

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL

FOOD GROWING STRATEGY 2020 – 2025

REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to make the panel aware of the content of the new Food Growing Strategy for the period 2020-2025 and to highlight to the panel the plans for the document going forward. Also to seek approval for submission to the Council Executive for approval.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Environment PDSP:

- (i) note the content of the Food Growing Strategy 2020-2025
- (ii) support the submission of the Strategy to Council Executive for approval

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

- | | |
|---|---|
| I Council Values | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focusing on our customers' needs;• being honest, open and accountable• providing equality of opportunities;• making best use of our resources;• working in partnership |
| II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment) | <p>The purpose of this report is to create a new council strategy.</p> <p>The council has a statutory duty to produce a Food Growing Strategy through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, part 9 Allotments</p> <p>Food growing is considered as Active Open Space, therefore the new guidance is in line with the Open Space Plan and it is not anticipated that there will be a requirement to make it the subject of separate Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).</p> |
| III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers | None |
| IV Impact on performance and | Comes under performance indicators for Open |

performance Indicators	Space
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	<p>Outcome 2. We are better educated and have access to increased and better quality learning and employment opportunities</p> <p>Outcome 3. Our economy is diverse and dynamic, and West Lothian is an attractive place for doing business</p> <p>Outcome 4. We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities</p> <p>Outcome 7. We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities</p> <p>Outcome 8. We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.</p>
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	<p>Resources / funding will be required to support community food growing groups, to establish and manage projects. This will be predominantly externally funded, with some support required from the council.</p> <p>There will be an increase in the variety of Open Space assets overall.</p>
VII Consideration at PDSP	-
VIII Other consultations	<p>Planning Services has been consulted</p> <p>Public consultation required</p>

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

In support of community growing, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (CEA), Part 9, Section 119 requires each local authority to prepare a Food-Growing Strategy for its area to identify land that may be used as allotment sites, identify other areas of land that could be used for community growing, and describe how the authority intends to increase provision, particularly in areas which experience disadvantage. Part 9 also places a duty on local authorities to review the Food Growing Strategy at least once every five years.

The Food Growing Strategy prepared has been created to fit these criteria as well as fit in with the council's revised Open Space Plan, which provides a strategic vision for the provision, development, regeneration and management of open space within West Lothian. This new West Lothian Food Growing Strategy replaces the council's Allotment Strategy.

D.2 Content of the Strategy

The overall purpose of the food growing strategy is to provide a rationale and some key actions which will promote and make it easier for people in West Lothian to grow their own food, principally in community food-growing settings.

The strategy highlights the benefits of food growing, to ensure that everyone understands the relevance of 'growing your own' today. It also raises awareness of all the different methods of growing, so that residents can be inspired to choose a method that is most suitable for them. It lists all the existing known community food growing initiatives across West Lothian as of 2019/20, and outlines how food growing is currently supported and what the issues are.

Significantly, the strategy outlines what the council will do to identify new opportunities for growing, the processes required to establish new food growing sites, and what support the council and partners can give to community food growing initiatives over the next 5 years.

Where there is demand, the council will seek to enable the different kinds of community food growing initiatives on council-owned land, in existing open spaces. Various council services will be required to give support to food growing initiatives, and we will also signpost and work in partnership with outside agencies.

To plan for the future, food growing sites are classed as 'active open space' and potential spaces should either be earmarked as part of Open Space requirements in new developments, or, where developer contributions are required through Section 75 or 69 agreements, these may be used for developing food growing sites outwith the development.

A new Standard for allotments (5 allotment plots per 1000 households) will enable the council to plan provision for the future and aligns with the council's current financial commitments to Open Space, to 2028.

The Strategy establishes a clear approach to community food growing in West Lothian, based on a shared vision. In addition, the Strategy will help inform and support important related strategic initiatives, such as the Anti-Poverty Strategy, Climate Change Adaptation plan and food security policies. It also conforms with the council's agreed Ecosystems Approach to land management.

The actions within this Strategy are intended to be carried out within current council staffing and resourcing, also through the work of external partners, and by drawing in funding from external grants. However, due to the substantial costs of setting up sizeable new allotment sites, some capital may need to be dedicated to food growing, in order to demonstrate council commitment and to lever in external, matched funding. In which case, council funding will be sought to cover site set-up costs.

E. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This Food Growing Strategy sets out a clear rationale and key actions for promoting, facilitating and sustaining increased food growing opportunities for the communities of West Lothian. It was developed with substantial community input and we seek to take it to the Council Executive for formal approval.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

1. WLC Open Space Plan 2020-25
2. Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
3. Becoming a Good Food Nation 2014 – national food and drink policy

Appendices/Attachments:

West Lothian Food Growing Strategy 2020 - 2025

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Jim Jack, Head of Operational Services

Date of meeting: 1 June 2021

West Lothian **FOOD GROWING STRATEGY**



Killandean Allotments

2020-2025

Open Space Plan - Annex B

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (CEA), Part 9, Section 119 requires each local authority to prepare a food-growing strategy for its area, to identify land that may be used as allotment sites, identify other areas of land that could be used for community growing, and to describe how the authority intends to increase provision, particularly in areas which experience disadvantage. Food growing strategies must be reviewed at least once every five years.

Above and beyond these legal requirements, the overall purpose of this food growing strategy is to provide a rationale, establish key processes and identify significant actions which will promote and make it easier for people in West Lothian to grow their own food, principally in community food-growing settings.

What do we mean by Food Growing?

'Food growing' in this document means the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs and/or flowers, in open spaces that are on public land. The Community Empowerment Act doesn't cover allotments and community growing projects on non-council land, or private gardens. However, this strategy does acknowledge the numerous existing community growing initiatives on non-council ground in West Lothian and can be used to encourage people to grow food in these other spaces as well.

There are many different ways to grow within the community, all offering varying degrees of commitment and support: from fruit trees in public parks through institutional growing sites (e.g. hospitals / schools), community gardens and through to individual plots on allotment sites.

Context in local policies and plans

Food growing sites are identified as 'active open space' within the West Lothian Open Space Plan and this strategy forms an annex to the overall Open Space Plan, which also informs the Local Development Plan. Other local policies and plans relevant to this strategy include the West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018-2023, West Lothian Climate Change Adaptation Plan, the West Lothian Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2013-23, and the NHS Lothian Green Space and Health Strategic Framework (2019).

Multiple benefits of food growing

The multiple benefits of local community food growing initiatives are outlined in the plan, including: Environmental benefits – enhancing biodiversity and promoting sustainable land use, mitigating against climate change, building resilience to the effects of climate change and reducing packaging; Social benefits - enhancing physical and mental health, providing learning opportunities, building community cohesion, reducing health inequalities; Economic benefits – reduced costs for households, boosting the local economy, helping to address local food poverty, providing productive activity.

The existing picture of food growing in West Lothian

The strategy provides a snapshot of the current picture of food growing in 2019/20, including an audit of existing community food growing sites and organisations who support food growing in West Lothian. At the time of writing, there are currently 2 council and 5 private allotment sites, 9 community growing initiatives on public lands and 3 on private land and 1 social enterprise farm.

It is clear that partnership working between third sector, public sector and private sector organisations is key to providing land and also skills, training and support for community food growing. As the operational side of food growing in West Lothian is constantly evolving, updates on initiatives throughout the next 5 years will be posted on the council's food growing webpage www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing

Barriers to growing

The barriers to community food growing have been identified through stakeholder feedback. They include, on a site level - identifying and securing suitable land for sites, land contamination, soil tests and planning applications, site set-up costs and access/utilities; on an individual level - a lack of skills, lack of time, lack of available plots, lack of wider community support for growing, lack of volunteers to set up sites, no garden/space, cost of buying materials, lack of information about where to grow and health issues.

Addressing barriers

The council will work to address the barriers identified through: updating the council allotment waiting list process, sharing and updating information on the council food growing webpage, identifying potential land for community growing in the strategy, help with soil testing and planning application costs, and addressing access issues where possible; we will work in partnership with other organisations to signpost to useful information/initiatives, support the formation of groups, help them to access funding in order to manage sites and provide training, facilitate knowledge-sharing and peer-learning throughout the area, promote the different kinds of food growing and encourage partnership working between community groups.

Identifying land for growing

Categories of council-owned land that could be used for new growing initiatives are outlined in the strategy. Priority geographic areas have been identified by mapping the spatial distribution of existing food growing opportunities and identifying where the gaps are – predominantly in the west of West Lothian. A new standard of ensuring 5 allotment plots per 1000 households is defined, based on existing provisions and current waiting lists, to ensure that the council can plan for future opportunities – both spatially and in relation to the number of predicted households in the area. This means that, in partnership with local communities, up to 3 allotment sites could be established within the next 5 years, depending on the level of demand.

Monitoring and reviewing progress

The strategy will be informally reviewed annually through discussions with stakeholders. The Community Empowerment Act requires the council to produce an annual allotment report, which will be presented to the Environment PDSP. More formal stakeholder reviews will take place every 4-5 years, before updating the strategy for the next 5 years.

Investment required to put the strategy into practice

Establishing new sites and supporting food growing groups will require some resource – both capital, for infrastructure set-up, and time/revenue for officers to support groups. It is anticipated that external funds will be sought to cover the majority of costs for establishing new council-owned sites, however, some council commitment is required to lever in the substantial external funding required for setting up allotment sites in particular. This would take the form of a council commitment to cover set-up costs such as soil testing, planning applications, reasonable site access, drainage and fencing for new council allotment sites.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Growing your own food and organic growing are seeing a resurgence in popularity, with Climate Change emergencies being declared by many local authorities, including West Lothian Council. With growing awareness about where our food comes from and a rising interest in vegetarianism, there is an increasing movement towards more locally sourced food and growing your own fresh produce. People are also experimenting with new ways of growing food in quantity, and are (re)discovering a wider variety of edible plants. There is also a need to address the health of the general population, health inequalities and food poverty. Attitudes are also changing: we are beginning to recognise the important functions of biodiversity and natural systems in sustaining both our economy and our health and wellbeing. All these factors are leading to a need to find new ways and places to grow within the urban environment – closer to where people live – and this offers opportunities for community growing, social enterprise and small business.
- 1.1.2 In support of community growing, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (CEA), Part 9, Section 119 requires each local authority to prepare a food-growing strategy for its area to identify land that may be used as allotment sites, identify other areas of land that could be used for community growing, and to describe how the authority intends to increase provision, particularly in areas which experience disadvantage. Part 9 also places a duty on local authorities to review the Food Growing Strategy at least once every five years.
- 1.1.3 Other specific legislation that will affect food growing is the national food and drink policy, [Becoming a Good Food Nation](#), which was published in 2014 by the Scottish Government. This policy sets out a new vision for Scotland: that by 2025 Scotland will be “a Good Food Nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day.” Legislation is currently being prepared to ensure the concept of a “Good Food Nation” is put into action across the country. Community food growing is one of many ways in which people can learn about food and the food system, and to provide access to good quality fresh food. It is expected that this Food Growing Strategy will also help West Lothian Council to fulfil new duties arising from the “Good Food Nation” legislation.

1.2 Purpose of the Strategy

- 1.2.1 The overall purpose of this food growing strategy is to provide a rationale, establish key processes and identify significant actions which will promote and make it easier for people in West Lothian to grow their own food, principally in community food-growing settings. The strategy highlights the benefits of food growing, to ensure that everyone understands the relevance of 'growing your own' today. It also raises awareness of all the different methods of growing, so that residents can be inspired to choose a method that is most suitable for them. It lists all the existing known community food growing initiatives across West Lothian as of 2019/20*, and outlines how food growing is currently supported and what the issues are. And significantly, it outlines what the council will do to identify new opportunities for growing, the processes required to establish new food growing sites, and what support the council and partners can give to community food growing initiatives over the next 5 years.

*A regularly updated list can be found on the council's food growing webpage: www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing

1.3 Scope of the Strategy

- 1.3.1 The Community Empowerment Act 2015 Part 9, 119 defines a local authority Food Growing Strategy as a document:

(3) (a) identifying land in its area that the local authority considers may be used as allotment sites,

(b) identifying other areas of land in its area that could be used by a community for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers,

(c) describing how, where the authority is required to take reasonable steps under section 112(1), the authority intends to increase the provision in its area of—

(i) allotments, or

(ii) other areas of land for use by a community for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers, and

(d) containing such other information as may be prescribed.

And when describing the matters required in paragraph (c), describe whether and how the authority intends to increase the provision of land in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage.

- 1.3.2 Beyond these legal requirements, this 5-year West Lothian Food Growing Strategy aims to promote food growing in many different ways across West Lothian and to support communities in whatever form of growing projects suit them best. This ranges from

allotments and community gardens to planters in public open spaces and also more informal food growing, such as fruit trees in parks and berry bushes in woodlands.

1.3.3 West Lothian already has some very good examples of these kinds of initiatives– e.g. Killandean Allotment site in Livingston, Polbeth and West Calder Community Garden, Winchburgh Community Growing Group (who have planters throughout Winchburgh) and fruit trees planted in parks by the Friends of Kirkton Park in Bathgate and Burgh Beautiful in Linlithgow.

1.3.4 The council is keen to support more initiatives, but with a limit on resources this can only be done through co-operation - working together with all our existing partners and seeking new partners. Partnership working is key to delivering the strategy.



Deansmeadow allotments

1.4 What do we mean by Food Growing?

‘Food growing’ in this document means the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs and/or flowers, in open spaces that are on public land. The Community Empowerment Act doesn’t cover allotments and community growing projects on non-council land, or private gardens. However, it doesn’t prohibit this strategy from acknowledging private community growing spaces or encouraging people to grow food in these other spaces as well, for example through the council’s annual West Lothian Gardens Competition.

1.5 Local Policies and Plans that influence local food growing

This strategy links with many other policies and plans for West Lothian:

- 1.5.1 *West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) (2018)*. Each council area across Scotland is required to produce a Local Development Plan, to ensure a planned approach to land use and all development across the area. It details areas for new development, such as housing, and areas to be protected, such as active open spaces (including food growing areas), throughout West Lothian. It also includes policies that guide decisions on planning applications.
- 1.5.2 Policy ENV 15 relates to Community Growing and Allotments. It explains that community growing spaces will be supported where there is no detriment to the existing recreational use or natural heritage, biodiversity or landscape provisions and adjacent uses and the proposals can be shown to be self-sustaining and free of additional revenue implications for the council.
- 1.5.3 Policy ENV 16 (page 49) relates to Stalled Spaces and Vacant/Derelict Land. It states that *“Allocated development sites that are taking time to be developed will be considered for temporary / advance green infrastructure works..... which bring environmental and community benefits in the short term”*. Community gardens are listed as a valid use of ‘temporary greening’ in paragraph 185.
- 1.5.4 Policy EMG 6 (page 71), paragraph 260 states that *“The greening of vacant and derelict land is encouraged by this plan. A wide range of environmental measures to green and enhance vacant and derelict land will be promoted and supported. In addition, development of or exceeding 2 hectares on vacant and derelict land for sustainable drainage systems or allotments will be treated as national development and supported in principle.”*
[https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/27735/Adopted-West-Lothian-Local-Development-Plan/pdf/West Lothian Local Development Plan - Adopted final.pdf](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/27735/Adopted-West-Lothian-Local-Development-Plan/pdf/West%20Lothian%20Local%20Development%20Plan%20-%20Adopted%20final.pdf)
- 1.5.5 *West Lothian Open Space Plan 2020-24*. This Food Growing Strategy constitutes Annex B of the Open Space Plan (OSP). The OSP provides an overall vision for the provision, development, regeneration and management of open spaces throughout West Lothian,

including community growing spaces (considered as 'active open space') and can be viewed online at: <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/34125/Open-Space-Strategy>

- 1.5.6 *West Lothian Allotment Strategy*. West Lothian Council previously had an allotment strategy from 2010-15. This arose from the West Lothian Open Space Strategy 2005-10 and was always intended to be an interim strategy, as other legislation was emerging. This Food Growing Strategy (2020-25) replaces the Allotment Strategy.
- 1.5.7 *West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018-2023*. The Anti-Poverty Strategy's overall purpose is to help minimise the impact of poverty on the people of West Lothian. It sets out how the council and its Community Planning Partners will address poverty at a local level. It can be viewed online at: <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/anti-poverty> Community food growing, especially in areas of disadvantage, is recognised as helping to improve physical and mental health as well as improving access to fresh fruit and vegetables.
- 1.5.8 *West Lothian Climate Change Adaptation Plan*. All local authorities are required to produce a Climate Change Adaptation Plan. The West Lothian Adaptation Plan includes actions to ensure that the Open Space Plan and Food Growing Strategy "take account of climate resilience and [support] health and wellbeing." It is currently being finalised for consideration by the council after a Climate Change Emergency was declared towards the end of 2019.
- 1.5.9 *West Lothian Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2013-23*. All local authorities are required by the Government to produce a LOIP, to help them improve quality of life and community participation, and reduce inequalities. The West Lothian LOIP can be viewed online at: <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/3893/Local-Outcomes-Improvement-Plan>. Food growing contributes to many local outcomes, including health and wellbeing, social, environmental and economic outcomes. Each of the 13 identified regeneration areas has its own community regeneration plan, based on the needs of the individual communities following consultation. Community growing is an integral part of these plans.
- 1.5.10 *Community Plans, Community Charrettes*. Where these exist or have taken place, there may be localised visions and plans to increase community food growing, which this strategy can support. e.g. Fauldhouse Charrette in 2017.

1.5.11 *NHS Lothian Green Space and Health Strategic Framework*. Brings together evidence on the impact of green space on health and the health benefits of outdoor activities, including community gardening, and seeks to advance the use of greenspaces, both within and outside the NHS estate, for improving health. Objective B4 of the Strategy is “to develop connections between the NHS estate and community greenspaces” and Objective D is “to encourage and support partnership working on a ‘natural health service’ approach to wider greenspace development and management” <https://tinyurl.com/hrw85zb3>

1.6 Different Growing Approaches

Community growing can occur in many different shared spaces and in lots of different ways. This strategy aims to support various communities across West Lothian to grow in spaces and ways that are most suitable for them, and to promote opportunities that arise with partner organisations.

greenspace scotland's “Our Growing Communities” webpage has many examples of where/how food can be grown <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/food-growing-publications>.

Definitions and brief descriptions of the approaches supported by this strategy are outlined below.

- 1.6.1 *Allotments*. Allotment gardens are areas of land (generally 250m² for a standard plot) which were historically intended for growing fruit and vegetables for the personal and family use of the plot-holder. These days allotment plot-holders may also grow herbs and flowers and share produce with friends, relatives and neighbours. Smaller plots can be also provided for people who can't manage a standard plot. Excess produce may now be lawfully sold, but not for a profit and a license is required if this is to be a regular activity. Allotment sites are generally managed by an allotment association, which is composed of current plot-holders.
- 1.6.2 *Community gardens (including communal gardens / backgreens)*. These are gardens that can be used for growing fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers and are generally

communally managed by a formally recognised group, who share the produce between all the volunteers. They may also share the produce with the wider community.

- 1.6.3 *Community orchards and woodlands.* At least 5 fruit trees planted in a public park may be called an 'orchard'. They are often created so that anyone can harvest the fruit, although there may also be group activities to harvest and process the fruit in some way, such as juice-making, jam-making or cider-making. Community woodlands can be managed or leased by a community group for the benefit of the community. They may include trees, shrubs, herbs and fungi that can be 'foraged' for food.



Mosswood community garden

- 1.6.4 *Forest Gardens.* These are informal gardens, structured like a woodland and using all the layers of a woodland to produce food – from the underground layer (e.g. root vegetables and mushrooms), to ground cover plants (e.g. wild strawberries), shrub layers (e.g. blackcurrants) small trees (e.g. apples), and tall trees (e.g. chestnut). Due to the woodland structure, which can be shady, the range of edible plants may be slightly different to those than would normally be found in a more open edible garden.
- 1.6.5 *Incidental growing spaces – 'growing in public spaces'.* This includes growing fruit, veg, herbs and flowers (including edible flowers) on verges, in planters in public spaces, in public flower beds and woodland edges. They can be managed by a community group with help from community volunteers. They could include purpose-built planters on new

housing estates, flower beds which are no longer maintained by the council or fruit bushes on the edge of a woodland. All produce is available for anyone to help themselves to.



Winchburgh Community Growing Group

1.6.6 *Institutional growing spaces.* These include spaces for growing in schools, colleges, health and social care buildings (e.g. hospitals / care homes). They can be managed by the participants in the organisation and/or volunteers.

1.6.7 *Social enterprises/Community businesses.* These are growing initiatives that sell produce and put their profits back in to the enterprise. They can include everything from community gardens to market gardens and co-operative farms. The term can also include community supported agriculture, which is a partnership between farmers and local consumers, where the responsibilities and rewards of farming are shared between them.

1.7 Multiple Benefits of Food Growing

Growing initiatives are widely recognised for their ability to facilitate and contribute to a broad spectrum of goals that support the move towards sustainable development.

Environmental benefits

- 1.7.1 *Biodiversity.* Most fruiting crops support pollinators, as they need insects to pollinate their blossoms in order to produce the fruit. Many food-growing sites also grow herbs and flowers to attract pollinators into the site. Fruit trees and shrubs offer habitats for foraging and shelter, for a wide range of birds and mammals. Combined with organic methods of gardening, food growing sites can support a significant healthy ecosystem.
- 1.7.2 *Climate-change mitigation – helping to limit climate change.* Providing opportunities for local production of food through all forms of community growing/grow-your-own helps to reduce long-term food insecurity and reduces the carbon emissions and energy associated with the mass production and transport of food. Food growing can also improve soil conditions and increase carbon storage in the soil through appropriate food-growing site design, practice and management. Responsible composting on site recycles waste and ensures that carbon and other elements are kept within the soil system. “Growing your own”, and the promotion of “grow-your-own” encourages behaviour change and sustainable lifestyle choices, helping to protect the wider environment as well.
- 1.7.3 *Climate change adaptation – ensuring we can cope with changes in climate.* Local, organic food growing can help to improve soil structure/fertility, improve air quality, aid water infiltration, improve water retention through mulching and reduce storm-water run-off through vegetation cover and rainwater collection and storage.
- 1.7.4 *Reduced packaging.* Harvesting and transporting your own fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers doesn’t require the use of single-use packaging or plastic. This in turn helps to reduce waste, litter and pollution.

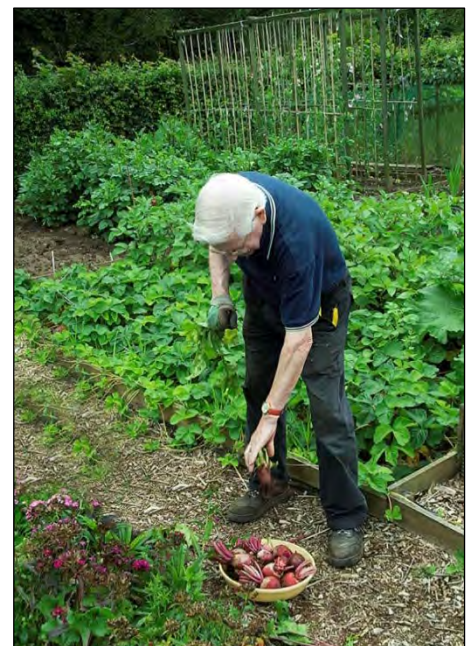
Social benefits

- 1.7.5 *Health.* Being outside in the fresh air, and in contact with nature, can help to relax us and boost our mental health and wellbeing. The physical nature of gardening, including digging, bending, lifting, etc also provides physical exercise. Relaxation and exercise can help to prevent many diseases. Research shows that our gut bacteria can also benefit, not just from the food we eat, but from spending time outside and interacting with the surroundings. Growing activities also provide a way for those who are recovering from

illness or injury to rehabilitate, and enable people suffering from isolation to socialise with others.

1.7.6 Learning. Growing food is a learning process in itself. Food growing initiatives enable people to share their experiences and learning; publicity of projects raises awareness of food growing within communities; and growing-your-own also offers an opportunity to try out new foods and different ways of growing. Growing in schools can be incorporated into the curriculum in many different ways and can contribute to extra-curricular activities and awards.

1.7.7 Community cohesion. Sharing food brings people together. Growing projects are community hubs – bringing people from all walks of life and cultures together. Benefits can be felt throughout the community with the sharing of produce, open days, activity days and sharing learning, etc. It's also an opportunity for older people to share their knowledge with younger people – bringing together generations. In this way food growing projects can help to reduce social isolation.



1.7.8 Reducing health inequalities. By widely promoting the multiple benefits of food growing and ensuring that food-growing opportunities are available to all, we can help to reduce health inequalities and relieve food poverty. Growing organic produce within communities can bring quality fresh fruit and vegetables to all, without the obstacle of cost.

Economic benefits

1.7.9 Reduced costs for households. A standard 250m² plot has traditionally been the recommended size to provide enough fruit/veg for a family of 4 throughout the year, and developments in growing methods (e.g. “no dig” and “double-cropping”), could reduce this area. Self-sufficiency in fruit and vegetables can substantially reduce annual household expenditure. For many working people who may not have the time to grow enough to be totally self-sufficient, their diet will be supplemented by the crops that they grow, meaning reduced costs for buying fruit, vegetables and herbs.

1.7.10 Boosting the local economy. The local economy benefits directly through the purchase of seeds, plants, etc, and the exchange of produce by individuals as well as the selling and exchange of produce by community-led food-growing enterprises. The economy is boosted indirectly as more active greenspace and more variety of opportunities make West Lothian a more attractive place to live and work.

1.7.11 Addressing local food poverty. Community growing initiatives can assist people to supplement their diet by growing their own fresh food at low cost; the sharing of excess produce from growing initiatives to community fridges and food banks helps to support people experiencing acute food poverty.

1.7.12 Productive activity. Community growing offers opportunities for being productive outdoors, which enables people to build up experience, learn new skills and increase their confidence. It can offer carers, voluntary and support sectors new ways to engage people and supports peer working and collaboration across a broad social mix.



Pumpherstons and Uphall Station Primary School

2.0 STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This section describes the processes used to develop the strategy, including who was involved and how.

2.1 Community Food Growing Audits

Firstly, audits were carried out of all the known allotment sites and community gardens in West Lothian over the autumn/spring of 2017-18. This included growing sites leased to community groups by private landowners. The audit consisted of visits to the sites, meeting with allotment committee members and community garden staff, and discussing key details (such as number of plots and numbers of people involved).



Consultation event: Linlithgow October 2018

2.2 Events and Surveys

2.2.1 The council employed greenspace scotland to organise two consultation events in autumn 2018, for anyone in West Lothian with an interest in growing. The first event was open to all members of the public. The second event was for local staff/volunteers of organisations already involved in growing and those who can help to enable future growing throughout the area, including council colleagues and staff/volunteers from external organisations.

2.2.2 Greenspace Scotland also hosted an online survey for all members of the public to tell us their views. The events and online survey were publicised through existing contacts, community groups, schools, community councils and the council's Media team. Results from the events and surveys can be found on our food growing webpage: <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing>

2.3 Focus Group

A discussion about food growing was held with the 'Experts by Experience' anti-poverty focus group in January 2019.

2.4 Discussions

Discussions about food growing have also taken place, and are ongoing, with the council's Open Space team, Regeneration groups, Anti-Poverty working group, Planning Services, Grounds Maintenance team, Property Services, colleagues from other interested national and regional organisations such as greenspace scotland and the Green Action Trust (formerly CSGNT), and local groups such as existing growing groups, schools and community councils.

All the information collated has directly shaped this strategy.



Consultation event: Linlithgow October 2018

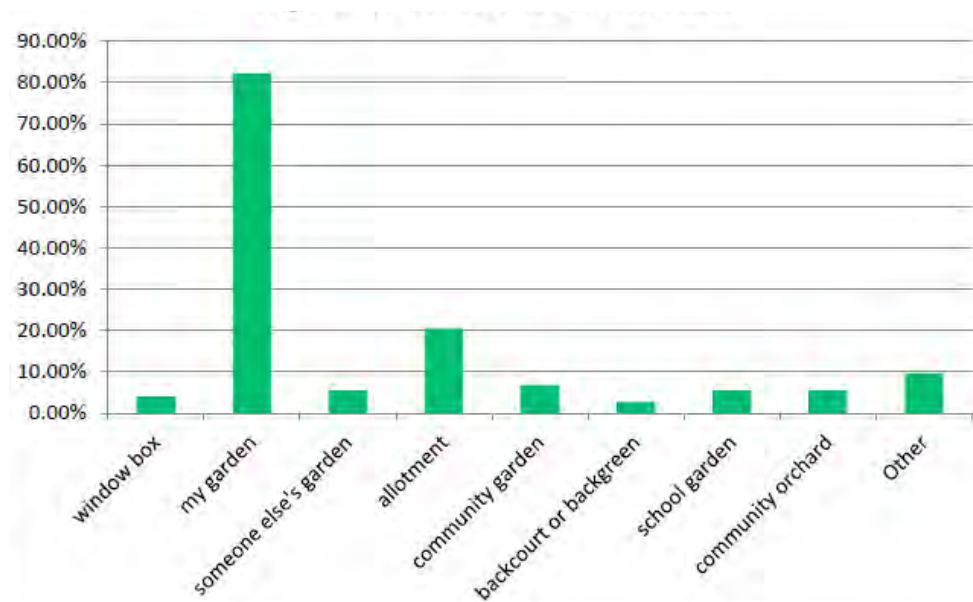
3.0 THE CURRENT PICTURE OF GROWING IN WEST LoTHIAN

This section notes all the existing growing opportunities across the range of growing approaches within West Lothian.

3.1 Where People Currently Grow

Of everyone who took part in the council's events and online survey in 2018/19, 75% of participants were already growing their own and 25% were not currently growing. See the graph below.

Graph 1 – Where people currently grow



3.1.1 Of the participants in the online survey, 83% of people who currently grow their own do so in their own gardens and 20% in allotments. By contrast, most people who attended the stakeholder events grow in a variety of community settings, including community gardens and community planters, followed closely by allotment sites. However, approximately 53% of all participants would like to grow *more* vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers.

3.1.2 60% of survey respondents said they 'pick their own' or 'forage' for fruit, vegetables, herbs or flowers, which they haven't grown themselves: 52% forage from hedgerows, 47% forage from woodlands, 41% use 'pick your own' farms and 33% pick fruit/ herbs/ flowers from council parks and open spaces. Respondents indicated that in future they would be interested in 'picking their own' from: community gardens (60%), council parks /

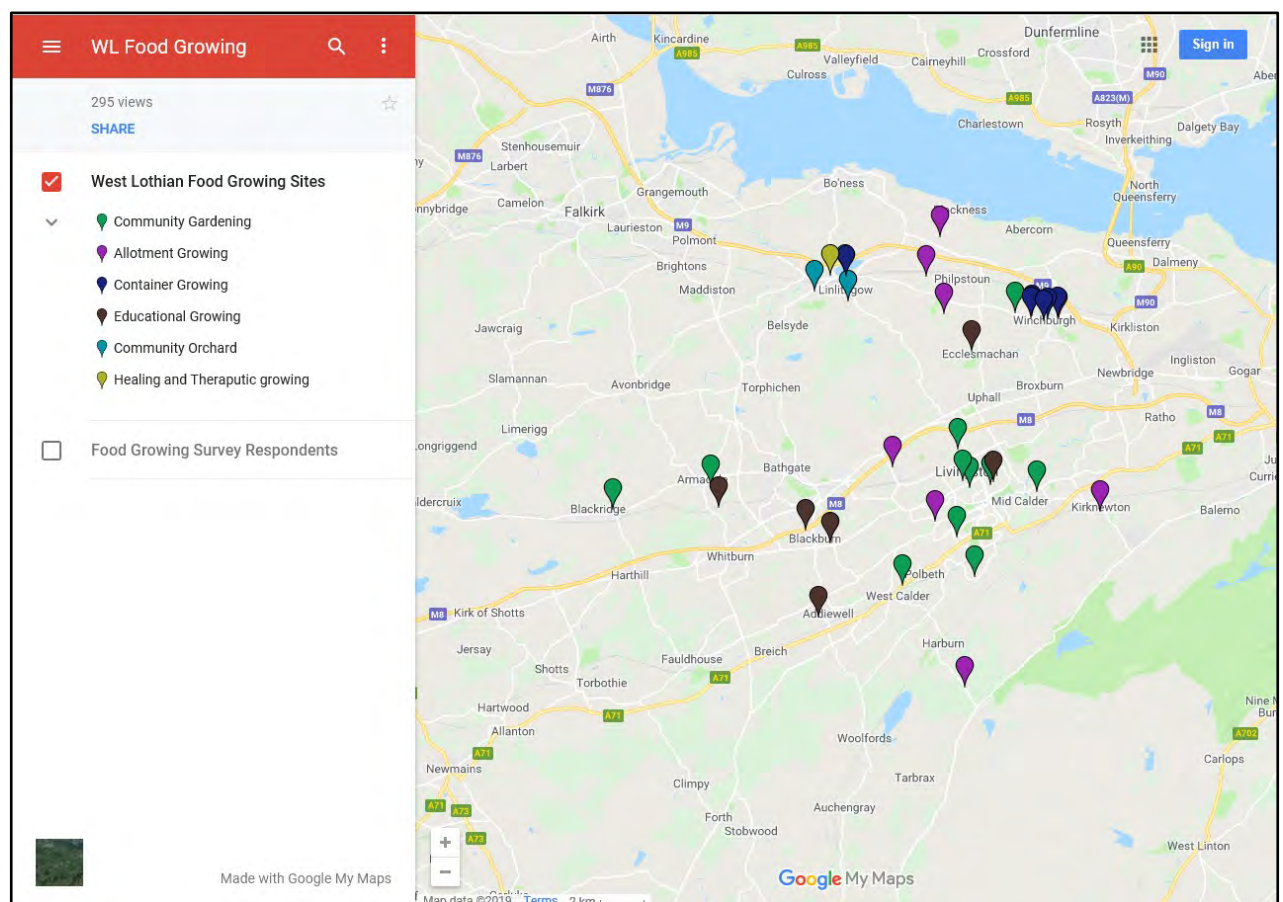
open spaces / woodlands (54%), hedgerows and planters around the community (44%) and 'pick your own' farms (44%).

3.2 Audit Results

3.2.1 As can be seen above, people are already growing in many different ways throughout the area and have aspirations to grow more. The map below shows all community growing projects identified through the stakeholder engagement events in autumn 2018. An [updated map](#) can be viewed the council's webpage. See below for a summary of information from existing community growing initiatives.

3.2.2 Although the new Community Empowerment Act (2015) legislation doesn't apply to allotment sites that aren't on council owned/leased ground, these have been included in the audit as they offer real opportunities for growing and they affect the overall supply and demand of allotment plots throughout the whole area.

Map 1 – Existing community growing projects





Killandean Allotments

3.2.3 Allotments. As can be seen in the table below, allotment sites come in different sizes and there are various models of allotment management. The allotment plots themselves vary in size and not all allotment sites offer 'standard' plot sizes of 250m². Costs also vary between sites. Some allotment sites have sheds on plots, some smaller sites don't; some sites have communal buildings; some sites have mains water, some rely on rainwater collection. Some sites have open days and fundraising initiatives. Most of the sites encourage cooperation and a sense of community with communal maintenance activities involving all plot holders and/or social events. Waiting times for plots can be anything from 6 months up to 2-3 years – depending on the site and demand at the time.

Table 1 – West Lothian allotment sites

Name	Total number of plots	No. of people on waiting list (2019)
Council-owned allotment sites, leased and managed by allotment associations in Livingston:		
Killandean, Livingston	45	18
Deansmeadow, Livingston	22	11
Allotment sites on non-council land, managed by allotment associations:		
Oakwell, Philpstoun	72	4
Kirknewton	29	2
Other allotments on non-council land, directly let by the landowners:		
Winchburgh	30	Various sized plots. No waiting list.
Harburn	75	125m ² plots. No waiting list.

Roukenglen near Newton	195	100m ² plots. 20 available (actually in Falkirk, but close to WLC border)
Totals	273 plots	35 people on waiting lists

3.2.4 The council owns two functioning allotment sites, both in Livingston. They are both leased and managed by allotment associations:

3.2.5 *Killandean, Kirkton* - is managed by Killandean Community Allotment Association. This is a moderate-sized allotment site of 0.9ha on the banks of the Killandean Burn, beside Kirkton Campus. There is a small car park across the road to the east and composting toilets are provided on site. All water is provided via rainwater collection. Every plot has a small shed and water butt and some have greenhouses as well, with a couple of communal buildings near the entrance. The site contains 45 plots, which come in three sizes: full plot 250m², half plot 125m² and quarter plot 62.5m².

3.2.6 *Deansmeadow, Livingston Station* - is managed by Deansmeadow Allotment Association, which is a registered charity. This is a medium-sized allotment site at approx. 0.75ha, which sits alongside Deans Road, with trees around it providing shelter and enclosure. It's one of the oldest allotment sites in West Lothian and contains 22 plots, which vary in size from approx. 97m² to 197m². There are also 2 accessible plots suitable for people with support needs. Mains water is provided and allotment holders have their own sheds and/or greenhouses on their plots. There is also a toilet, communal container and portacabin on site and a small car park.

3.2.6 *Other community growing initiatives with sites*. There are a range of other formal and informal community growing initiatives in West Lothian, which have growing sites (large and small) within the community.

Table 2 – West Lothian community gardens, growing projects and social enterprise

Name	Town/Village	Set-up
<i>On council land</i>		
Polbeth and West Calder Community Garden	Polbeth / West Calder	Shared growing
Armada Community Growing Garden - Mayfield	Armada	10 starter plots and shared spaces
Knightsbridge Community Garden	Livingston	21 starter plots and shared spaces

Crofthead Community Garden, Dedridge	Livingston	Shared growing
Winchburgh Community Growing Group	Winchburgh	50 shared planters throughout community with edible plants. Fruit trees in Tippetknowes Park and beside the primary schools/nursery
Peggy's Garden	Pumpherstoun	Shared containers and raised beds in Fraser Park
Howden Walled Garden	Livingston	Various groups involved. Some raised beds for individual groups and shared growing areas.
Burgh Beautiful	Linlithgow	Fruit trees in Learmonth Gardens, Kettilstoun Leisure Centre grounds and Springfield Park.
Friends of Kirkton Park	Bathgate	Fruit trees in Kirkton Park
<i>On non-council land</i>		
Almond Community Garden	Craigshill, Livingston	Shared raised beds on Hobart Street. West Lothian Youth Action Project manage the garden.
Beechbrae Garden	Blackridge	Shared growing area including fruit trees, raised beds and a polytunnel
Winchburgh Community Growing Group	Winchburgh	Also has shared planters with edible plants on non-council land throughout the village.
<i>Larger social enterprise on non-council land</i>		
Cyrenians Farm	Kirknewton	A working farm, with a veg-box scheme. Volunteers welcome.

3.2.7 *School growing projects.* Information on all the schools that grow in West Lothian is not currently held centrally, making it difficult to get an accurate, up-to-date picture. However, in 2018 65% of Nursery, Primary, Secondary, Special schools and Private nurseries in West Lothian were registered with the Royal Horticultural Society's Campaign for School Gardening, which gives an estimate of the extent of school growing. Six schools entered the newly-formed West Lothian Schools Garden Competition in 2019, with scope to encourage and increase school participation in future.

3.2.8 *Other gardening initiatives.* Livingston and District Horticultural Society was founded in 2009. It is a voluntary organisation, promoting horticulture, community participation and competitive gardening. The Society organises an Annual Flower Show, which is open to the general public.

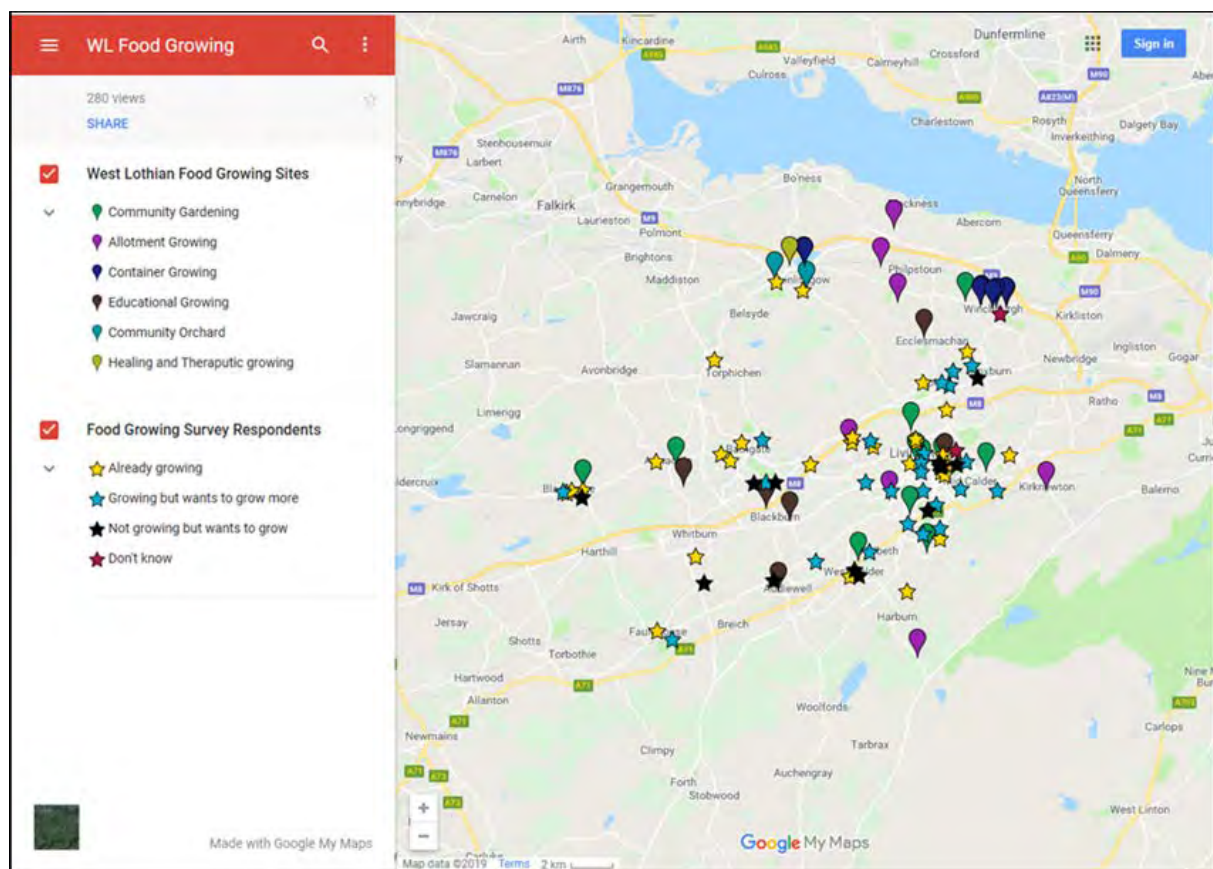
3.3 Current Demand for Food Growing Opportunities

3.3.1 Demand for community food growing within West Lothian is at a relatively moderate level. This assessment is based on:

- feedback from the food growing events and survey (53% of respondents want to grow more)
- current allotment waiting list numbers (currently 43% of the number of plots)
- the annual numbers of people directly expressing an interest in an allotment plot to the council (7 people in 2019)

3.3.2 However, latent demand can be hard to assess: when people are directly asked if they would like an allotment plot, they will often say yes even if they haven't previously expressed an interest. There is also a desire by at least 5 community groups in West Lothian to pro-actively promote food growing and to provide opportunities for 'grow your own' in their areas.

Map 2 – Showing existing food growing projects and demand in 2018/19



Click [here](#) for an updated map

3.4 Existing Processes for Recording and Addressing Demand

- 3.4.1 *Requests for an allotment plot.* The council retains a list of people who have come to the council to ask about obtaining an allotment plot, and have given their consent for their details to be held on record. This list is used to assess how much demand there is in each area for allotments, which can be used to help determine where any new sites should be set up.
- 3.4.2 Existing allotment sites also manage their own waiting lists. People can be added to a list by directly contacting the allotment site, or by contacting the council. When someone contacts the council about obtaining a plot, Open Space staff put them in contact with their nearest existing allotment site (including non-council allotment sites) to allow them to make a choice as to which site best fits their needs.
- 3.4.3 People can be on one or more allotment waiting list, and those who already have an allotment can apply to be on another allotment site's waiting list. They may wish to do this if the other site is closer to their home, etc.
- 3.4.4 *New allotment sites / community gardens.* The current model the council uses to provide new allotment sites and new community growing projects is to respond to community demand. When approached, the council helps community groups to find suitable land and set up growing initiatives, including allotments, which the groups go on to manage themselves.
- 3.4.5 Interested local people must form a small working group of at least 3 people. This group then works with council Open Space officers to take forward the development of the food growing initiative (see **Appendix 3** for flow chart). The first step is to identify suitable land, which may take some time. The council will then organise initial soil tests to make sure the land is suitable for food growing.
- 3.4.6 Once it's established that the land is suitable, the group must formally constitute, and carry out wider consultations to gauge community interest, apply for planning and other permissions and fundraise as necessary. This group acts as the contact point for any other interested people from the community who wish to get involved. The group manages the set-up of the project, including leases and public liability insurance, with support from council officers.

3.4.7 Once the growing project is on site, the group is responsible for managing it. For allotments, this would require an Allotment Association with a committee. For a community garden, there may be a Garden Committee, volunteers and possibly paid members of staff to co-ordinate volunteers and activities in the garden. For other projects, there may only be a small committee and volunteers – the organisational set-up depends on the project and its location.

3.4.8 When a new allotment site is set up by an allotment group for their area, the council requires 10% of the plots to be offered to people at the top of the overall council waiting list.

3.5 Support and Skills Currently Being Provided

Existing support for community food growing in West Lothian was identified at the second Stakeholder workshop in 2018 /19. Current support includes (but is not limited to):

3.5.1 *Council support.* The Open Space team puts individuals in touch with existing growing projects and allotment sites; helps groups who want to set up an allotment site or community garden to get established; helps to identify suitable land, constitute groups and make initial plans of action; signposts to other groups and organisations who have experience, specifically with food growing projects; and can offer help and advice. The Open Space team may provide financial support with soil testing and planning applications, and help to raise the profile of initiatives through council publicity.

3.5.2 The Community Regeneration Team, through Community Action Plans (CAP), helps to identify demand in the community, including wider community engagement. They support groups to build their skills and confidence, identify grants and funding opportunities and connect groups and individuals with other groups/organisations in the area. They can also help to raise the profile of groups in the area, though CAP's do not cover the whole of West Lothian.

3.5.3 *Peer support within / between groups.* Almost all existing community food growing groups give advice to other groups that are keen to set up new projects – from allotment sites to planters in parks.

- 3.5.4 Allotment plot holders at all sites share horticultural skills and experience between themselves, and many of them give informal mentoring and training for new plot holders. Some allotment sites have open days, where people without allotments can also learn about food growing.
- 3.5.5 Many of the community gardens have a development worker who co-ordinates garden activities and provides basic mentoring for new gardeners. All the community gardens run various workshops / training sessions, for example on growing, composting, woodland management, etc. Armadale Community Garden also has a tool lending library and Beechbrae offers cooking workshops.
- 3.5.6 Polbeth and West Calder Community Garden at the time of writing doesn't have a development worker, but does run a Green Gym, where people can come and help with garden tasks to improve their health and wellbeing. The sessions are led by a voluntary Green Gym leader.
- 3.5.7 Livingston and District Horticultural Society has an annual show and some members give horticultural support to groups involved with Howden Walled Garden in Livingston.
- 3.5.8 West Lothian Youth Action Project provides training for young people in making planters and growing, as well as cooking.
- 3.5.9 Winchburgh Community Growing Group shares information about their project and growing tips through various social media.



3.5.10 Support from other organisations

Support from non-council organisations:

- SRUC – Oatridge College in Ecclesmachan offers formal training in horticulture and land management; students can contribute to community projects as part of their courses.
- Social Farms and Gardens gives all kinds of advice and support to new and established community garden groups. They can also assist with leases.
- The Society of Allotment Gardens Scotland (SAGS) gives support to allotment groups.
- The Royal Horticultural Society gives support to community groups, educational support to schools and has an annual small grant.
- The Conservation Volunteers gives practical and educational support to schools and garden groups. They can also organise corporate volunteer workdays for an intense ‘blitz’ of practical work.
- Almond Housing supports various growing sites around Craigshill and areas where they have housing. They also have a small grant for community growing projects anywhere that will benefit Almond tenants, and can give support with other funding applications too.
- Learning Through Landscapes gives support to schools to grow in their school grounds and to make use of other outdoor spaces near schools.

3.6 Barriers to Growing Food in West Lothian

Several barriers were identified through the site audit process and also through engagement with stakeholders. The current barriers to food growing in West Lothian are:

Table 3 – Barriers to food growing in West Lothian

Barriers associated with setting up allotments and community gardens	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identifying and securing suitable land b. Land contamination c. Costs of soil testing and Planning applications d. Site set-up costs e. Vehicle access, car parking, electricity, water supply, etc.
Barriers identified by individual stakeholders (in order of number of mentions)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Lack of know-how / gardening skills

- g. Lack of time
- h. Lack of allotment plots, specifically
- i. Lack of wider community support for growing
- j. Lack of volunteers to set up growing sites/ projects
- k. No garden / space to grow
- Other:
- l. Cost of buying materials, tools, etc (for individuals)
- m. Lack of confidence
- n. Lack of information on where to grow
- o. Health issues

3.6.1 For over half the participants in the workshops, the main barrier was a lack of a suitable growing space. Also identified were a lack of time and lack of volunteers to help set-up growing sites and projects. For those answering the online survey, a lack of gardening skills and lack of time were the main barriers - see the graph below.

3.6.2 *Site set-up costs.* The costs of setting up growing spaces can range from over £100,000 to set up a 45-plot allotment site from scratch to £0, for planting donated fruiting shrubs on woodland edges with volunteers. Costs depend on the type of project, the scale of the project, how resourceful partners are able to be and the opportunities available at the time.

3.6.3 *Soil Testing.* Contaminated land can be an issue in West Lothian. The Grow-Your-Own-Working-Group's [Guide for growing on land which may be contaminated](#) and Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society's [Allotment Site Design Guide](#) both contain useful guidance on the potential problems with contaminated land and how to deal with it.

3.6.4 In West Lothian, the process for soil testing is agreed with the Contaminated Land Officer Shared Service and is incorporated into the process for establishing new sites (Appendix 3). Soil testing will be required for allotments and most community gardens - depending on the history of the site, what is intended to be grown and how and who will be using the site.

3.6.5 For projects requiring soil tests, this should be done before applying for planning permission and the report submitted alongside the planning application. The Open Space team may be able to support the costs of initial soil tests on council land, depending on the level of demand and available resources.

- 3.6.6 Projects using only planters and fruit tree or shrub planting may not require soil testing, but each project will need to be assessed first.
- 3.6.7 *Permissions for Growing.* Planning permission may be required before the land is cultivated, to cover a 'change of use of land' and for any structures proposed on the site. Groups are best to apply for the allotment site/ garden as a whole than for individuals to apply for separate sheds, etc. Planning permission fees can be found on the Planning web pages: <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/planning-fees> This start-up cost may be supported by the Open Space team, depending on the level of demand and available resources.
- 3.6.8 Permission to grow on council land, other than in allotments / community gardens (e.g. fruit trees / planters), is by agreement between community groups and the NETs, Land and Countryside Services manager.
- 3.6.9 *Public Liability Insurance.* All growing groups must have public liability insurance to cover them in case of accidents, injuries, etc. Many groups initially see this as a barrier, however various organisations offer their members cheaper public liability insurance, tailored specifically for growing projects. These include, but are not limited to, [TCV Community Network](#), [Social Farms and Gardens](#), [The Royal Horticultural Society](#), [The National Allotment Society](#) and the [Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society](#).
- 3.6.10 *Ongoing costs.* Apart from land rental, allotments generally have minor ongoing costs, mostly for maintenance of the site, e.g. pathways, fences, and buildings, and insurances. At key times, larger capital costs may be required for repairing or updating large items, such as buildings. Allotment associations may decide to cover all costs and projected costs through the annual rents for plot-holders, or they may wish to keep rents to a minimum and fundraise separately for any extra expenditure.
- 3.6.11 Community Gardens and other growing initiatives will have differing ongoing costs, depending on the set-up. These range from land rents, insurances, maintenance and replacement costs – which are similar to allotments - to staff salaries. As these initiatives don't usually require garden users and participants to pay membership, community gardens need to fundraise, apply for grants or establish other income generation measures to ensure their longevity.

3.6.12 Allotment Associations, community gardens and other organisations that lease property from the council, which exist solely for community, social, environmental or economic benefit objectives and who reinvest any surplus funds in the organisation to further their social aims or community benefits, may be eligible for a reduced rent, subject to West Lothian Council Committee approval

3.6.13 If groups request to negotiate a rent at less than market value, the council requires a demonstration of the community benefits from the activities of the organisation. Potential community benefits include: sustaining or improving local services; building the capacity of voluntary groups; encouraging a sustainable voluntary sector; supporting social enterprise; economic development and regeneration; health, social or environmental benefits. Check the council's guidance on Asset Transfer for up-to-date information:



<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/34944/Community-Asset-Transfer>

4.0 THE WAY FORWARD

This section sets out a vision for the future and outlines how West Lothian Council plans to work towards this vision over the next 5 years.

4.1 A Vision for the Future: 2025 / 2030 / 2040

To form a collective vision of food growing for the future, all participants at the stakeholder workshops were asked what West Lothian would look like if the Food Growing Strategy is successful. Vision statements referred to 5, 10 and 20 years in the future. In summary:

By 2025
There are more spaces to grow; including allotments, schools, unkempt gardens, underused space, rooftops, hospitals
Horticulture and food growing are promoted as career options
Ensure that there is a food growing and food skills education programme for all, especially in schools
There is a vibrant West Lothian growing network sharing skills and learning

By 2030
There are more spaces to grow; including all housing estates, all schools, all public spaces, every village
There is an abundance of free fruit in parks, green corridors and greenspaces with people confident to pick their own and use their harvest
More local seasonal food is consumed by West Lothian residents
Food growing recognisably delivers outcomes in other policy areas such as mental health, climate change and community regeneration

By 2040
There is a cost effective, sustainable and genuinely accessible community growing space within walking distance of every household, with a true sense of community in all areas
We have a social enterprise of seasonal food boxes being delivered across West Lothian using farm and community garden produce and as a result we use less plastic packaging
All school children have basic skills in food growing - "leave school knowing how to make a pot of soup"
Community growing is taken into consideration in all aspects of council policy development

Broadly speaking, the general vision by 2040 is to embed food growing into principal council policies and everyday formal education, to have easy access to locally produced fresh fruit and veg, support for local enterprise, and easy access to land on which to

‘grow your own’; which is all underpinned by a strong sense of community and a culture of sharing.

4.2 How will West Lothian Council work towards this vision?

Over the next five years, the council will work with partners to work towards this vision by:

- 1) Reducing the barriers to food growing,
- 2) Updating the allotment waiting list process,
- 3) Identifying suitable land for community food growing,
- 4) Helping to get groups started,
- 5) Supporting the sharing of knowledge and skills,
- 6) Publicity and Signposting and
- 7) Monitoring and reviewing progress.

4.3 Reducing the barriers to food growing

The council will seek to work in partnership with other agencies to address the barriers identified in section 3.5, as follows:

Table 4 – Addressing Barriers to Food Growing

Barrier	Support required, as identified by stakeholders	Actions
<i>As identified for allotments / community gardens</i>		
a. Identifying and securing suitable land	Help to find suitable land	Use allotment waiting list information and geographic data to assess the need for new growing sites, to pro-actively identify gaps in provision and to plan future sites.
b. Land contamination	Help to find suitable land	Where need is clearly established in a community, identify potentially contaminated land and work with community groups to identify suitable land for allotments / community gardens.
c. Soil tests and planning applications	Help to get a group started locally	Support the costs of initial Phase 1 site investigation and planning applications, where possible, for allotments/ community gardens on council land.
d. Site set-up costs	Help to get a group started locally	Work in partnership with others to support groups to apply for funding, set up committees and manage allotment / community garden sites.
e. Vehicle access, car parking, electricity, water supply, etc.		On council land, work with groups to ensure appropriate vehicle access (e.g. for deliveries and disabled access) and solutions to Public Utilities issues where required.
<i>As identified by individuals</i>		
f. Lack of know-how / gardening skills	Support for growing activities	Facilitate knowledge-sharing throughout the area and promote formal and informal training opportunities as appropriate (e.g. via events, email, social media, webpage). Signpost to organisations and groups that can train others.

		Groups should consider the employment of staff in community gardens.
g. Lack of time	Support for growing activities	Promote different methods of growing, which may require less time commitment or space and may also offer support to individuals, e.g. community gardens, community planters, edible verges
h. Lack of allotment plots	Help to find suitable land	Update the allotment waiting list process to make it more transparent and accessible, and publish an up-to-date map of allotment and community garden sites on the council's webpage. See Action b above and i below
i. Lack of wider community support for growing	Help to get a group started locally	Publicise through various media the benefits of food growing and the different growing methods, and encourage participation. Promote allotment/ garden open days, etc. Also see Action d above.
j. Lack of volunteers to set up growing sites/ projects	Help to get a group started locally	Provide advice on community engagement and volunteer recruitment. Encourage partnership working with other groups in the community. Also see Actions f and i above
k. No garden / space to grow	Support for growing activities / Help to find suitable land	See Actions g and h above
l. Cost of buying materials, tools, etc	Help to get tools and materials// funding advice	Encourage participation in growing projects and sharing resources. Raise awareness of tool sharing initiatives. Promote recycling and re-use of materials and low-cost ways to grow your own. Share information about funding sources and see Action d above.
m. Lack of confidence	Support for growing activities	See Action f above, also promote simple and easy ways to grow your own, including community planting days, skills workshops, etc
n. Lack of information on where to grow	Help to find suitable land	Share information about existing food growing sites on Council webpage www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing and outline a clear process for establishing new sites on the webpage.
o. Health issues	Support for growing activities	Ensure that food growing sites are accessible for people with mental and physical health issues. Also see Actions f, g, i and m above

4.4 Updating the allotment waiting list process

The council's food growing webpage, www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing will display contact details for all allotment and community garden sites in West Lothian that give consent to do so. An updated allotment waiting list for the council-owned sites will be established with the two allotment associations managing the sites, along with an online form to register interest for an allotment plot. See **Appendix 2** for the process. In this way, it will be easier to determine the existing plot to waiting list ratio, which determines the statutory requirement to provide new plots. (If the number of people on the overall council waiting list is more than 50% of the existing number of council plots, then reasonable steps must be taken to provide more plots)



New planters at Strathbrock Health Centre - Broxburn and Uphall Growers

4.5 Identifying suitable land for community food growing

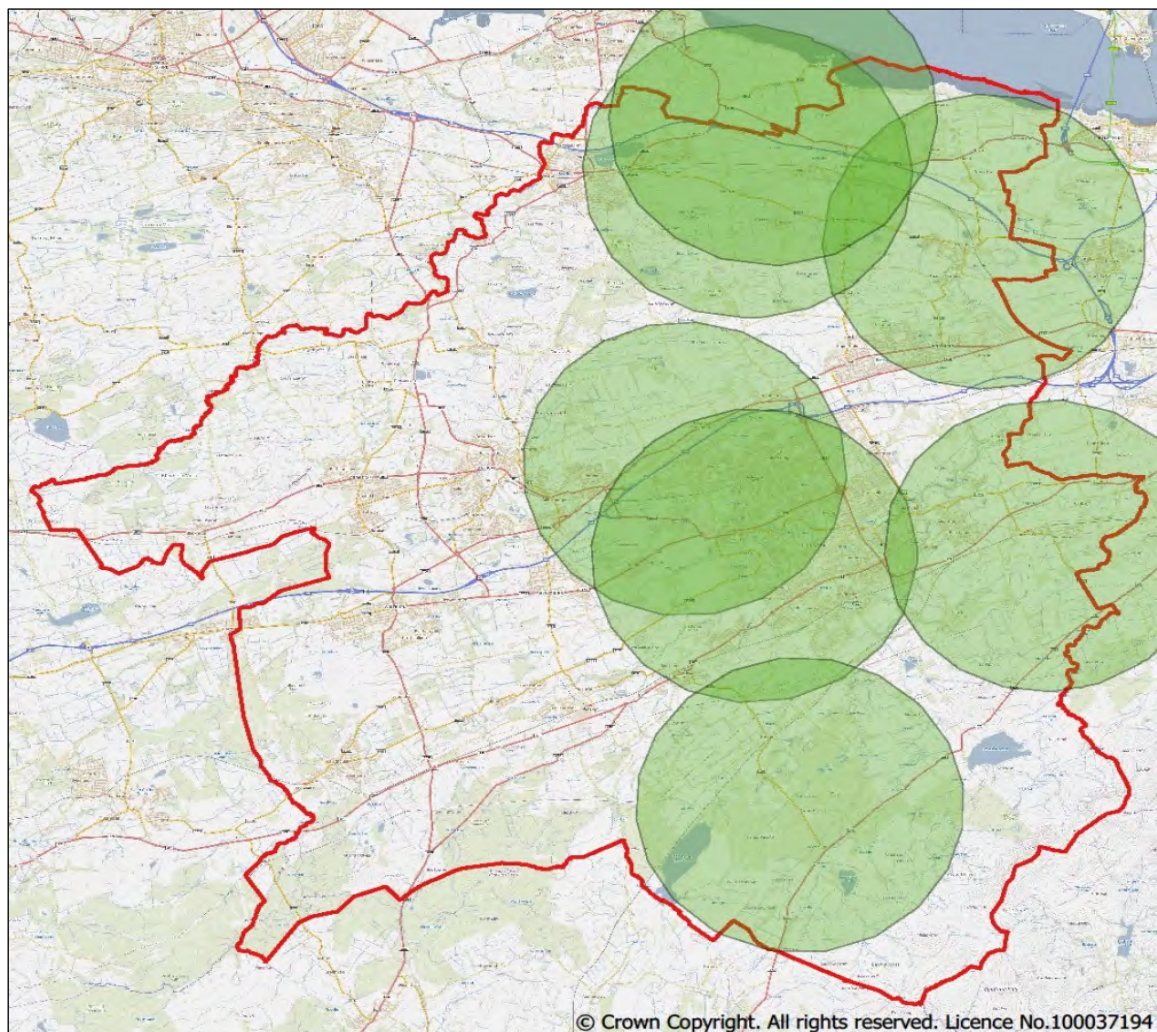
The types of growing space provided in any area will depend on the aspirations of the community in that area. Land that *could* be used for growing is outlined below (*Growing in existing public spaces*), but communities coming forward with growing requests will be supported grow in locations that are best suited to the methods they prefer.

4.5.1 *Closing geographical gaps in provision.* As can be seen on the map of existing growing projects (see Map 1 in section 3.2.2), there is currently a lack of **all** community food growing opportunities around Bathgate, Blackburn, Broxburn, Fauldhouse and Whitburn. Therefore, support for new growing initiatives will be prioritised in these areas.

4.5.2 In terms of allotments, as a general rule the council would expect residents to be no more than 4km from their nearest allotment site in West Lothian, following the same standard as District Parks. The Scottish Government's guidance is within a 3-mile radius (4.8km). In the larger settlements of Livingston, Bathgate, Linlithgow, Armadale, Whitburn and Broxburn, it is anticipated that people would travel up to 4km to their allotment plot. For allotments in the smaller towns and villages, it is envisaged that most plots would be used by people who live in / close to the settlement (approx. 2km). Therefore, allotment sites might be smaller and more numerous in smaller settlements, to cater for local need. This will ensure that sites are easily accessed and that mileage is kept to a minimum.

4.5.3 From the map below, it can be seen that there is a gap in allotment provision in the west of West Lothian around Armadale, Bathgate, Blackburn, Fauldhouse and Whitburn, with some smaller gaps around North East Livingston, Pumpherston, Uphall and South-East Livingston. Therefore community groups wanting to set up sites in these gap areas will be given priority support. We will also monitor the council allotment waiting list to see where people waiting for an allotment live. If there is large demand in a priority area, if we have not already been approached by a group to set up a site, we may approach existing community groups and those on the list to consider setting up a new site.

Map 3 All existing allotment sites, with 4km buffers

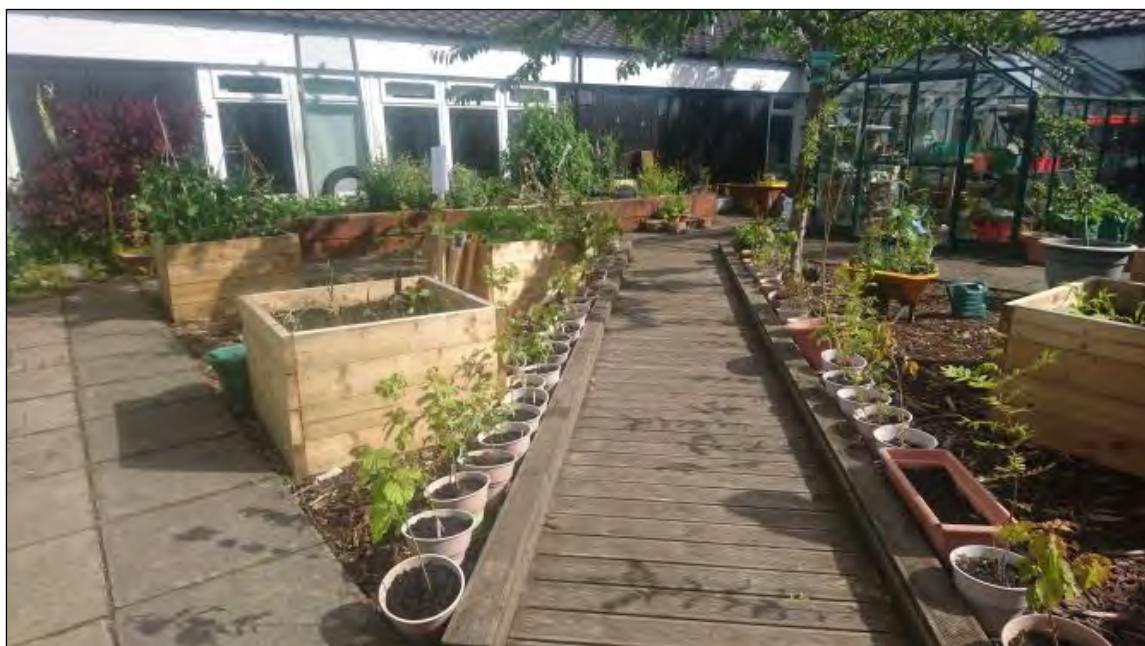


4.5.4 *Growing in existing public spaces.* The council already supports a number of community food growing initiatives in public spaces, such as allotments, community gardens, container growing, and the planting of fruit trees and bushes in parks.

4.5.5 The council's preference is to use existing council land for all new food growing initiatives. However, the council may also work with public landowners who want to

promote growing on their land (e.g. Almond Housing Association, Woodland Trust Scotland, NHS).

- 4.5.6 As part of a wider approach to ensure that public open spaces provide a range of benefits, the council will consider making land available in all council-owned parks and open spaces for community growing. Whether this is appropriate will depend on the size of the park/open space, the ground conditions, community support, current use, accessibility, vehicle access requirements, the methods of growing proposed and the area (m²) of land required for growing. To ensure the safeguarding of open spaces, if any growing initiative in a public open space should fail and the site fall into disrepair, the land will revert back to park/open space and will be maintained as such.
- 4.5.7 Public flower beds and shrub beds that now have minimal council maintenance can be taken over by dedicated community groups for growing, with the appropriate agreements in place.
- 4.5.8 Schools will be encouraged to grow in their grounds as part of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, through the promotion of the West Lothian Schools Garden Competition. Involving parents and the wider community in these gardens will ensure that they are looked after throughout school holidays. Schools may also wish to make some ground available for community growing groups, subject to addressing any security and safety issues of the school estate. This will be at the discretion of head teachers and Education Services.



Cedarbank School

- 4.5.9 Community Centre management committees will be supported to establish community growing projects within their grounds as required, such as at Crofthead Community Centre in Dedridge.
- 4.5.10 The council has already planted fruiting shrubs on woodland edges in the Country Parks and will look to gradually increase the amount of naturalised fruiting trees and shrubs within or beside wooded areas, as appropriate, for members of the community to pick seasonal fruit. The creation of Forest Gardens by dedicated community groups will be supported, if appropriate agreements are in place.
- 4.5.11 In areas of disadvantage, the council will encourage and support growing through the Community Regeneration plans.
- 4.5.12 *Planning for growing in future public spaces.* In the West Lothian Open Space Plan, growing spaces are classed as 'active open space' along with public parks. All active open spaces are mapped in the Open Space database and are safeguarded through the Local Development Plan. As progress is achieved, space for food growing will be assessed and considered alongside other types of active open space, such as play and recreation.
- 4.5.13 In new housing developments, the council will seek to ensure that housing developers identify potential food growing areas within their open space requirements. If there is no active open space required within a development, developer contributions for Open Space (through Section 75 / 69 agreements) may be used towards the cost of setting up new food growing sites on council land outwith the development.
- 4.5.14 The areas with the largest population increases will be the Core Development Areas of: Armadale, East Broxburn, Winchburgh, West Livingston / Almond Valley and at Calderwood, East Calder. These areas roughly match up with gaps in existing food growing opportunities, which are the council priority areas for potential growing sites.
- 4.5.15 The council's Open Space team can advise private landowners who have questions about setting up community growing projects on their land. However, we cannot broker

agreements between community groups and private landowners. It is not currently the council's intention to lease land for allotments from private landowners.

4.5.16 *Allotments - a new standard.* One standard allotment plot (250m²) has the potential to provide fruit and vegetables for a family of four, therefore it is reasonable to consider the number of households in the area when planning for new allotment sites. Currently, the number of households in West Lothian is 77,953 and the total number of known allotment plots, including privately rented plots, is 273. This means there are currently 3.5 plots per 1000 households.

4.5.17 In order to plan new allotment sites over the next 5 years - based on current interest, waiting list numbers, geographic coverage and council resources - the council will set a new target of 5 allotment plots per 1,000 households. The predicted number of households in West Lothian by 2025 is 83,605. Therefore, to achieve this standard, the council would need to ensure a total of 418 allotment plots by 2025. Consequently, over the next 5 years, land will be identified to create a potential 145 new plots – or up to 3 allotment sites with approximately 48 plots each – in the event that sufficient demand for plots is demonstrated. The priority areas for new allotment provision have been identified above. The minimum recommended garden sizes for new houses in West Lothian all fall below 250m², so it is possible that households with gardens may seek allotment plots as well as households without gardens.

4.5.18 In the [Local Development Plan 2018](#), provision has already been made for an extension to the west of the Killandean Burn Greenway allotment site (site ref Proposal 51) in Livingston and recorded in the LDP Appendix on page 91. It's also shown as Proposal - 51 on [Map 3: Livingston Area](#). However, this can only be considered if new access arrangements can be made to the west of the site from the wider Kirkton Campus.

4.6 Helping to get groups started

The council will aim to improve the systems and processes for setting up community food growing sites, to make it easier for communities to grow and also to share fresh produce.

4.6.1 Over the next 5 years, the council will continue to work with communities to pro-actively address demand for growing sites in each community – assessed according to demand and prioritised according to the spatial distribution of existing sites. The process for

setting up new allotment sites and community gardens on council-owned land is included in **Appendix 3**. Where a new allotment site is set up, there will be a requirement for the new site to offer 10% of its new plots to people already on the council's overall waiting list.

- 4.6.2 Where required, and depending on levels of demand and council resources, the council will support groups to carry out Phase 1 soil tests and to apply for planning permission for growing sites on council land.
- 4.6.3 For allotment sites in particular, as the site set-up costs can be especially expensive and require substantial external funding, seed money will be sought from council Open Space budgets for each new allotment site on council-owned land, to act as matched funding. This would aim to cover set-up costs such as soil testing, planning applications, reasonable site access, drainage and fencing.
- 4.6.4 Schools will be encouraged to grow and share their ideas and learning through the West Lothian Schools Garden Competition.
- 4.6.5 The council will also signpost to other organisations that promote food growing and organisations which can offer support. The council will also share information about other community projects in the area to help them connect with each other (see below).



Killandean allotments – initial set-up

4.7 Supporting the sharing of knowledge and skills

To improve access to information about growing and skills training, the council will continue to work in partnership with other organisations and existing West Lothian food growing groups:

Table 5 – Supporting Organisations

Skills training / information sharing	Who can provide help / advice
Setting up community groups, including volunteer recruitment	WLC Open Space, Regeneration Officers, Voluntary Sector Gateway, existing growing groups
Setting up a growing project	Social Farms and Gardens, Scottish Association of Allotments and Gardens (SAGS), existing growing groups
Horticultural skills	SRUC – Oatridge College, Royal Horticultural Society, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, The Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, existing growing groups
Gardening and health projects	The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Cyrenians, Trellis
Gardening and career training	SRUC – Oatridge College, TCV, West Lothian Youth Action Project, Social Farms and Gardens
School gardens	Royal Horticultural Society, TCV, Learning through Landscapes Initiative
Making raised beds / improving nature conservation, (e.g. wildflower meadow maintenance)	SRUC – Oatridge College, TCV
Managing groups	Social Farms and Gardens, Voluntary Sector Gateway, SAGS
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Council food growing webpage – www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing o Member organisations with newsletters, etc: SAGS, Social Farms and Gardens, TCV Community network, RHS, Livingston and District Horticultural Society, Trellis o greenspace scotland
Funding info / funding applications	WLC – Open Space and Regeneration Officers Social Farms and Gardens, Almond Housing Association

4.8 Publicity and signposting

4.8.1 In order to broaden the understanding and support for food growing initiatives, the council will publicise the benefits of food growing and promote the various methods of community growing by sharing updates and stories about community food growing initiatives throughout West Lothian across the variety of council media platforms.

4.8.2 Useful information will be posted on the council's food growing webpage www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing, to inform people about what's happening locally and encourage people to participate. This will include a link to an [updated map](#) of food growing sites.

4.8.3 To help increase access to fresh fruit and vegetables, allotments and community gardens will be encouraged to share their excess produce with community fridges and foodbanks for those in crisis. Connections have already been made through the anti-poverty and food insecurity strategies to promote this. Links to maps of foodbanks/fridges will be shared on the council's website, so all growers can see where their nearest food bank / community fridge is located.

4.9 Monitoring and reviewing progress

4.9.1 The strategy will be informally reviewed annually through discussion with stakeholders, to monitor progress and if appropriate, an update reported to the Council Executive committee.

4.9.2 As required by the Community Empowerment Act (2015), an annual allotment report will be prepared for the council's Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel and posted on the food growing webpage.

4.9.3 A more formal stakeholder review of the strategy will be held every 4-5 years (1 year before the end of the strategy period i.e. in 2024), to ensure progress and to ensure that the strategy still addresses the long-term vision of stakeholders and to plan for the next 5 years. This includes:

- Opportunities for food growing;
- Assessments of demand (including waiting lists);
- Levels of provision;
- Site conditions etc.
- Information sharing;
- Networking opportunities for groups; and
- Support for local growing initiatives (including skills development).



Polbeth and West Calder Community Garden

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ACT INFORMATION

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Part 9 – Allotments

Part 9 in full can be viewed here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/part/9/enacted>

Definition of “allotment”:

Land which is owned or leased by a local authority, which is let out to a person or intended for let by the authority, and which is used or intended for use—

- (i) wholly or mainly for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers, and
- (ii) not for profit

Definition of “allotment site”:

- (a) land consisting wholly or partly of allotments, and
- (b) includes other land owned or leased by a local authority that may be used by tenants of allotments in connection with their use of allotments.

Major duties of local authorities (for council owned/leased sites only):

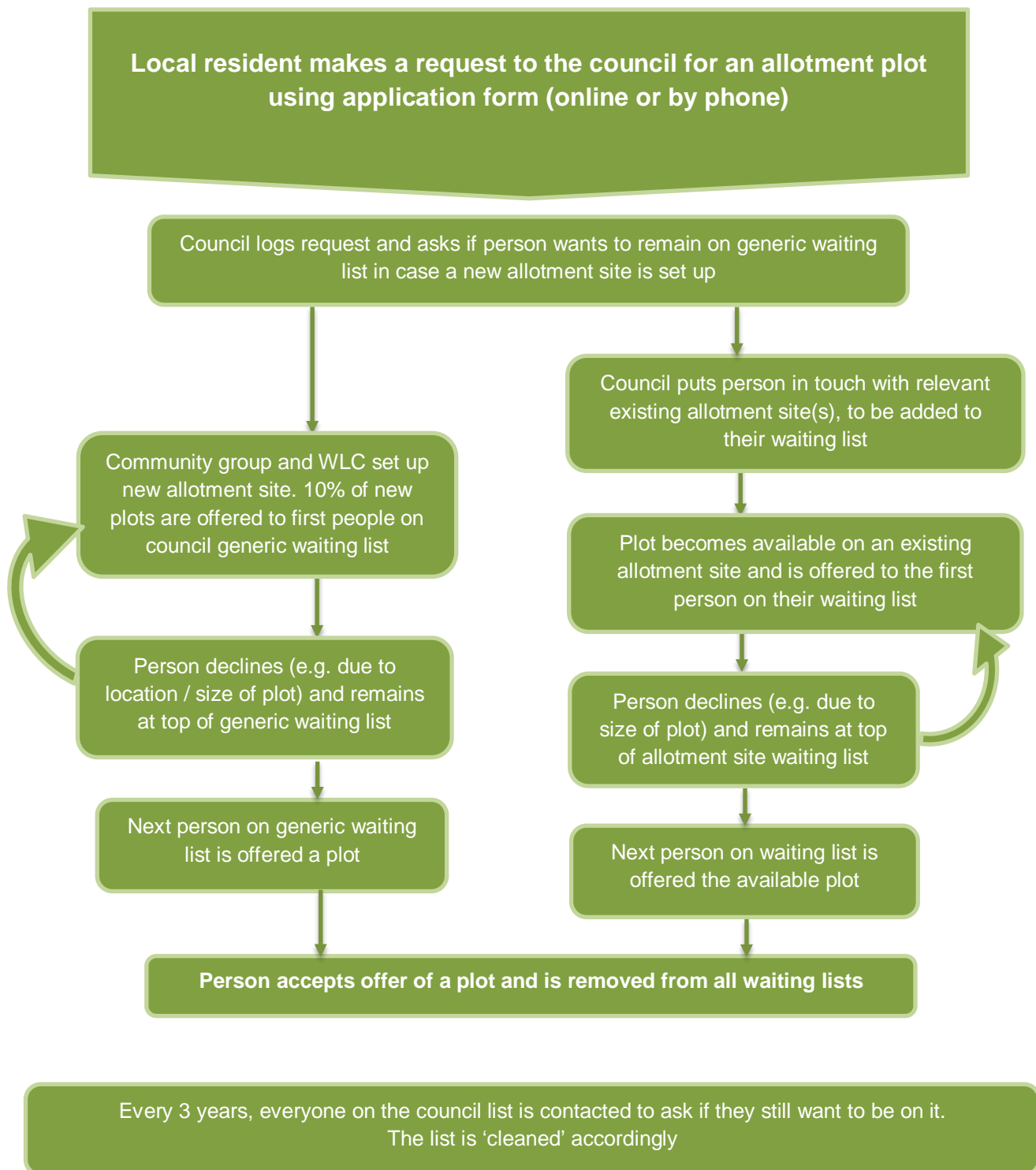
1. Establish and maintain a list of people who make a request to the local authority for an allotment.
2. Ensure that the list of people waiting for an allotment doesn't exceed 50% of the number of existing council-owned plots and that people wait no more than 5 years for a plot.
3. Take reasonable steps to provide allotments that are reasonably close to people making requests. i.e. within 3 miles (4.8km) or 20mins by public transport (or other, if appropriate)
4. Provide reasonable access to an allotment site and allotments on the site.
5. Make regulations about the allotment sites in the local authority area, and display them.
6. Publish a Food Growing Strategy, to be reviewed every 5 years.
7. Publish an annual allotments report
8. Allow allotment associations to meet in council buildings

Powers of local authorities (for council owned/leased sites):

1. To remove unauthorised buildings from allotment sites
2. To delegate management of allotment sites if a person (usually Allotment Association) requests to take on some of the functions of a local authority, whilst the local authority retains responsibility. If an authority agrees to delegate functions, the lease must detail the responsibilities of both sides.
3. To incur expenditure in the promotion of allotments / food growing and also give training in growing, if deemed necessary (not compulsory).
4. Powers to terminate the lease of allotments or allotment sites if the tenant has failed to comply with the regulations

APPENDIX 2 –

WLC PROCESS FOR MANAGING COUNCIL ALLOTMENT WAITING LISTS



APPENDIX 3 - WLC PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING NEW FOOD GROWING SITES

Request made to West Lothian Council for the creation of a new allotment site or community garden by:

- I. An existing constituted community group
- II. A group of least 3 people from the community

