bathgate Hills Fringe	Lowland Hills Fringes
22	West Lothian Coastal Farmlands	Coastal Margins
23	West Lothian Coastal Hills	Coastal Margins



**Figure 4 – Map of landscape units and types in West Lothian**

(P. 8 - text reference; CD102, p. 11)

