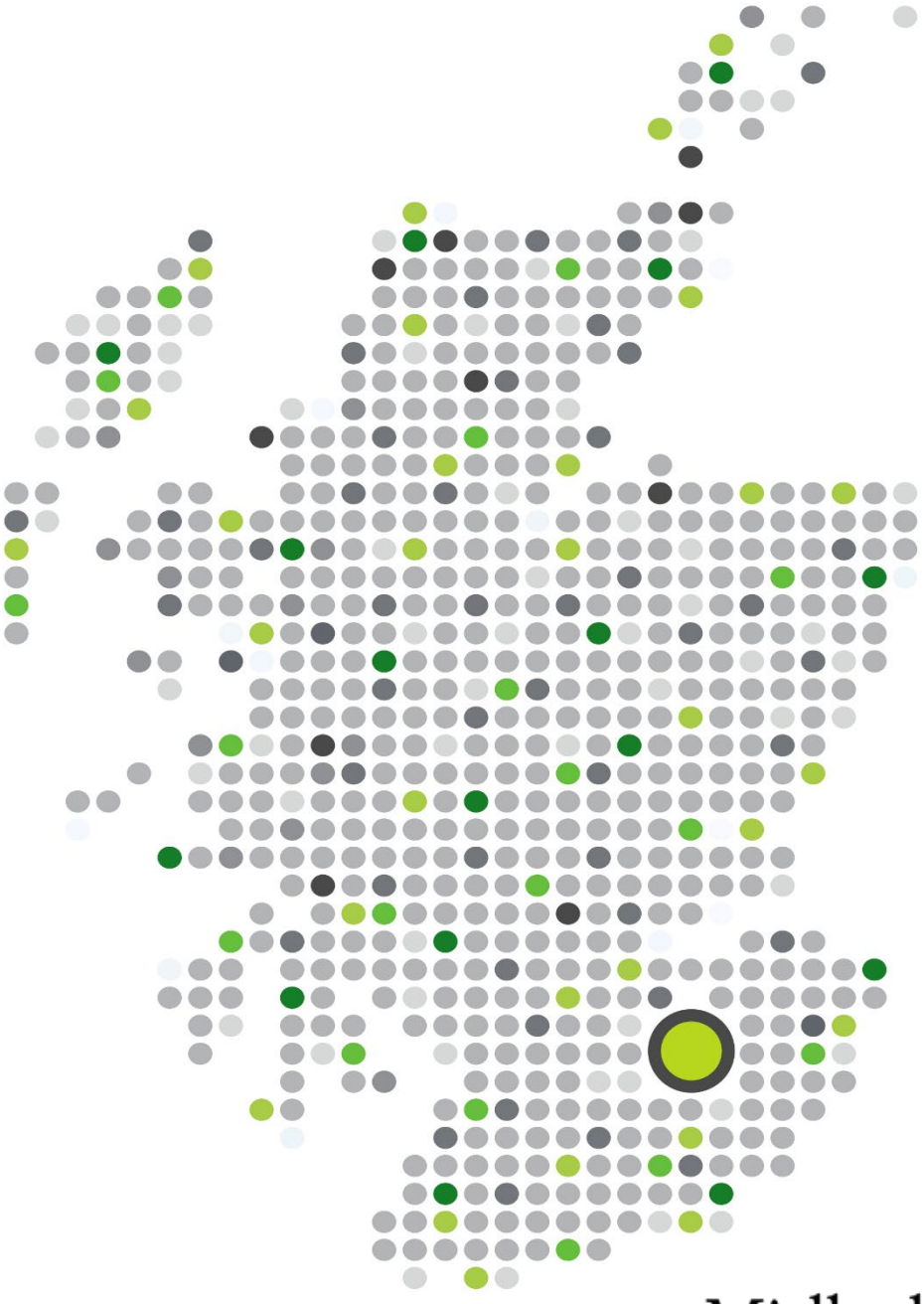
Evidence Report Summary

June 2024

Midlothian Local Development Plan 2



Midlothian

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Part 1 – Introduction

Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to summarise the main matters contained within the Midlothian Local Development Plan 2 (MLDP2) Evidence Report. The Evidence Report has been prepared as part of the review and replacement of the adopted Midlothian Local Development Plan 2017 (MLDP 2017).

2. This summary document identifies matters which have arisen as part of the evidence gathering for the Evidence Report and key implications for MLDP2. This document provides a summary for each of the 34 topic chapters in the full Evidence Report. Each topic chapter (1-34) summary is set out in the following way in this document: Topic Title; Summary of Evidence; and Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan. References to NPF4 in the document are to the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4.

3. It is not the intention of this summary document to repeat all matters raised in the Evidence Report. It is a summary only. While this summary document can be read alone, it would be beneficial to read it alongside the below full document(s) that can be viewed through Midlothian Council > Meetings (cmis.uk.com) at Public Reports item 5.1:
   - The Evidence Report;
   - Participation Report; and
   - Children and Young People Participation Report.

4. After approval of the Evidence Report by Midlothian Council – it will be going to the 25 June 2024 full meeting of Midlothian Council for approval, it is submitted to Scottish Ministers (via the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) for "Gate Check". The Gate Check is a process were a person(s) (a Scottish Government Planning Reporter) appointed by the Scottish Ministers/DPEA will undertake an assessment of the Evidence Report to decide if it contains sufficient evidence for the Council to proceed to the next stage of MLDP2 production – namely the production of the MLDP2 Proposed Plan. The MLDP2 Proposed Plan will contain a spatial strategy and policy framework against which development proposals and planning applications will be assessed. Development Plan Scheme 16, which can be viewed on Midlothian Council's website at Development Plan Scheme 16 | Development Plan Scheme 16 (midlothian.gov.uk), provides details of the production timetable for MLDP2. Engagement will occur during production of MLDP2 Proposed Plan, and the Proposed Plan will be consulted upon when produced.

5. During the Scottish Ministers/DPEA "Gate Check" process, the Evidence Report and accompanying documents will be available for inspection on the website of the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA).

6. For further information, or if you would like to be added to the MLDP2 mailing list, please email ldp@midlothian.gov.uk.

Part 2 – Topic Summaries

Topic 1: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Summary of Evidence

- The changes in climate already being experienced are projected to continue and intensify. For Midlothian projections are that this will mean that average temperatures will increase across all seasons, typical summers will be warmer and dryer, typical winters will be milder and wetter, intense and heavy rainfall events will increase in both winter and summers, there will be reduced frost and snowfall, and weather is likely to become more variable.
- Midlothian's total emissions continue to decrease, sitting slightly below the Scottish level in terms of percentage decrease.
- Transport and domestic heating are the biggest sources of carbon emissions in Midlothian.
- Blue and green infrastructure (e.g. water and land based natural and semi-natural areas) and nature-based solutions are key components in making places more resilient and adaptive to climate change.
- Most flooding incidents in Midlothian are the result of surface water flooding. River flooding is less of a widespread significant risk in many areas due to the incised character of Midlothian's river valleys.
- Deprivation may be worsened by climate change and may also exacerbate health inequalities.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will have a role in supporting decarbonisation, mostly through its influence over the built environment, transport and energy generation. MLDP2's spatial strategy will need to be designed to reduce, minimise and avoid greenhouse gas emissions.
- Given the scale of housing related growth, it will be particularly important for Midlothian that the spatial strategy and site selection methodology for MLDP2 reflect net zero commitments.
- For Midlothian, the most significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions are transport and domestic heating. MLDP2 will need to help address both directly. New development and retrofitting of existing building stock and places will both be relevant. MLDP2 will have an important role in climate change mitigation due to the influence it has on reducing energy demand.
- MLDP2 has a role in supporting increased energy efficiency in new buildings, working alongside building standards and construction related standards.
- MLDP2 will be a key tool in moving Midlothian towards being a climate adapted place. This will require a whole place approach which combines the adaptation and mitigation measures required to deliver a resilient future. Nature-based solutions should be an integral element of this.

Topic 2: Biodiversity (including Soils)

Summary of Evidence

- Biodiversity is the variety of all living things and the ecosystems where they live. Midlothian's physical features including the Pentland Hills and Moorfoot scarp and foothills with their reservoirs, and the incised river valleys of the Esk and Tyne river systems, form the framework for Midlothian's varied biodiversity both in terms of habitats and species.
- Healthy rivers are important sources of biodiversity generally and specifically in Midlothian where the River North Esk, River South Esk, River Tyne and their tributaries dominate and heavily influence the landscape and ecosystems.
- The Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024 identifies six priorities agreed by the Midlothian Biodiversity Partnership – pollinators; homes for wildlife; rivers, streams and ponds; invasive non-native species; people and nature; and protected sites and species. Twenty-three actions are identified within these six priorities.
- Planning has an important role in helping to address damage to nature. There are practical steps which a local authority can take to nature-based solutions, including developing strategic approaches to spatial planning, transport and development that aim to secure the multiple benefits of nature-based solutions. Protecting and restoring features of biodiversity value, including locally important habitats and species, is a key part of this along with placing an increased emphasis on multi-functional green infrastructure and seeking positive effects for biodiversity through policies and processes on managing new development.
- 26%, or 9,255 hectares, of Midlothian's surface area is classified as prime agricultural land. It is largely clustered in the centre and north of Midlothian, close to existing settlements. Prime agricultural land is significant because it produces the highest crop yields with relatively lower inputs of energy and resources. It is therefore an important resource in relation to food supply and wider climate change matters.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- Protecting biodiversity, reversing biodiversity loss and delivering positive effects for biodiversity from development will be a key theme for MLDP2 and its delivery.
- MLDP2 will need to spatially define the Midlothian Nature Network at a specific point in time, with the intention that the network will expand and improve over time as new nature rich habitat areas are created and connectivity across the network increases. MLDP2 will need to ensure that the existing network is protected, and that enhancements are encouraged and supported. Where development sites are allocated in MLDP2, the site statements/briefs will need to clearly identify the biodiversity and nature network related expectations from development.
- The Council will consider other options for a tool to help increase biodiversity through development which can be implemented through MLDP2.
- Given the location of prime agricultural land in Midlothian, concentrated around settlements, there is significant potential that allocations may need to be on prime agricultural farmland. However, given the importance of prime agricultural land to food security and climate change resilience, this will be required to be balanced against NPF4 Policy 5b.

Topic 3: Forestry Woodland and Trees

Summary of Evidence

- The existing tree and woodland resource in Midlothian is set out in the draft Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2024. In Midlothian there are three broad types of forest and woodland – commercial forestry, native woodland (including ancient woodland and riparian woodlands) and urban trees and woodland. Woodland creation and management issues and priorities will vary between these, but there are common themes around supporting expansion of woodland coverage in line with national targets.
- A woodland spatial strategy is set out in the draft Forestry and Woodland Strategy. It identifies areas unsuitable for woodland creation, and preferred, potential and sensitive areas.
- Trees have multiple benefits for the environment and people, in addition to their vital function of converting carbon dioxide into oxygen. They store carbon, clean the air by soaking up pollutants and toxins, provide habitats for birds, insects and other wildlife, and help to prevent soil erosion. Trees can help to attenuate water flow, reducing the impact of heavy rain. They also help to moderate temperature, providing shade and shelter, and in urban areas can have a cooling effect. Trees also boost physical and mental health and wellbeing and contribute to the economy in many ways, directly and indirectly.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will integrate the protection and careful management of existing trees and woodland into the spatial strategy, policies, site selection and settlement statements. Additional policy on control of tree and woodland removal, supporting the Scottish Government Policy on Control of Woodland Removal and NPF4, will be considered.
- The woodland spatial strategy will be integrated into the spatial strategy for Midlothian in MLDP2. Trees and woodland will also be integrated into the Nature Network to be defined in MLDP2.
- MLDP2 will integrate, and where appropriate help deliver, commitments in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Midlothian Climate Change Strategy. Ensuring existing trees are carefully integrated into new development, and opportunities for new planting are maximised, will be an integral element in briefs for sites to be allocated.

Topic 4: Natural Places and Landscape

Summary of Evidence

- There is a rich and wide variety of places and landscapes in Midlothian that are not subject of designation, but are very much valued by residents and visitors. Strong support for the natural environment was reflected in public engagement undertaken during Evidence Report production.
- Midlothian's natural environment designated sites include: two Special Protection Areas (SPAs), one Special Area of Conservation (SAC),16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) one Local Nature Reserve, part of one Regional Country Park, four Country Parks, 62 designated Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) and five proposed Local Biodiversity Sites.
- Midlothian has seven designated Special Landscape Ares (SLAs).
- There are 19 proposed Local Geodiversity Sites (LGS) in Midlothian.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will seek to ensure that valuable and valued features of Midlothian are safeguarded and enhanced where possible.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy will need to consider how it safeguards the cherished and valued environmental assets of Midlothian and how its policy framework interacts with that of NPF4.

Topic 5: Historic Assets and Places

Summary of Evidence

- Historic buildings are a very important visible demonstration of Midlothian's heritage, with many styles and periods reflected in buildings across the county.
- Midlothian historic assets include: 698 listed buildings, 21 conservation areas, 10 gardens and designed landscapes, 75 scheduled monuments, two registered battlefield sites and 36 entries on the Historic Environment Scotland Buildings at Risk Register. There have been heritage-based regeneration projects in Dalkeith and Gorebridge, and one currently on going in Penicuik.
- Public engagement demonstrated a wish for historic buildings and places to be protected in the face of new development and that any new development takes into consideration the historic setting in which they are being built.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will need to continue to protect and enhance Midlothian's historic environment and its features and designations.
- Consideration will be needed by the Council on the extent to which NPF4 policies replace corresponding MLDP 2017 policy and MLDP2 relies on NPF4 for its policy framework on historic environment matters.
- Alterations to conservation area boundaries or the designation of new conservation areas will need to be considered during the preparation of the MLDP2 Proposed Plan.

Topic 6: Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings

Summary of Evidence

- Midlothian Council has contributed annually to the Scottish Government's Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (SVDLS) process, including visiting and mapping sites to verify their suitability for inclusion in the return.
- The latest SVDLS submitted to the Scottish Government was in October 2023. It lists 39 sites in Midlothian that cover a cumulative area of 76 hectares.
- Midlothian Council has not prepared a formal Urban Capacity Study (UCS) for engagement or consultation as part of the preparation of MLDP2. The Council does not intend publishing or consulting on an UCS. The SVDLS identifies the vacant and derelict land.
- The Call for Ideas exercise to be undertaken as part of MLDP2 Proposed Plan preparation will assist in identifying possible sites for consideration in meeting MLDP2 requirements.
- The Scottish Government's Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods Planning Guidance highlights the important role that retrofitting and repurposing existing buildings has in reducing emissions associated with new construction and in retaining embodied carbon within existing structures. The document also sets out the potential for 20-minute neighbourhoods and local living to improve the health and wellbeing and overall quality of life of communities.
- Comments received from the public indicate support use of previously used land (often called brownfield land) first before building on previously unbuilt on land (often called greenfield land).

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2's spatial strategy will need to identify and consider appropriate and available brownfield to help meet its development requirements. However, it is Midlothian Council's view from the evidence available that there is a limited selection of suitable brownfield sites in which to accommodate significant additional future growth.
- MLDP2 will need to consider appropriate densities for brownfield sites relative to their location, including for example higher density development, such as flatted development in some locations.
- Some derelict sites will have been out of use for so long that natural colonisation by wildlife and vegetation will have taken place. Colonised sites with minimal intervention can result in a rich diversity of species. MLDP2 will need to take the biodiversity value of a site which has naturalised into consideration when considering possible future uses.
- A review of Historic Environment Scotland's Buildings at Risk Register (relative to Midlothian) will be undertaken at MLDP2 Proposed Plan stage. The spatial strategy of MLDP2 will need to consider how and if it can support the safeguarding, restoration and appropriate redevelopment of sites on the Buildings at Risk Register.

Topic 7: Green Belt and Coalescence

Summary of Evidence

- Land designated as green belt in Midlothian is part of the wider Edinburgh Green Belt. The Edinburgh Green Belt has influenced the scope and scale of long-term development in Midlothian. It has helped encourage development within urban areas and expansion of settlements beyond the Green Belt boundary.
- To meet strategic housing and economic development requirements, MLDP 2017 and previous Midlothian local plans made changes to Green Belt boundaries to accommodate very significant levels of growth.
- Green Belt land in the MLDP 2017 represents 3,370 hectares, or 9.5% of the Midlothian Council area.
- No Green Belt review has been carried out at Evidence Report stage for MLDP2. It is likely any formal review of the Green Belt would be undertaken in the future as part of a wider cross-boundary review with neighbouring planning authorities. This would likely be with City of Edinburgh Council and East Lothian Council, with whom the Green Belt spreads across joint contiguous local authority boundaries.
- The proposals map of MLDP 2017 highlights the very close proximity to each other of Midlothian's largest and most populated communities. In some areas settlement and community coalescence has already occurred. In other areas communities, while physically separated, are very close to each other. While not unique to Midlothian, unlike in other parts of Scotland, there are not significant distances between many Midlothian communities and settlements.
- The Newbattle Strategic Greenspace Safeguard, designated to contribute to long-term settlement identity safeguarding by restricting development in this very important location, is considered by Midlothian Council to have been successful in its ambition to help prevent coalescence. No review of this designation has occurred in the production of the Evidence Report.
- Feedback from the public identified settlement coalescence and loss of settlement identity as being a concern in the context of the significant growth which Midlothian has experienced.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework development will need to consider the location of Green Belt boundaries, the location of any required new development sites and matters of settlement coalescence and community identity.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- Midlothian Council will continue to retain green belt land in MLDP2. MLDP2 will need to identify the extent and boundaries of the Green Belt.
- MLDP2 will need to decide on its Green Belt policy framework. This will include what scale of reliance is placed on NPF4's green belt policy framework, and whether the outcome of Council monitoring work on development proposals in the Green Belt indicates any local policy features are required in MLDP2.
- The Council considers the timing, and the nature of any Green Belt review would need to be considered at Proposed Plan stage of MLDP2. The Council considers the matter of green belt review should be considered further when through the Gate Check process and the LHLR figure is confirmed.
- MLDP2 Proposed Plan preparation will need to consider if it requires an equivalent to MLDP 2017 Policy DEV 1 Community Identity and Coalescence. If so, any changes that may be required would need to be considered.

- The location of any new development allocations in MLDP2 will need to be considered in the context of settlement identity and coalescence. The policy direction of NPF4 on place making and coalescence will also need to be considered in MLDP2 Proposed Plan preparation.
- Given, in the opinion of the Council, the success of the Newbattle Strategic Greenspace Safeguard (MLDP 2017 Policy ENV 3) in protecting settlement identify in this location, no changes are proposed at this stage to the designation. It is proposed that this designation will roll forward into MLDP2 Proposed Plan.

Topic 8: Active Travel

Summary of Evidence

- Information has been collected on national policy requirements as well as regional and local strategies for transport and summarised for a Midlothian context.
- Public feedback from engagement mainly indicated the need for prioritising road space allocation for active travel options, better connection of settlements through active travel networks and better integration of active travel infrastructure.
- The Cycling Scotland statistics for the Midlothian area, for the five year period 2017-2021, highlight increases in the proportion of journeys under 5km being made by bicycle (an increase from 44% to 54%).

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework should align with relevant national, regional, and local level strategies, objectives, policies, infrastructure plans, and hierarchies.
- MLDP2 should be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach (as per NPF4) and set out the infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy.
- The emerging Midlothian Active Travel Strategy will inform the MLDP2 spatial strategy through the Strategic Project Pipeline (10-year), which addresses major routes and network expansion; and the Local Neighbourhood Action Plan, which addresses local routes and integration in new development.
- Active travel infrastructure should form part of an integrated transport system and built environment. When planning for new development sites in MLDP2, there is an opportunity to build in cycle friendly conditions from the outset. MLDP2 will consider how active travel networks can be better integrated into the design of new developments.
- MLDP2 will be informed by targets to improve conditions and connectivity for active and sustainable travel and increase active travel trips to railway stations.

Topic 9: Public Transport

Summary of Evidence

- Information has been collected on national policy requirements as well as regional and local strategies for transport and summarised for a Midlothian context.
- Public transport in Midlothian consists of bus and train. Feedback from public engagement demonstrates that the bus services in Midlothian need to be more frequent, direct and reliable. There is also a desire to improve east-west connectivity by public transport and encourage development of new bus services.
- The Midlothian Orbital Bus Study (2023) examines potential enhanced bus priority measures along key bus corridors in Midlothian.
- The Borders Railway is well-used for access to Edinburgh, however public engagement indicated a need to better link bus and rail travel through transport hubs.
- Eskbank is the busiest rail station in Midlothian, accounting for nearly 50% of the total number of passengers using the service from one of the Midlothian rail stations. This is followed by Newtongrange, Gorebridge, and Shawfair.
- The Edinburgh Strategic Sustainable Transport Study Phase 2 Summary Report (2021) analyses a potential southeast corridor tram route, with options to link Edinburgh BioQuarter and Shawfair.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework will be informed by relevant national, regional, and local level strategies, objectives, policies, infrastructure plans, and hierarchies. MLDP2 should be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach and set out the infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy.
- The emerging Midlothian Local Transport Strategy will inform MLDP2 strategy and policy.
- MLDP2 will be informed by the Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy (2023) to grow the number of sustainable transport journeys to and from local neighbourhoods to railway stations, and better integrate railway stations into the communities they serve.
- MLDP2 will be informed by the Mobility Hubs Strategic Study (2020) and the demand and need for hubs in the region.
- MLDP2 will look to prioritise public transport and active travel in new developments and include in the early stages of development.

Topic 10: Roads

Summary of Evidence

- Information was gathered on national, regional and local strategies as well and existing and proposed road infrastructure.
- The emerging Midlothian Local Transport Strategy (LTS) provides a baseline of the roads network in Midlothian and considers the potential problems around road-based travel. Issues include the volume of traffic and congestion on Midlothian roads, which could be further pronounced with projected population growth.
- The emerging LTS identifies that traffic congestion is a regular problem which affects many routes in Midlothian. Routine congestion during peak times around A720 Edinburgh City Bypass junctions and congestion blocking back onto other roads.
- Traffic data outlines capacity issues at the Eskbank Toll and Sheriffhall roundabouts and at Straiton, Hillend and City Bypass junctions.
- The Midlothian 20mph Speed Limit Review (2023) addresses existing speed limits across the Midlothian Council area with a view to adjusting speed limits to 20mph in appropriate locations.
- Feedback from public engagement included a significant volume of negative responses regarding roads and traffic, for example increased traffic due to new development, existing infrastructure is not able to cope with current traffic demands and current capacity issues in areas closer to Edinburgh. The condition of roads was also highlighted by the public, in particular the need to upgrade the roads, carparks, pavements and repair potholes.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- The MLDP2 spatial strategy and policy framework should align with relevant national, regional, and local level strategies, objectives, policies, infrastructure plans, and hierarchies. MLDP2 should be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach and set out the infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy.
- NPF4 Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport) may replace MLDP 2017 Policies TRAN2 (Transport Network Interventions), TRAN3 (Strategic Transport Network) and TRAN4 (Freight). MLDP2 spatial strategy will be informed by NPF4 Policy 18 (Infrastructure First) to ensure roads infrastructure considerations are integral in the development plan process. MLDP2 will be informed by the NPF4 National Spatial Strategy (spatial principles) – just transition, conserving and recycling assets, local living, compact urban growth, rebalanced development, and rural revitalisation.
- MLDP2 will be informed by the NTS2 sustainable investment and travel hierarchies – reduce the need to travel and promote active travel and public transport over private car use for the movement of people. MLDP2 will be informed by the Transport Scotland Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2) Transport Planning Objectives and Final Recommendations.
- The data and capacity issues on the trunk road and local road networks and at significant junctions will inform MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework.
- MLDP2 should prioritise locations for future development that can be accessed by sustainable modes. The spatial strategy should reflect the sustainable travel hierarchy and sustainable investment hierarchy by making best use of existing infrastructure and services.
- MLDP2 will be informed by an appropriate and effective transport appraisal undertaken in line with relevant transport appraisal guidance. The MLDP2 transport appraisal and modelling should also reflect the national ambition and commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030.

Topic 11: Wind Energy

Summary of Evidence

- Details have been gathered on national, regional and local priorities and issues as well as existing and proposed wind energy infrastructure.
- Within the Midlothian area, several small-scale wind energy developments (1-2 wind turbines, under 50m height) are operational at farm or commercial sites. There are no large scale wind farms in Midlothian, but there are on its boundaries.
- Renewable energy capacity data shows that the maximum amount of electricity produced at any one time from onshore wind in Midlothian in 2021 was 50MW. Onshore wind produced 87% of the total renewable energy generated in Midlothian in 2021.
- An application for the Torfichen Wind Farm, Midlothian proposal (19no. turbines / 114MW) has been submitted to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit. Several wind farms are also operational and proposed in the Scottish Borders Council area to the south of Midlothian.
- From public engagement, it is clear that communities value Midlothian's countryside and landscapes and wish to see them protected.
- When engaging with children and young people, no comments were received directly relating to wind energy. However, children and young people expressed awareness of the climate emergency and comment on the value they place on the biodiversity and landscape of rural communities.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will need to consider and be guided by the policy framework of NPF4 on wind energy.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy are required by NPF4 Policy 11 to expand renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies and seek to realise Midlothian's full potential for electricity and heat from these means.
- Scotland's Energy Statement and Just Transition Plan (2023) (Scottish Government) will inform the MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework development. The document outlines energy demand and aspirations, including:
  - by 2030, at least the equivalent of 50% of energy across heat, transport and electricity demand comes from renewable sources.
  - by 2030, renewable heat target provisionally set at 22%.
  - by 2030, locally or community owned energy generation set at 2 GW.
- The Scottish Government's Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2022) will inform MLDP2 spatial strategy and sets ambitions of a further 12GW of onshore wind by 2030, increasing from 8.78GW in 2022 to 20GW by 2030 in Scotland.
- The Midlothian Landscape Wind Capacity Study (2014) will help inform work on the MLDP2 spatial strategy and potential development, but MLDP2 will need to be led by NPF4. The Study outlines limited scope to develop wind turbines below 20-30m in Midlothian, and no scope for development of wind turbines above 30m high in most Midlothian LCAs due to landscape sensitivity. The study outlines very limited scope for turbines 50-80m high in the central parts of the Moorland Fringes landscape.
- The MLDP2 spatial strategy will be informed by the cumulative impact of existing and proposed wind farm development in Midlothian and throughout the region in the Scottish Borders and East Lothian.

Topic 12: Solar Energy

Summary of Evidence

- Evidence has been gathered on existing and proposed solar infrastructure in Midlothian. There are currently three existing solar photovoltaic (PV) developments in Midlothian and 15 consented and proposed Solar Photovoltaic (PV) developments in Midlothian. Many domestic scale Solar PV developments do not need planning permission.
- Solar PV generation is set to increase, including small scale rooftop schemes and larger solar farms/arrays. However, it is expected that this will have a minimal impact in winter in Scotland on the energy network and a relatively low impact on it in summer when peak and minimum demands in the network are experienced.
- The renewable electricity data from Scottish Energy Statistics Hub confirms an increase in generation from solar PV in Midlothian between 2017 to 2021.
- Midlothian Council officers are working closely with Changeworks to deliver the Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes projects across Midlothian. The Council's Local Energy and Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) lead is working with the individuals responsible for these projects to ensure that they are in line with LHEES priorities.
- Public engagement indicated that more solar panels are required on new and existing Council houses. Support was also expressed for retrofitting solar technology on older buildings and that renewable energy sources should be part of new developments.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will need to take into account NPF4 policy on solar energy and renewable energy development in its spatial framework and policy framework.
- The national target of 2GW of locally or community owned energy generation by 2030, will inform MLDP2 policy and placemaking regarding local and small-scale solar energy development.

Topic 13: Geothermal and Hydro Energy

Summary of Evidence

- No geothermal energy infrastructure has been developed in Midlothian.
- A Green Heat in Greenspaces project (Greenspace Scotland) considers ground source and water source heat generation potential in Midlothian. The project provides an extensive range of information and analysis for the Midlothian area, which will be addressed during the development of MLDP2 strategy and policy.
- The Green Heat in Greenspaces evidence confirms that the total ground source heat capacity from greenspace in Midlothian is 407GWh. Three Midlothian settlements are identified with high potential for ground source heat capacity – Loanhead, Danderhall and Rosewell.
- Midlothian Council has received an application for an EIA screening opinion of temporary mine water pilot wells at Roslin (ref 23/00778/SCR). The proposal is for temporary engineering works associated with minewater heat exploration, comprising the drilling of 3no boreholes, the recharge of waste heat into flooded mineshafts for a period of 6 weeks and subsequent capping with manholes on all land at 50m south of the B7003 Penicuik Road, Oatslie Farm, Roslin, and land 300m southeast of Langhill Farm, Roslin. This proposal is linked to a University of Edinburgh Galleries to Calories (G2C) Project to assess use of legacy mine workings as recycled heat storage and transport networks.
- District heating networks could help the Council to meet its net zero targets. The Council is engaged with Midlothian Energy Ltd (MEL) on this and other energy topics.
- The evidence outlines that the installed renewable electricity generation capacity (MW) from hydro projects in Midlothian has remained at 0.4 MW between 2017 and 2021.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework will need to take account of and be able to support appropriate expansion of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies and seek to realise Midlothian's full potential for electricity and heat from these sources.

Topic 14: Zero Waste

Summary of Evidence

- Scotland's Zero Waste Plan 2010 highlights the aim of achieving a zero waste Scotland, where we make the most efficient use of resources by minimising Scotland's demand on primary resources, and maximising the reuse, recycling and recovery of resources instead of treating them as waste. Current targets for reducing waste and increasing recycling by 2025 include reducing total waste arising in Scotland; reducing food waste; recycling 70% of remaining waste and sending no more than 5% of remaining waste to landfill.
- An audit of waste infrastructure capacity, condition, needs and deliverability has been carried out.
- The evidence confirms that two landfill sites are currently operational in Midlothian at Drummond Moor (no.2) and Middleton Quarry. The anticipated dates for ceasing landfill at these sites are 2025 and 2030.
- Midlothian Council is committed to achieving the Scottish Government's targets in Scotland's Zero Waste Plan and The Charter for Household Recycling. A joint Midlothian/City of Edinburgh Council Recycling and Energy Recovery Centre (RERC) at Millerhill to treat kerbside collected residual waste is now operational.
- The reduction in landfilled waste reflects the incineration of waste now occurring at the Millerhill RERC. It is hoped that the RERC and the Millerhill Anaerobic Digestion facilities will help Midlothian Council contribute to the national recycling targets of 70% by 2025, and only 5% of waste going to landfill by 2025.
- Feedback from public engagement identified there was considered to be a significant litter issue and the need for more local waste bin provision was raised recurrently. Feedback also highlighted views that there is a lot of fly tipping in the authority area and that the closure of recycling centres is seen as a problem.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework will be informed by the NPF4 Policy 12's support for the capture, distribution or use of gases captured from landfill sites or waste treatment plant.
- MLDP2 will be informed by the Scottish Government's Circular Economy Strategy (2016) and the priority areas of food and drink, remanufacture, construction and the built environment, and energy infrastructure.
- MLDP2 will need to consider how it can support energy recovery from waste to support high quality heat and power schemes.
- The MLDP2 spatial strategy will be informed by the Mine Water Geothermal Resource Atlas (MiRAS), which details mine water sources at the surface, including surface heat available, and surface heat resource type. The MiRAS presents optimal mine water geothermal areas in Scotland. In Midlothian, these areas are identified primarily in central and northern region, including Shawfair, Dalkeith, Bonnyrigg, Newtongrange and Gorebridge.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework should explore opportunities to increase contributions from hydro energy to the energy mix, in line with national aspirations.

Topic 15: Design, Quality and Place

Summary of Evidence

- A range of development frameworks, masterplans and town centre strategies have been prepared, including for the Dalkeith, Mayfield, Newtongrange and Shawfair areas.
- Dalkeith is a project town in the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme, which aims to improve wellbeing and reduce inequalities. Engagement during the process highlighted that improvements could be made in a range of areas including recreational space, affordable housing, and connectivity to transport.
- The Council received eight finalised local place plans, all from Midlothian community councils. Place Standard assessments were undertaken for six of the local place plan areas. On average, the 'moving around' and 'natural space' topics rate highest, and the 'care and maintenance' and 'influence and sense of control' topics rate lowest.
- A series of neighbourhood plans and action plans have previously been prepared for local communities. The plans identified a range of opportunities including the regeneration of town centres and utilisation of vacant buildings, and the development of active travel and green networks.
- Place Standard assessments were undertaken during the Evidence Report production process. On average, the 'natural space' and 'play and recreation' topics rate highest, and the 'public transport' and 'traffic and parking' topics rate lowest.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will be informed by the core design, planning, health, place, and wellbeing principles set out in national, regional, and local strategy and design guidance.
- MLDP2 should be place-based and design-led and created in line with the Scottish Government's Place Principle Place Principle: introduction - gov.scot (www.gov.scot).
- MLDP2 spatial strategy should be underpinned by the six qualities of successful places outlined in national policy and guidance (including NPF4): 1, Healthy; 2. Pleasant; 3. Connected; 4. Distinctive; 5. Sustainable; and 6. Adaptable. Place Standard should be used to support the delivery of successful places. Annex D – Six Qualities of Successful Places - National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework will be informed, where relevant, by the objectives, developments principles and proposals set out in available Midlothian development frameworks, masterplans, and town centre strategies.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy, policy and placemaking will be informed by the Place Standard assessment and engagement results produced during Evidence Report production, issues raised in local place plan information and the neighbourhood plans (where appropriate, given their age of production).

Topic 16: Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods

Summary of Evidence

- The Scottish Living Locally Data Portal (SLLDP) (arcgis.com) statistics indicate that overall, and while parts of this would be challenged by Midlothian residents in a range of places, Midlothian has good access to public transport, superfast broadband, and accessible public open space. However, it sets out there could be better access to primary healthcare, pharmacy and eating establishments.
- The Midlothian Place and Wellbeing Outcome Indicators Report (prepared by Public Health Scotland 2024) highlighted that the satisfaction rate of adults for many services and facilities in Midlothian is below the average for Scotland. These include local health services, local schools, Council libraries, and Council sport and leisure facilities.
- A 20-minute neighbourhood assessment of Midlothian settlements was undertaken during Evidence Report production. All towns (except Loanhead) scored below 60% for overall accessibility to facilities. All villages (except Danderhall and Roslin) scored below 50% for overall accessibility to facilities.
- Engagement with the public during Evidence Report production identified several local living issues, concerns and recommendations, including – developing and enhancing town centres, including community facilities and shopping options; concern over capacity of existing services, facilities, and infrastructure; housing types being built and options available; play space, recreational space, and leisure facilities; active travel infrastructure, links to the network and integration within new development; a need to improve public transport options and links to rail stations; and concern about settlement coalescence and loss of countryside, natural space, biodiversity, and woodland.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2's spatial strategy and any associated site briefs and masterplans will need to be informed by evidence gathered and help support local living including 20-minute neighbourhoods within settlements.
- MLDP2, in the context of local living, will need to support work seeking to address health issues directly and indirectly related to place.
- MLDP2 will need to support work to help address quality and accessibility of amenities, with a focus on healthy local neighbourhoods that support and facilitate healthy behaviours.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework development will need to be informed by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020 data, which identifies seven Midlothian data zones within the most deprived 20% in Scotland. MLDP2's spatial strategy will need to consider SIMD zones and the gaps in accessibility to facilities and services as highlighted by a range of studies, to help the area's settlements better conform to aspirations of NPF4 Policy 15 and local living in the future.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework will be informed by, and need to consider, the findings of the Public Health Scotland Midlothian Place and Wellbeing Outcome Indicators Report (2024).

Topic 17: MATHLR and Local Housing Land Requirement

Summary of Evidence

- Update Post 4 June 2024 Midlothian Council Planning Committee meeting: Midlothian Council's Planning Committee at its 4 June 2024 meeting agreed to identify an LHLR for MLDP2 of between 9,001-11,000 homes for MLDP2. This LHLR was identified subject to factors sets out in paragraph 4.15 of the report to the 4 June 2024 Planning Committee. The report can be viewed through Midlothian Council > Meetings (cmis.uk.com) at Public Reports item 5.1.
- Widespread public discontent and objection to the scale of housing growth in Midlothian and the type of housing being built was expressed to the Council during production of the Evidence Report. Objection was directed to the impact of housing on infrastructure (including roads, education and healthcare) and on the natural environment. Desire for different types of housing and more accessible (both financially and physically accessible) was expressed to the Council during public engagement on the Evidence Report production.
- Midlothian has been the fastest growing local authority in population terms for a number of years and this trend of population growth is set to continue. In the census period 2011-2021 Scotland's population grew by 2.7% and Midlothian's grew by 16.1%, the highest local authority area in Scotland. The Evidence Report provides detail of the growth in population and housing development in recent years.
- MLDP2 will need to identify land for a minimum of 8,850 homes and the Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) identified in MLDP2 through the Gate Check process. The amount of housing land identified in MLDP2 is called the Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR).
- There are programmed to be around 8,500 houses in the effective (available without constraint) housing land supply (in Midlothian) at 31 March 2026 - approximately nine months before MLDP2 is programmed for adoption by the Council. This is close to the 8,850 MATHLR (Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement) identified for Midlothian in NPF4. Variables such as the level of housing completions up to 31 March 2026 and possible removal of some existing sites following a sites review for MLDP2 will affect the available housing supply.
- There are other potential sources of land for housing from already identified long term housing safeguards (600 units). There are a further 747 on constrained sites in Midlothian. MLDP2 will need to consider their potential for development in the longer term. Windfall development might generate approximately 430 units over 10 years based on past take-up rates (adjusted for new NPF4 policy on windfall development).
- The larger the LHLR, the greater the quantity of new sites that will likely be required to be identified in MLDP2.
- Vacant and second homes and Houses in Multiple Occupation are, to date, a comparatively very small element of Midlothian's total housing stock/supply. The Council has not considered it necessary to increase the LHLR to compensate for the loss of housing stock to these matters, or to increase the LHLR to help provide accommodation for those studying in full or part-time education. The demand and need for student accommodation has not been accurately quantifiable.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will need to identify sufficient land for housing to meet the scale of housing in the LHLR for the plan's 10-year period (2026-2036).
- MLDP2 will have to help address the environmental and infrastructure capacity issues resulting from the scale of growth from the LHLR.

- The site selection methodology referred to in Topic Chapter 19 seeks to direct housing growth to the best available and appropriate locations, acknowledging that difficult decisions will be required and that there will be impacts from development.
- In line with NPF4, MLDP2 will need to consider potential housing growth matters and locations for MLDP3, the period after 2036.

Topic 18: Affordable, Disabled, Specialist and Other Housing

Summary of Evidence

- The City Region Deal Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 3 (HNDA3) for the South East Scotland area points to a high demand for social rented and Below Market Rented housing in Midlothian (about 60% of total demand). The Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) delivers affordable housing completions at a rate close to the annualised HNDA3 demand, but there is a large backlog of existing need to be addressed. There is uncertainty whether delivery can be sustained in the longer term, in part largely due to funding.
- Midlothian Council has approved a Mixed Tenure Strategy for housing which seeks to increase the numbers of affordable houses provided, through a range of tenures falling under the NPF4 definition of affordable housing.
- There is a considerable increase in the elderly population and need for specialist housing. Allowing people to remain supported in their homes for longer and minimising time spent in hospital is considered better for a variety of reasons. The Council's SHIP and Local Housing Strategy (LHS) provide information on provision of more accessible and specialist housing types.
- Scottish Building Standards are expected to change in 2025/2026 and require improved accessibility.
- There is no current gypsy/traveller provision in Midlothian. The previous site did not meet expectations of the community and was under-utilised. There are a variety of styles of provision, and some interest has been registered in a replacement facility more aimed at touring caravans.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 Proposed Plan will need to consider whether the current 25% affordable housing requirement of MLDP 2017 should be increased to help increase supply of affordable housing.
- Consideration of the impact of increased affordable housing requirements on development viability and delivery will be needed, particularly in the context of increasing financial costs of building standards, construction costs and less affordable housing funding being available.
- Consideration will need to be given in MLDP2 to allocating sites solely for affordable housing, but the deliverability of any sites not owned by the Council will need to be assessed.
- MLDP2 can consider MLDP2 affordable housing policy having separate requirements for different types of affordable housing, for example, housing to rent, Below Market Rent (BMR) and low cost affordable housing.
- MLDP2 can consider having policy requirements for more physically accessible housing. Building Standard regulations will need to be considered in this matter.
- MLDP2 can consider the variety of house types on new housing sites identified.
- Decisions on whether a site is for gypsy/travellers is needed can be taken forward through MLDP2 preparation. Any site search could be taken forward through the MLDP2. There appears to be interest in a more transient model of site where mobile homes are accommodated for a short period of time.

Topic 19: Site Selection Methodology

Summary of Evidence

- The Council has produced a site selection methodology which seeks to identify key environmental constraints, and consequently areas which are less constrained and may have more development potential.
- The application of the methodology has to and will allow for, exercising of professional judgement on what are the most appropriate sites. This will need to include taking a judgement on factors including the availability of sites to meet housing requirements and the impact of development on sites.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- The site selection methodology seeks to identify locations and assess potential new sites (both for housing and economic development sites).
- The methodology will also be used to assess existing development allocations, where these do not have planning permission.
- The site selection methodology has been prepared to align with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that will be prepared to accompany MLDP2. SEA principles have informed the production of the site selection methodology.

Topic 20: Heat and Cooling

Summary of Evidence

- Heat networks are a form of infrastructure consisting of heat generation and insulated pipes which supply heat to homes and non-domestic premises. Existing heat source and network infrastructure in Midlothian include – Millerhill Recycling and Energy Recovery Centre; initial infrastructure for Shawfair low carbon district heat network; Bonnyrigg heat network; and communal heating systems within social housing facilities.
- The Draft Midlothian Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and Midlothian Energy Ltd evidence highlights key heat source opportunities in Midlothian. These include:
  - Millerhill Recycling and Energy Recovery (RERC) facility
  - Advanced Computing Facility (ACF) at Easter Bush
  - Penicuik Estate redevelopment
  - Dalkeith mine water treatment site (MWTS) and energy centre
  - Shallow mine water opportunities
- The available waste heat from the Millerhill Recycling and Energy Recovery Centre is approximately 160 GWh, which is sufficient to heat about 30,000 homes within the Shawfair and Danderhall areas (Midlothian) and the Bio-Quarter and Greendykes areas (Edinburgh). Midlothian Energy Ltd is developing proposals and business cases for low carbon energy projects within these areas.

Implications for Proposed Plan

- The national energy demand and aspirations set out in the Scottish Government's Energy Statement and Just Transition Plan (Draft) (2023), Heat Networks Delivery Plan (2022) and the Heat in Buildings Strategy (2021) will be considered in the development of MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework, as noted below:
  - by 2027 – 2.6 TWh of thermal energy supplied by heat networks;
  - by 2030 – 6.0 TWh of thermal energy supplied by heat networks; and
  - by 2040-45 – heat networks decarbonised.
- The Opportunity Areas for District Heating in the UK study (UK Government) explores the geographic opportunities for low carbon heat network deployment across the UK and will be utilised during the development of MLDP2 spatial strategy and policy framework.
- The Green Heat in Greenspaces (GHiGs) project (Greenspace Scotland) considers ground source and water source heat generation potential, as well as indicators for promising sites for district heat networks. The project provides an extensive range of information and analysis for the Midlothian area, which will be considered during the development of MLDP2 strategy and policy. The Midlothian settlement profiles (in the project document) highlight that several settlement areas are classed as 'high' in terms of suitability for district heat network.
- MLDP2 will be informed by the Draft Midlothian Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), which identifies six prioritised clusters with potential for heat network development – Dalkeith, Easthouses / Mayfield, Bonnyrigg, Loanhead, Penicuik A and Penicuik B.
- MLDP2 will be required to consider policy and proposals, which support the requirement for heat networks within developments, and address the role that district heating can play in reducing fuel poverty.

Topic 21: Education

Summary of Evidence

- Current education provision in Midlothian is: 24 non-denominational Primary Schools (plus one under construction); 6 denominational Primary Schools; 1 special education combined Primary School and Secondary School (5-18); 5 non-denominational Secondary Schools; 1 denominational Secondary School, and 30 Council run nurseries (plus one under construction).
- At the moment, seven schools (five primary and two secondary) are at or exceed the 90% of planning capacity, which would usually trigger consideration of the need for additional capacity and options for meeting additional capacity needs.
- The Pupil Intake August 2024 paper to Midlothian Council 26 March 2024 highlights that the number of children eligible to start P1 in August 2024 exceeds Primary 1 intake capacity in 17 catchment areas.
- For secondary schools, the number of pupils eligible to start S1 in August 2024 living within the catchment exceeds S1 intake capacity at Dalkeith High School, Lasswade High School, Newbattle High School and St David's RC High School.
- There are current commitments relating to the building of five new schools.
- There are nine committed school estate projects largely required to meet the growth in pupils resulting from the development of land allocated for housing in the MLDP 2017.
- In addition to these projects, a commitment has been made to undertake a land identification study to provide an analysis of possible sites for a potential new secondary school in Gorebridge.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- Midlothian has experienced a significant growth in population, including school age children and young people, and this will continue due to the MATHLR and LHLR required to be delivered through MLDP2. This population growth has had, and will continue to have, significant implications for the Learning Estate which is a key part of the infrastructure needed for successful communities. In Midlothian, the implications of continuing growth for the Learning Estate will be a significant influence on the spatial strategy set out in MLDP2. Education capacity will therefore be integrated into the Site Selection Methodology.
- Significant expansion and improvement of the school estate has taken place to accommodate the population growth in Midlothian, and more expansion is planned to accommodate the growth resulting from MLDP 2017. The evidence shows that many Midlothian schools (primary and secondary) are operating close to their maximum pupil capacity, particularly secondary schools. Given that the planned investment has been designed to accommodate the growth resulting from MLDP 2017, increases in capacity that are achieved through investment will not create capacity for additional growth resulting from MLDP2.
- Significant investment in the Council's Learning Estate (i.e. schools) is planned, relating both to accommodating increasing pupil numbers, but also to Midlothian Council's commitment to providing a suitable learning environment for pupils. Even with planned investment, such as the replacement Beeslack High School, there will be significant challenges in accommodating a growth in pupil numbers beyond that expected as a result of existing housing land allocations.

Topic 22: Health

Summary of Evidence

- The identification and provision of health care capacity, provision and need is very complex and challenging.
- There are a lot more health care services provided than GP services. However, GP services are acknowledged as fundamental and were consistently raised, along with others such as dentists, during public engagement during preparation of the Evidence Report. Consistent feedback on significant problems and difficulties in getting healthcare appointments were raised with the Council during production of the Evidence Report.
- Evidence provided by healthcare partners outlines the very significant pressures which health and social care services in Midlothian are currently experiencing. This includes pressures upon local health services as a result of increased demand from a growing population and also from staffing and recruitment challenges.
- Capacity for Midlothian's GP practices to safely and sustainably absorb and deal with increasing demand and population growth is limited by premises / available accommodation and workforce availability.
- The collected evidence indicates that, although it is not possible to confidently predict the demographical composition of incoming population, there is a risk that the health needs/demands associated with a rapidly increasing population could widen existing health inequalities.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- Planning officers will continue to engage with health partners to further understand the implications of future population growth upon health services and infrastructure – both in terms of the challenges of physical health and social care facilities/buildings, and the ongoing challenges facing health and social care provision by way of a shortage of skilled professionals.
- Consideration will need to be given to guiding new MLDP2 housing development allocations to locations that can help minimise the implications of population growth upon existing health infrastructure.
- MLDP2 will need to recognise the connection between health and wellbeing and the environment.
- MLDP2 will need to consider the direct and indirect health impacts of new development upon all people groups.

Topic 23: Energy Infrastructure

Summary of Evidence

- Key electricity assets and transmission networks in or near Midlothian include the Kaimes and Portobello Electricity Substations (275kV Grid Supply Points), several Primary Substations and the 132-400kV circuit line network.
- The existing gas distribution network includes a pipeline network of low, medium, intermediate, and high (Major Accident Hazard Pipelines) pressure.
- SP Energy Networks distribution heat mapping outlines that the Kaimes and Portobello Substations and all Primary Substations are category red facilities, with at least one factor close to its operational limit and may require reinforcement works.
- The SP Energy Networks RIIO T2 Business Plan (2021-2026) (Transmission) outlines future energy scenarios and increased demand (MW) regarding electric vehicles and heat pump installations.
- The SP Energy Networks RIIO ED2 Business Plan (2023-2028) (Distribution) sets out a vision for the electricity network and proposes the developments in the Edinburgh and Borders network. Key projects which are relevant to Midlothian include new 32MVA Primary Substations at Shawfair, The Bush and Musselburgh.
- SP Energy Networks Distribution Future Energy Scenarios provides forecast details of customer demand and generation (peak demand, electric vehicles, heat pumps, generation capacity, etc.). The baseline scenario for Midlothian highlights an increase in electric vehicle volume from 5,172 to 47,053 between 2025 and 2035 and an increase in heat pumps from 3,501 to 21,499 during the same period.
- The SP Energy Networks Long Term Development Statement outlines development opportunities for the SP Distribution network, highlighting connection opportunities for generation and load. Key projects which are relevant to Midlothian and due to be competed between 2025 and 2028 include reinforcement and modernisation projects at Musselburgh, Portobello, Kaimes and Loanstone.
- The current SGN RIIO-GD2 Business Plan (2021-2026) notes that the GD3 period (from 2026) could see the delivery of a significant rollout of 100% hydrogen networks across several towns in the SGN distribution area. Scotland's Hydrogen Asset Map highlights that no hydrogen projects are currently identified in the Midlothian area.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- Scotland's Energy Statement and Just Transition Plan (Scottish Government 2023) will inform development of MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework. The Scottish Government document outlines national aspirations in relation to energy infrastructure and supply:
  - installed renewable and low-carbon hydrogen production capacity – 5GW by 2030; and 25GW by 2045.
  - locally or community owned energy generation – 2GW by 2030.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy and policy framework development will be informed by national plans, strategies, and energy demand, including:
  - electricity generation projections for wind and solar photovoltaic;
  - electricity demand projections for electric vehicles and heat pump installations;
  - electricity demand technologies including battery storage;
  - diversification of the gas distribution network to supply low carbon gases and natural gas, including through local energy projects; and
  - potential to develop heat networks and hydrogen supply.

- As outlined in the Scottish Government's Scotland's Energy Statement and Just Transition Plan, there is the potential to repurpose and redesign some parts of Scotland's gas networks to carry low carbon gases, including biomethane and hydrogen.
- As outlined in the Scottish Government's Vision for Scotland's Electricity and Gas Networks, the gas transmission network must adapt to support increased decarbonisation of gas, and regional energy systems based on 100% hydrogen.

Topic 24: Water and Drainage Infrastructure

Summary of Evidence

- Scottish Water considers the needs of new development alongside other drivers such as the environment and seeks to provide sufficient drainage capacity ahead of new development to avoid constraints.
- The Edinburgh and Lothians Strategic Drainage Partnership (ELSDP) seeks to reduce the volumes of water and drainage going to the Seafield Waste Water Treatment Works in Edinburgh, through changing how water is handled. It brings together partners, including Midlothian Council as the majority of Midlothian's built-up area is serviced by Seafield.
- Removal of surface water in built up areas, by a new blue-green network, has potential to release capacity in the existing legacy combined network (of foul and surface water drainage infrastructure going to the Seafield works) as well as providing amenity, biodiversity, flood risk reduction and improved water quality benefits.
- There appears less pressure on the water supply system, although climate change and rapid population growth are concerns, and the Scottish Government are consulting on measures to ensure the robustness of future supply.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- Moving more to a blue-green network (e.g. water and land based natural and semi-natural areas) across Midlothian and beyond will help provide a more efficient and sustainable waste-water management system.
- Delivery of this network and the retrofit of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) features in general can be assisted by the MLDP2 and will be fully considered in the development of the document's policy framework.
- MLDP2 can support requirements for individual developments to form part of a network and seek higher quality SUDS schemes that contribute to water quality, flood risk, amenity and biodiversity.
- Scottish Water is concerned at protection of aqueduct assets along the A701/A702 corridor. This can be looked at during production of MLDP2.

Topic 25: Blue and Green Infrastructure

Summary of Evidence

- Green infrastructure is defined in NPF4 as features or spaces within the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem services. Green infrastructure includes street trees, green roofs, green walls, parks and other open spaces, allotments, sustainable drainage systems, wildlife areas, woodlands, wetlands, and linear features such as roadside verges, green bridges, field margins, rights of way, access routes, and canals and rivers.
- Blue infrastructure is defined in NPF4 as water environment features within the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem services. Blue features include rivers, lochs, wetlands, canals, other water courses, ponds, coastal and marine areas, porous paving, sustainable urban drainage systems and rain gardens.
- Existing green and blue infrastructure in Midlothian has been mapped by bringing together existing spatial data from the Open Space Audit, Forestry and Woodland Strategy and Nature Network. This includes surface water and known SUDS basins but does not, at this stage, include a comprehensive list of all SUDS infrastructure as the Council has not yet prepared a Surface Water Management Plan.
- A draft new Open Space Audit has been prepared which sets out the results of the analysis of the quality, quantity and accessibility of open space in Midlothian. The audit will inform the forthcoming Open Space Strategy.
- A Play Sufficiency Assessment has been drafted and provides an assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of formal and informal play spaces.
- Midlothian Council owns one allotment site, at Deanburn in Penicuik. There are also independent allotment sites and community growing spaces.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- The importance of green infrastructure in place making and climate change mitigation and adaptation means that MLDP2 will need to integrate the principles of good green infrastructure to help deliver urban environments which improve health and wellbeing, air quality, biodiversity and climate change resilience.
- In addition to the creation of new blue and green infrastructure, MLDP2 will need to promote connectivity between blue and green infrastructure both in terms of making connections between existing assets and ensuring future assets form part of an integrated network.
- In terms of future development, MLDP2 will have an important role in trying to help ensure that residents have access to high quality blue and green space.
- The overall need is to ensure provision of a range of high quality, safe, well-maintained, accessible places with opportunities for play and recreation to meet the varying needs of different population groups and the community itself. MLDP2 will have a function in protecting existing play spaces as a land use. Importantly, MLDP2 will need to ensure that there is adequate play provision for all new development, either on-site or through contributions to expansion/improvement of existing play spaces.
- Provision of allotments is a legislative duty on the Council. MLDP2 will have a role in helping address the shortfall in current provision and in helping ensure additional demand resulting from new housing development is addressed.
- Integration of high quality, blue and green infrastructure designed to manage surface water above ground will need to be a fundamental part of placemaking in MLDP2.

Topic 26: Flood Risk and Water Management

Summary of Evidence

- SEPA's (Scottish Environment Protection Agency) flood risk management maps indicate a relatively small area and proportion of existing properties are projected to be at flood risk from watercourses by 2080. This is primarily due to the incised nature of the main river valleys in Midlothian.
- Surface water flooding is a more significant flood risk issue in Midlothian, more frequent storm events, built development with hard impermeable surfaces and small-scale works (often not needing planning permission) have the potential to make this worse.
- Further studies are required under the Midlothian Local Flood Risk Management Plan, including flood risk studies and surface water management plans.
- SUDS systems (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) have largely been installed on an individual site basis for newer developments. While efficient in flood prevention and water quality terms when maintained properly, they have arguably been less successful in terms of amenity and biodiversity.
- The system of River Basin Management Plan identifies that in Midlothian many waterbodies are not in good condition, including from barriers to fish migration, but also due to legacy pollution from mine-waters.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- Midlothian will continue to experience high development pressure, and it will be important to ensure that that flood avoidance is built into site selection to avoid increases in the amount of properties at risk of flooding.
- There is a need to consider policy approaches to raise the quality of SUDS, so that flood risk, water quality, biodiversity and amenity are fully considered.
- MLDP2 will need to consider SUDS on a connected basis, including potential areas of retrofit in existing built-up areas.
- MLDP2 will need to consider, in the context of the further committed flood risk studies, if there are any areas of unmanageable flood risk and the desirability or not of bringing previously used land (sometimes called brownfield land) in flood risk areas into positive use.
- Programmes by other bodies/agencies can be expected to contribute to improving the quality of Midlothian water bodies but will benefit from a supportive policy framework in MLDP2.

Topic 27: Digital Infrastructure

Summary of Evidence

- Note regarding broadband download speeds (Mbps = Mb per second) – ultrafast broadband: greater than 300 Mbps; superfast broadband: 30 to 300 Mbps; standard broadband: less than 30 Mbps.
- The Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme update (2018) noted that 97.3% of Midlothian premises were able to access a minimum of 24 Mbps download speeds. The Ofcom Connected Nations report (2023) shows that coverage of 30 Mbps download speeds in Midlothian was 98%.
- The rural Midlothian data zones with the poorest access to superfast broadband (above 30 Mbps) are within Pathhead and Rural East, Rural South Midlothian, and Pentland. The urban Midlothian data zones with the poorest access are within Thornybank Dalkeith, Penicuik Southwest, and Eskbank.
- The Reaching 100% (R100) programme aims to achieve coverage of a minimum of 30 Mbps download speeds for 100% of premises in Scotland. The R100 programme started in 2020 and is forecast to be completed in Midlothian in 2024/25.
- Mobile signal coverage (4G quality) data per mobile network operator outlines a range of coverage across the Midlothian towns from average to very good. Roslin, Loanhead, Dalkeith and Lasswade are rated highest and Penicuik is rated lowest in terms of overall mobile signal coverage across the four main operators. This is reflected in mast location data, which confirms a smaller number of masts within 7km of Penicuik, Gorebridge and Pathhead.
- The 4G coverage from all mobile network operators is anticipated to increase from 88% to 94% in the Lothian area by the end of the Scottish Rural Network (SRN) programme in 2026. The 4G coverage from at least one mobile network operator is anticipated to be maintained at 99% in the Lothian area over the period of the SRN programme.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 should support the delivery of digital infrastructure, including fixed line and mobile connectivity, particularly in areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access, while ensuring that respect is given to the built, historic, and natural environment.
- MLDP2's spatial strategy will be informed by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data (2020), which highlights gaps in connectivity to superfast broadband (above 30 Mbps) within the Midlothian towns and villages.
- MLDP2 will be informed by the progress and build status of the Openreach Ultrafast Full Fibre Broadband (UFFB) Build Programme. The 2023 build status notes that the main part of this development has finished at Penicuik and Howgate exchange areas, with development taking place at several Midlothian locations.
- MLDP2 will be informed by the Digital Strategy for Scotland (2021) and the Shared Rural Network (SRN) programme, which aim to improve rural 4G mobile coverage and upgrade existing mobile networks.

Topic 28: Rural Development

Summary of Evidence

- Despite being one of Scotland's smaller local authorities in land area and in very close proximity to Edinburgh, Midlothian possesses an incredibly varied and very attractive countryside of rolling farmland, upland hills, lowland moorland and incised river valleys valued by many people.
- 80% of Midlothian is designated as countryside in land use planning terms.
- 13% of Midlothian's households or just under 6,000 homes fall in an area classed as 'accessible rural' by a Scottish Government's six-fold scale. Around 2,400 of these homes are in the villages of Pathhead, Rosewell and Roslin.
- Development in Midlothian's countryside mainly relates to agriculture, equestrian, tourism and residential dwellings. Other activities do occur, however, including forestry and commercial activity.
- Evidence would indicate levels of second homes and holiday home accommodation are not a significant issue in Midlothian.
- Midlothian Council development management planning officers are experiencing increasing applications for glamping pods and holiday accommodation in rural locations.
- There are 9,255 hectares of designated prime agricultural land in Midlothian. This forms 26% of Midlothian's land area and is mostly found mostly surrounding the larger settlements in the north of the county.
- As required, Midlothian Council has advertised its Self-Build Housing Register on its online consultation Hub, Citizen Space through the Council website. To date, there have been ten expressions of interest in self-build housing.
- Engagement with Scottish Land and Estates demonstrated a clear and strong desire for flexibility in the planning system in rural areas to support small-scale housing and other development opportunities to help diversify farm estate income and provide for capital injections.
- Public engagement indicated need for more social housing; need for housing of appropriate size, e.g., two-bedroom homes so that the elderly population may downsize without having to relocate away from existing communities; and a lack of infrastructure in rural areas to support new housing developments. Public engagement identified strong support for the countryside and natural environment.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will need to consider concerns about the demand, availability, cost and deliverability of market and affordable rural housing.
- MLDP2 will need to have regard to the Self-build Housing Register.
- Protection of the countryside and natural environment has been raised in public engagement as a matter of concern and needs to be fully considered in the development of the policy framework and spatial strategy of MLDP2.
- The extent to which MLDP2 Proposed Plan supports rural economic development, e.g. small-scale business premises, tourism and accommodation, will need to be considered.

Topic 29: Local Place Plans

Summary of Evidence

- Local place plans were introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, which contains a new right for communities to produce these plans as part of the new Scottish planning system. Midlothian Council issued invitations to prepare local place plans in March 2023.
- The Council received eight finalised local place plans, all from Midlothian community councils. They were registered by Midlothian Council on 4 June 2024.
- Place Standard assessments were undertaken in six local place plans. On average, the 'natural space' and 'moving around' topics rate highest, and the 'care and maintenance' and 'influence and sense of control' topics rate lowest.
- Two draft local place plans were received from two other community councils, but they were not complete and not registered. Also received were details of engagement undertaken by two community councils who did not go forward to produce local place plans.
- Details of these local place plans are in the full Evidence Report document.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- The local place plans contain aspirations and proposals for community councils. The local place plans will be reviewed and taken into account in the production of the MLDP2 Proposed Plan.
- The local place plans contain aspirations and proposals for community council areas. These relate to a range of issues including, local living, housing, community facilities, transport and infrastructure, economic development, streets and social space, leisure, environment and biodiversity.
- The local place plans will be reviewed and taken into account in the production of the MLDP2 Proposed Plan.

Topic 30: Town, Local and Commercial Centres and Retail

Summary of Evidence

- Retailing is undergoing major change from factors including internet shopping, a weakening of the relationship between turnover and floorspace and the rise of discounters.
- Expenditure growth per person has been slow since the recession of 2008.
- There are a range of town and local centres in Midlothian and large-scale retail development at Straiton. There are significant vacancy rates in Mayfield and Penicuik town centres.
- Public engagement in the production of the Evidence Report has referred to the types of retail on offer in many town centres and a desire for better and more attractive town centres.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will need to consider the policy framework for town centres, how it can support their continued functioning and purpose.
- The future of large-scale retailing will need consideration in MDP2 preparation.
- Considerable potential for additional floorspace exists in allocated areas for retailing.
- Market interest and delivery of neighbourhood facilities has traditionally been difficult but can be looked at through MLDP2.
- Policy matters relating to new drive-through facilities and hot food take-aways will need to be considered in MLDP2.

Topic 31: Tourism

Summary of Evidence

- There is a wide variety of types of tourist activities and attractions in Midlothian.
- Evidence indicates consumer behaviour has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic with more customers choosing to stay in self-contained accommodation such as self-catering units or motorhomes/caravans. This change presents an opportunity for Midlothian's landowners to diversify the use of their land and enter the tourism sector.
- Tourism providers indicated that the planning system is perceived as being a barrier to those who wish to develop their land and that further support is necessary from planning authorities to help develop tourism.
- Engagement with Midlothian's tourism industry indicated there is an issue with the lack of access to and between attractions by public transport or active travel and that this acts as a barrier to tourists visiting these sites - particularly for tourists based in Edinburgh who wish to daytrip to Midlothian.
- The rich identity of Midlothian's communities was highlighted through local place plans as well as the need to support these communities, appropriately, in their promotion as tourist destinations.
- There is also a desire amongst tourism providers for stronger branding for Midlothian tourism as the area, and that it is often seen as being a part of Edinburgh.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will need to take into account current the evidence, including the demand and aspiration for varied types of tourism, and the potential impact that this may have on Midlothian. This will include consideration of varied tourism related activities including outdoor pursuits, food and drink, accommodation and heritage based.
- Safeguarding the assets that create the tourism potential in Midlothian is an implication to be considered in the development of the MLDP2 Proposed Plan.

Topic 32: Culture and Creativity

Summary of Evidence

- Midlothian has a rich cultural heritage which has helped to shape its communities from agriculture/land management, industrialisation, coal mining and paper mills. It possesses significant heritage and architectural and historic interest, reflected in its land use patterns, places, buildings, settlements and estates.
- The Council is aware, anecdotally, through the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership and Council colleagues of clusters of small to medium scale cultural and artistic businesses and communities in Midlothian.
- Across Midlothian approximately 122 community spaces to hire. These community spaces include church halls, community hubs, miners' clubs, arts centre and village halls. There are also approximately 15 promoted cultural and heritage sites and 24 heritage societies. This reflects the very varied and number of active groups and societies, including those for sporting, heritage, craft, and those more directly aimed at community support and welfare.
- Engagement during Evidence Report production with members of the community highlighted they feel that there is a lack of community venues/facilities and venues such as theatres and cinemas. The received local place plans will help in form MLDP2 Proposed Plan production on this matter.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 will need to take account of registered local place plans and their cultural and creative aspirations for their places. The registered local place plans, draft local place plans and public engagement undertaken for local place plans highlights community aspirations and views on facilities and identity.
- MLDP2 will need to seek to help protect the individual cultural identities of Midlothian's settlements.
- In accordance with NPF4 Policy 31, MLDP2 needs to seek to support existing arts and cultural venues.

Topic 33: Business, Industry and Community Wealth Building

Summary of Evidence

- Midlothian has one of the fastest growing economies in Scotland (measures by increase in Gross Value Added) over the last 20 years.
- It is increasingly a place that people travel to for work, as well as from for work.
- Public engagement highlighted concern that the employment opportunities are more focused in western Midlothian than eastern Midlothian.
- The take-up of economic land has been uneven, but there appears to be an adequate supply of allocated economic land. However, a large amount of it is not built out and therefore not available to occupiers.
- Constraints on delivery of development are less about the supply of land, but more about getting sites developed and having readily available premises to move into.
- Evidence indicates very strong demand for premises and land, but sufficient move in ready premises are not available.
- The Midlothian Science Zone is of international, national and local significance, but its operators/tenants consider it is not meeting its full potential due to infrastructure constraints.
- Issues associated with transport and public transport accessibility within and to a variety of employment destinations outside Midlothian were raised during engagement.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- MLDP2 needs to consider if sufficient quantities of the right types of economic land exist and exist in the right locations.
- MLDP2 needs to consider how it can support delivery of allocated economic sites. MSZ Masterplan and Policy are dated and require review.
- MLDP2 will need to consider how it can assist in resolving infrastructure concerns at the Midlothian Science Zone.
- MLDP2 will need to consider the distribution of employment opportunities, with current west-east split in terms of distribution of opportunities.

Topic 34: Minerals

Summary of Evidence

- The most recent Scottish Government Aggregates survey (dated 2019 and published in 2023) indicates an adequate aggregate minerals landbank in South East Scotland.
- Some operators in Midlothian dispute the Scottish Government findings and note the extended haul distances involved in sourcing aggregates for the Lothians from some parts of the region.
- Existing Midlothian quarries have operated successfully to date, although there are operator concerns that expanded settlements would place their operations closer to domestic properties.
- Current site operators note that without extension of duration/extent of existing sites, Midlothian will have no operational quarries in four years.

Implications for MLDP2 Proposed Plan

- The extent of sand and gravel extraction areas of search need to be considered in MLDP2 Proposed Plan production.
- The aggregates landbank in Midlothian, existing planning consents, and consistency with NPF4 policy need to be considered in MLDP2 Proposed Plan production.
- It is considered correct and reasonable not to have areas of search for coal extraction in MLDP2.
- Given Scottish Government announcements on onshore unconventional oil and gas extraction, MLDP 2017 Policy MIN3 Onshore Oil and Gas appears to be redundant and not necessary for MLDP2. This matter will be considered in MLDP2 Proposed Plan production.

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