The background image shows a lush green landscape with a river flowing through it. The river has several small waterfalls and rapids, with water splashing over mossy rocks. In the distance, a stone bridge with multiple arches spans across the river. The surrounding area is densely wooded with tall trees and thick foliage.

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West Lothian Local Landscape Designation Review

Final Report
June 2013

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Client: West Lothian Council

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Final Report
Prepared by LUC
June 2013

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Non-Technical Summary

Background

The West Lothian Local Plan (2009) defines two types of local landscape designations, both aimed at protecting the character and quality of the West Lothian landscape:

- Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV); and
- Areas of Special Landscape Control (ASLC).

These designations have evolved over the preceding decades, and limited detailed explanation is available for their extent and boundaries.

Scottish Planning Policy (2010) is the statement of the Scottish Government's policy on land use planning matters. It advocates a single tier of local landscape designations, supported by clearly explained reasons for designation.

In 2005, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland published *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*, designed to assist local authorities in ensuring local designations are more robust. The West Lothian Local Plan refers to this document, and commits the council to a review of local landscape designations.

LUC was commissioned to review the provision of local landscape designations in West Lothian, and to carry out an evaluation of the West Lothian landscape, leading to a new, more robustly justified single tier of Special Landscape Areas. The review was undertaken by landscape architects at LUC, in discussion with a steering group comprising representatives of West Lothian Council and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Approach

The review follows the general principles set out in *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*. The guidance recommends an approach grounded in landscape character assessment, which is the process of describing and classifying the landscape according to common characteristics. The guidance suggests a range of criteria which can be used to describe the landscape, and to select locally important landscapes for designation.

An audit of the existing local landscape designations was carried out, to identify which parts and features of the West Lothian landscape had been selected for designation in the past.

Drawing on the *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*, a list of evaluation criteria were agreed with the steering group. These criteria represent aspects of the landscape which contribute to high-quality or particularly valued landscapes in West Lothian.

A systematic evaluation of the West Lothian landscape was undertaken, using the criteria to develop a picture of the relative quality of different parts of the area. The evaluation was carried out using pre-defined 'landscape units', representing areas of distinct landscape character.

Based on the outcome of the evaluation, the landscape units which performed best against the agreed criteria were selected for further analysis. This allowed the review process to move away from the pre-defined landscape units towards areas of potential designation.

These areas were initially defined as 'core areas' of landscape quality, and nine were selected for further examination against practical considerations, as recommended by *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*. This included detailed study of potential boundaries, which were drawn, where possible, along identifiable features in the landscape, such as roads, railways, field boundaries, streams and ridge lines. Where there is a lack of obvious features, it has been necessary to move outwards and to include areas of lower merit, rather than to move inwards and

reduce the area of higher merit landscape included, particularly where this has an impact on the integrity of the 'core area'.

Following this stage, seven candidate Special Landscape Areas were selected and agreed with the steering group. It is important to note that the process was iterative in nature, with the findings of each stage prompting a re-evaluation of earlier stages. In this way the candidate Special Landscape Areas have evolved through detailed analysis and discussion with the steering group.

Candidate Special Landscape Areas

The seven candidate Special Landscape Areas are:

- Pentland Hills;
- Almond and Linhouse Valleys;
- Blackridge Heights;
- Avon Valley;
- Bathgate Hills;
- Airngath Hill; and
- Forth Coast.

For each area, a statement of importance has been developed, setting out its location, extent and boundaries, and describing the reasons for its selection. Key pressures for landscape change are identified, and outline management guidelines are suggested.

The total area of the seven candidate Special Landscape Areas is 12,894 ha. This compares to 13,845 ha covered by AGLVs, and 15,830 ha covered by AGLVs and ASLCs combined. The candidate Special Landscape Areas cover broadly the same areas as the present AGLVs, although they do not cover any areas which are presently covered by ASLCs.

The candidate Special Landscape Areas will be subject to public consultation as part of the forthcoming West Lothian Local Development Plan. This document will inform a background technical report for the revision of the council's landscape planning policies, as part of the Local Development Plan process.

1 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 A number of local landscape designations are defined in the West Lothian Local Plan, which was adopted in 2009, although the designations themselves pre-date the plan. There are two types of designation currently in operation: Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV); and Areas of Special Landscape Control (ASLC). A total of twelve areas are covered. Since their original designation, no formal examination has been made of their landscape qualities or values, and consequently they lack robust and defensible justification.
- 1.2 Following the publication in 2005 of *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations* (GLLD) by Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland, the West Lothian Local Plan (WLLP, paragraph 3.52) commits the Council to a review of local landscape designations. Further impetus for the review comes from changes to national planning policy, specifically Scottish Planning Policy (SPP, 2010), which notes that that “*the reasons for designation should be clearly explained and the on-going relevance and function of local designations should be considered when development plans are prepared*” (paragraph 139).

Requirements of the brief

- 1.3 In January 2013, LUC was appointed to carry out a local landscape designation review (LLDR) with the aim of updating the coverage and justification of local landscape designations in West Lothian as part of the preparations for a new local development plan. The consultants’ brief provided by the council, in association with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), required a comprehensive review based on “first principles”, aimed at replacing the current two-tier system of designations with a new, more robustly justified single tier of designated landscapes that would accord with national policy.
- 1.4 The LLDR involves the development of a systematic and transparent approach to selecting areas for designation as special landscape areas (SLA), based on the approach set out in the *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*.
- 1.5 Specific objectives of the LLDR, as set out in the consultants brief, include:
 - “*Assessment of West Lothian landscape based on Appendix 1: Landscape Character Classification Description set out in the Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy Development in West Lothian (2011, pp. 55 - 84). [Additional landscape character assessment work including outdoor surveys will be required to tailor the landscape character work to the needs of the study and review of landscape designation/s];*
 - *Assessment of the West Lothian landscape against Zones of Visual Influence, particularly for high ground and areas of high visual amenity;*
 - *Assessment of candidate SLAs (cSLAs) against other specific designations and criteria such as the aforementioned countryside belts, Areas of Special Agricultural Importance (ASAI) / soil classifications, designed gardens and landscapes, as well as, regional and country parks, local / national nature reserves, and larger areas of open space and countryside. (see GLLD: coverage of local landscape designations, page 27);*
 - *Assessment of candidate SLAs against designations in neighbouring local authorities;*
 - *Refinement, identification and amendment of boundaries of cSLAs on defensible topographic, built or other clear lines;*
 - *Introduction of a one-tier system based on the candidate Special Landscape Areas (cSLAs) as advised in GLLD, para 6-11, page 29, which is the authority’s preferred outcome; and*

- *Review of extant local landscape designations (AGLVs & ASLCs) set out in WLLP to highlight potential changes, extensions and losses of protection.*"

1.6 The consultants brief also noted the importance of the historical context of the West Lothian landscape, and the highly visible legacy of the oil shale and coal industries. Consultation did not form part of the consultants brief, and will be taken forward by the council following the conclusion of the LLDR process.

1.7 The LLDR was overseen by a steering group comprising representatives of West Lothian Council and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Planning background

1.8 National, regional and local policies and plans provide the context for the provision of local landscape designations, and offer high-level guidance on the approach to identifying and selecting candidate areas.

National Planning Framework

1.9 The National Planning Framework for Scotland 2 (NPF2) celebrates the diversity and value of Scotland's landscapes.¹ In particular, it recognises the role of natural and historic landscapes in creating a sense of place, contributing to quality of life, and as a rich resource for tourism and leisure, creative industries, education and national and regional marketing. "*Nationally important landscape characteristics*" are recognised, including "*openness, intervisibility, perceived naturalness, and remoteness*" (paragraph 97).

1.10 NPF2 also recognises the wide ranging pressures on landscapes and the resultant changing character, particularly in response to the challenge of climate change. At the same time, these and other changes offer opportunities to support landscape enhancement, with the ultimate aim "*to build environmental capital and pass well-managed, high quality landscapes on to future generations*" (paragraph 100).

1.11 The NPF3 Main Issues Report, published in April 2013, retains similar commitments to maintaining the scenic quality and cultural distinctiveness of Scotland's landscapes.²

Scottish Planning Policy

1.12 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters.³ The policy outlines the need for planning authorities to support opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of the natural heritage, whilst protecting and preserving it. The policy recognises the dynamic nature of the landscape in countryside and urban areas and the aim of the policy is to facilitate positive change whilst maintaining and enhancing its distinctive character.

1.13 SPP notes that "*local designations should be clearly identified and protected through the local development plan,*" and that "*the reasons for designation should be clearly explained and the on-going relevance and function of local designations should be considered when development plans are prepared*" (paragraph 139). It identifies that local landscape areas and local nature conservation sites are to be the only two non-statutory local designations for natural heritage.

1.14 The document notes that the purpose for designating a local landscape area should be to:

- "*Safeguard and enhance the character and quality of landscapes which are important or particularly valued locally or regionally, or*
- *Promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of local landscapes, or*

¹ Scottish Government (2009) National Planning Framework for Scotland 2.

² Scottish Government (2013) Scotland's Third National Planning Framework: Main Issues Report and Draft Framework.

³ Scottish Government (2010) Scottish Planning Policy.

- *Safeguard and promote important settings for outdoor recreation and tourism locally* (paragraph 140).

1.15 The consultation draft of the revised SPP, published in April 2013, retains very similar wording.⁴

Planning Advice Note 60

1.16 PAN 60: Planning for Natural Heritage (2000) provides policy and planning advice regarding Scotland's natural heritage.⁵ Safeguarding and enhancing landscape character is an important planning objective. To achieve this there needs to be clear policy objectives in relation to landscape, promotion of high standards of development siting and use of appropriate materials.

1.17 PAN 60 notes that landscape character assessment can provide the means of determining the extent of landscapes to be designated (paragraph 26). Landscape designations are stated to be of more value when forming part of a wider land-use framework and habitat network and contributing to realisation of national natural heritage strategy (paragraph 39).

1.18 In relation to landscape designations, PAN 60 advises that these *"should be valued beyond their immediate locale"*, and that a *"single tier of sub-national landscape designation should be sufficient for practical planning purposes"*. The importance of *"development guidelines designed to safeguard landscape character and quality"* is highlighted (paragraph 40).

Structure Plan

1.19 The Edinburgh & the Lothians Structure Plan 2015 currently provides the long term strategic planning policy framework for protection of the built and natural environment.⁶ The structure plan confirms that local natural heritage interests will be protected, and that these areas should be defined by local authorities (p.46). Policy ENV 4 states that *"local plans should take account of landscape designations in accordance with new guidance produced by Scottish Natural Heritage"* (p.49).

Strategic Development Plan

1.20 When completed, the South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan (SESplan) will replace the existing Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan, as well as the Fife Structure Plan and the Scottish Borders Structure Plan. NPF2 states that strategic development plans should seek to achieve a net enhancement of landscape quality.

1.21 The SESplan Main Issues Report (2010) sets out the authority's preferred approach to the environment, noting that: *"The preparation of up to date Local Biodiversity Action Plans and the designation of landscape areas of quality will also continue to be supported"* (paragraph 7.85).⁷ The current Proposed Plan does not refer to landscape designations.⁸

Local Plan

1.22 The West Lothian Local Plan was adopted in 2009, and sets out the current planning policy framework and extent of landscape designations in the area. A two-tier system of Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and Areas of Special Landscape Control (ASLC) is currently in place, as described in more detail in Section 3 of this report.

1.23 The local plan contains other policies which relate to protection of landscape and countryside such as for Countryside Belts and Areas of Special Agricultural Importance. These policies are of relevance to the LLDR, although the review does not make recommendations on these other types of designations. The relevant policies are summarised in Table 1.1. These will be reviewed separately by the council through the Local Development Plan process.

⁴ Scottish Government (2013) Scottish Planning Policy: Consultation Draft.

⁵ Scottish Executive (2000) Planning Advice Note 60: Planning for Natural Heritage.

⁶ City of Edinburgh Council; East Lothian Council; Midlothian Council; West Lothian Council (2004) Edinburgh & the Lothians Structure Plan 2015.

⁷ Edinburgh and South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan Authority (2010) SESplan Main Issues Report.

⁸ Edinburgh and South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan Authority (2011) SESplan Proposed Plan Version 9.2.

Table 1.1 Relevant policy provisions in the West Lothian Local Plan (2009)

Reference	Summary
ENV 9	Defines Areas of Special Agricultural Importance as intensively farmed, high-quality agricultural areas; a presumption against large-scale development unless justified for strategic reasons.
ENV 10 – ENV 13	Support for the Central Scotland Forest; planting and management of woodlands; establishment of Forest Habitat Networks; presumption against development affecting trees and woodlands; importance of landscape integration of new woodlands.
ENV 17 – ENV 18	Support for enhancement of the natural and built heritage of the Union Canal in its setting.
ENV 19 – ENV 21	Defines AGLVs and ASLCs and outlines the protection they will be afforded. These designations are discussed in greater detail in Section 3 of this report.
ENV 22 – ENV 23	Defines Countryside Belts around Livingston, Bathgate/Whitburn and Winchburgh/Broxburn; encourages protection and enhancement of the landscape in these areas through Central Scotland Forest and seeks to prevent coalescence.
ENV 29 – ENV 30	Criteria-based policies to control development within the Pentland Hills Regional Park; criteria include conservation of the hill landscape.
ENV 31 – ENV 35	Criteria-based policies to control development in the countryside, including new development, conversion and re-use of buildings, and low-density development or “lowland crofting”.
HER 12 – HER 14	Protection of scheduled monuments and their settings.
HER 17 – HER 20	Defines conservation areas and sets out their protection; several conservation areas protect the landscape setting of settlements, eg Mid Calder and Torphichen.
HER 22 – HER 23	Protection of historic gardens and designed landscapes; recognises those in the Historic Scotland inventory and others which are not included.
HER 24	Specific protection of the “ <i>amenity, outlook, character and setting of the Palace and Peel, Linlithgow.</i> ”
COM 2	Protection of formal or informal urban open space; includes parks, gardens, wildlife habitat, allotments and civic space.

- 1.24 The local plan defines settlement boundaries, and identifies housing sites and strategic core development areas (CDA) where there will be a general presumption in favour of development, subject to criteria-based policies. These development areas will necessarily be excluded from incorporation into candidate SLAs.
- 1.25 The local plan will be replaced by the West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP), currently in preparation. The findings of this LLDR study will feed into the emerging LDP.

Supplementary planning guidance

- 1.26 West Lothian Council has published a range of supplementary planning guidance (SPG) and technical studies. Of primary relevance for the LLDR is the landscape capacity study (LCS) for

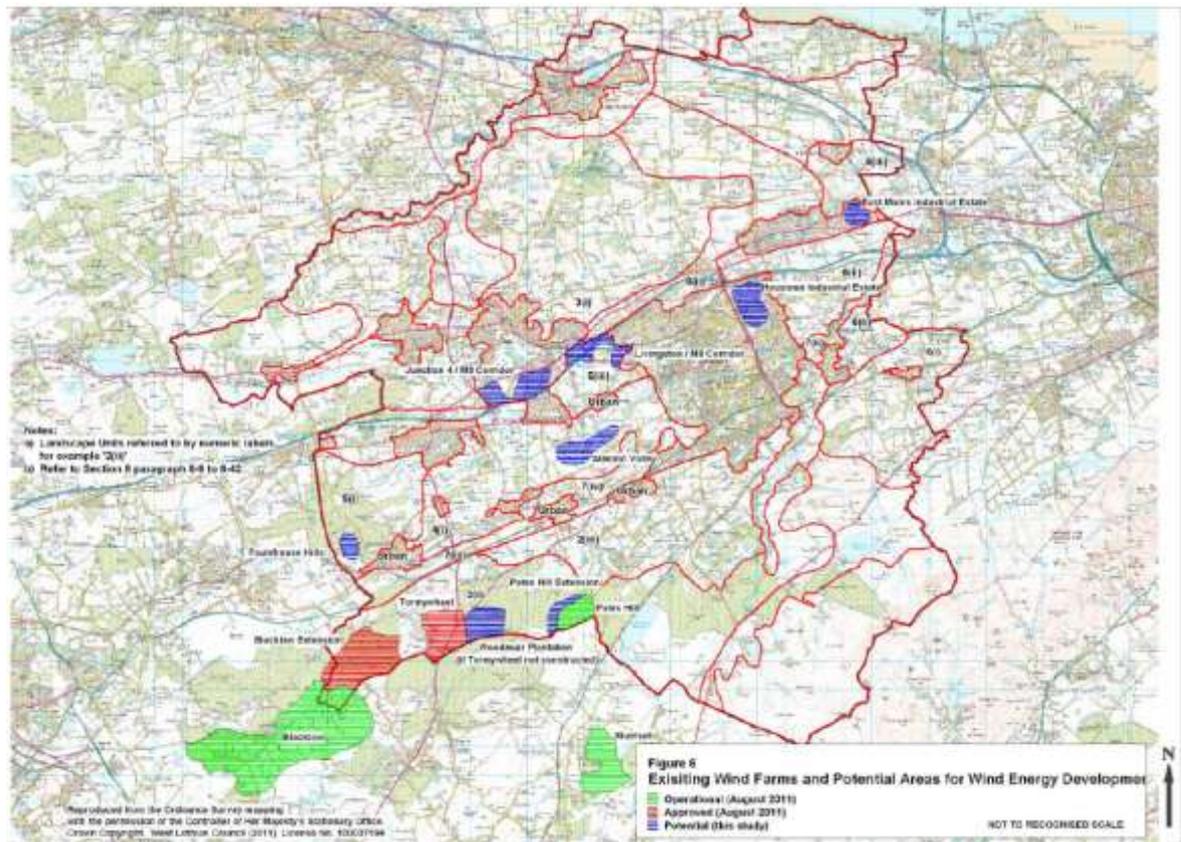
wind energy, published in 2011.⁹ The LCS includes a new, updated landscape character assessment of West Lothian, which is discussed further in Section 2.

1.27 The LCS goes on to classify the sensitivity and capacity of each part of the West Lothian landscape in relation to potential wind energy development at a range of scales. It defines a series of landscape features considered to be of particular sensitivity, as follows:

- two landmark landscape features and their settings:
 - the assembly of Linlithgow Palace, Peel and Loch, and St Michael's Church with its setting including Airngath Hill; and
 - the Pentland Hills and foothills;
- sensitive walking and cycling routes across West Lothian with attractive views; and
- nine important viewpoints and their "sensitive visual compartments" or associated areas of visibility.

1.28 The final stage of the LCS defines "broad zones with potential for wind energy development". Several of these areas are located within business parks, and those which are outside settlements are located in the central and southern parts of the council area. These areas are identified by blue hatching in Figure 6 of the LCS, reproduced as Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1 Potential areas for wind energy defined by the LCS



Structure of this report

1.29 This report presents the approach and findings of the local landscape designation review. The methodology which was used is fully described in Section 2.

⁹ David Tyldesley and Associates (2011) *Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy Development in West Lothian*. West Lothian Council and Scottish Natural Heritage.

- 1.30 An audit of the existing local landscape designations was undertaken, aimed at identifying some of the key characteristics which have been protected to date. This is presented in Appendix 1 and summarised in Section 3.
- 1.31 Section 4 summarises the findings of a systematic, quantitative evaluation of the landscape of West Lothian. The results of this evaluation are presented in Appendix 2.
- 1.32 Section 5 includes more detailed qualitative analysis to identify the core areas which were considered to potentially merit designation. A series of practical criteria were applied to these core areas, as set out in Section 6.
- 1.33 The finalised candidate SLAs are described in Section 7, and references are listed in Section 8.

Abbreviations

- 1.34 The following abbreviations are used in this report.

AGLV	Area of great landscape value
ASAI	Area of special agricultural importance
ASLC	Area of special landscape control
CDA	Core development area
CSGN	Central Scotland Green Network
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland
GLLD	<i>Guidance on Local Landscape Designations</i> (Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland, 2005)
HS	Historic Scotland
LCS	Landscape capacity study
LDP	Local development plan
LLDR	Local landscape designation review
LNR	Local nature reserve
NCN	National Cycle Network
NNR	National nature reserve
SAC	Special area of control
SLA	Special landscape area
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPA	Special protection area
SSSI	Site of special scientific interest
SWT	Scottish Wildlife Trust
WL-LCA	West Lothian Landscape Character Assessment
WLC	West Lothian Council
WLLP	West Lothian Local Plan

Glossary of terms

- 1.35 The following list provides definitions for both technical terms related to landscape, and Scots words used to describe landscape features.

Technical terms and definitions

Forest design plan	A document which sets out management proposals for woodland, including the benefits of the management proposed.
Landscape	"Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" ¹⁰
Landscape character	"A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another" ¹¹
Lowlandcrofting	Very low density rural housing and woodland development, as defined in the West Lothian Local Plan (2009).
Wildness	A quality of the landscape, which may be present in more managed landscapes, as opposed to 'wild land'. Relative wildness across Scotland has been mapped by SNH. ¹²

Scots words

Bing	A spoil heap or waste tip, usually associated with coal and shale mining. Red shale bings are unique to West Lothian.
Brae	A hill or hillside, often a steep slope above water
Drystane dykes	Dry-stone walls
Haugh	River flats, an area of floodplain.
The Peel	Formerly a palisaded enclosure, now the grassy field below Linlithgow Palace.

¹⁰ European Landscape Convention, Article 1a.

¹¹ Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*.

¹² See <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/looking-after-landscapes/landscape-policy-and-guidance/wild-land/mapping/>

2 Methodology

Approach to the study

- 2.1 The methodology for the LLDR was drawn from *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations* (SNH and Historic Scotland, 2005) and was developed based on LUC's past experience in designation reviews. Further refinement was undertaken based on the specific needs of the present study, and through consultation with the steering group.
- 2.2 The methodology comprises five principal stages, as follows:
- establishment of the landscape baseline;
 - quantitative evaluation of the landscape baseline;
 - qualitative analysis of the evaluation results and selection of core areas;
 - refinement of core areas through application of practical criteria; and
 - written statements of importance.

Landscape baseline

- 2.3 A landscape character assessment (LCA) of West Lothian is presented in the *Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy Development in West Lothian* (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2011). This LCA, referred to as the WL-LCA 2011, developed the regional-scale characterisation presented in the earlier *Lothians Landscape Character Assessment* (ASH, 1998) into a more detailed classification of nine landscape types and 23 discrete landscape units. The WL-LCA 2011 was prepared in discussion with the Council and SNH, and as part of the landscape capacity study it was considered by the council in October 2011 and underwent consultation in early summer 2013. It is the most recent and detailed available characterisation of the West Lothian landscape.
- 2.4 However, the WL-LCA 2011 was prepared as part of a wind energy capacity study, and the assessment was particularly focused on identifying "*landscape characteristics that may influence the capacity of any landscape character type within WL to accommodate wind energy development*" (paragraph 1.9). As noted in the consultants brief, it was therefore necessary to review the assessment to ensure its suitability as a baseline for the LLDR.
- 2.5 Following initial field work and discussion with the steering group, a number of areas were noted where the nature of the classification could potentially lead to inconsistencies in the evaluation. It was therefore agreed that the WL-LCA 2011 would form an appropriate baseline for the LLDR, subject to a small number of amendments. These are detailed as follows:
- both unit 4(i) and unit 7(ii) are named *Almond Valley*: the former was renamed *Upper Almond Valley*;
 - the boundaries of unit 7(iv) *West Calder Burn / Breich and Harwood Water* between Bents and Fauldhouse were amended to better reflect the extent of the Breich Water corridor, and it was also noted that the Harwood Water is not within the landscape unit; and
 - unit 8(ii) *Bathgate Fringe* includes open farmland to the north-east of the Bathgate Hills, as well as the M8 corridor to the south, resulting in contrasting qualities between the two areas. This area was split into the northern section, renamed *Bathgate Hills Fringe*, and the southern area which was joined with unit 5(iii) *Livingston / Blackburn Plateau*, considered more similar in character.
- 2.6 For ease of reference the landscape units were renumbered from 1 to 23. The landscape units used in this study are listed in Table 2.1 and are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

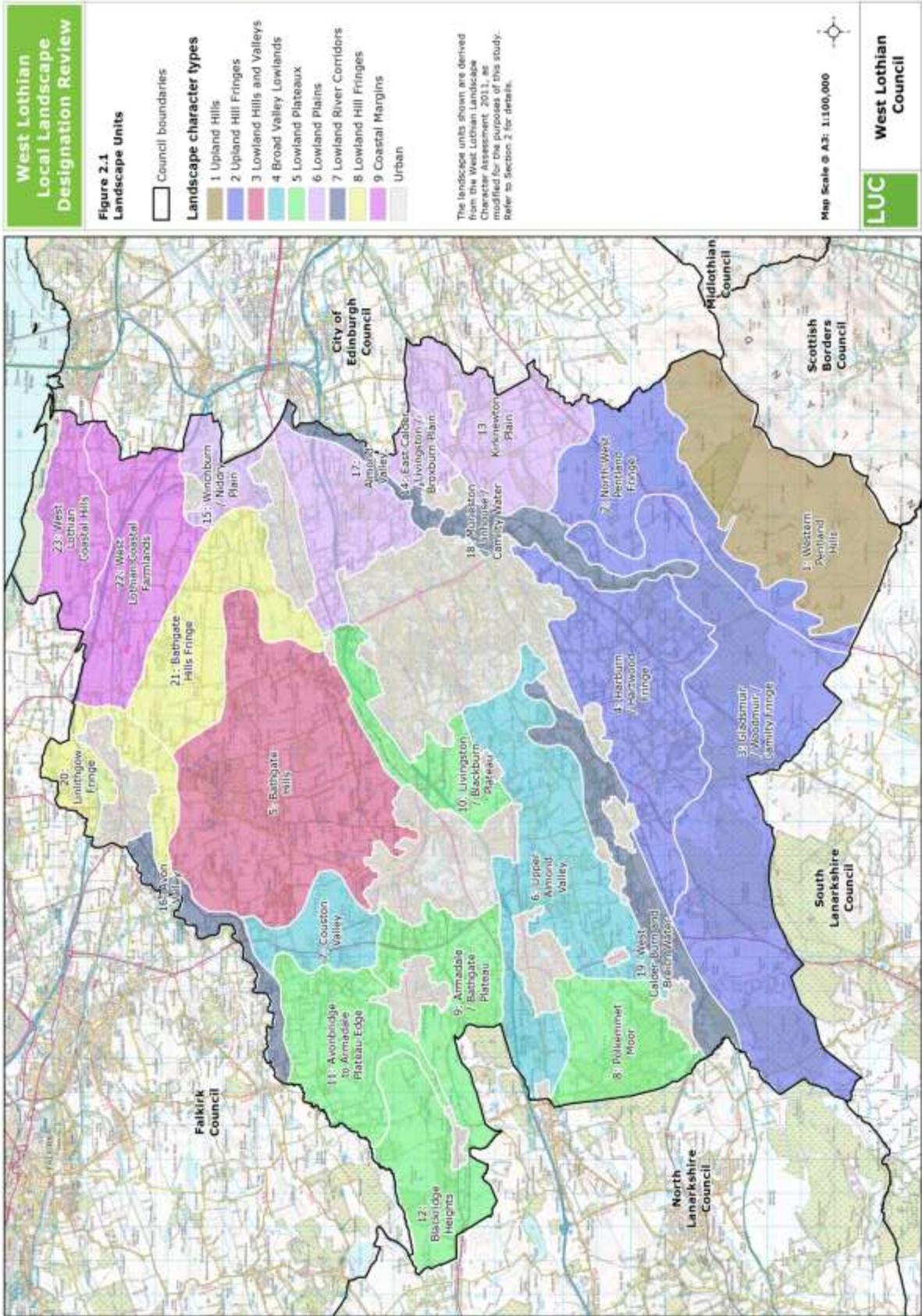
Table 2.1 Landscape baseline for the LLDR

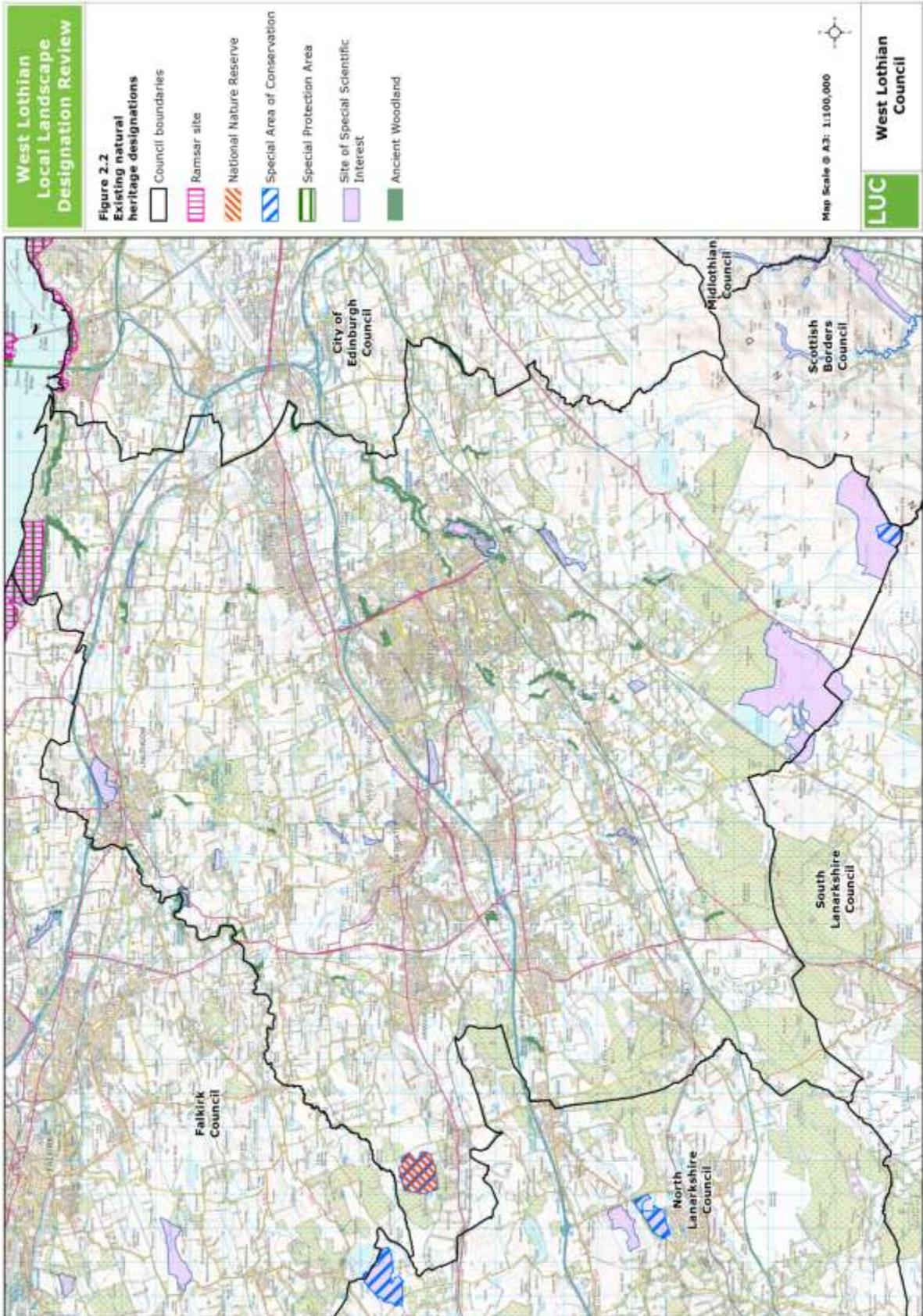
Unit no.	Landscape unit name	Unit no. (WL-LCA 2011)	Landscape Type (WL-LCA 2011)
1	Western Pentland Hills	1(i)	Upland Hills
2	North-west Pentland Fringe	2(i)	Upland Hill Fringes
3	Gladsmuir / Woodmuir / Camilty Fringe	2(ii)	Upland Hill Fringes
4	Harburn / Hartwood Fringe	2(iii)	Upland Hill Fringes
5	Bathgate Hills	3(i)	Lowland Hills & Valleys
6	Upper Almond Valley	4(i)	Broad Valley Lowlands
7	Couston Valley	4(ii)	Broad Valley Lowlands
8	Polkemmet Moor	5(i)	Lowland Plateaux
9	Armadale / Bathgate Plateau	5(ii)	Lowland Plateaux
10	Livingston / Blackburn Plateau	5(iii)	Lowland Plateaux
11	Avonbridge to Armadale Plateau Edge	5(iv)	Lowland Plateaux
12	Blackridge Heights	5(v)	Lowland Plateaux
13	Kirknewton Plain	6(i)	Lowland Plains
14	East Calder / Livingston / Broxburn Plain	6(ii)	Lowland Plains
15	Winchburgh / Niddry Plain	6(iii)	Lowland Plains
16	Avon Valley	7(i)	Lowland River Corridors
17	Almond Valley	7(ii)	Lowland River Corridors
18	Murieston / Linhouse / Camilty Waters	7(iii)	Lowland River Corridors
19	West Calder Burn / Breich & Harwood Waters	7(iv)	Lowland River Corridors
20	Linlithgow Fringe	8(i)	Lowland Hill Fringes
21	Bathgate Hills Fringe	8(ii)	Lowland Hill Fringes
22	West Lothian Coastal Farmlands	9(i)	Coastal Margins
23	West Lothian Coastal Hills	9(ii)	Coastal Margins

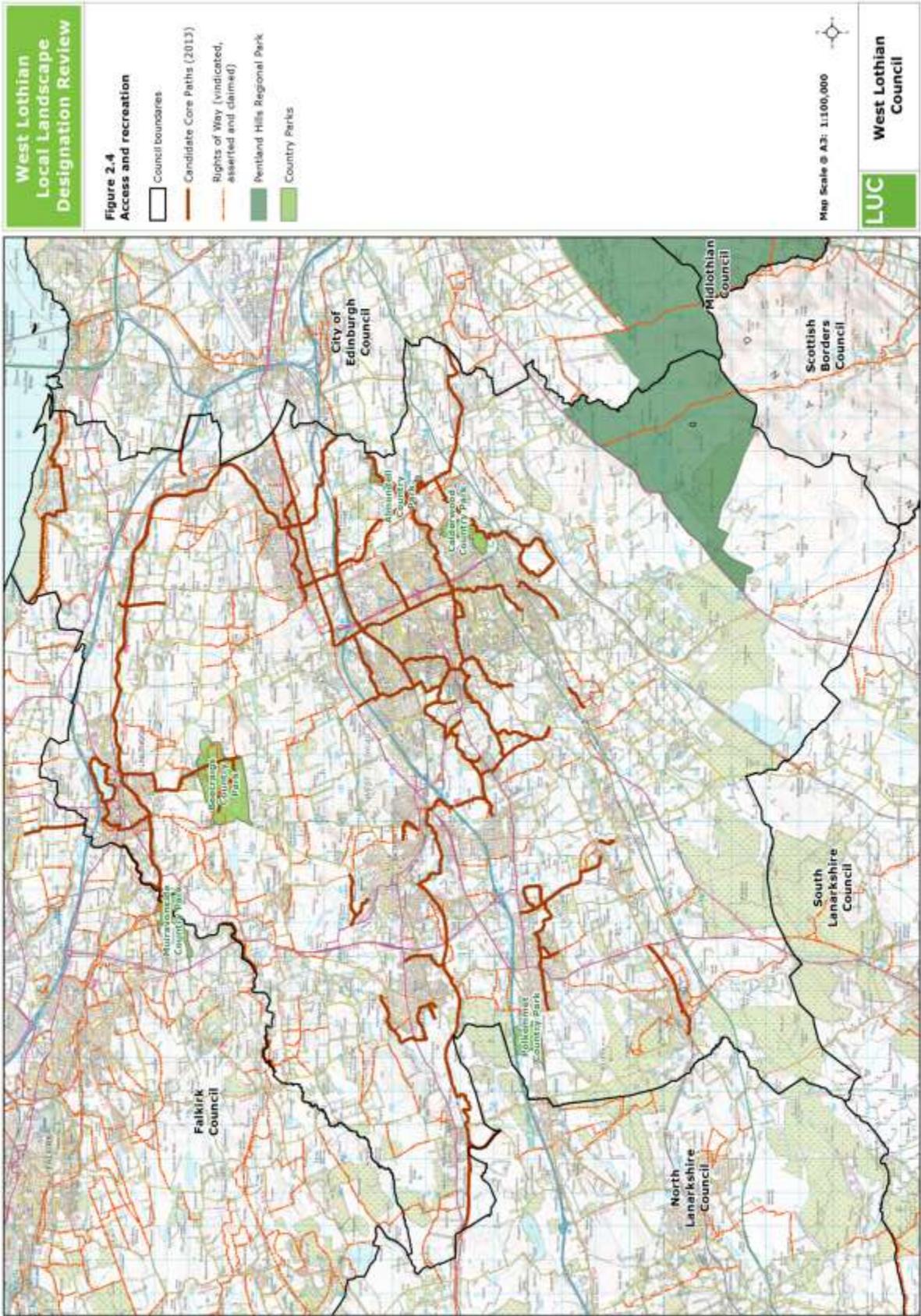
- 2.7 The WL-LCA 2011 defines urban areas which are not characterised or described in detail. These are similar in extent, but not identical to, the settlement boundaries defined in the West Lothian Local Plan (2009). For the purposes of the LLDR, areas classed as urban have not been surveyed in detail, since the process does not seek to identify candidate SLAs within settlements. Where undeveloped landscape extends into settlement boundaries, for example around Dechmont Law and the Almond Valley in Livingston, this has been noted and these areas are considered under the adjacent landscape units. When selecting boundaries for candidate SLAs, the settlement boundaries from the Local Plan have been used rather than the looser boundaries defined by the WL-LCA 2011 (see Section 6).
- 2.8 The 23 landscape units in Table 2.1 have been adopted as the baseline for the LLDR, and each unit is individually assessed against a range of criteria as described in the following section.

Other baseline information

- 2.9 To further inform the LLDR process, additional background material relating to landscape was gathered and reviewed. This included the information sources listed in the References (Section 8) and also the patterns of other designations across West Lothian. Figure 2.2 illustrates the existing biodiversity designations in the area; Figure 2.3 shows historic environment; and Figure 2.4 illustrates access and recreation opportunities.







Quantitative evaluation of the landscape

- 2.10 The quantitative evaluation represents a systematic, criteria-based assessment of the relative values of each landscape unit. The criteria represent a range of aspects of landscape which may help identify an area which is considered worthy of designation. They are therefore designed to identify those aspects of West Lothian which the steering group felt would merit designation as Special Landscape Areas within the forthcoming Local Development Plan.
- 2.11 The process of defining criteria begins with the suggested aspects of landscape set out in the *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*. These are presented as “aspects of landscape character” and “landscape qualities” (pp.15-16). During previous local landscape designation reviews, LUC has expanded and developed these criteria in order to identify high-quality or highly-valued landscapes within West Lothian. The criteria have been further refined based on the particular character of the West Lothian landscape.
- 2.12 The criteria were discussed in detail during a workshop session in February 2013. This involved members of the steering group as well as other West Lothian Council planning officers and land services officers, and representatives of Central Scotland Forest Trust. The agreed criteria are listed and defined in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Potential criteria for evaluation of the landscape

Criterion	Definition
Landscape character criteria	
Representativeness	The extent to which a landscape is typical of the study area as a whole, and to which it contributes to its wider identity and sense of place.
Rarity	Identifies landscapes or features which are rare or unusual within the study area, or which are known to be uncommon elsewhere.
Condition	The general state of repair of the landscape, with reference to its primary land use(s), in terms of management and maintenance of key features.
Intactness	The extent to which a landscape has changed in the past, or is currently changing, as a result of development or changing land management practices.
Landscape quality criteria	
Scenic qualities	The extent to which the landscape contains pleasing combinations of features, or to which it prompts strong sensory appeal.
Views	The extent and importance of views in and out of the landscape, particularly the relative visibility of the landscape from key routes and locations.
Enjoyment	The importance of the landscape as a recreational resource, including accessibility and provision of opportunities for appreciation of the landscape or views.
Cultural qualities	The extent to which the landscape is the setting for features of historic value, including buildings, archaeology and designed landscapes, or the influence of intangible literary or artistic associations.
Naturalness	The perceived importance to the landscape of features of natural heritage interest, including important habitats and features of geodiversity value which may or may not be protected, and also perceptions of wildness or tranquillity.

Criterion	Definition
Settlement setting	The extent to which the landscape allows the appreciation of settlement form, including framing of views to and from settlements, and the contribution of landscapes to the identity or sense of place of settlements.
Non-ranked criteria	
Landscape consistency	The extent to which the landscape is consistent in terms of the above criteria.
Landscape relationships	The extent to which the landscape is associated with adjacent landscapes, potentially combining to form groupings of high value.
Other designations	Identifies existing designations within the landscape.

- 2.13 Each criterion was developed into an evaluation question, which can be asked in relation to each of the landscape units in Table 2.1. Three possible responses are defined, corresponding to 'ranks' of *low*, *medium*, or *high*. The evaluation questions and responses are set out in Table 2.3.
- 2.14 Three of the criteria are non-ranked. These seek to identify differences in relative value within the landscape unit, and important relationships with other landscape units and designations. They are designed to identify any potential groupings of landscapes, or areas which could be subdivided based on their qualities.
- 2.15 It is important to note that the judgements of *low*, *medium*, or *high* are relative to the landscapes of West Lothian, and do not indicate absolute levels or thresholds. By the same token, the findings cannot be directly related to the findings of other similar studies carried out in relation to other localities.
- 2.16 Further information on certain of the criteria is included below.

Representativeness

- 2.17 Definitions of the word "representative" refer to two elements: typicality; and the concept of an exemplar. For example the Oxford English Dictionary:
- "That exemplifies a wider group, class, or kind; (of an individual) typical; (of a sample or selection) balanced."*
- 2.18 Typicality is one of the suggested criteria in the LLDR guidance, as an aspect of landscape character, while representativeness forms part of a second set of criteria aimed at selecting important landscapes for designation. In considering typicality, it was found that this often serves as the reverse of rarity, and is a less useful criterion as a result. It was therefore decided to combine the two, to identify "typical" landscapes, which also "exemplify" the landscape of West Lothian. A two-stage evaluation question was developed to frame these two aspects which make up "representativeness", as set out in Table 2.3.
- 2.19 It was noted in discussions with the steering group that there are some negative perceptions of what is representative of West Lothian, and so the criterion was designed to focus explicitly on those aspects making a positive contribution to sense of place. Some elements which were seen as typical (though not necessarily representative) of West Lothian included the following:
- a mixed land use of arable and pastoral farming;
 - field boundary trees, including lines of beech along roads;
 - density of settlement, and the presence of commercial and settlement fringe development in the landscape;
 - strong presence of recent historical mining activity remaining in the landscape, most notably in the form of red shale bings;
 - a proliferation of former smallholdings on the edges of and between settlements including "lowland crofting" in the west of the district; and

- transport corridors, ranging from the Union Canal to the M8 and M9 motorways.

Intactness

- 2.20 When considering past change, the evaluation has primarily considered recent mineral extraction activities, the development of transport corridors, afforestation and settlement expansion. Future changes are more difficult to evaluate, and the assessment is therefore limited to developments which have a degree of certainty. For the purposes of the LLDR, the consideration of future development has included:
- sites which are allocated for development in the West Lothian Local Plan (2009), including the committed Core Development Areas; and
 - other significant developments with planning consent, including wind farms such as Tormywheel in south-west West Lothian.
- 2.21 There are other pressures which will continue to change the West Lothian landscape, including potential for further wind energy development, and longer-term forces such as climate change. These do not form part of the evaluation baseline, but have been considered in the statements of significance attached to the candidate SLAs (see Section 7).

Views

- 2.22 This criterion is designed to evaluate the visibility of a landscape. In effect it looks at the quantity rather than the quality of views, which is covered by the scenic quality criterion. The West Lothian landscape capacity study (LCS) for wind energy defines a series of important viewpoints which are considered to be sensitive. For the purposes of the LLDR, these were recognised under this criterion, since they represent locations with views of agreed importance to the area. The nine important viewpoints listed in the LCS, and the landscape units into which they fall, are:
- West Cairn Hill (unit 1);
 - Harperrig Reservoir (unit 2);
 - public viewpoint on the A904 east of Newton (unit 23);
 - tower at the House of the Binns (unit 23);
 - Cockleroy (unit 5);
 - The Knock viewpoint and Cairnpapple Hill (unit 5);
 - Binny Craig (unit 5);
 - Avon Aqueduct on the Union Canal (unit 16); and
 - Blawhorn Moss (unit 12).

Naturalness

- 2.23 This criterion looks at the apparent naturalness of the landscape, as perceived by people. Areas of extensive natural or semi-natural land cover may be perceived as “natural” landscapes. These areas may or may not coincide with areas protected for their biodiversity or geodiversity, but naturalness is distinct from natural heritage value as expressed in scientific terms.
- 2.24 Consideration of naturalness will also include the perceived wildness of the landscape. Relative wildness across Scotland has been mapped by SNH, and these maps have been referred to in the evaluation. SNH’s policy statement on Wildness in Scotland’s Countryside notes that the quality of wildness can be found in managed landscapes, even close to towns, although “wild land” is restricted to the most remote areas of mountain, moorland and coast.

Table 2.3 Evaluation criteria and decision rules

Criterion	Question	Response	Rank
Representativeness	<p>a) Does the landscape contain features, or combinations of features, that recur throughout West Lothian?</p> <p>b) Are these features distinctive of West Lothian, making a positive contribution to its wider identity, image and sense of place?</p>	The landscape contains features that recur throughout West Lothian, and these features make a strong positive contribution to sense of place.	High
		<p>The landscape contains features that recur throughout West Lothian, but these features do not make a positive contribution to sense of place; <i>or</i></p> <p>The landscape contains fewer features that recur throughout West Lothian, but these features make a strong positive contribution to sense of place.</p>	Medium
		The landscape contains few or no features that recur throughout West Lothian, and these do not make a positive contribution to sense of place.	Low
Rarity	Does the landscape contain features or a combination of features which are rare or unique within West Lothian, or which are known to be uncommon elsewhere?	Large number of landscape features which are unique within West Lothian, and may be rare across Scotland.	High
		Some landscape features which are rare or unique within the West Lothian.	Medium
		Few or no landscape features which are rare or unique within West Lothian.	Low
Condition	Are the landscape features or combinations of features in a good state of repair?	The landscape is clearly well managed and maintained, and overall is in a good state of repair.	High
		The landscape is generally in a good state of repair, although there are some elements which have been less well maintained and managed.	Medium
		The landscape is not in a good state of repair, with many elements which have been less well maintained.	Low

Criterion	Question	Response	Rank
Intactness	Is the landscape intact or has it experienced a decline in quality? Are present and future changes likely to lead to such decline, for example as a consequence of changes in landscape management, patterns of development, or the influence of development in adjacent areas?	The landscape shows little or no signs of past, present or potential decline in quality.	High
		The landscape has experienced some past decline in quality but is not currently or potentially subject to further decline.	Medium
		The landscape has experienced past decline in quality, and is potentially subject to further decline.	Low
Scenic qualities	To what extent is the landscape of scenic value in its own right or to what extent does it contribute to the scenic qualities of the wider area?	Pleasing combination of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. Visual, sensory, perceptual and experiential qualities which contribute to the natural beauty and appreciation of the landscape.	High
		Some pleasing features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements, or visual, sensory, perceptual and experiential qualities. A landscape which contributes to the setting of an adjacent area of high landscape quality.	Medium
		The landscape does not contain particularly pleasing features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements, and has more limited visual, sensory, perceptual and experiential qualities.	Low
Views	Does the landscape provide key views to and from important built and natural heritage assets or transport routes?	The landscape is important in views from recognised key viewpoints, settlements or transport routes, and/or includes key landmarks.	High
		The landscape is important in some views from settlements or transport routes, and/or includes landmarks.	Medium
		The landscape does not perform a key function in relation to views from viewpoints, settlements, transport routes or landmarks.	Low

Criterion	Question	Response	Rank
Enjoyment	To what extent is the landscape enjoyed by local people and visitors, for example in the form of walking, cycling or horse riding, or in the form of more formal recreation activities, which are focused on enjoyment of the landscape?	The landscape is well-used, and is important as a greenspace or recreation area, with provision of access routes, key viewpoints and recreational facilities.	High
		The landscape has some importance as a greenspace or recreation area. Some provision of access routes, key viewpoints and facilities, potentially less well-used.	Medium
		The landscape has little or no greenspace or recreational value, and limited provision of access routes, etc.	Low
Cultural qualities	Does the landscape have specific historic or cultural associations (including literature, music, art, local history or particular spiritual associations) or does it contribute to the wider cultural heritage of the area?	The landscape is rich in visible features of archaeology and built heritage, and has strong literary or artistic associations.	High
		The landscape has some visible features of archaeology and built heritage; literary and artistic associations less direct.	Medium
		The landscape has few visible features of archaeology or built heritage, and few or no literary or artistic associations.	Low
Naturalness	Do biodiversity and/or geodiversity make a significant contribution to the landscape? Does the landscape exhibit tranquillity or wildness?	Biodiversity and/or geodiversity are a key aspect of this landscape, and/or a landscape with high degree of tranquillity or wildness.	High
		Biodiversity and/or geodiversity are of some importance to this landscape, and/or a landscape with some degree of tranquillity or wildness.	Medium
		Biodiversity and/or geodiversity are not significant to this landscape, and/or a landscape no or limited tranquillity or wildness.	Low

Criterion	Question	Response	Rank
Settlement setting	How important is the landscape in providing the setting for settlements as a whole, or particular aspects of a settlement?	The landscape performs a key function in providing the setting of settlement(s), or contributes strongly to settlement identity.	High
		The landscape performs some function in providing the setting of settlement(s), and/or makes some contribution to settlement identity.	Medium
		The landscape is isolated from or does not perform a function in relation to the setting of settlement(s), and does not make a strong contribution to settlement identity.	Low

Evaluation process

- 2.25 The evaluation was based on both desk study and on field surveys of West Lothian. Information on each landscape unit was drawn from available baseline material including the WL-LCA 2011.
- 2.26 A series of field surveys undertaken in February and March 2013 allowed verification of this material and addition of field-based observations by the survey team. For each of the 23 landscape units, a standard evaluation sheet was completed in the field to record information relating to each criterion.
- 2.27 Following completion of the desk-based and field-based research, the evaluation sheet was developed to include a brief description of each landscape unit against each criterion. This was compared with the evaluation questions and responses set out in Table 2.3, and each landscape unit was assigned a rank of *low*, *medium*, or *high* in relation to each of the criteria.
- 2.28 A completed evaluation sheet for each of the 23 landscape units is included in Appendix 2 of this report.

Presentation of results

- 2.29 Once complete, the ranks assigned to each landscape unit for each criterion were extracted and mapped. These maps are presented in Section 4, and identify the locations which best represent each of the desired characteristics or aspects of landscape.
- 2.30 It is recognised that many of the evaluation criteria are interrelated, and the criteria-based approach therefore results in a layering of qualities, with some landscapes representing a large number of the desired aspects, and other landscapes representing fewer aspects. This layering allows a comparison of landscapes based on the relative concentration of the desired characteristics. To enable this comparison, the ranks assigned under each criterion are converted into numerical values and combined to give an overall 'score' to each landscape unit.
- 2.31 The overall scores are calculated by assigning a value of 1 to a *low* rank, 2 to *medium* and 3 to *high*. This gives a possible range of total scores of between 10 (a landscape unit with 10 *low* ranks) and 30 (a landscape unit with 10 *high* ranks).
- 2.32 The overall scores show which landscapes were ranked highly under the most criteria. They therefore give an indication of those landscapes within West Lothian which exhibit the greatest number of the characteristics and qualities which have been considered worthy of recognition through the LLDR. The scores are relative, and do not represent absolute landscape values which can be applied outside the context of this study.
- 2.33 They also do not identify which criteria contribute to their overall rank. It is possible that two landscapes could score equally highly based on a very different set of criteria-based rankings. The overall scores are therefore an indication of overall quality or value. Further analysis of the results was therefore undertaken, as set out below.

Analysis and selection of core areas

- 2.34 The evaluation process resulted in a relative 'ranking' or comparison of the landscape units, whereby those areas which exhibit more of the characteristics which may be worthy of designations can be distinguished from those which exhibit fewer such characteristics. The ranking allows the LLDR to focus on the higher-scoring areas, while the lower-scoring landscape units can be discounted. A clear method for drawing a distinction between the two is needed.
- 2.35 The ranking presents the overall score assigned to each landscape unit, and these scores occur as a continuum from the lowest to highest. The ranking illustrates relative value but does not automatically identify the landscapes which are most suitable for designation. The next stage is therefore to separate those landscapes which may merit designation from those which are unlikely to do so. Those landscape units which may merit designation are taken forward as areas of search or 'core areas', to be refined and developed as potential SLAs.

Filtering the results

- 2.36 To establish which landscape units could be considered as core areas, or parts of core areas, the evaluation results need to be filtered in some way.
- 2.37 A simple 'cut-off' can be established, either pegged to a particular minimum score, or based on a proportion of landscape units to be considered. The effect of such an approach is to impose an 'in/out' division, where landscapes below the cut-off are rejected from further consideration. It is recognised that qualities vary across character units, and that there are higher-scoring areas within middle-ranking landscapes. Under a simple in/out division, these areas may be lost to further consideration.
- 2.38 It was therefore decided to create a three-fold division:
- the higher-scoring one third of landscape units were considered for inclusion as core areas in their own right;
 - the lower-scoring one third of landscape units were not considered in further detail; and
 - the remaining areas were reviewed in more detail, and where appropriate core areas for consideration were identified.

Qualitative analysis

- 2.39 The purpose of the qualitative analysis was to enable a move away from the pre-defined landscape units, towards potential candidate SLAs, given that the landscape character areas are not focused on landscape quality. It was recognised that significant variations in landscape quality can occur across the landscape units, and these variations are not brought out by the evaluation process which looked at each unit as a whole.
- 2.40 The higher- and middle-scoring tranches were subjected to the qualitative analysis, aimed at identifying:
- Which parts of each landscape unit perform best against each criterion; and
 - Whether any parts of each landscape unit contribute to important composite landscapes.
- 2.41 This analysis was informed by the non-ranked criteria in the evaluation, which recorded the variations within and interrelationships between landscape units. A series of core areas were identified, representing either complete landscape units, or parts of different units grouped together. The analysis is presented in Section 5.

Application of practical criteria

- 2.42 At this stage, the practical criteria set out in the Guidance on Local Landscape Designations were applied to inform choices over inclusion. These practical criteria were highlighted in the study objectives in the consultants brief (see Section 1), and include:
- identity and coherence;
 - suitable size;
 - national and local planning policy designations including countryside belts, gardens and designed landscapes, country parks;
 - planning policy designations in neighbouring local authorities; and
 - boundary features.
- 2.43 The core areas identified in Section 5 were tested against these practical considerations, in discussion with the steering group, and a decision was taken in each case as to whether to pursue the development of a candidate SLA or not.
- 2.44 It is important that candidate SLAs represent recognisable landscape units, with a logical theme or focus: for example a distinctive group of hills, a coastal landscape, or a river valley. Smaller areas of identified landscape quality are not taken forward in isolation since it would be impractical to apply spatial landscape policy at this scale.

- 2.45 It is recognised that there are benefits to establishing consistency of policy across landscapes which extend over administrative boundaries. However, different authorities designate different areas for different reasons. The presence of a designation in an adjacent authority area does not always relate to the need for a designation within West Lothian, but has been a consideration in defining the extents of candidate SLAs.
- 2.46 In terms of boundary features, the aim has been to select strong and permanent boundaries for the candidate SLAs, which include roads and tracks, field boundaries, water courses, topographic features and coastal features. Where there is a lack of obvious boundaries, it has occasionally been necessary to move outwards from the core area and to include areas of lower merit, rather than to move inwards and reduce the area of higher merit landscape included within the candidate SLA, particularly where this could have an impact on the integrity of the core area in question.
- 2.47 The process of analysis, selection and refinement which led from the ranked landscape units to candidate SLAs was iterative in nature. The candidate SLAs developed as a result of ongoing assessment and reconsideration of areas based on feedback from the steering group.

Statements of importance

- 2.48 Once the candidate SLAs had been agreed, a statement of importance was drawn up for each candidate SLA. The statement is designed to highlight the key characteristics and qualities which underpin the candidate SLA. It also briefly outlines key forces for change and principles for both development management and landscape management within the designated area. These are intended to be suitable for use by prospective developers and the council's development management staff. The candidate SLAs identified by the LLDR are described and illustrated in Section 7.
- 2.49 A brief comparison with existing AGLVs and ASLCs was carried out, in order to highlight any major differences in terms of coverage of protected landscape, the representation of different landscapes character types and the geographic representation within the candidate SLAs.

3 Audit of West Lothian Landscape Designations

Introduction

- 3.1 An audit was undertaken of the existing local landscape designations in or immediately adjacent to the council area of West Lothian. The audit presents a brief overview of each designation, its background and its key characteristics. Landscape designations within neighbouring local authorities have been briefly considered but were not audited in detail.
- 3.2 The audit seeks to identify the principal qualities for which each area has been designated, based on desk review of the West Lothian LCA (2011). No attempt has been made to justify the existing AGLV boundaries or areas, as the West Lothian-wide evaluation process undertaken for this LLDR study will lead to the redefinition of local landscape designations. The audit provides baseline information on what landscape qualities and characteristics have been considered worthy of policy protection in the past.
- 3.3 The current designations pre-date the area-wide West Lothian Local Plan (2009), and the specific reasons for their selection and boundaries were either not recorded or paper records were not retained. A more detailed review of the historical development of local landscape designations, as defined by West Lothian Council and its predecessor administrative areas, was prepared separately by the Council.¹³ Their review noted that some of the current designations are over 40 years old, and have been extended and added to on an ad hoc basis. The landscape importance of the Forth coast, the Pentland Hills and the Torphichen Hills was recognised as early as 1948, in the *Regional Survey and Plan for Central and South-East Scotland* produced by a post-war planning task force led by Sir Frank Mears. However, very limited justification was discovered for the selection, retention and expansion of these areas through successive development plans.

Landscape designations in West Lothian

- 3.4 Within West Lothian there are six Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and six Areas of Special Landscape Control (ASLC). These are listed in Table 3.1 and are shown on Figure 3.1.

Table 3.1 Landscape designations within West Lothian

Local landscape designation	Area (Ha)
Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV	5,588
Forth Shore AGLV	939
Airngath Hill AGLV	360
Blackridge Heights AGLV	1,836
Almond and Linhouse Valleys AGLV	377
Pentland Hills AGLV	4,613
Breich Valley ASLC	695

¹³ West Lothian Council (2013) *Background to Local Landscape Designations in West Lothian*. Internal Briefing Paper.

Local landscape designation	Area (Ha)
Levenseat ASLC	418
River Almond ASLC	439
Livingston ASLC	303
Boghead House Policies ASLC	104
Barbauchlaw Glen ASLC	87

Content of the audit

- 3.5 The audit of local landscape designations, presented in Appendix 1, sets out the following information for each AGLV and ASLC:
- a thumbnail map of the area covered;
 - the location, extent and boundaries of the designation, including its total area;
 - the published description of the designation, taken from the West Lothian Local Plan (2009);
 - any other designations which overlap with the AGLV or ASLC, including planning, biodiversity and cultural heritage interests, as well as local landscape designations in adjacent council areas;
 - the landscape units which the designation covers, drawn from the revised WL-LCA set out in Section 2 of this report; and
 - a selection of the key landscape characteristics, as relevant to the designated area, drawn from the corresponding descriptions in the WL-LCA 2011.
- 3.6 The conclusions of the audit are summarised below.

Areas of Great Landscape Value

- 3.7 AGLVs are currently defined in the West Lothian Local Plan, which states that they are designated “because of their special landscape character and special appearance” (paragraph 3.54). The local plan indicates that development will generally be resisted either within an AGLV, or in an adjacent location where development may impact upon the setting of an AGLV. This protection is formalised in policies ENV 19 and ENV 20.
- 3.8 The local plan goes on to propose that AGLVs will be used as a vehicle for ongoing landscape management and enhancement. The local plan states that “*The council will promote further woodland planting [and] the management and enhancement of natural and built features and practical conservation measures*” (paragraph 3.55). The recreational importance of the Bathgate Hills and Pentland Hills is also recognised.
- 3.9 The AGLVs range in size from 360 ha (Airngath Hill) to over 5,500 ha (Bathgate Hills and Avon Valley). The six AGLVs cover a total of 13,845 ha, equivalent to 32% of the West Lothian administrative area.
- 3.10 AGLVs cover the key upland and upland fringe areas of West Lothian, the two main river valleys (the Almond and the Avon), and the Firth of Forth coastline. There is a focus on the more visible landscapes of the area, particularly where these relate to settlement setting. The AGLVs also cover the more visually diverse landscapes of the area, including the igneous Bathgate Hills and the gorge-like lower Almond and Avon valleys.
- 3.11 The focus of some designated areas, such as Airngath Hill or the Pentlands, can readily be appreciated. Other areas are more diffuse. The Bathgate Hills includes not only the main area of the hills, but also a section of the Avon valley and the outlying Dechmont Law in North Livingston, separated from the core area by the M8 motorway. The Blackridge Heights AGLV includes open upland as well as mixed farmland and valley landscapes.

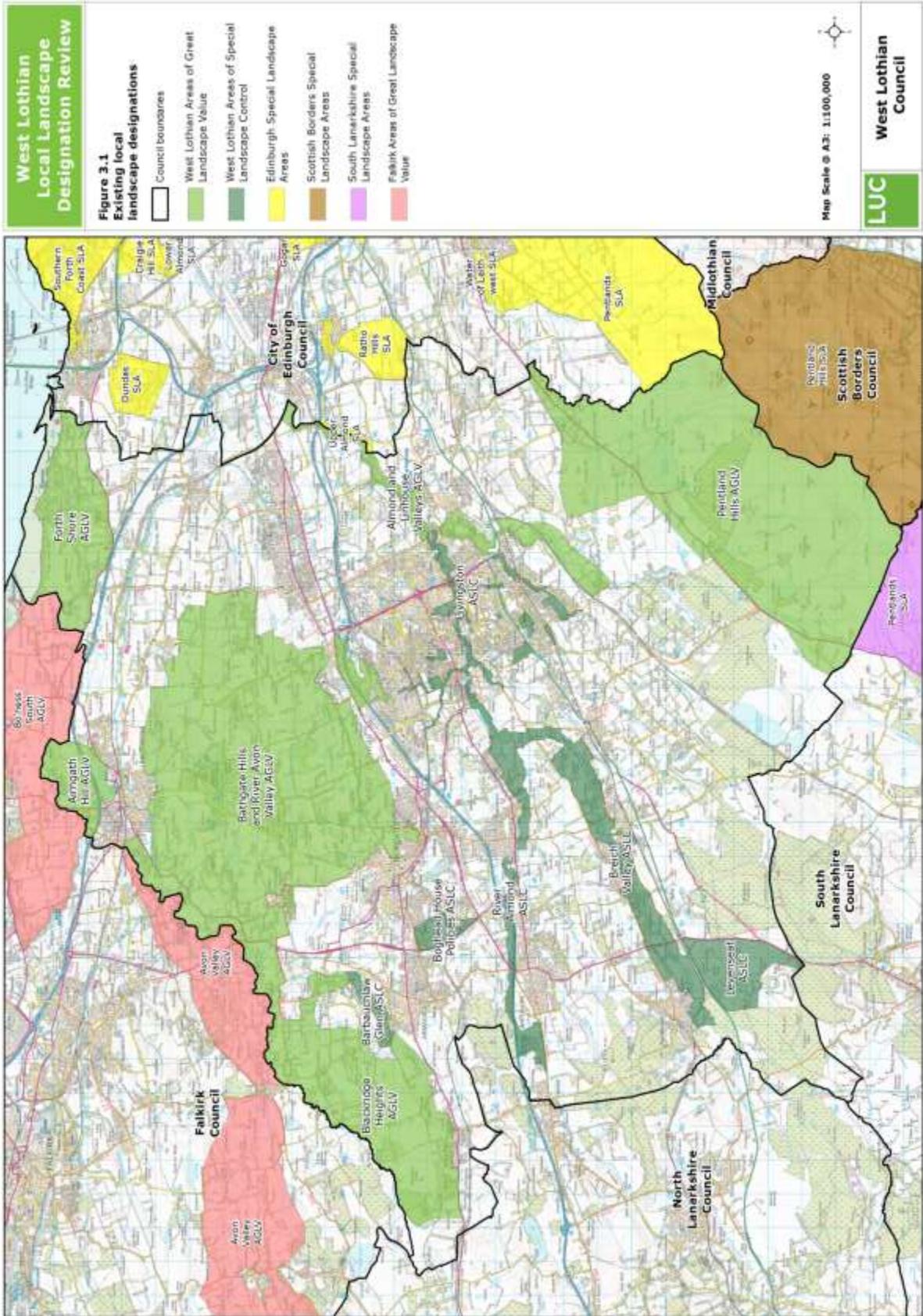
Areas of Special Landscape Control

- 3.12 ASLCs are also defined in the West Lothian Local Plan, which states that they are “*landscapes of character and of local importance*” (paragraph 3.63). It is stated that intrusive development within these areas would be inappropriate. The local plan also notes the potential for environmental enhancement. Policy ENV 21 states that the Council will “*will promote opportunities to enhance [these areas] and their accessibility to the public.*”
- 3.13 The ASLCs range in size from 634 ha (Breich Valley) to 87 ha (Barbauchlaw Glen), though several of the individual parcels of the Livingston ASLC, focused along the ‘greenways’ within the town, are much smaller still. The six ASLCs cover a total of 1,985 ha, equivalent to 5% of the West Lothian administrative area.
- 3.14 In comparison to the AGLVs, the ASLCs are smaller and represent less distinctive landscapes. They generally occur in association with settlements, representing accessible areas used by local populations for informal recreation. While most of the ASLCs represent coherent areas, the Livingston ASLC is very diverse, occupying a large number of interstitial spaces within the town. Also noted as an anomaly in the consultants brief is the inclusion of parts of Levenseat Quarry within the Levenseat ASLC.

Combined coverage of landscape designations

- 3.15 Together, the existing local landscape designations cover 15,830 ha. These figures, derived from GIS datasets supplied by West Lothian Council, suggest that local landscape designations amount to 37% of the land area of West Lothian, rather than the 51% suggested in the Local Plan (paragraph 3.53).¹⁴

¹⁴ The total area of West Lothian is 427 km² (42,700 ha), see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/02/2421/1>



Landscape designations outside West Lothian

- 3.16 Landscape designations which lie outside West Lothian, but run along or very close to the Council boundary, have been identified from local plans and supporting documents. These are listed in Table 3.2 and shown on Figure 3.1.

Table 3.2 Landscape designations adjacent to the West Lothian boundary

Local landscape designation	Local authority area
Dundas Estate SLA	Edinburgh
Upper Almond SLA	Edinburgh
Ratho Hills SLA	Edinburgh
Pentlands SLA	Edinburgh
Avon Valley AGLV	Falkirk
Bo'ness South AGLV	Falkirk
Pentland Hills and Black Mount SLA	South Lanarkshire
Pentlands SLA	Scottish Borders

- 3.17 The identified designations run adjacent to the West Lothian boundary within four of the five neighbouring local authority areas: there are no adjacent designations in North Lanarkshire. The presence of an adjacent designation may be a consideration in defining the extent of a new or amended designation within West Lothian, although it would not be a reason for designation in itself.
- 3.18 Scottish Borders Council, City of Edinburgh Council and South Lanarkshire Council have all recently published the results of local landscape designation studies, undertaken following the process set out in the SNH/HS Guidance on Local Landscape Designations.¹⁵ Detailed citations are therefore available for the designations in these areas. No local landscape designation reviews have been published by Falkirk or North Lanarkshire councils at the time of writing.

¹⁵ LUC (2012) *Scottish Borders Local Landscape Designation Review*. Scottish Borders Council.
LUC (2010) *Review of Local Landscape Designations in The City of Edinburgh Council*. City of Edinburgh Council.
Ironside Farrar (2010) *South Lanarkshire: Validating Local Landscape Designations*. South Lanarkshire Council.

4 Evaluation Results

Results by evaluation criteria

- 4.1 This section presents the results of the landscape evaluation, which examined each of the 23 landscape units in terms of the character and quality criteria defined in Table 2.2 and Table 2.3. The detailed evaluation is presented in the evaluation sheets for each of the 23 landscape units, included in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 4.2 The findings in relation to each of the ten criteria have been extracted and mapped separately, resulting in the series of maps presented in Figures 4.1 to 4.10. The following sections discuss the patterns of results relating to each of the landscape characteristics and qualities which were evaluated.

Representativeness

- 4.3 Three areas were ranked low under this criterion, and four were ranked high. The remaining 16 were ranked medium. This reflects the two-stage nature of the evaluation question (see Section 2). Often, the features which are considered 'typical' of West Lothian equate to less distinctive landscapes. The areas which were ranked 'medium' can be separated into three groups:
- highly typical, but with less sense of place, eg. unit 6 Upper Almond Valley;
 - moderate typicality and some sense of place, eg. unit 11 Avonbridge to Armadale Plateau Edge; and
 - not typical, but with a strong sense of place, eg. unit 1 Western Pentland Hills.
- 4.4 The majority of the areas which were ranked medium fall into the first group. There are several in the last group and fewest in the second group.

Rarity

- 4.5 Areas which were considered rare in the West Lothian context were the incised river valleys, coast, hills, and the extensive bing complex at Winchburgh. Many other areas contain unusual features or combinations of features, so ranking medium, while those areas ranked low exhibit few unusual characteristics.

Condition

- 4.6 Those landscape units observed to be in best condition, in terms of their overall maintenance and management, frequently coincide with designed landscapes, parkland, and better quality farmland. This is apparent along the coast (unit 23), around Kirknewton (unit 13) and Almondell (unit 17). Also in good overall condition are the Pentland Hills (unit 1). Areas to the north and south of the council area were ranked medium, while across the central part of the study area is a concentration of landscape units ranked low. These reflect marginal farmland and settlement edges where landscape management has not been a priority, sometimes due to proposed development.

Intactness

- 4.7 The most intact areas were found to be the Pentlands and Pentland fringes (units 1 and 2); the Bathgate Hills and adjacent areas (units 5, 20 and 21); the river valleys (units 16 and 17); and the coast (unit 23). These areas have experienced less of the mining activities and settlement expansion which have affected other areas in the past.

Scenic qualities

- 4.8 The most scenic areas were considered to be the Pentland Hills, the Bathgate Hills, the coast and the Avon and Almond valleys. These areas reflect those rated highly for their intactness, indicating the correspondence between perceptions of scenic quality and 'unspoilt' landscapes. The exception is unit 15 (Winchburgh / Niddry Plain), where the extensive red shale bings, farmland and canal were found to offer the visual contrasts and combinations of elements contributing to scenic quality.

Views

- 4.9 A number of areas were ranked high against this criterion, with almost all others ranked medium. This reflects the high visibility of West Lothian from several key transport corridors radiating out from Edinburgh. The M9, M8, A71 and A70, as well as several train lines, all traverse West Lothian, and its landscapes are seen by large numbers of people using these strategic routes. Landscapes containing hills or other upstanding landmark features, such as prominent bings, were ranked most highly. The only two areas ranked low were the Almond and Avon valleys, incised landforms with few inward or outward views.

Enjoyment

- 4.10 Opportunities for recreational access in the West Lothian countryside are focused on the Pentland Hills Regional Park and the three country parks in the area. Also noted for their recreational importance were the Union Canal and the two main river valleys: the River Avon Heritage Trail follows the Avon; while the lower Almond is the focus of Almondell and Calderwood Country Park. Areas closer to settlements which provide recreational access include Seafield Law and Dechmont Law, in unit 10, and Calderwood in unit 18. The coastal hills (unit 23) include extensive parklands at The Binns and Hopetoun which serve as major visitor attractions in the area.

Cultural qualities

- 4.11 Most areas were ranked high or medium against this criterion, recognising the importance, and continuing presence, of recent historical activity in the landscape. The mining history of the area is an important aspect of West Lothian's heritage, and can be readily seen in today's landscape primarily in the form of bings, though also as disused railways, industrial buildings, and miners' rows. Areas which reflect not only the recent past but offer a deeper sense of history were ranked highest. These include: the Neolithic landscape of the Bathgate hills, focused on the Cairnpapple Henge (unit 5); Linlithgow Palace and Peel (unit 20); the layers of historic buildings and landscape around Abercorn, Hopetoun and The Binns (unit 23); and the unique combination of the 15th-century Niddry Castle dwarfed by shale bings at Winchburgh (unit 15).

Naturalness

- 4.12 Fewer areas were ranked high against this criterion, reflecting the extensively farmed and settled landscape of West Lothian. The Pentland Hills (units 1 and 2) and the Blackridge Heights (unit 12), comprise the most extensive areas of natural moorland landcover, while substantial areas of native woodland are limited to the Avon and Almond river valleys. These areas also represent the most tranquil landscapes of West Lothian, being most removed, either physically or visually, from settlements. Other areas with significant habitat resources and accessible nature reserves were ranked medium, and the more intensively farmed areas to the east were ranked low.

Settlement setting

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

Evaluation criteria maps

- 4.14 Figures 4.1 to 4.10, on the following pages, illustrate diagrammatically the rank mapped for each landscape unit against each criterion assessed. The maps are coloured according to the key below, while the landscape units are numbered as set out in Table 2.1.

Key to Figures 4.1 to 4.10

	High evaluation
	Medium evaluation
	Low evaluation

Figure 4.1 Representativeness

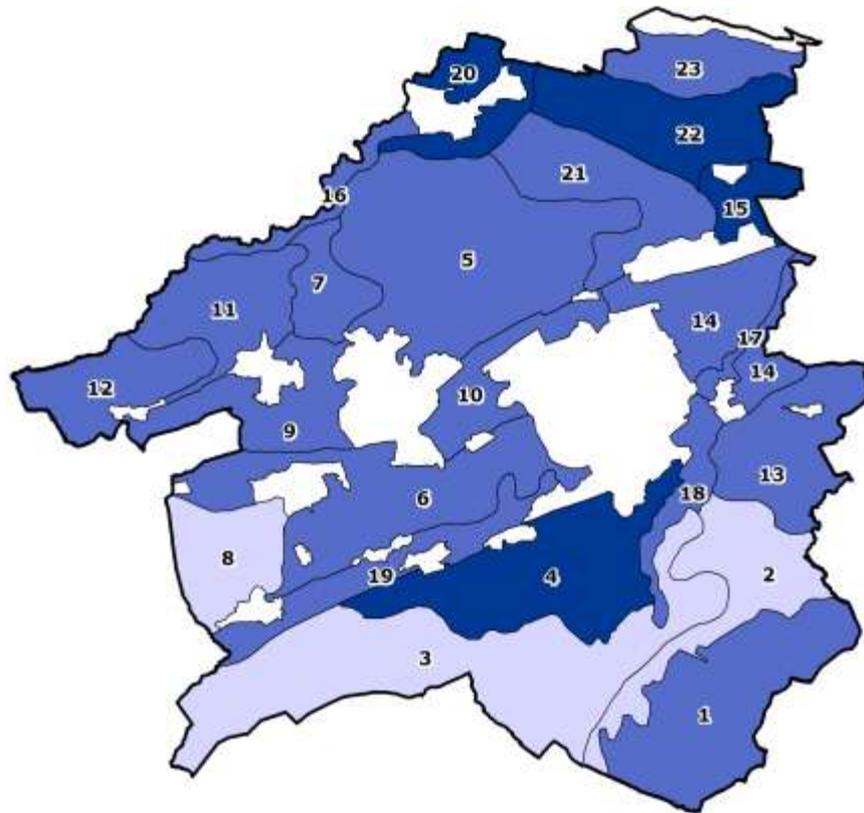


Figure 4.2 Rarity

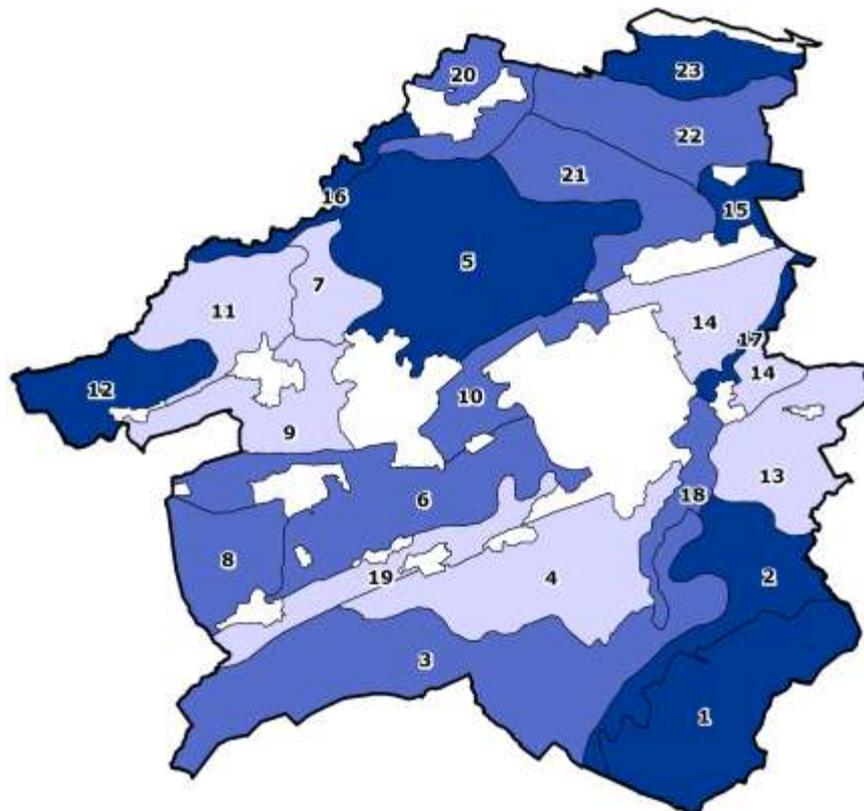


Figure 4.3 Condition

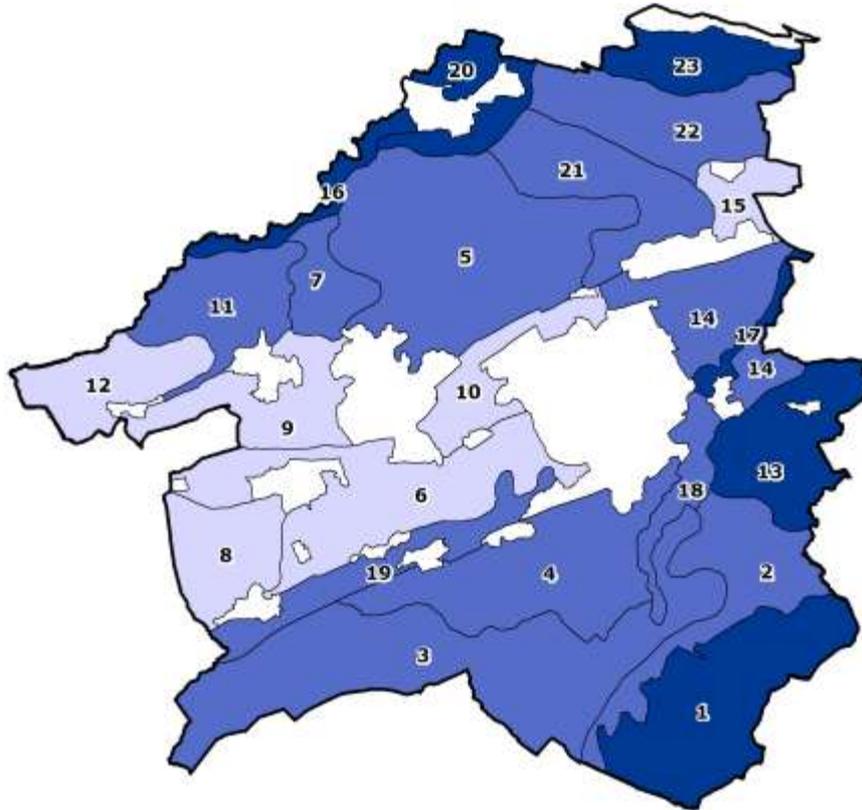


Figure 4.4 Intactness

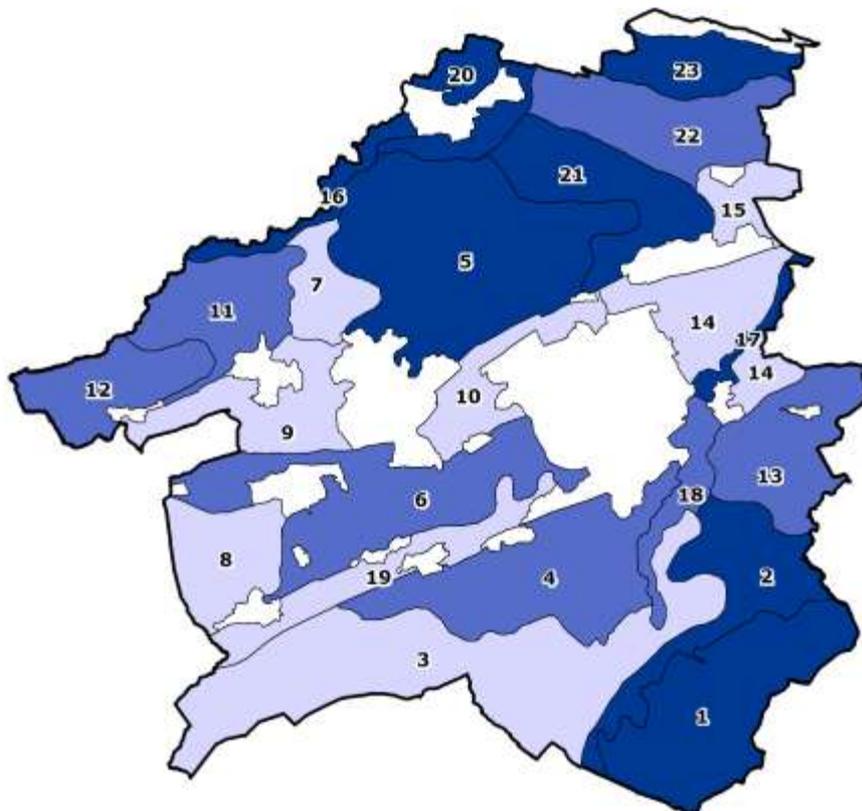


Figure 4.5 Scenic quality

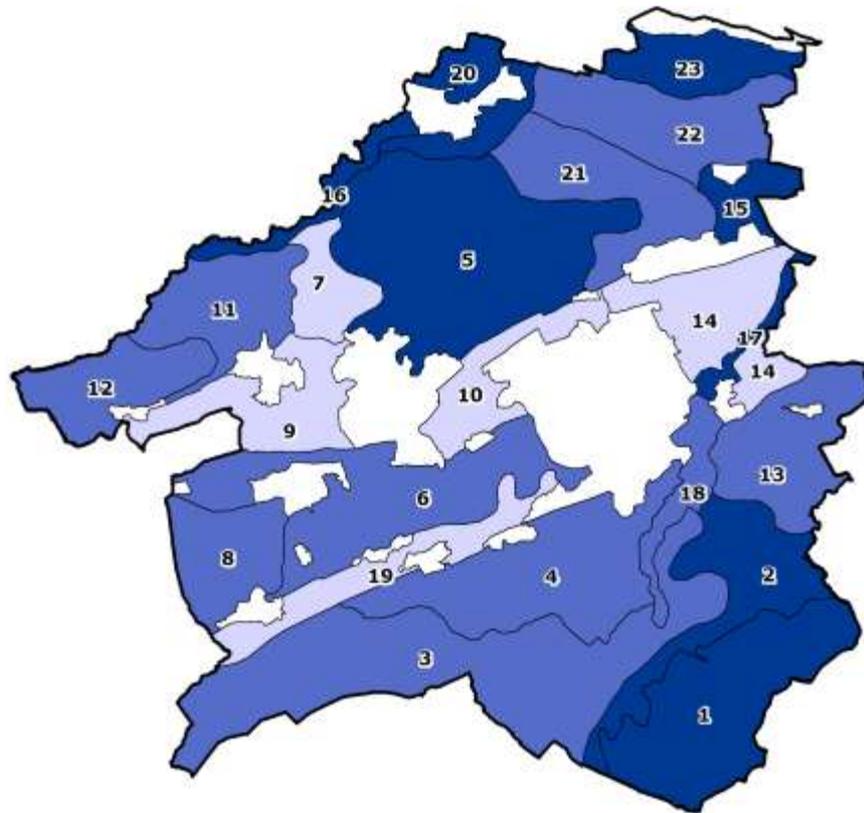


Figure 4.6 Views

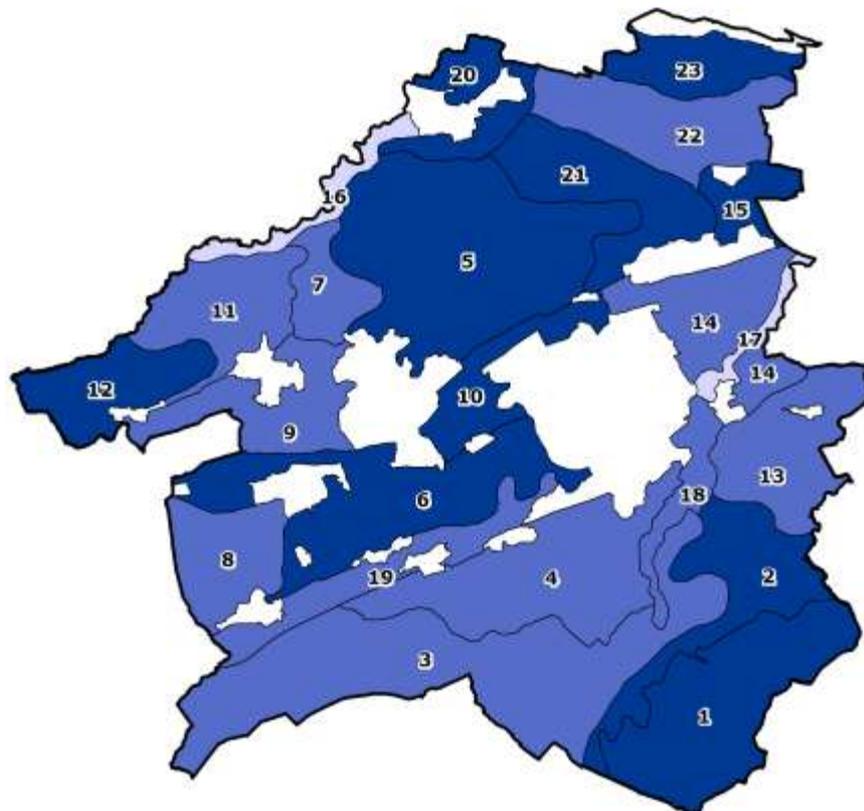


Figure 4.7 Enjoyment

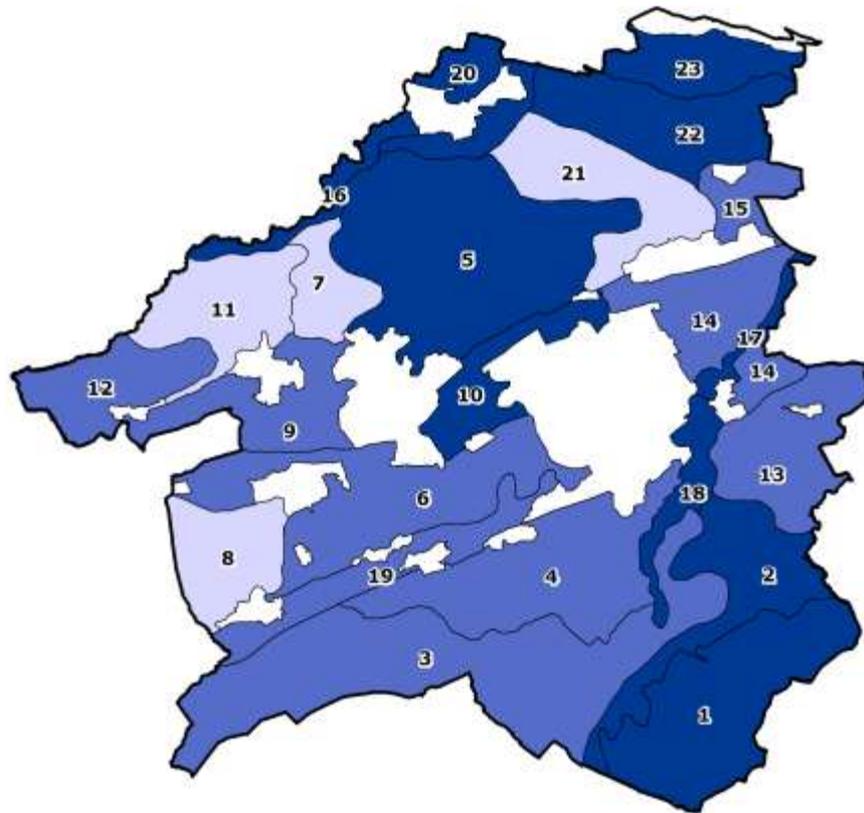


Figure 4.8 Cultural qualities

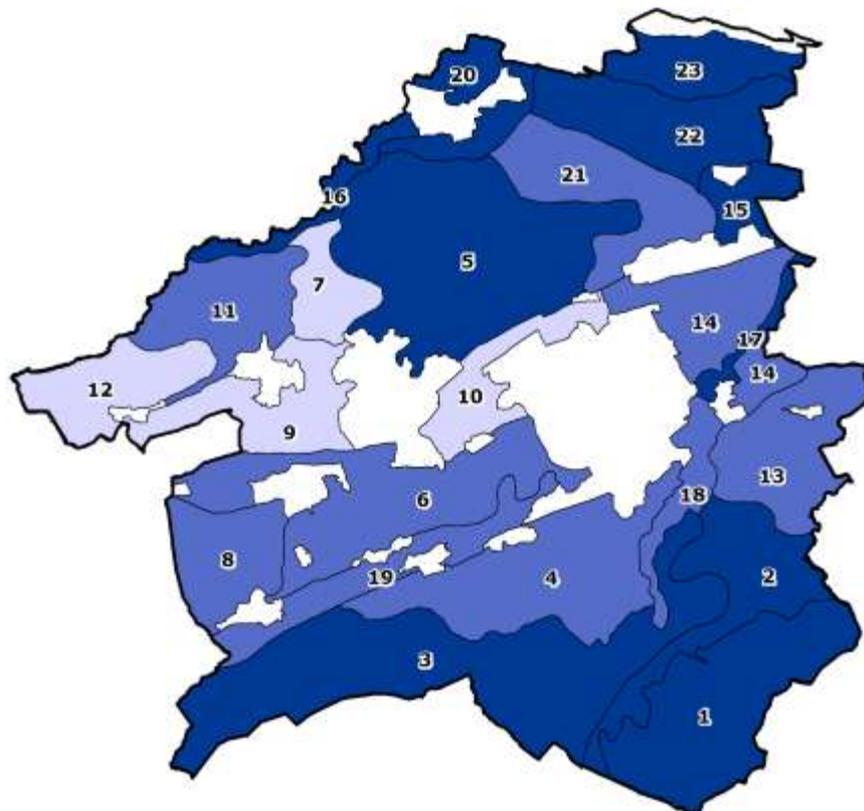


Figure 4.9 Naturalness

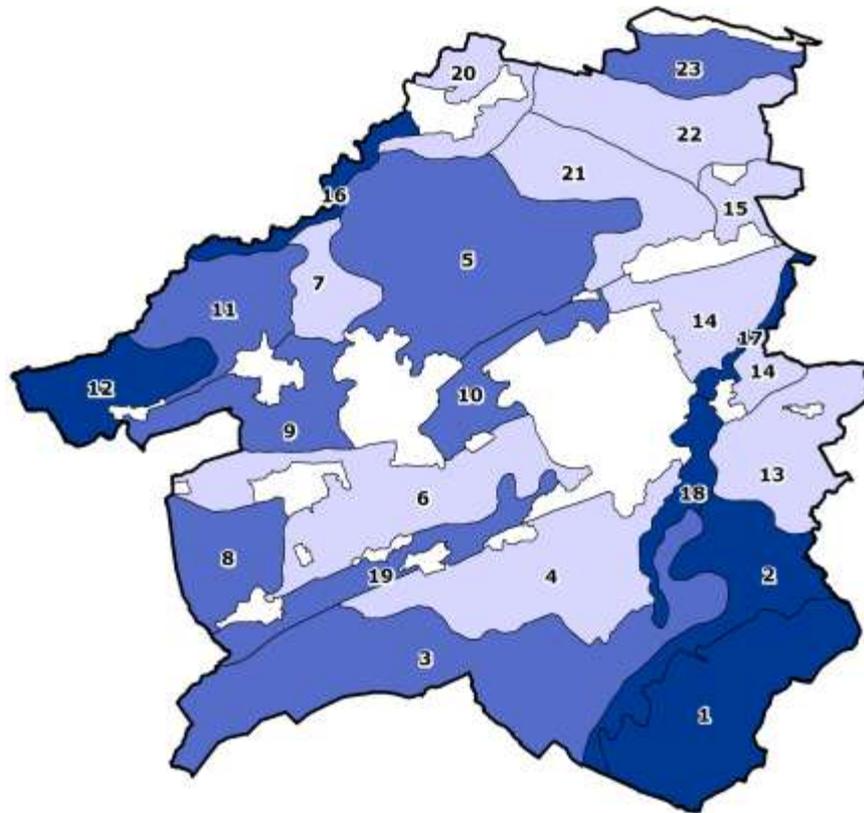
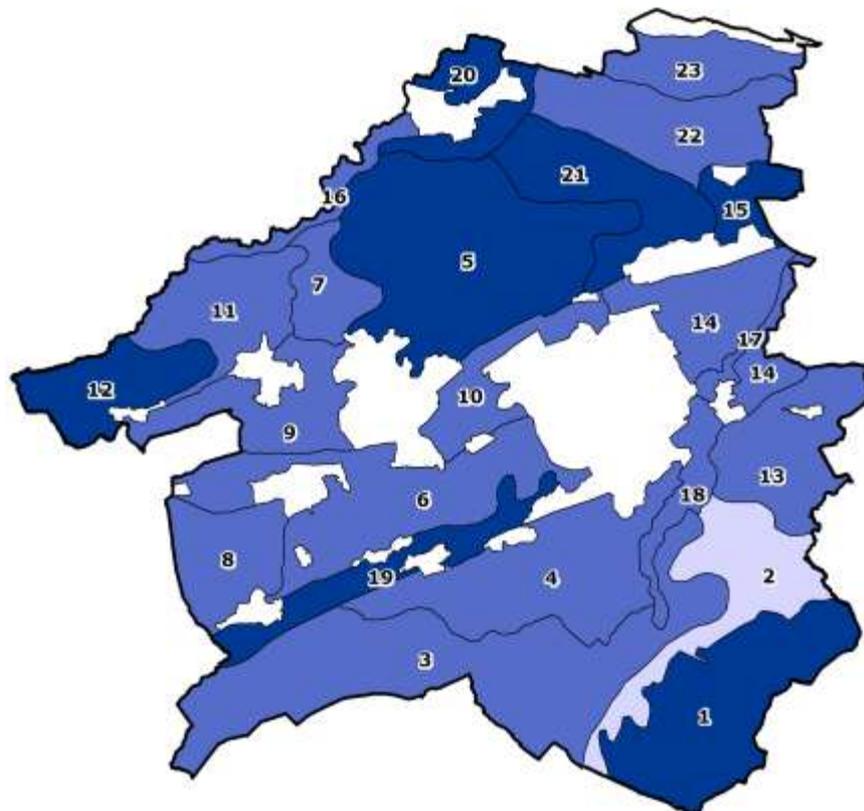


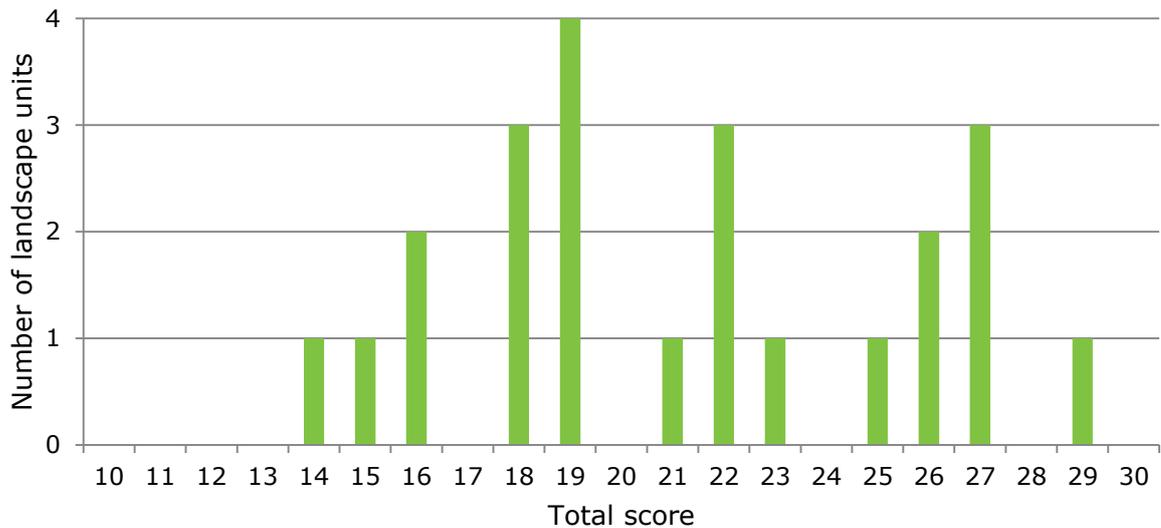
Figure 4.10 Settlement setting



Combined results

- 4.15 A combined results map was prepared using the total 'score' for each LCU. Total scores were calculated by assigning a value of 1 to a low evaluation, 2 to medium and 3 to high, and adding these together. This gives a possible range of total scores of between 10 and 30. These total scores are illustrated on Figure 4.11, showing which landscapes were ranked highly under the most criteria. The total scores are set out in Table 4.2.
- 4.16 Unit 1 Western Pentland Hills was the single highest-scoring landscape unit, with a combined total of 29, followed by three units which had combined totals of 27: 5 Bathgate Hills; 20 Linlithgow Fringe; and 23 West Lothian Coastal Hills. The lowest combined total was 14 for unit 7 Couston Valley. The distribution of total scores is illustrated in Table 4.1, where each bar represents the number of landscape units which accrued each possible total score. For example, no landscape units scored 10, while four scored 19.

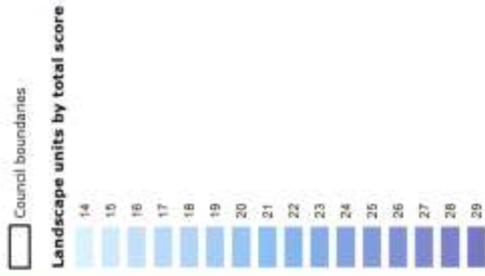
Table 4.1 Distribution of scores



- 4.17 While it is possible to add a weighting to emphasise the importance of certain criteria, following discussion with the steering group it was decided not to introduce a weighting, as all criteria were seen as being of importance to the outcome of the LLDR. Initial experiments with alternative weightings did not produce significantly different results from the un-weighted scores.

**West Lothian
Local Landscape
Designation Review**

**Figure 4.11
Combined results**



Map Scale @ A3: 1:100,000

LUC
**West Lothian
Council**

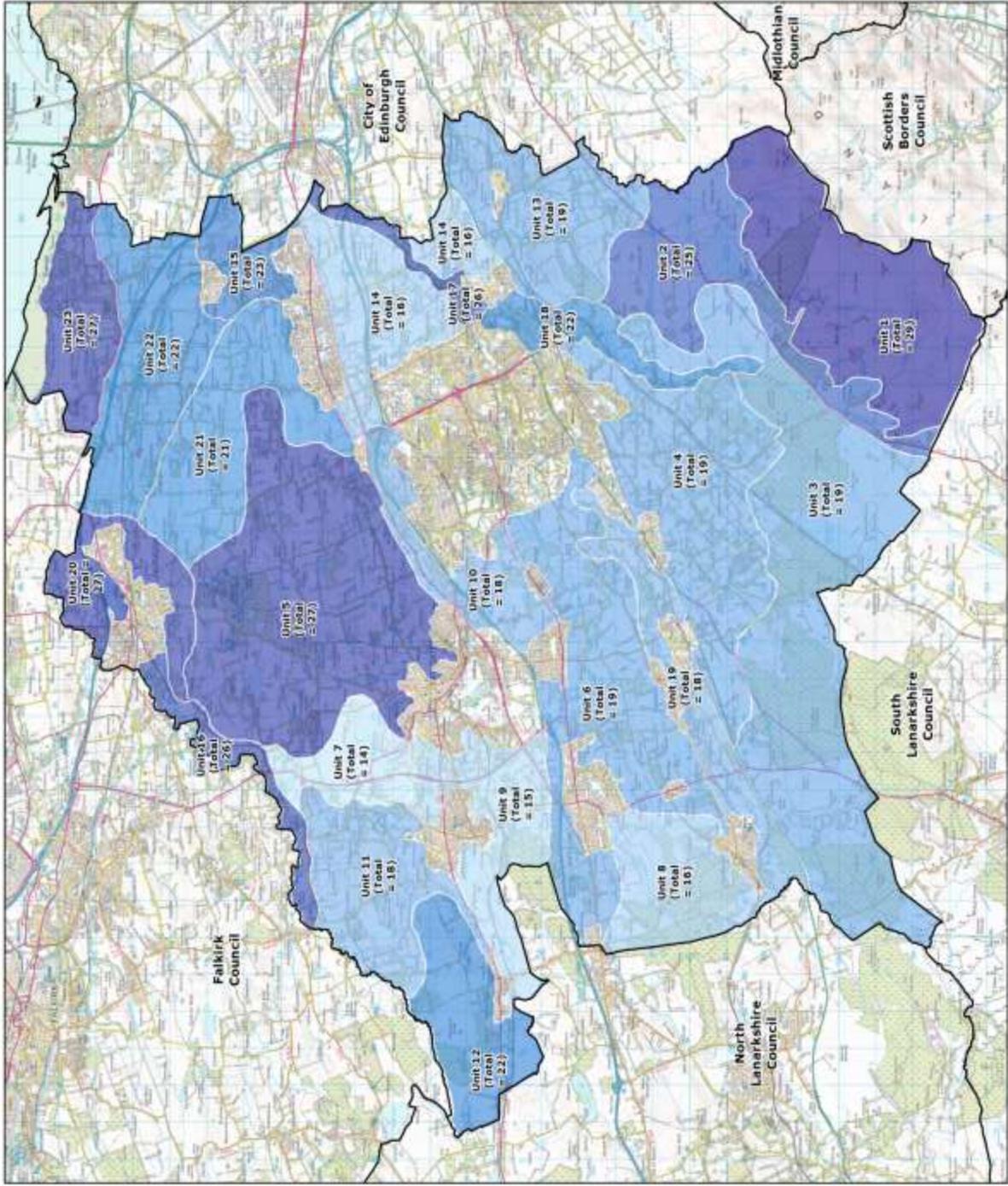


Table 4.2 Summary of rankings and total scores

Unit no.	Name	Representative -ness	Rarity	Condition	Intactness	Scenic qualities	Views	Enjoyment	Cultural qualities	Naturalness	Settlement setting	Total
1	Western Pentland Hills	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	29
2	North-west Pentland Fringe	Low	High	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	High	Low	25
3	Gladsmuir / Woodmuir / Camilty Fringe	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	19
4	Harburn / Hartwood Fringe	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	19
5	Bathgate Hills	Medium	High	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	Medium	High	27
6	Upper Almond Valley	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	19
7	Couston Valley	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Medium	14
8	Polkemmet Moor	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	16
9	Armadales / Bathgate Plateau	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	15
10	Livingston / Blackburn Plateau	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	High	High	Low	Medium	Medium	18
11	Avonbridge to Armadales Plateau Edge	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	18
12	Blackridge Heights	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Low	High	High	22
13	Kirknewton Plain	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	19
14	East Calder / Livingston / Broxburn Plain	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	16
15	Winchburgh / Niddry Plain	High	High	Low	Low	High	High	Medium	High	Low	High	23
16	Avon Valley	Medium	High	High	High	High	Low	High	High	High	Medium	26
17	Almond Valley	Medium	High	High	High	High	Low	High	High	High	Medium	26
18	Murieston / Linhouse / Camilty Waters	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium	22
19	West Calder Burn / Breich & Harwood Waters	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	18
20	Linlithgow Fringe	High	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	High	Low	High	27
21	Bathgate Hills Fringe	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Low	High	21
22	West Lothian Coastal Farmlands	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Low	Medium	22
23	West Lothian Coastal Hills	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	27

Note: Low=1 Medium=2 High=3

5 Selection of Core Areas for Formation of Potential Landscape Designations

Introduction

- 5.1 This section sets out the process of analysing the evaluation results and identifying an area of search, defined as a series of 'core areas'. This was undertaken by firstly filtering the results of the evaluation to focus on the areas which performed best against the criteria. These areas were then analysed to identify core areas, which are landscapes or groups of landscapes that exhibit many of the desired characteristics and qualities. These core areas represent landscapes which may have the potential to form the focus of candidate Special Landscape Areas, subject to consideration of practical criteria, discussed in Section 6.

Filtering the evaluation results

- 5.2 As set out in the methodology (Section 2), the evaluation results were divided into three groups as follows:
- the higher-scoring one third of landscape units were considered for inclusion as core areas in their own right;
 - the lower-scoring one third of landscape units were not considered further; and
 - the remaining areas were reviewed in more detail, and where appropriate core areas for consideration were identified.
- 5.3 Applying this three-fold division to the total evaluation scores resulted in the three groups shown in Table 5.1 and illustrated in Figure 5.1. The following groups were identified:
- seven areas scoring 25 or more were considered for inclusion as core areas in their own right;
 - nine areas scoring between 19 and 23 were reviewed in more detail; and
 - seven areas scoring less than 19 were not considered in further detail.

Analysis of landscape units

- 5.4 The highest-scoring areas were, in general, considered appropriate to define as 'core areas' of designations. However, some analysis was required to identify significant variations in quality, and interrelationships with other areas. Some core areas may be groups of two or more landscape units.
- 5.5 The middle-ranking areas were examined in the same way, but without the presumption that they would necessarily form core areas. Within these areas, the aim was to establish whether a part of the landscape unit could be a core area, or whether sections could be considered as a group with other landscape units. Consideration of these areas has particularly focused on those criteria which were evaluated as high.
- 5.6 This analysis was informed by the non-ranked criteria at the end of the evaluation sheets (Appendix 2), which recorded the variations within and interrelationships between landscape units. The findings are presented in Table 5.2 and Table 5.3.
- 5.7 The lower-ranking areas were not considered in detail within this analysis, as they do not exhibit enough of the characteristics and qualities which may merit designation. However, any important relationships between the potential core areas and lower-scoring landscapes are considered in the

analysis. In this way, important parts of low-scoring landscape units can be recognised where they contribute to group value, and if appropriate these parts can be brought in to the core area.

- 5.8 The analysis was iterative in nature, with the detailed consideration of variations in quality and interrelationships prompting the evaluations to be revisited in some instances. Feedback from the steering group also helped to ensure that the analysis was robust in relation to the evaluation stages.

Table 5.1 Ranking of landscape units by total score

Landscape unit		Total score	Group
1	Western Pentland Hills	29	Consider as core area
5	Bathgate Hills	27	Consider as core area
20	Linlithgow Fringe	27	Consider as core area
23	West Lothian Coastal Hills	27	Consider as core area
16	Avon Valley	26	Consider as core area
17	Almond Valley	26	Consider as core area
2	North-West Pentland Fringe	25	Consider as core area
15	Winchburgh / Niddry Plain	23	Review in more detail
12	Blackridge Heights	22	Review in more detail
18	Murieston / Linhouse / Camilty Water	22	Review in more detail
22	West Lothian Coastal Farmlands	22	Review in more detail
21	Bathgate Hills Fringe	21	Review in more detail
3	Gladsmuir / Woodmuir / Camilty Fringe	19	Review in more detail
4	Harburn / Hartwood Fringe	19	Review in more detail
6	Upper Almond Valley	19	Review in more detail
13	Kirknewton Plain	19	Review in more detail
19	West Calder Burn and Breich Water	18	Not considered in detail
10	Livingston / Blackburn Plateau	18	Not considered in detail
11	Avonbridge to Armadale Plateau Edge	18	Not considered in detail
8	Polkemmet Moor	16	Not considered in detail
14	East Calder / Livingston / Broxburn Plain	16	Not considered in detail
9	Armadale / Bathgate Plateau	15	Not considered in detail
7	Couston Valley	14	Not considered further

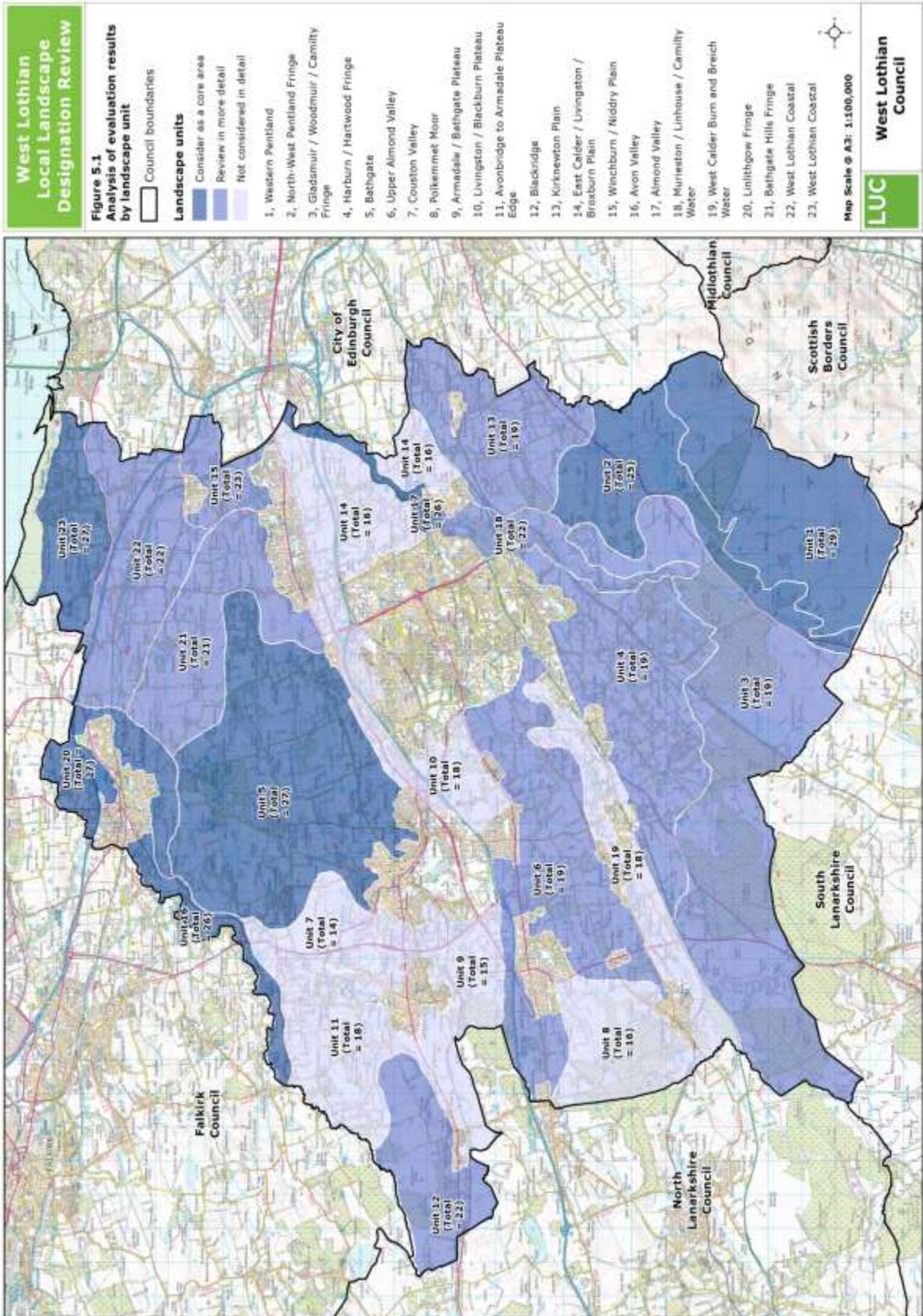


Table 5.2 Analysis of higher-scoring landscape units

Landscape unit	Consistency	Relationships (within West Lothian)	Core areas identified
1 Western Pentland Hills	The open upland of the Pentland ridge is consistent as a landscape unit, without significant variations in the distribution of the observed qualities. The area as a whole exhibits almost all of the identified characteristics to a high degree.	The key relationship of this landscape is with the Pentland fringe landscape of foothills (unit 2 North-West Pentland Fringe) to the north-west.	The whole of this landscape unit was considered as a core area, along with unit 2.
2 North-West Pentland Fringe	The landscape is generally consistent in terms of its rolling landform and representative ground cover. Although the A70 affects the local character, there are no significant variations in the presence of the identified characteristics.	This foothills landscape has an essential relationship with the Pentland Hills (unit 1) to the south-east. In many places the boundary between these areas is indistinct. Auchinoon and Corston Hills, although separate from the main range, nevertheless have a strong relationship with the Pentlands. To the west, the boundary with unit 3 is similarly indistinct.	The whole of this landscape unit was considered as a core area, along with unit 1.
5 Bathgate Hills	Some local variations in local landscape character were noted. For example, the area north of Bangour is more open and intensively farmed than the intricate rocky hills around Cockleroy and Torphichen in the north-west. Overall, the area is consistent in terms of the observed characteristics.	Key relationships are with the fringe areas to north, east and south. To the north the transition is gradual, to the south more abrupt along the M8 corridor. The eastern boundary is particularly indistinct, forming a gradual transition to unit 21.	The whole of this landscape was considered as a core area.
16 Avon Valley	Differences in character were noted along the length of the valley, with a more intimate central gorge opening out to north-east and west. However, all parts of the unit exhibit some of the identified characteristics.	The incised river valley is self-contained, with limited intervisibility with the surrounding landscape. Only in the shallower valley to the west is there a relationship with the adjacent landscape to the south.	The whole of this landscape unit was considered as a core area.

Landscape unit	Consistency	Relationships (within West Lothian)	Core areas identified
17 Almond Valley	This river valley is a consistent landscape, from the southern end at Mid Calder, as far downstream as Illieston near the boundary with City of Edinburgh Council. Beyond this point the valley opens out, though the wooded slopes continue north of the M8.	The incised valley has limited intervisibility with the adjacent farmland. The main physical link is upstream to the Almond Valley, which flows through Livingston, and the Linhouse Water, which continues southward (unit 18) as an unbroken wooded valley.	The whole of this landscape unit was considered as a core area.
20 Linlithgow Fringe	The area north of Linlithgow, including the loch and Airngath Hill, exhibits a range of characteristics which were ranked highly in the evaluation. While other parts of this unit have a similar character, they exhibit fewer of these characteristics.	The area to the south of Linlithgow has a strong relationship with the Bathgate Hills (unit 5), as it forms the foothills of Cockleroy. The area to the west comprises intensive farmland which continues into unit 21.	The northern parts of this landscape were considered as a core area, while the southern parts were considered alongside unit 5.
23 West Lothian Coastal Hills	This is a consistent landscape, tied together by the coastal edge, and by the wooded policies of estate landscapes.	This area is more closely related to the coast than to inland areas, and in the West Lothian context is relatively self-contained. For the most part the boundary along the A904 is distinct, although slightly less so around Duddingston in the east, close to the council boundary.	The whole of this landscape was considered as a core area.

Table 5.3 Analysis of middle-scoring landscape units

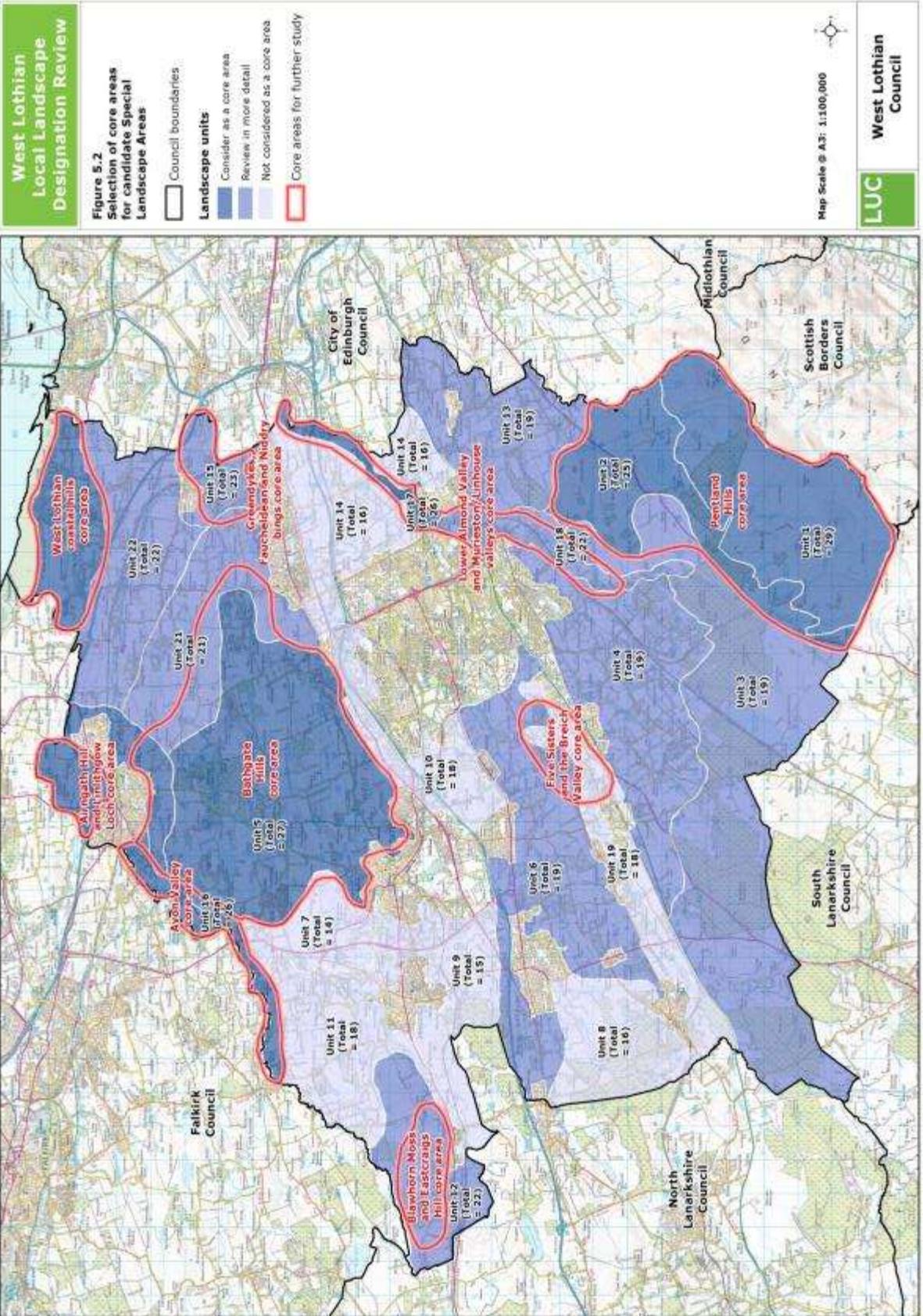
Landscape unit	Consistency	Relationships	Core areas identified
3 Gladsmuir / Woodmuir / Camilty Fringe	This area is a mosaic of forestry, moorland and farmland, each of which represent different characteristics. For example, naturalness is concentrated around Cobbinshaw. Extensive coniferous forestry plantations have more limited value, except for recreation, and limit outward views.	<p>Areas to the east are related to the Pentland Hills, particularly open areas with intervisibility.</p> <p>The area to the west, the Gladsmuir Hills, has visual relationships northwards across the Breich Valley.</p>	<p>No core areas identified.</p> <p>Eastern parts to be considered along with units 2 and 1.</p>

Landscape unit	Consistency	Relationships	Core areas identified
4 Harburn / Hartwood Fringe	This area of farmland was considered largely consistent, with a general uniformity of land use across the area. Some local variations in character were noted, including the birch woodlands at Hermand, the shallow Harwood Water valley, and the inventory-listed designed landscape of Harburn House.	The strongest physical relationships were noted with the adjacent upland fringe landscapes to the south. These largely forested or moorland areas are reflected in the plantations and upland fringe influences in the southern part of the area. To the north the relationships are with settlements.	No core areas were identified which would potentially merit SLA designation.
6 Upper Almond Valley	The area is broadly unified in character, and is considered representative of the mix of land uses present in West Lothian. Other criteria were affected by smaller areas within the unit. Key contributing areas are Polkemmet Country Park, the Almond Valley nearer Livingston, and Blackburn House. In particular, the Five Sisters bing contributed to the high evaluations of views and cultural qualities.	This area has generally limited relationships with adjacent areas, with gradual transitions into neighbouring areas. The Five Sisters bing is located at the edge of the Breich Valley and has a relationship with the valley and Addiewell North Bing across the river.	It was considered that the Five Sisters bing merited further consideration as a core area, to be looked at in combination with related parts of unit 19.
12 Blackridge Heights	This is a fairly consistent moorland and grassland landscape; however the presence of farmlands with quarries at the west creates a localised variation in character. Views and scenic qualities evaluated for this area are concentrated on the hills which form the backdrop to Blackridge, while Blawhorn Moss was rated highly for naturalness and rarity.	The area to the east has visual relationship with the pastures and farmlands of Avonbridge to Armadale Plateau Edge.	Eastcraigs Hills and Blawhorn Moss were considered together as a core area.
13 Kirknewton Plain	This landscape was found to be very consistent as an intensively farmed area. There are small-scale designed landscapes as at Kirknewton House, while parts of the area are influenced by transport corridors.	A strong visual relationship was noted with Dalmahoy Hill to the east, just outwith West Lothian. There are also views to the Pentland Hills to the south. To the west is the Linhouse valley which does not form a strong relationship with this area.	No core areas were identified which would potentially merit SLA designation.

Landscape unit	Consistency	Relationships	Core areas identified
15 Winchburgh / Niddry Plain	Differences in landcover were noted across the area. The landscape consists of contrasting land uses: farmland and former industrial sites. The highest scores assigned to this area relate mainly to the bings.	This man-modified landscape has essential relationships with adjacent areas. Several bings and other remains of industrial activity are present and strongly relate to the character of other areas of West Lothian.	Greendykes Bing and adjacent areas, including the section of the Union Canal, were considered together as a core area.
18 Murieston / Linhouse / Camilty Water	The area is composed of natural wooded landscapes that continue along the valley. Although the valley broadens and narrows, the overall character of the area is largely consistent. Beyond Linhouse the valley takes on a more upland character and becomes less distinct within the moorland fringe landscape.	The area is located in the valley and there are no strong visual relationships with adjacent areas. The key relationship is with the Almond Valley downstream. The area has a physical relationship with Livingston and Kirknewton Plain.	No core areas identified. The northern parts of Linhouse Water valley including Calder Wood and Linhouse Glen SSSI to be considered along with unit 17.
21 Bathgate Hills Fringe	This is a generally consistent landscape, although there is some variation in character between the open sloping farmland and more undulating areas around Ecclesmachan and west of Ochiltree.	The main physical and visual relationship is with the core of the Bathgate Hills to south and west. Intensive farmlands and pastures extend north as the key features of the West Lothian Coastal Farmlands.	No core areas identified. The areas to the west of this unit, and to the north of Broxburn, to be considered along with unit 5 as part of the wider Bathgate Hills.
22 West Lothian Coastal Farmlands	This area has a unified character. Intensive farmlands consistently run along the canal. Higher values within this area were generally associated with the canal, which is a linear feature not suited to landscape designation.	Relatively flat farmlands continue south to the Bathgate Fringe. To the north the West Lothian Coastal Hills are more visually separated, although there is a visual link to Binns Tower. Union Canal ties together a number of West Lothian landscapes.	No core areas were identified which would potentially merit SLA designation.

Core areas for development of candidate SLAs

- 5.9 Based on the analysis presented in Table 5.2 and Table 5.3, the following nine core areas have been identified, around which candidate designations could be developed, subject to consideration against practical criteria:
- Pentland Hills, comprising the whole of units 1 and 2;
 - Bathgate Hills, comprising the whole of unit 5, the southern part of unit 20 and part of unit 21;
 - Avon Valley, comprising the whole of unit 16;
 - Lower Almond Valley and Murieston/Linhouse valleys, comprising the whole of unit 17 and part of unit 18;
 - Airngath Hill and Linlithgow Loch, comprising the northern part of unit 20;
 - West Lothian coastal hills, comprising the whole of unit 23;
 - Five sisters and a section of the Breich Valley, comprising parts of units 6 and 19;
 - Blawhorn Moss and Eastcraigs Hill, comprising part of unit 12; and
 - Greendykes, Faucheldean and Niddry bings, comprising part of unit 15.
- 5.10 These are illustrated in Figure 5.2, which highlights the core areas drawn from the analysis. These areas are considered to represent the characteristics and qualities which have been identified as desirable for landscape designations in West Lothian. They are derived from the evaluations and scores assigned to the individual landscape units, but have been defined based on variations in quality across those units. For this reason the remaining sections of the report are structured around these core areas, rather than the landscape units.
- 5.11 The areas shown in Figure 5.2 are for illustrative purposes only and do not reflect the potential boundaries which any candidate designation would have. The core areas were evaluated against practical criteria, as set out in Section 6, and the refined candidate Special Landscape Areas are presented in Section 7.



6 Refinement of Core Areas against Practical Criteria

Introduction

- 6.1 The core areas were considered against a range of 'practical criteria', as advised by the SNH/HS *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*, and as required by the consultants' brief. This included detailed discussion with the steering group on each of the core areas, informed by further site work to review their extent, identify the likely special qualities and to establish potential boundaries.
- 6.2 Practical considerations which were examined included:
- the identity, size and coherence of each area as a recognisable landscape;
 - the reasons for selecting each area, and compatibility with the purposes of designation;
 - potential overlaps with other designations;
 - potential overlaps with other planning policy/strategy considerations such as housing land allocations; and
 - availability of suitable boundary features.
- 6.3 The following sections summarise the consideration of practical criteria in relation to each of the core areas, and the decision which was taken, as to whether or not to take each forward as a candidate SLA.
- 6.4 The refinement, along with the previous step (Section 5), was an iterative process, with ongoing steering group discussions informing reconsideration of some areas in order to ensure the most robust result. The core areas evolved continually throughout this process of refinement from landscape units to candidate SLAs.

Pentland Hills

- 6.5 The Pentland Hills core area includes the whole of unit 1 Western Pentland Hills, along with unit 2 North-west Pentland Fringe. The eastern edges of unit 3 Gladsmuir / Woodmuir / Camilty Fringe were also considered for inclusion.
- 6.6 The Pentland Hills have a strong identity, extending well beyond the boundaries of West Lothian. There is a clear definition between the Pentlands and the adjacent moorland, largely following the A70, although there are outlying hills at Corston and Auchinoon. Within West Lothian, the Pentlands form a substantial and coherent area.
- 6.7 Designation of the Pentlands would recognise the importance of the Pentland Hills and its skyline for the wider West Lothian landscape, and assist with further management and promotion of the area. It would also serve to protect the only extensive high ground in West Lothian, an area of high natural, cultural and recreational value, as highlighted in the evaluation. The area includes part of the Pentland Hills Regional Park, and management objectives for this area would be complemented by SLA designation.
- 6.8 It was therefore decided to take this area forward as a candidate SLA. It was agreed that the name Pentland Hills was appropriate for this candidate SLA. The plateau to the west of the A70, comprising unit 3, was generally considered to be separate from the Pentland Hills and has not been included.

Bathgate Hills

- 6.9 The Bathgate Hills form the most prominent landscape which lies wholly within West Lothian. This group of recognisable hills is an important recreational resource for the area, offering ready access from several of the main settlements. The core area considered included the whole of unit 5, parts of unit 20 at the southern edge of Linlithgow, and unit 21 along the north-east and eastern edges of the hills. These areas form the foreground to the hills in several views, and particularly in relation to the settings of surrounding settlements which cluster around it. While the transition between the hills and the surrounding farmland is unclear in places, the network of minor roads was considered to provide likely suitable boundaries. This wider area was therefore included as a candidate SLA. It was agreed that the name Bathgate Hills was appropriate for this candidate SLA.
- 6.10 The area contains Beecraigs Country Park and various small SSSIs. The West Lothian Local Plan identifies the former Bangour Village Hospital as a housing land allocation as well as a conservation area, although it is not within a settlement boundary. The housing land allocation was therefore excluded from the candidate SLA. The site of the former Bangour General Hospital to the north-east is noted in the local plan as a development opportunity (policy ENV 39), but is outwith the Dechmont settlement boundary and the housing allocation and would be included within the landscape designation.

Avon Valley

- 6.11 The Avon Valley (unit 16) is a relatively continuous, coherent landscape exhibiting a number of the qualities identified for inclusion. The core area includes the whole of unit 16. It represents an attractive river valley landscape, which is also a key recreational resource accessible from Muiravonside Country Park in Falkirk Council area. The Avon Valley is a recognisable landscape of high scenic value and was included as a candidate SLA. It was agreed that the name Avon Valley was appropriate for this candidate SLA.
- 6.12 Only the southern side of the valley is in West Lothian, with the other side in Falkirk. This area is identified in the Falkirk Local Plan as an AGLV as far west as Avonbridge. At the north end of the valley is the inventory-listed battlefield of Linlithgow Bridge, which extends into the settlement boundary, but was otherwise incorporated into the candidate SLA.

Lower Almond and Murieston/Linhouse Valleys

- 6.13 This core area comprises unit 17 Almond Valley, and part of unit 19 covering the Murieston and Linhouse valleys. The River Almond is the principal watercourse of West Lothian and its valley was ranked high among several criteria. The analysis notes that the valley becomes less distinct north of the M8, and that there is a physical link with the Linhouse Water to the south.
- 6.14 At the north end of this area the Almond forms the boundary with City of Edinburgh Council area. A section of the Almond valley between Illieston and the M8 has been designated as a SLA in Edinburgh. The core area contains Almondell and Calderwood Country Park, and also a SSSI at Linhouse Glen. Upstream of the SSSI is the small non-inventory designed landscape around Linhouse.
- 6.15 The valley landscape between the M8 and Linhouse was taken forward as a candidate SLA. It was agreed that the name Almond and Linhouse Valleys was appropriate for this candidate SLA.

Airngath Hill and Linlithgow Loch

- 6.16 This core area forms the northern part of landscape unit 20. Linlithgow Loch and its surroundings were ranked high among several criteria. Airngath Hill forms an essential backdrop to the loch, the palace, and the north side of the old burgh of Linlithgow. The M9, along the north side of the

loch, is remarkably well hidden by cuttings and vegetation, and does not compromise this association of landscapes.

- 6.17 The Peel of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Loch are protected at a national level as scheduled monuments and as a Royal Park,¹⁶ and are also given protection under local plan policies. The addition of SLA designation would extend local level protection to the wider setting of the north side of the town.
- 6.18 Although small, the area is contained, coherent and recognisable, and was included as a candidate SLA. It was agreed that the name Airngath Hill was appropriate for this candidate SLA.

West Lothian coastal hills

- 6.19 The whole of this coastal landscape, comprising unit 23, was considered as a core area. It is distinctly different from other areas of West Lothian yet represents a valued landscape. The area contains important concentrations of woodland, and has a rich historic past. The designed landscapes of Hopetoun and The Binns are listed on Historic Scotland's inventory, and so enjoy some protection through the planning system. The addition of SLA designation would complement these existing designations and extend protection across non-inventory designed landscape elements such as Philpstoun House between Hopetoun and The Binns.
- 6.20 The area forms a coherent and recognisable landscape with suitable boundaries available, and was therefore included as a candidate SLA. It was agreed that the name Forth Coast was appropriate for this candidate SLA.

Five Sisters and the Breich Valley

- 6.21 This area includes parts of unit 6 and 19, and represents a small group of features which play a role in the setting of several of the adjacent settlements. The key feature is the iconic Five Sisters shale bing complex, which together with North Addiewell Bing illustrates the historic industry of this area. This area was ranked lower in terms of several criteria, including intactness. It was initially felt that designation of this area, comprising the iconic bing and its valley setting, could be a means to promote landscape enhancement.
- 6.22 Following additional site survey work it was considered that, while the importance of the Five Sisters in particular is clear, the surrounding area is mixed and lacks overall distinctiveness. The Five Sisters bing is already protected at a national level as a scheduled monument, and further designation of this feature alone would not therefore be advantageous. Although the potential for enhancement of the wider area remains, it was agreed by the steering group that designation for this reason alone would be inconsistent with other areas being taken forward.
- 6.23 Other means of securing landscape enhancement within this area were discussed, but it was acknowledged that these are outside the scope of the LLDR. It was decided that this area would not be considered further.

Blawhorn Moss and Eastcraigs Hill

- 6.24 This core area includes part of unit 12, covering the Blawhorn Moss national nature reserve, and the adjacent prominent hills. Blawhorn Moss and the hills of Eastcraigs and Westcraigs are part of a distinct block of lowland moor to the north of Blackridge. In the field, a continuity of landform and character was noted which extended across this area as far east as the former Woodhall Colliery near Armadale.
- 6.25 Designation of this area would recognise the importance of this area of West Lothian, both as a visually important landform, and as a setting for recreational access to Blawhorn Moss. It was

¹⁶ Under Section 15 of The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Scotland) Order 1992.

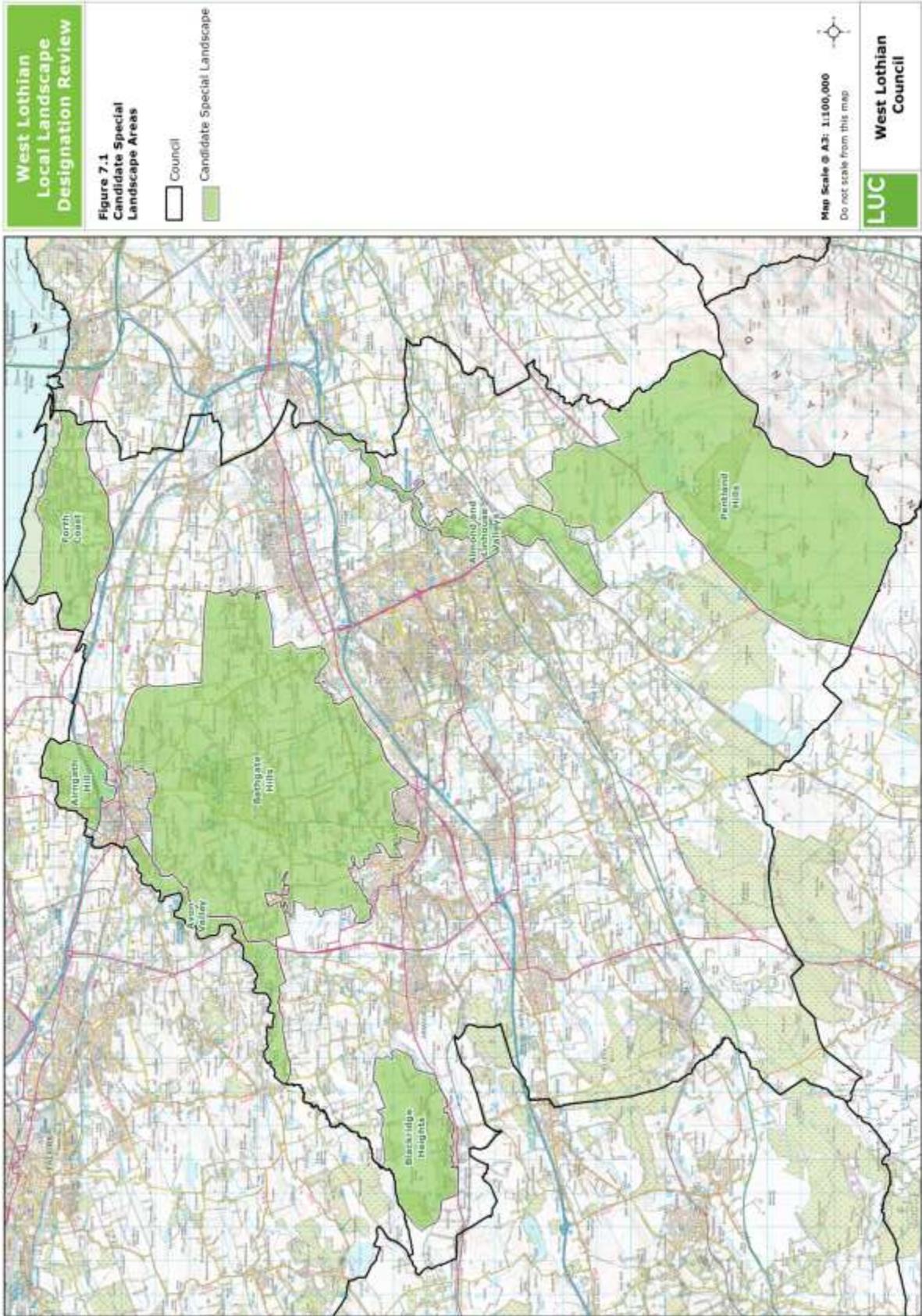
therefore decided to take this area forward as a candidate SLA. The initial core area was extended to incorporate the whole of this upland landscape. It was agreed that the name Blackridge Heights was appropriate for this candidate SLA, being a well-understood name for the high ground north of Blackridge, and reflecting the extension of the candidate SLA beyond Blawhorn Moss and Eastcraigs Hill.

Greendykes, Faucheldean and Niddry bings

- 6.26 A substantial section of landscape unit 15, comprising the three bings and a section of the Union Canal, was selected as a core area. The selection of this area was based primarily on the landmark status of the bings and their importance to the West Lothian landscape. Greendykes Bing with the adjacent rehabilitated former mining area of Stewartfield Park, and a section of Union Canal, form an important part of the setting of Broxburn. Both Niddry Castle Bing and Faucheldean Bing contribute highly to the setting of Winchburgh.
- 6.27 Inspection of the West Lothian Local Plan confirmed that the settlement boundaries of Winchburgh and Broxburn extend into this landscape unit to accommodate future development. Major development is proposed at Winchburgh, where the expanded settlement boundary includes the Niddry Castle Bing, currently subject to ongoing extraction of material.
- 6.28 Greendykes and Faucheldean bings are protected at a national level as scheduled monuments, the highest level of protection available for features of historic interest.
- 6.29 The remaining area, outside the expanded settlement boundaries, would therefore be relatively small, and largely subject to existing protection. It was also noted in discussion with the steering group that other initiatives are being taken forward to enhance this area as part of the expansion of Winchburgh. It was therefore decided that this area would not be considered further.

7 Candidate Special Landscape Areas

- 7.1 Following the application of practical considerations and discussion with the steering group, seven of the nine core areas considered were taken forward as candidate SLAs. Their names were agreed with the steering group as follows:
- Pentland Hills;
 - Almond and Linhouse Valleys;
 - Blackridge Heights;
 - Avon Valley;
 - Bathgate Hills;
 - Airngath Hill; and
 - Forth Coast.
- 7.2 The statements of importance for each area are set out on the following pages, followed by a brief comparison of the candidate SLAs with the current local landscape designations in West Lothian.
- 7.3 Figure 7.1 shows an overview of the seven candidate SLAs, which are illustrated individually on Figures 7.2 to 7.8. Figure 7.9 illustrates the seven candidate SLAs at a larger scale.



Pentland Hills: Statement of Importance

This candidate SLA comprises the section of the Pentland Hills within West Lothian. It occupies the south-eastern section of the council area.

Boundaries

The north-east edge of the candidate SLA follows the West Lothian Council boundary along the Dean Burn and Thrashedean Plantation, to East Cairn Hill. The boundary then turns south and runs across several Pentland Hills summits: West Cairn Hill, Colzium Hill, Craigengar and Henshaw Hill, where it descends to the A70. The candidate SLA boundary then follows the A70 north-east to Causewood, where it turns north-west and follows a linear forestry plantation, then crosses open moor to the Morton Burn. It follows a minor road around Morton Reservoir and past Corston, then follows the southern edge of Selm Muir Wood. It then turns southward, past Leyden Old House farm to Little Vantage, following field boundaries and lines of mature trees which mark the distinction between moorland and the more cultivated farmland to the north-east.



West Cairn and East Cairn Hills and the Cauldstane Slap viewed to the south across Harperrig Reservoir

Statement of significance

The Pentland Hills form a distinct and recognisable landscape feature of West Lothian, within the wider landscape of south-east Scotland. The area comprises an upland landscape of rounded hill tops and sweeping slopes cut by steep upland streams and covered with grassland and heather moorland. Several reservoirs occupy localised dips in landform between the hills. The combination of the outlying Auchinoo and Corston Hills with Harperrig Reservoir and the backdrop of West Cairns and East Cairns Hills, has a high scenic value. The attractive views and features can be appreciated from the A70 as well as from adjacent higher ground. The south-east section of the A70 is bounded by attractive rows of mature beech trees around Crosswoodhill. The landscape offers long, unobstructed views northward, and the Pentland skyline is visible from the majority of West Lothian providing a setting for the whole region.

The area has a strongly undeveloped character, with a high degree of naturalness despite some extensive coniferous plantations at West Cairns. The candidate SLA contains no villages or large settlements, only scattered farms and properties along the A70. The general lack of human activity, minimal vegetation and openness of the undulating grassland enhance the sense of remoteness and wildness, particularly when considered in the context of the population centres close by.

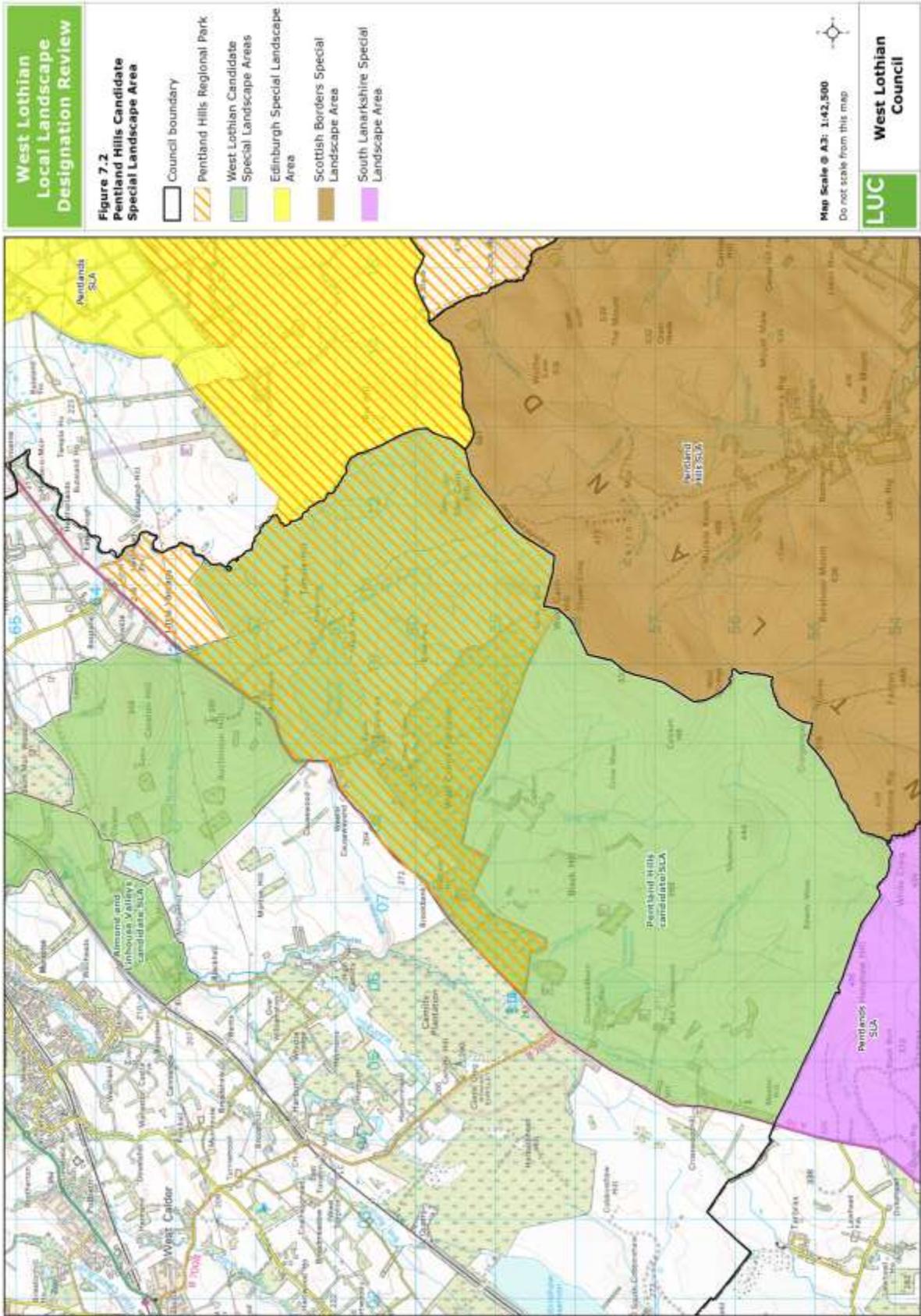
The Pentland Hills Regional Park covers part of the area, and is a very popular and highly valued recreational resource. The area encourages high levels of use across the hills and offers several routes for walkers accessed from the car park at Harperrig Reservoir which is a key location within the park. There is access from here across the Cauldstane Slap, an ancient drove road, and the remains of the 15th-century Cairns Castle attest to the historic importance of the area.

Forces for change

- Changes in moorland management practices, including grazing.
- Potential for afforestation and/or felling and restructuring of existing plantations.
- Footpaths and access management around Harperrig Reservoir and across the hills, including footpath erosion which may be visible on the slopes.
- Pressure for additional or upgraded visitor facilities along the A70 i.e. car parks, viewing points.
- Current proposals for wind farms both within the candidate SLA, and in adjacent areas.

Management recommendations

- Careful management of forests and the use of forest design plans for existing and new areas of afforestation.
- Consider landscape and visual impacts of proposed developments in this area, with particular regard to the Pentland skyline, and key views to and from the hills.
- Seek to maintain the undeveloped character and qualities of wildness of the great majority of the hills.
- Promote responsible recreational use through the enhancement of routes and access.



Almond and Linhouse Valleys: Statement of Importance

This candidate SLA extends from Linhouse, along the Linhouse and Almond valleys, which run north through the eastern part of West Lothian. The candidate SLA passes between Mid Calder and East Calder along the narrow, incised river valley, and extends to the M8 and the City of Edinburgh Council boundary.

Boundaries

From the City of Edinburgh Council boundary between the M8 and Illieston, the eastern SLA boundary follows the expanded settlement boundary of East Calder, and then follows the valley edge and the Country Park boundary. It continues along the B7015 by Broompark, the valley edge, and the East Calder boundary to Oakbank Road, and then to the A71, where the boundary excludes a local plan employment land allocation (ELv56). It then runs south along the minor road to Corston, following the forest buffer around the northern Morton Reservoir. From the reservoir the boundary runs south-west along an access track, crossing the Linhouse Water at Linnhous mansion. It then turns north-west along the minor road to the railway line. It follows the railway to Linhouse Glen Nature Reserve and turns north along a track at the valley edge, skirting Oakbank Park industrial area and following the A71 to the Livingston and Mid Calder settlement boundary. From Mid Calder, where the Linhouse Water joins the River Almond, it continues along the valley edge, including the woodland around the entrance to Almondell Country Park. It also includes the fields west of Illieston and beside the Union Canal, which the boundary briefly follows, before running along a track to the M8.



The Nasmyth Bridge on the River Almond, Almondell Country Park

Statement of significance

The River Almond flows through a deeply incised valley between Livingston and Illieston, with steep wooded valley sides and occasional gorge-like cliffs. Between these narrow sections are more open areas of floodplain, though still framed by deciduous woodland. The estate landscape of the former Almondell House has been designed to exploit these natural features to dramatic effect.

The tributary valley of the Linhouse Water has some similar sections, but becomes progressively more open and upland in character going upstream. Woodlands along the river are predominantly native in this valley and along the adjacent Murieston Water. Calderwood is a more natural area, managed for biodiversity interest, located on what is almost an island between the Linhouse and Murieston Waters.

Valuable native habitats abound, including the native woodlands at Calderwood and continuing towards Linhouse Glen, and two extensive Sites of Special Scientific Interest are designated within these areas. The mixed woodlands at Linhouse and Almondell relate to the relatively intact designed landscapes. The Almond valley is enhanced by some impressive bridges and aqueducts, particularly the Nasmyth Bridge at Almondell and the Union Canal aqueduct. Remains of mills and weirs and the presence of A-listed buildings enhance the cultural quality of the landscape. Both the Almond and Linhouse Valleys play important roles in the setting of East Calder and Mid Calder.

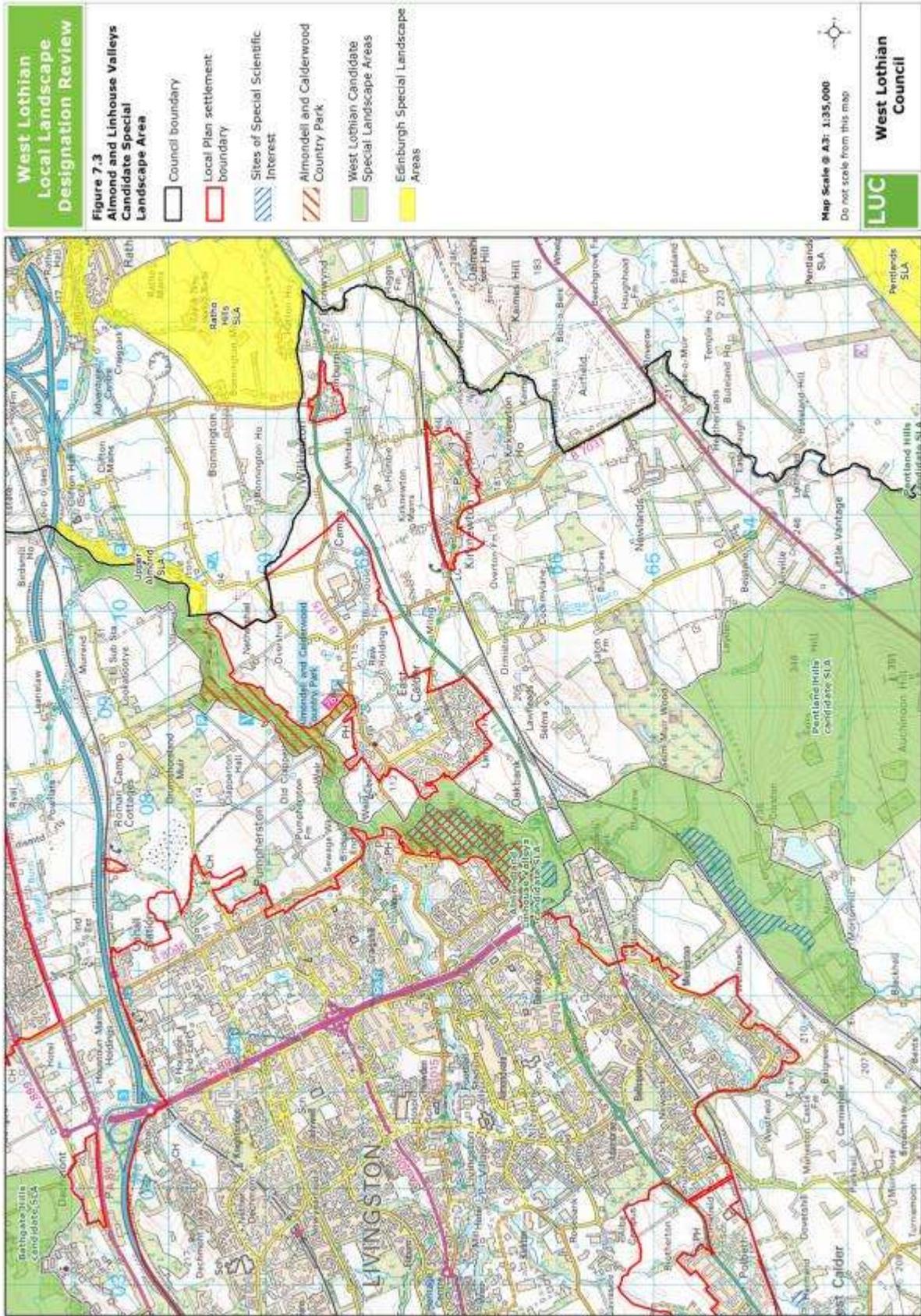
These connected valleys are intimate and picturesque, with a high scenic value. The area cuts through the eastern part of West Lothian from upland to settled lowland, and is directly adjacent to several communities. Despite this there is often a remote character: Calderwood in particular is a valued tranquil resource on the 'doorstep' of Livingston. Almondell and Calderwood Country Park and Linhouse Glen Nature Reserve provide a variety of outdoor activities and accessible routes.

Forces for change

- Potential loss of tranquillity of character between East Calder and Mid Calder/Livingston, arising from development pressure at the edges of settlements.
- Further development of commercial sites around the A71.
- Pressure for enhanced recreational opportunities.

Management

- Careful management of land use at settlement edges including reinforcement of landscape patterns through well designed tree planting and rural landscape reinforcement, recreation and access improvements particularly where new development goes ahead.
- Maintain the character of the area formed by a combination of more open river sections and enclosed wooded corridors by promoting the use of forest design plans for new areas of woodland.
- Continue to maintain and enhance the diverse native woodlands in the area.
- Promote responsible recreational use especially in the lower sections at Linhouse adjacent to Livingston and consider creation of linkages between Selm Muir Wood, owned by the Forestry Commission Scotland.
- Ensure high quality siting and design of new developments, especially where these could be prominent within the valley landscape, including development adjacent to the valley or along valley edges.



Blackridge Heights: Statement of Importance

This candidate SLA lies at the north-west edge of West Lothian, and lies within the higher ground to the north of Blackridge.

Boundaries

To the south the boundary follows the A89 and Blackridge settlement boundary. To the west the boundary follows a prominent line of beech trees at Langside Wood and runs along the edge of Drumbeg Wood. The northern boundary runs along the Falkirk Council boundary which follows Drumtassie Burn, then continues across field boundaries, along West Rhodens Plantation, and along a track to the former Woodend Colliery. The east boundary skirts the colliery site, then follows a disused railway along Barbauchlaw Glen to Brownclair on the A89.



The moorland of the Blackridge Heights offers views eastward across to the Bathgate Hills

Statement of significance

This area of continuous moorland plateau forms a surprisingly upland landscape for the central belt of Scotland. The area has an openness emphasised by the extensive moorland land cover, lack of trees, and the availability of long views in all directions. The area provides attractive long views northwards to the Highlands and southwards to the Pentland Hills. A sense of remoteness is notable, with limited human influence on the landscape in comparison to nearby areas.

Westcraigs, Crowns and Eastcraigs Hills are landmark features of the wider area: they are clearly seen from the M8, and provide a setting for the settlement of Blackridge. Prominent lines of mature beech trees around Blawhorn Moss form visually attractive landscape features which are highly representative of West Lothian.

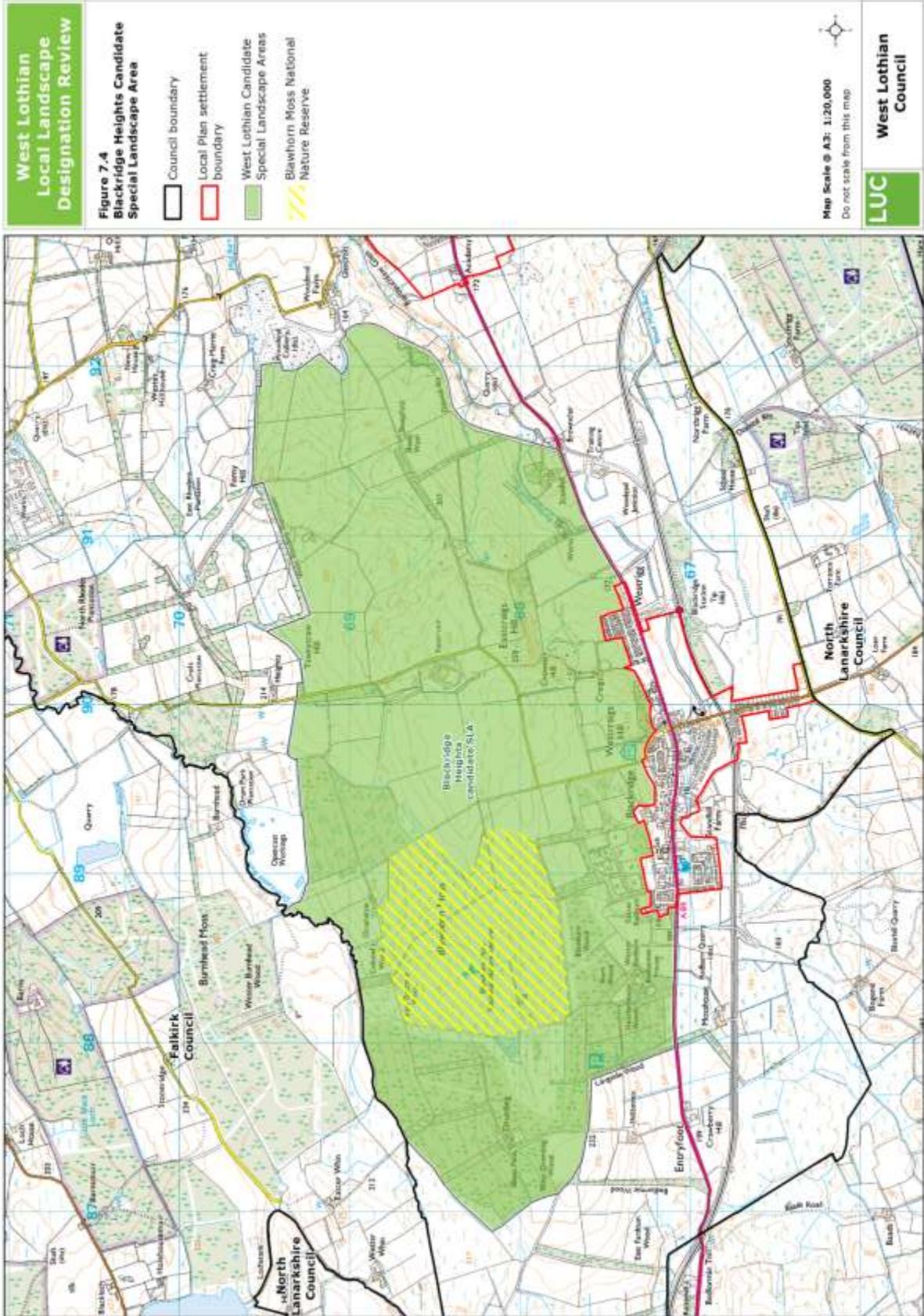
Blawhorn Moss National Nature Reserve is a unique large-scale wetland in central Scotland and provides opportunities for experiencing the moorland landscape. Rocky hills and undulating landform adjacent to the settlement of Blackridge provide local footpaths and have high recreational value for local residents.

Forces for change

- Afforestation of open moorland, including maturation of newly-planted areas at Drumbeg, and/or felling and restructuring of existing plantations.
- Proposals for wind farm development in the vicinity of the candidate SLA.
- Visitor facility improvements at Blawhorn Moss National Nature Reserve.
- Loss of remnant stone walls.

Management recommendations

- Seek opportunities to enhance the Blackridge settlement edge, and ensure any development is of an appropriate standard of siting and design, particularly in relation to the view from the south.
- Promote the use of forest design plans for new area of afforestation.
- Maintain the largely undeveloped character of the plateau and the open nature of outward views.
- Recognise the importance of the hills in views from the south
- Highlight and promote the upland character of the plateau and the lowland raised bog with its characteristic mosses as an unusual landscape within the central belt.
- Seek opportunities to promote responsible recreational access and increase understanding of the landscape.



Avon Valley: Statement of Importance

This candidate SLA covers the incised valley of the River Avon, which forms the north-west boundary of West Lothian with Falkirk administrative area between Linlithgow and Avonbridge.

Boundaries

The candidate SLA is bounded by the West Lothian Council boundary to the north and by the Linlithgow settlement boundary to the north-east. The south-east boundary follows the A706 from Linlithgow to the Westfield roundabout at the A801, a boundary which is shared with the Bathgate Hills candidate SLA to the south-east. It then follows the B8047 westward, skirting the Westfield settlement boundary, and continues along the B8047 to the Council boundary near Avonbridge.



The Avon Valley provides the setting for landmark features such as the Westfield railway viaduct

Statement of significance

The River Avon forms the historic boundary of West Lothian and has a distinctive sense of place. It flows through an increasingly incised valley from Avonbridge to Linlithgow, passing through a deep rocky gorge around Muiravonside. Steeply sloping, densely wooded valley sides strongly contrast with the open farmland, more prevalent at the western upstream extent, and with the haughs by Linlithgow Bridge downstream.

The valley forms an attractive, enclosed and visually contained landscape. Areas of the valley have a hidden quality, seemingly remote from adjacent settled landscapes and with a strong sense of tranquillity.

The Avon Valley provides the setting for several landmark features including the viaduct at Westfield and the Union Canal which spans the Avon on Scotland's longest and tallest aqueduct. Earlier historical associations include the battle of Linlithgow Bridge (1526) which took place across the valley, and the remains of a medieval nunnery at Manuel.

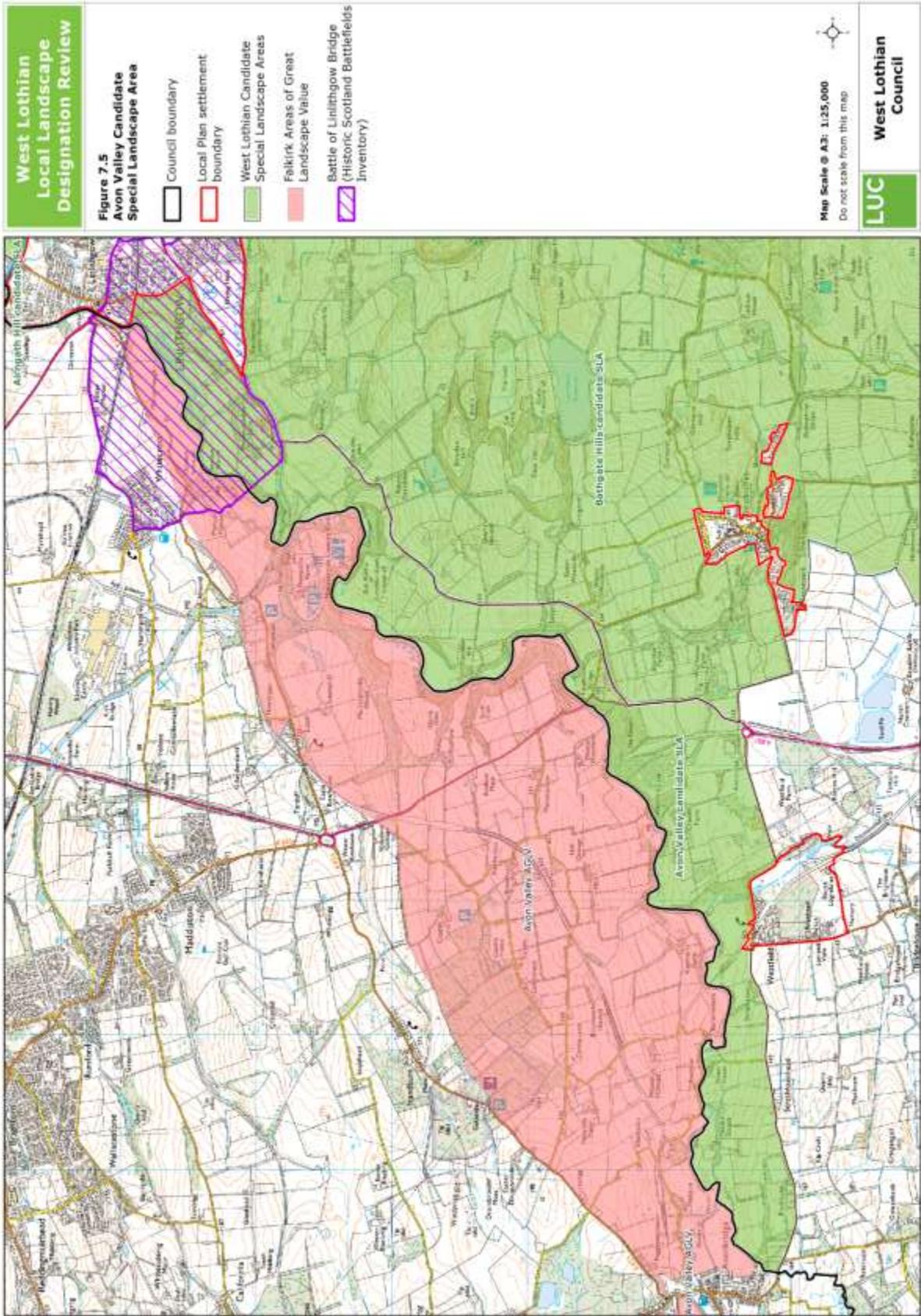
The Avon Heritage Trail links these features along the length of the river, allowing an appreciation of the importance of the river corridor and an understanding of its natural heritage. There are numerous opportunities for enjoying the landscape, which is readily accessible from Linlithgow, and also well-used by visitors to Muiravonside Country Park on the Falkirk side of the river.

Forces for change

- Development pressure around the western fringe of Linlithgow.
- With the proposed expansion of Westfield, more pressure is anticipated on the River Avon Heritage Trail, including potential footpath erosion and access management.
- Changes on the Falkirk side of the River Avon, including any change in the status of the AGLV.
- Long-term plans for improvement of the A801 road corridor include a new high-level road bridge over the Avon.

Management recommendations

- Seek to maintain the tranquil, undeveloped character of the valley, particularly in the more incised and wooded sections.
- Positive management of valued river and woodland habitats.
- Focus land-use management around responsible recreational access.
- Consider landscape and visual impacts of proposed developments on views along the River Avon.
- Ensure high quality siting and design of new developments, especially where these could be prominent within the valley landscape.



Bathgate Hills: Statement of Importance

This area covers an extensive but distinctive landscape of lowland hills, ridges and valleys between the settlements of Linlithgow, Broxburn, Dechmont, Livingston and Bathgate, with the village of Torphichen situated on the western part of the hills.

Boundaries

To the north the candidate SLA boundary follows the Linlithgow settlement boundary and the Union Canal, and then the B9080 to Kingscavil. It follows the minor road south to Ochiltree, then east from Ochiltree Castle along the ridge road. It turns south again along the B8046 to skirt the small village of Ecclesmachan. From the disused Binny Quarry the boundary follows the Binny Burn, then field boundaries and a shelterbelt to the northern settlement boundary of Dechmont.

Continuing westward, the candidate SLA boundary skirts the allocated housing land at the former Bangour Village Hospital, and then follows the A89 to Bathgate. It follows the northern settlement edge of Bathgate to the A800, where it turns north and follows field boundaries to Torphichen. It then follows a minor road to the Westfield roundabout on the A801. From here the boundary follows the A706 back to Linlithgow, a boundary which is shared with the Avon Valley candidate SLA to the north-west.



Panoramic views are available from high points in the Bathgate Hills, such as from the archaeological site at Cairnpapple, looking north to Cockleroy

Statement of significance

The Bathgate Hills comprise a recognisable range of rounded hills, rocky crags and valleys, with a distinct West Lothian sense of place. The area includes a combination of land uses, from intensive arable production to undulating pastures and patches of moorland on the highest hills. Large parts in the centre of the area are given over to extensive plantation woodlands, but there are also substantial native woodlands, particularly in association with steeper hillsides and watercourses. Several of these small burns have been dammed to form reservoirs which form focal points for recreation.

At the heart of the area is a group of prominent summits which together form a distinctive and picturesque landscape. Several exhibit classic 'crag and tail' features formed by glaciation, with steep western outcrops backed by gentler eastern slopes. Cockleroy is the most prominent from the north, The Knock is more prominent from the south, but both offer panoramic lookouts with views across West Lothian and beyond. An outlier further east, Binny Craig is perhaps the most dramatic of these igneous hills. Less prominent but equally attractive are Torphichen Hills to the west, and Nancy's Hill above the Haugh Burn.

The transition from settled lowland to hills is gradual, more so to the east, with the surrounding slopes forming a setting to the hills. This smooth transition between contrasting elements creates a consistent and attractive landscape. The hills as a group have a strong relationship with neighbouring settlements at Linlithgow, Uphall and Bathgate, forming a backdrop in longer views. More locally the area is essential to the setting of Torphichen.

Time-depth is most evident at Cairnpapple, a unique multi-period site. Further prehistoric sites include the hillforts at Cockleroy and Bowden Hill, while the middle ages are represented by the 13th-century Preceptory of the Knights Hospitaller, and outlying refuge stones, around which the conservation village of Torphichen is centred. The remains of 17th-century silver mines can be seen near Cairnpapple. The remnant pastoral landscape of drystone dykes has been supplanted more recently by the enclosure of arable land.

The Bathgate Hills form an essential recreational resource within the area, providing access to attractive countryside in proximity to the main settlements. Beecraigs is the most visited Country Park in West Lothian, offering forest and woodland walks and access to key viewpoints including Cockleroy, just outwith the park. Within the lower-lying parts of the area, away from settlement, the hills have a sense of isolation and exhibit tranquillity.

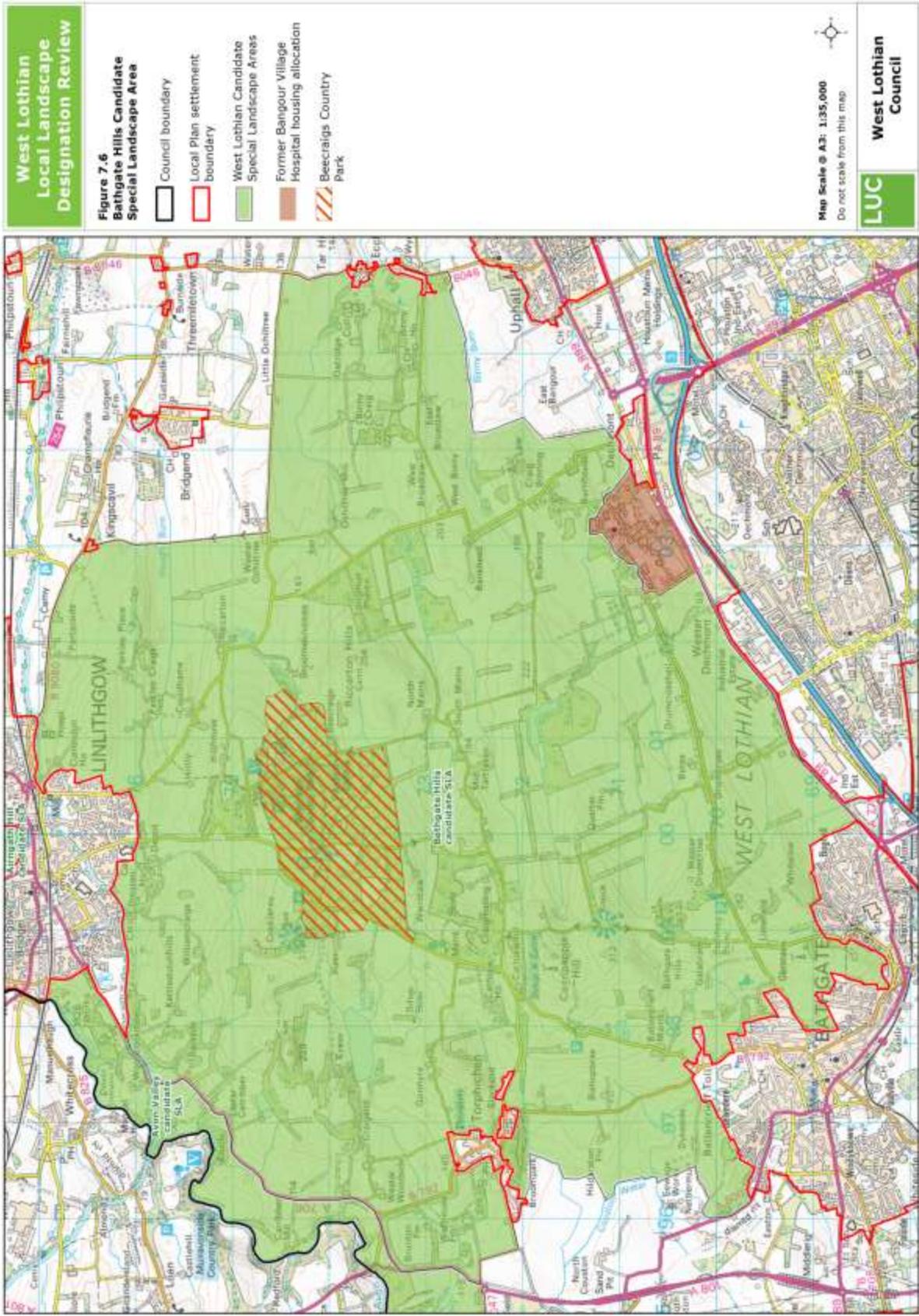
Forces for change

- Changes in farmland management, including further intensification and loss of shelter belts, hedges, dykes and woodlands.
- Pressure for enhanced recreational facilities, particularly in association with Beecraigs.
- Increased afforestation, including coniferous plantations and also native woodland.
- Development pressure at the edges of Linlithgow, Bathgate and Uphall, particularly where development begins to move uphill.

Management recommendations

- Ensure settlement expansion does not advance to key skylines especially where these contribute to understanding of cultural heritage.
- Ensure high quality of siting and design for any new developments, including reuse or conversion of farm buildings.
- Promote the use of forest design plans for new areas of afforestation.
- Consider the effects of development on higher ground, such as masts or wind turbines, which may be visible within the wider landscape.
- Encourage the management and replacement of hedgerows, shelterbelts and distinctive lines of beech trees.

- Maintain the undeveloped character of the valleys within the central part of the area, which form the setting of the igneous hills and the country park.
- Promote the continued development of responsible recreational access, particularly encouraging links from adjacent communities.



Airngath Hill: Statement of Importance

The area comprises Linlithgow Loch and Airngath Hill to the north of Linlithgow, rising up to the prominent Hope Monument at the northern edge of West Lothian.

Boundaries

To the south the candidate SLA boundary follows the Linlithgow settlement boundary, which runs along the A803, around the south side of Linlithgow Loch, and along the M9. The boundary then turns northward along the B8029 at Linlithgow Bridge to the Falkirk Council boundary, which it follows across Airngath Hill. It turns south along the minor road to the east of Bonnytoun House, returning along the A803 to the settlement boundary.



Linlithgow Palace and Loch at the foot of Airngath Hill

Statement of significance

Linlithgow Loch is a key feature in providing the settlement setting for the old burgh of Linlithgow. The landscape which rises up to the north, to the summit of Airngath Hill and the prominent Hope Monument, is equally essential to the setting of the town, providing a picturesque backdrop to the Loch. Although small, the area plays a key role in providing the setting for the town and for the nationally-important combination of the Palace, St Michael's Church, the Peel and the Loch. Also within this setting are the designed landscapes of Bonnytoun House and The Grange, in which the Victorian Hope Monument is located.

The area comprises mixed farmland, with beech hedges and lines of mature trees. These include lines of Scots Pine seen distinctively on the horizon. Although the M9 passes very close to the north side of the loch, it is well screened by vegetation and landform, and its impact on the landscape is minimal. Higher locations on Airngath Hill provide spectacular views north and north-east to the Firth of Forth, and southwards over Linlithgow to the Bathgate Hills.

The area is important for recreation, containing walking routes around the Loch and leading northward over the hill to Bo'ness. These are immediately accessible from the town, providing a valued resource for local people and visitors. The Loch and Palace are one of the essential tourist attractions of West Lothian, with a range of historical associations, and are complemented by this landscape backdrop.

Forces for change

- Development pressure in the vicinity of Linlithgow.
- Potential for development pressure extending onto the north side of the M9 in future.
- Relatively small developments in this area may be highly visible from the key location of the Peel.
- Further intensification of agricultural land and loss of trees or woodland.

Management recommendations

- Careful management of land use across Airngath Hill and Linlithgow settlement edge to maintain the open outlook from the centre of the burgh.
- Maintain, and promote restoration of, prominent lines of mature trees and hedgerows across Airngath Hill, particularly where these are seen on the skyline from the Loch.
- Consider the effects of development within the area which may be visible from Linlithgow, from the elevated Union Canal and from the railway line.
- Promote high standards of design quality for any developments, including opportunities for structural landscape planting in keeping with the character of the area.
- Continue to promote recreational activities on and around the Loch, while encouraging access into the wider countryside of Airngath Hill.

Forth Coast: Statement of Importance

This candidate SLA covers the Firth of Forth coastline in the northern part of West Lothian, including the parklands and designed landscapes of Hopetoun House and The Binns.

Boundaries

The northern boundary of the candidate SLA follows the Firth of Forth coastline. The eastern boundary follows the City of Edinburgh Council boundary to the A904. The southern boundary follows the A904 to Merrylees, where the boundary turns north and follows the Falkirk Council boundary northward around The Binns to the shore near Blackness.



Rolling wooded farmland near Abercorn, looking west to the Binns Tower

Statement of significance

Along the northern edge of West Lothian lies this short section of attractive coastal landscape which adjoins the Firth of Forth. To the north the area is bounded by steep wooded coastal braes, dropping sharply to the alternately sandy and rocky foreshore. There are open views along and across the Firth; downstream to the Forth Bridge and Forth Road Bridge; upstream to Blackness Castle; and north to the Ochils.

Behind the coastal braes is an undulating landscape of mixed farmland and estate parklands, with a high level of deciduous and mixed woodland cover throughout. There are open grasslands and arable fields, as well as intimate wooded glens where small burns run down to the coastline. There are few views into this landscape. The A904 runs along its southern edge, but only east of Newton do views open out, though looking across to the Forth Bridges and Fife Coast rather than to West Lothian.

The extensive designed landscapes around the well-known country houses of Hopetoun House and The Binns cover much of the area, and are listed on Historic Scotland's Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. Between these two is Philpstoun House with a smaller designed landscape around a 17th-century laird's house. The earlier history of the area is represented by the 12th-century Abercorn Church, and the 16th-century Midhope Castle. These are among numerous monuments across the coastal landscape which give it a strong identity and time-depth. The Binns Tower, located on a ridgeline, is a highly visible landmark in the wider area and offers broad views across farmland to the south.

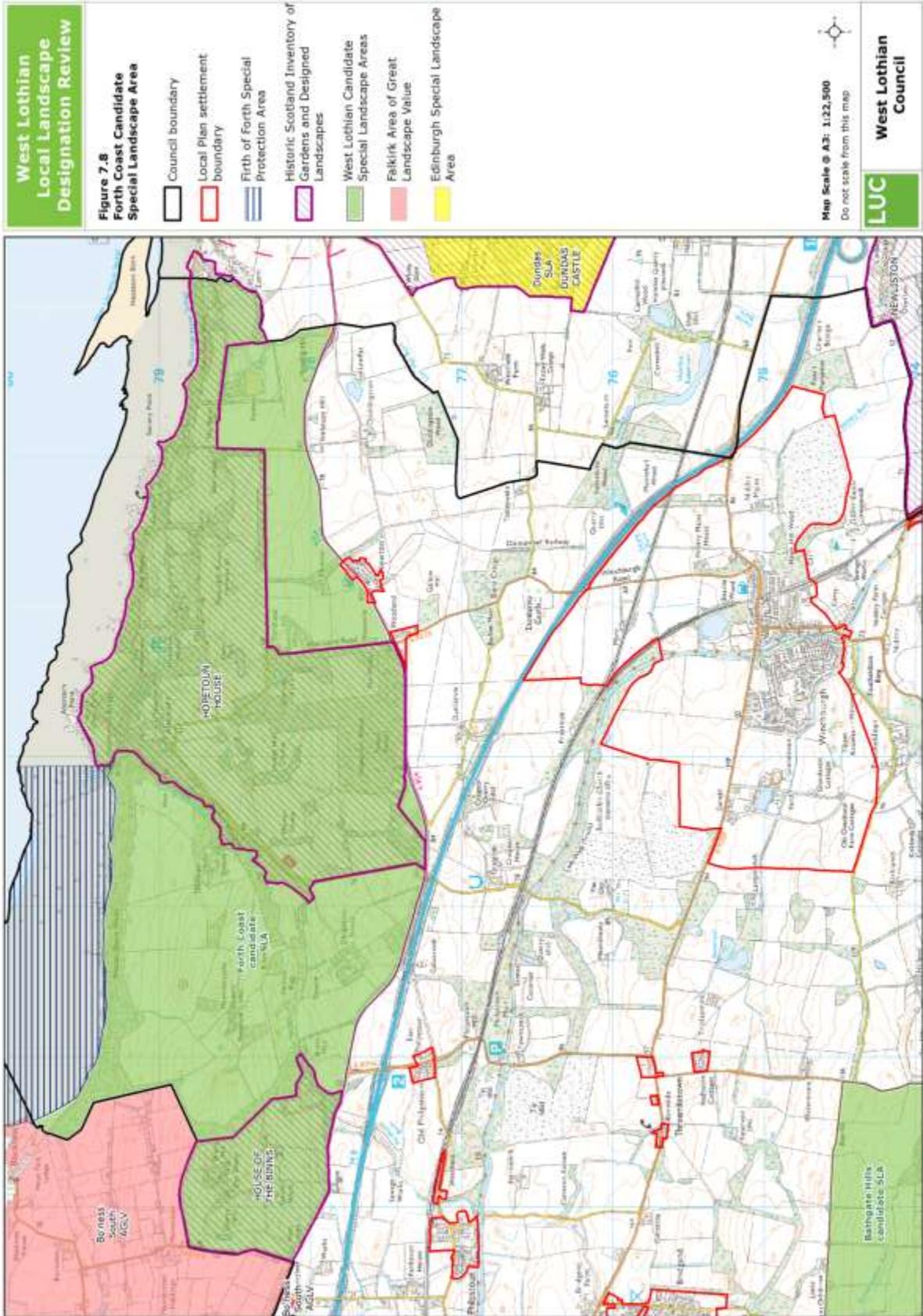
The Binns, managed by the National Trust for Scotland, and Hopetoun House, managed by a preservation trust, are the main visitor attractions of the area, and among the key attractions of West Lothian. Footpaths and walking routes throughout the area allow free access to the attractive coast and policy woodlands.

Forces for change

- The two main designed landscapes are managed for conservation ends and are unlikely to undergo significant change.
- Potential pressure for reuse of farm buildings.
- Potential for commercial development along the A904, and pressure for expansion around Newton village.
- Accommodation of enhanced recreational opportunities and access.
- Development of the Queensferry Crossing will have a visual effect on this area, adding to the existing view of the landmark Forth Bridge and Forth Road Bridge.

Management recommendations

- Protect the undeveloped nature of the coastal edge, and continue to protect the internationally-designated foreshore of the area.
- Seek to balance commercial estate management needs with recreation and biodiversity.
- Recognise the importance of the coastal area as a unique landscape resource within West Lothian, and promote recreational use of the area particularly along the National Cycle Network (NCN) 76 Coastal Route.
- Continue to protect the integrity of designed estate landscapes, both inventory-listed and otherwise.
- Ensure a high quality of siting and design for new development, particularly where this is within or adjacent to designed landscapes, or would be seen along the coast.



Comparison with existing landscape designations

- 7.4 The area covered by each candidate SLA is given in Table 7.1, and the seven areas together cover a total of 12,894 ha. This compares to 13,845 ha covered by AGLVs, and 15,830 ha covered by both AGLVs and ASLCs. The coverage of candidate SLAs equates to approximately 30% of the land area of West Lothian, as compared to 37% covered by AGLVs and ASLCs.

Table 7.1 Candidate SLAs

Candidate SLA	Area (ha)
Pentland Hills	4,341
Almond and Linhouse Valleys	573
Blackridge Heights	864
Avon Valley	474
Bathgate Hills	5,348
Airngath Hill	348
Forth Coast	946

- 7.5 Figure 7.9 overlays the candidate SLAs on the current AGLVs and ASLCs. Each of the candidate SLAs corresponds to an area currently covered by AGLV designation, and the differences in coverage between AGLVs and candidate SLAs are generally small. This suggests that the existing AGLVs are generally well chosen to represent the most important West Lothian landscapes.
- 7.6 The main difference between the AGLVs and candidate SLAs is that the origins and selection of the boundaries of the former are often ad hoc and unclear, whereas the new proposed landscape designations were arrived at through a clear analytical process set out in this report. Thus each proposed candidate SLA has a detailed justification arising from field survey and criteria-based evaluation, feeding through to defined boundaries and clear statements of significance.
- 7.7 None of the areas currently designated as ASLC have been included within a candidate SLA. This reflects the more local, rather than regional, value ascribed to these areas, as well as the other designations such as urban open space which overlap with the ASLCs. As a result, there are no candidate designations in the south-west part of West Lothian.
- 7.8 Several of the ASLCs are covered in whole or in part by other planning designations. The Livingston ASLC is covered by open space and countryside belt designations. Countryside belts also cover the entire Boghead House Policies ASLC, parts of the River Almond ASLC and a small section of the Breich Valley ASLC north of West Calder.
- 7.9 The following sections describe in more detail the differences in coverage between the current AGLVs and the candidate SLAs.

Pentland Hills AGLV

- 7.10 The Pentland Hills AGLV includes the area of farmland north of Little Vantage, as well as small areas of land west of the A70 at Berry Knowe and Crosswoodhill. The candidate SLA boundary follows the A70 more closely, but includes a wider setting to Auchinoon and Corston Hills, extending to Morton Reservoir and Selm Muir Wood.

Almond and Linhouse Valleys AGLV

- 7.11 The Almond and Linhouse Valleys AGLV is similar in extent to the Almond and Linhouse Valleys candidate SLA. The candidate SLA does not include the area north of the M8 which forms part of the AGLV, but both areas extend south to Linhouse. There are small variations in the width of the

area covered along the length of the valleys, with the candidate SLA being slightly broader in the south and narrower in the north.

Blackridge Heights AGLV

- 7.12 The Blackridge Heights candidate SLA covers the southern half of the Blackridge Heights AGLV. The candidate SLA includes the upland area between Drumbeg, Blackridge and Woodend Colliery, though not the fields around Bedlormie or the Barbauchlaw Burn. The northern edge of the AGLV, north of the B8047, is covered by the Avon Valley candidate SLA. The area of the AGLV between the B8047 and Woodend Colliery is not covered by any candidate SLA.

Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV

- 7.13 The Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV is mainly within the Bathgate Hills candidate SLA, which remains the most extensive of the candidate areas. The western section is within the Avon Valley candidate SLA which is proposed as a separate designation. The Bathgate Hills candidate SLA does not include part of the AGLV between Ochiltree and Bridgend, but includes additional areas between Linlithgow and Kingscavil, and between Torphichen and Bathgate. The detached part of the AGLV at Dechmont Law is not covered by a candidate SLA.

Airngath Hill AGLV

- 7.14 The Airngath Hill AGLV corresponds almost exactly with the Airngath Hill candidate SLA. The LLDR concluded that this area plays a key role in the landscape setting of Linlithgow and its Royal Park. The only changes are that the candidate SLA omits an area in the west occupied by a sewage treatment works, and also does not extend to the south of the A803.

Forth Shore AGLV

- 7.15 The Forth Shore AGLV corresponds precisely with the Forth Shore candidate SLA. The LLDR found that the area as currently designated represents a high-quality landscape, and that the A904 forms the most appropriate boundary.

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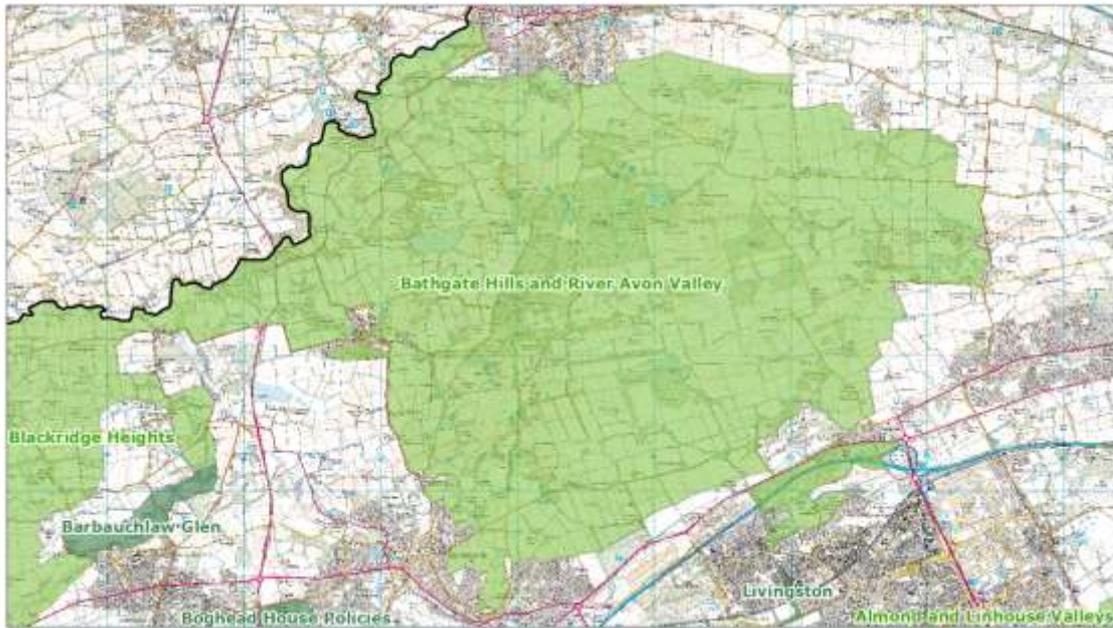
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland:
<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/>

Appendix 1

Audit of existing West Lothian landscape designations

The following pages present the audit of the current Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and Areas of Special Landscape Control (ASLC). The audit process is described and the findings presented in Section 3 of the report.

Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV



Location, extent and boundaries

Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV is located in the north west of the Council area. It borders Linlithgow on its northern edge and Livingston and Bathgate to the south. The north-west boundary is defined by the council area boundary with all other sides defined by roads, field patterns and settlement edges. A small outlying area covers Dechmont Law and adjacent areas. This AGLV extends west to Westfield Viaduct where it meets the Blackridge Heights AGLV.

Total area: 5,588 ha

Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan

"The area of the Bathgate Hills is a rich mixture of farmland, woods and small volcanic outcrops rising to 300m. It is one of the most attractive and accessible parts of West Lothian, with extensive views outwards and an internal landscape enriched by landform and land use. Included in the designation is the steep, meandering, wooded valley of the river Avon extending from the former railway viaduct crossing the river at Westfield, to the Linlithgow town boundary at Avontoun. To the south east, Dechmont Law, although within the town boundary of Livingston, is included as an integral part of the AGLV."

Overlapping designations

Within this AGLV are SSSIs at Carriber Glen and Lochcote Marsh. East Kirkton Quarry located in Bathgate is designated as both an SSSI and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site (RIGS). Petershill is listed as an SSSI, a Scottish Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve and a RIGS. Torphichen Conservation Area extends well beyond the village to take in part of the hills. Bangour Hospital Conservation Area also extends into the AGLV.

There is an adjacent AGLV designation covering the Avon Valley in Falkirk.

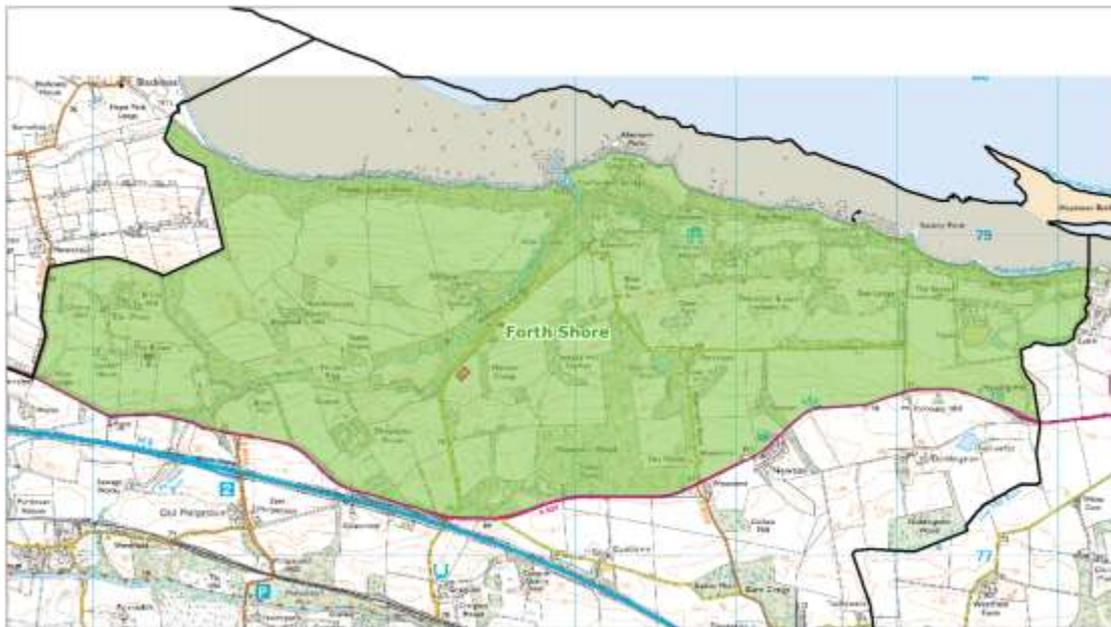
Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)

- 5 Bathgate Hills
- 10 Livingston / Blackburn Plateau
- 16 Avon Valley
- 20 Linlithgow Fringe

Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 Bathgate Hills Fringe
Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex, rounded and prominent range of igneous hills. • Lower slopes are smoother, contrasting with the more rugged broken higher ground. • Open water at several reservoirs. • Bold, relatively pastoral or mixed, small scale and intimate farmed lowland hill landscape with post and wire fences and lines of oak, ash and beech. • In spring hills are ablaze with yellow gorse which thrives off the thin stony dolerite soil. • Linear tree belts and occasional stone dykes on higher steeper slopes add to the intricate pattern of landform. • Coniferous woodland particularly prominent on hill tops, especially at Beecraigs Country Park. • Distinctive lines of mixed shelterbelts with trees often shaped by the wind. • Winding minor roads and tracks link scattered farmsteads, small settlements and isolated mansion houses on the lower slopes. • Strong sense of place due to remoteness, wilderness and stillness of the high ground, wide horizons and infinite skies.

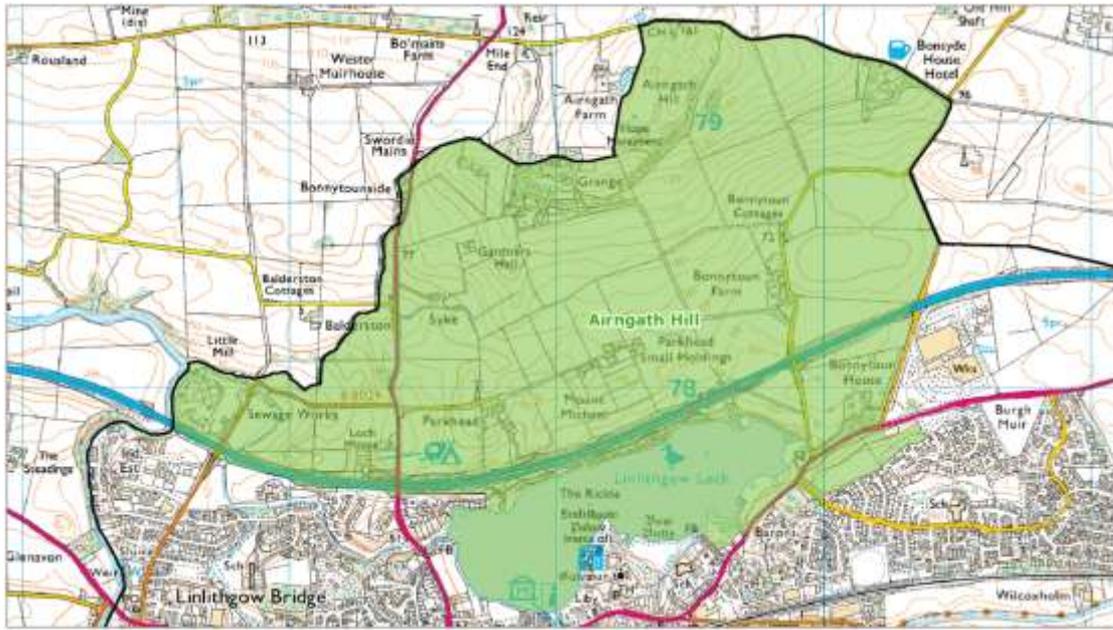
Forth Shore AGLV



Location, extent and boundaries	<p>This AGLV is located west of South Queensferry in the most north eastern area of the West Lothian council area. Its northern boundary follows the shore, the east and west boundaries are defined by the council boundary and its southern edge runs along the line of the A904.</p> <p>Total area: 939 ha</p>
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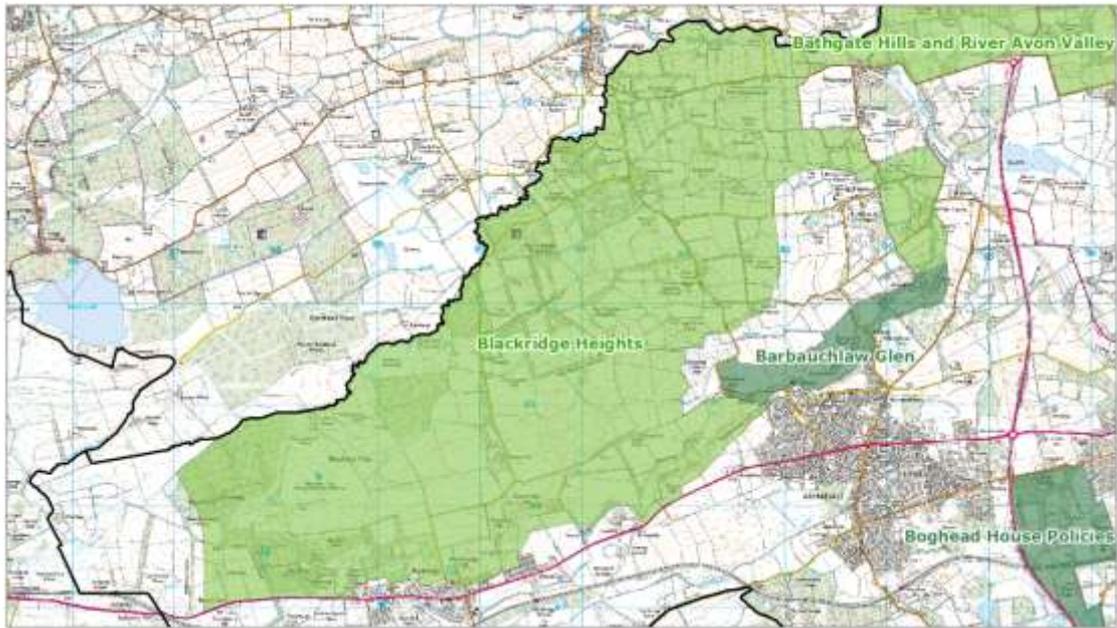
Forth Shore AGLV	
Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan	<i>"The Forth Shore is small in extent and is mainly covered by the managed woodlands of the Hopetoun Estate. The designated area includes the shore of the Forth between Blackness and South Queensferry and the setting of several historic buildings."</i>
Overlapping designations	<p>Hopetoun House is listed on Historic Scotland's Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. Its location is at the heart of this AGLV along the shore of the Forth. The House of the Binns is also included in Historic Scotland's inventory located further inland within this AGLV. The Firth of Forth foreshore is listed as a Special Protection Area as well as an SSSI and Ramsar site.</p> <p>There is an adjacent AGLV designation covering the Forth shore in Falkirk.</p>
Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 West Lothian Coastal Hills
Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently undulating, predominantly north facing countryside rising up to the south and west from the tidal zone and levelling out to the east. • High quality landscape of intensely farmed agricultural land with significant areas of ancient and semi-natural native woodlands and improved grasslands grazed by sheep. • Large, well maintained, designed parkland landscapes around the historic stately buildings of Hopetoun House and the House of the Binns. Both included in Historic Scotland's Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. • Small scale landscape with a regular field pattern defined by hedgerows and some stone dykes. • Landform and land cover provide contrasts of enclosed, small scale areas with open, elevated outward viewpoints from higher land, where long distance views provide a sense of place and context with the Firth of Forth, bridges and Fife beyond.

Airngath Hill AGLV



<p>Location, extent and boundaries</p>	<p>Airngath Hill AGLV lies immediately to the north of Linlithgow and includes Linlithgow Loch and a section of the M9, extending north to the summit of Airngath Hill. Boundaries follow the Council boundary, a road to the east, and the settlement boundary to the south.</p> <p>Total area: 360 ha</p>
<p>Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan</p>	<p><i>"Airngath Hill forms an attractive backdrop to the loch and the town and for this reason is a sensitive area. It is typified by wooded road sides and includes the policies of The Grange. The area abuts the Bo'ness green belt in the administrative area of Falkirk Council to the north."</i></p>
<p>Overlapping designations</p>	<p>Within this AGLV is Linlithgow Loch, listed as an SSSI and part of an extensive scheduled monument. Linlithgow Conservation Area also covers the loch and areas to the east around Bonnyton House.</p> <p>There is an adjacent AGLV designation in Falkirk.</p>
<p>Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 Linlithgow Fringe
<p>Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linlithgow urban area and loch nestle in a basin contained by gently rising, undulating slopes of foothills to the north and south. • North of the town the south facing slopes gradually rise to localised hills providing panoramic views in all directions and a striking setting to Linlithgow Loch, Palace and modern spire at St. Michael's Church. • The M9 passes between the loch and northern foothills but is well screened and inconspicuous.

Blackridge Heights AGLV



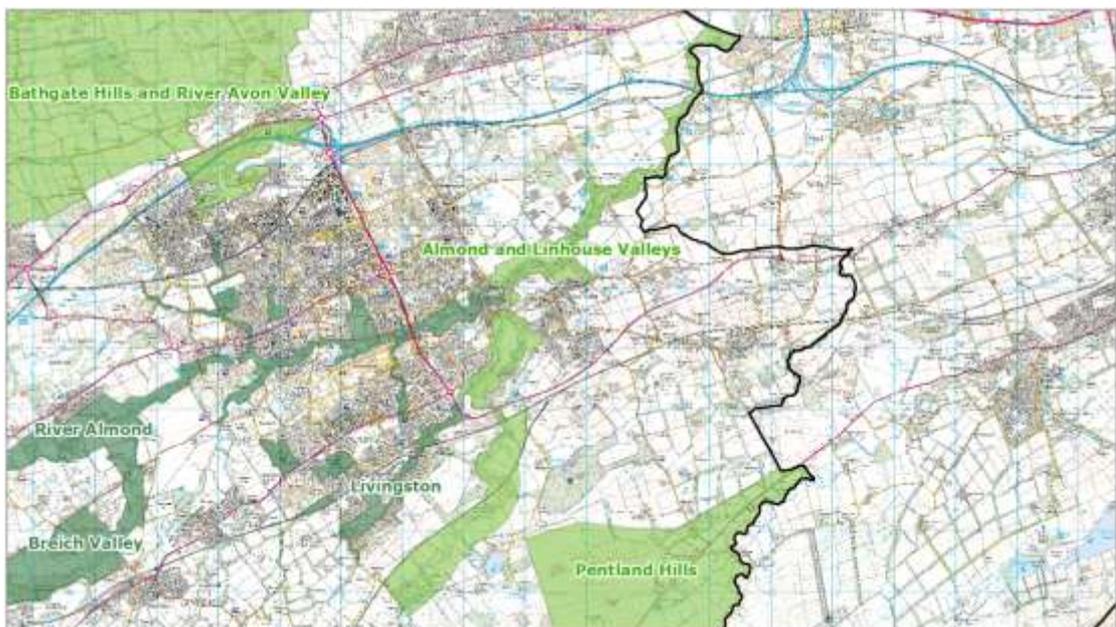
<p>Location, extent and boundaries</p>	<p>Blackridge Heights AGLV extends south west from the Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV which it borders. Armadale and Blackridge are located to the south, and its northern boundary runs along the Council boundary. An arm of the AGLV wraps around Bridgehouse. This AGLV extends north-east to Westfield Viaduct where it meets the Bathgate Hills and River Avon Valley AGLV.</p> <p>Total area: 1,836 ha</p>
<p>Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan</p>	<p><i>"This area of countryside comprises a dramatic expanse of open sweeping moorland and forests. Features include Blawhorn Moss, a site of considerable conservation value, and Eastcraigs Hill, which forms a rugged and dramatic backdrop to Blackridge. The area includes areas of attractive policy woodland on its fringes and extensive forestry planting in its core area. The area is relatively unspoiled and the only permanent intrusions into the heights are the Gowanbank gas compressor station, which has been well absorbed into a wooded landscape, and the Eastcraigs water tank complex."</i></p>
<p>Overlapping designations</p>	<p>Blawhorn Moss is located within this AGLV and is protected as an SSSI, a Special Area of Conservation and a National Nature Reserve.</p> <p>There is an adjacent AGLV designation to the north, covering the Avon Valley in Falkirk.</p>
<p>Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 Avonbridge to Armadale Plateau Edge • 12 Blackridge Heights • 16 Avon Valley
<p>Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive west to east grain to the landscape due to drainage by a series of tributary burns. • Small scale, semi-enclosed pattern of rural roads, mixed farming, woodland and shelterbelts in parts of the unit. • Extensive mixed forest plantation at Drumtassie Burn managed by the

Blackridge Heights AGLV

Forestry Commission as part of the Central Scotland Forest.

- The northern edge of Armadale is generally low lying, gently terraced pastoral landscape for sheep grazing.
- Large scale, open, exposed gently undulating moorland plateau located in the south west of this AGLV.
- Extensive areas of peat land and other poorly drained areas with a mosaic of mosses, heather, bog cotton and wet grassland.
- Strong sense of place due to remoteness, wildness and stillness, with huge skies and wide horizons.
- To the west, the area is almost devoid of settlement, buildings, roads, intensive agriculture or forestry giving this landscape its wild character.

Almond and Linhouse Valleys AGLV



Location, extent and boundaries

This AGLV covers a narrow, linear stretch running from north east along the River Almond, and then the Linhouse Water, to the south west. The AGLV borders the Council boundary near Ratho, and is defined by valley edges elsewhere, whether fields or settlements. The AGLV follows the south east of Livingston, following Linhouse Water to Linhouse Estate.

Total area: 509 ha

Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan

"The Almond and Linhouse Valleys comprise some of the most picturesque stretches of wooded river valley in Central Scotland. They are made all the more valuable and indeed vulnerable by the proximity of a large population centre in Livingston. They also serve to provide a green space within Livingston and between Mid Calder and East Calder."

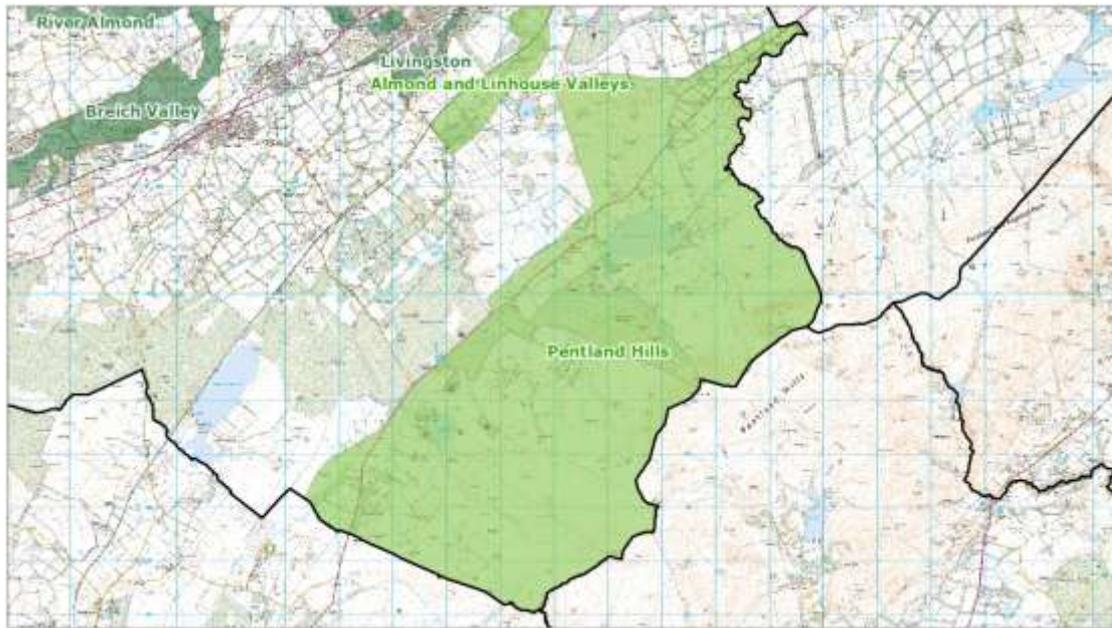
Overlapping designations

Within this AGLV is Almondell and Calderwood Country Park, comprising two adjacent areas, the southern of which also forms Calderwood SSSI. Parts of

Almond and Linhouse Valleys AGLV

	<p>the Country Park are also within Mid Calder Conservation Area. The Linhouse Valley is also designated as an SSSI and Linhouse is a Scottish Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve.</p> <p>There is an adjacent SLA designation covering the Almond Valley in Edinburgh.</p>
<p>Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 Almond Valley • 18 Murieston / Linhouse / Camilty Waters
<p>Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep gorge-like, incised river valley with mixed broadleaved woodland changing to open, less wooded, gently undulating pastoral landscape used for dairying/cattle rearing with fields of hay, silage and ryegrass. • The River Avon Heritage Trail provides a significant recreational resource along the river bank between Avonbridge and Linlithgow. Features include weirs, waterfalls, the Westfield viaduct, Avon viaduct, the Avon aqueduct and the remains of mills and Carriber Castle. • Almondell and Calder Wood Country Park with extensive broadleaved woodland and ornamental planting provides a significant environmental resource. • The River Almond east of Livingston is a more gently meandering downstream section of the Murieston/Linhouse/Camilty Water unit. • Elsewhere the relatively narrow valley edges comprise remnant semi-natural woodland, mixed shelterbelts and plantations and more open grassland grazed by sheep. • National Cycle Route 75 follows the valley and the Union Canal Feeder path offers stunning seasonal views of the former rural estate and the narrow gorge like section of the river.

Pentland Hills AGLV



<p>Location, extent and boundaries</p>	<p>The Pentland Hills AGLV covers the section of the Pentlands range within West Lothian. Here, the north-western slopes of the hills are open and widely visible over long distances from many vantage points in West Lothian and beyond. The hills extend into South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, Edinburgh and Midlothian council areas. The AGLV boundary follows the A70, extending north-east of the road to take in Corston Hill and Auchinoon Hill.</p> <p>Total area: 4,613 ha</p>
<p>Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan</p>	<p><i>"The Pentland Hills Area of Great Landscape Value extends from Edinburgh and Midlothian into West Lothian. Here, the north-western slopes of the hills are open and widely visible over long distances from many vantage points in West Lothian and beyond. Generally, the landscape is affected by man's influence, especially over the last two centuries, with sheep grazing now predominating on the upper slopes and agriculture, pockets of woodland and shelter belts on the better quality lower land which provide the setting for Harperrig Reservoir, an important element in the sweeping landscape. The character of the area is particularly vulnerable to intrusions within the landscape setting of the AGLV."</i></p>
<p>Overlapping designations</p>	<p>Craigengar SSSI and Special Area of Conservation is located at the most southern point of this AGLV. The north-eastern part of the AGLV is within the Pentland Hills Regional Park which includes parts of Edinburgh and Midlothian.</p> <p>There are adjacent SLA designations covering the Pentland Hills in Edinburgh, Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire.</p>
<p>Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Western Pentland Hills • 2 North-west Pentland Fringe
<p>Key landscape characteristics,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive upland hills of Devonian Old Red Sandstone period lavas and gently rolling, sweeping slopes rising to level topped ridges and

Pentland Hills AGLV

derived from the
WL-LCA 2011

pronounced hill masses.

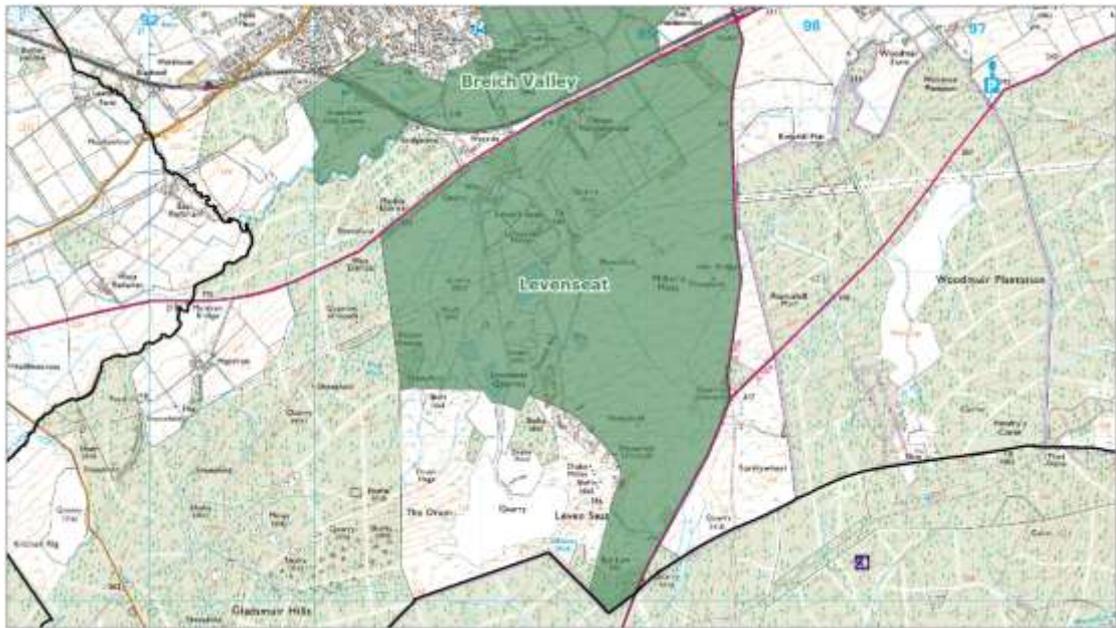
- Heather, gorse acidic grassland and upland raised/blanket bog peat land dominate on the highest ground forming an attractive mosaic.
- Distinctively shaped straight sided conifer plantations and shelterbelts on the lower slopes and valley sides provide local identity.
- Occasional long, low traditional stone dykes flow over rising landform providing a sense of scale perspective and distance.
- Strong sense of place due to remoteness, wildness and stillness, open skies, wide horizons and distant, unobstructed views.
- Strong associations with local heritage and history.
- Very low settlement density confined to a number of isolated dwellings.
- Open standing water at Crosswood Reservoir and Harperrig Reservoir.
- Linear belts of trees, including mature beech trees creating avenues, and remnant stone dykes or post and wire fences provide a locally distinctive pattern on the lower slopes.

Breich Valley ASLC



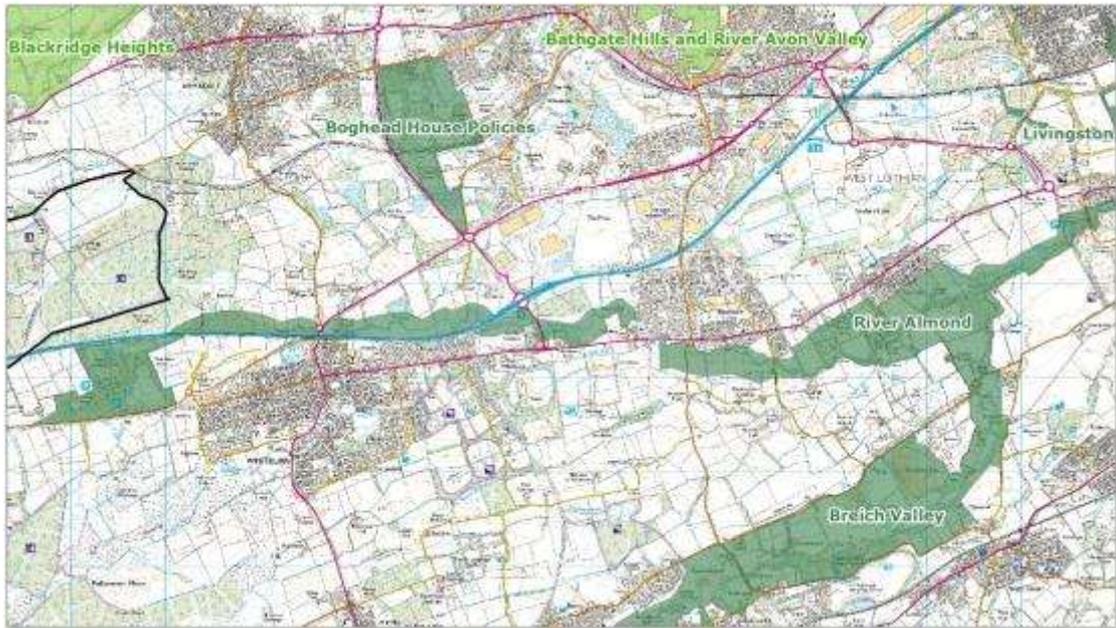
<p>Location, extent and boundaries</p>	<p>This ASLC covers a linear stretch running north east to south west from north of West Calder to Fauldhouse. It follows the Breich Water, primarily bordered by the B7015 to the north and by minor roads to the south. It is located within the south west quarter of the West Lothian Council area. This ASLC meets the River Almond ASLC near the confluence of the two watercourses.</p> <p>Total area: 695 ha</p>
<p>Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan</p>	<p><i>"The Breich Valley consists of contrasting narrow glens and wider open valleys linking the former mining villages of Fauldhouse, Longridge, Breich, Stoneyburn/Bents, Addiewell/Loganlea and the Westwood/Oakbank area."</i></p>
<p>Overlapping designations</p>	<p>Skolie Burn SSSI is located within this ASLC as is North Addiewell Bing, a Scottish Wildlife Trust nature reserve. The eastern part of the ASLC overlaps with the Livingston Countryside Belt.</p>
<p>Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 Breich Valley • 6 Upper Almond Valley
<p>Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some distinctive incised sections but tending to the more open shallower form of this landscape type. • Railway crosses the Breich Valley near Fauldhouse then follows the valley eastward, often on embankment or in cutting. • Important local recreational and wildlife resource in the Addiewell Bing Wildlife Reserve. • Roadside tree belts are a feature along the B7015. • Features providing a legacy of the area's industrial past, most notably the Five Sisters oil shale bing.

Levenscat ASLC



<p>Location, extent and boundaries</p>	<p>Levenscat ASLC is located in the south west of the Council area, south of Fauldhouse. Its eastern boundary is defined by the A704, and the northern boundary by the A70. It extends to the council area boundary, with an irregular south-west boundary across Levenscat quarry, much of which is within the ASLC.</p> <p>Total area: 418 ha</p>
<p>Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan</p>	<p><i>"Levenscat is the most prominent summit of the Gladsmuir Hills and its setting, which forms an impressive southern backdrop to Fauldhouse. Surrounded on three sides by forestry and the subject of extensive mineral workings, it is an accessible landmark offering sweeping views of the surrounding area."</i></p>
<p>Overlapping designations</p>	<p>None identified.</p>
<p>Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Gladsmuir / Woodmuir / Camilty Fringe
<p>Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale, open moorland in the Gladsmuir Hills. • Remote, simple, undisturbed and unsettled with few dwellings giving this area its character. • Extensive views northwards across open moorland to the Bathgate Hills. • Quarrying at Levenscat above Fauldhouse where spoil heaps, dismantled railway lines, and associated works give a despoiled unsettled character.

River Almond ASLC



Location, extent and boundaries

This ASLC follows the course of the River Almond from the western perimeter of Whitburn, eastward along the M8 and A705 to the western edge of Livingston. The ASLC covers four discrete areas: Polkemmet Country Park; the north of the M8; East Whitburn to Blackburn; and Blackburn to Livingston. Boundaries generally follow field edges with some sections following roads. This ASLC meets the Breich Valley ASLC near the confluence of the two watercourses.

Total area: 439 ha

Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan

"Through the upper reaches at Greenrigg, through Polkemmet Country Park, Whitburn, Livingston, Almondell and Calderwood Country Parks and Mid Calder, the Almond Valley provides contrast to the mostly urbanised landscape through which it flows."

Overlapping designations

The eastern and central parts of the ASLC overlap with the Livingston and Bathgate – Whitburn Countryside Belts. Polkemmet Country Park coincides with the western-most area.

Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)

- 6 Upper Almond Valley

Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011

- Open, lowland plain with generally inconspicuous river in shallow undulations.
- Predominately medium scale pastoral landscape with some arable farmland close to settlement edges.
- Occasional woodland provides local enclosure, and scattered scrubby birch is a landscape feature.
- Broadleaved woodland within Polkemmet Country Park provides considerable natural heritage value and significant landscape character within an uncharacteristic sheltered river valley.

Livingston ASLC



Location, extent and boundaries

Located centrally within the local council area, Livingston ASLC comprises a number of small pockets and linear stretches of open space. These extend throughout the settlement of Livingston. The majority of the areas are along or close to the River Almond and the Murieston Water.

Total area: 303 ha

Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan

"The framework of greenway routes, including the River Almond, Bellsquarry Plantation, North Wood, Wilderness Plantation, Murieston Water, the Murieston Trail and Livingston Old Wood and Eliburn Reservoir are of considerable importance for their wildlife and amenity value."

Overlapping designations

These areas are all defined as "land safeguarded for open space" in the Local Plan, with the exception of two small areas which are outside the settlement boundary and are within the Livingston Countryside Belt.

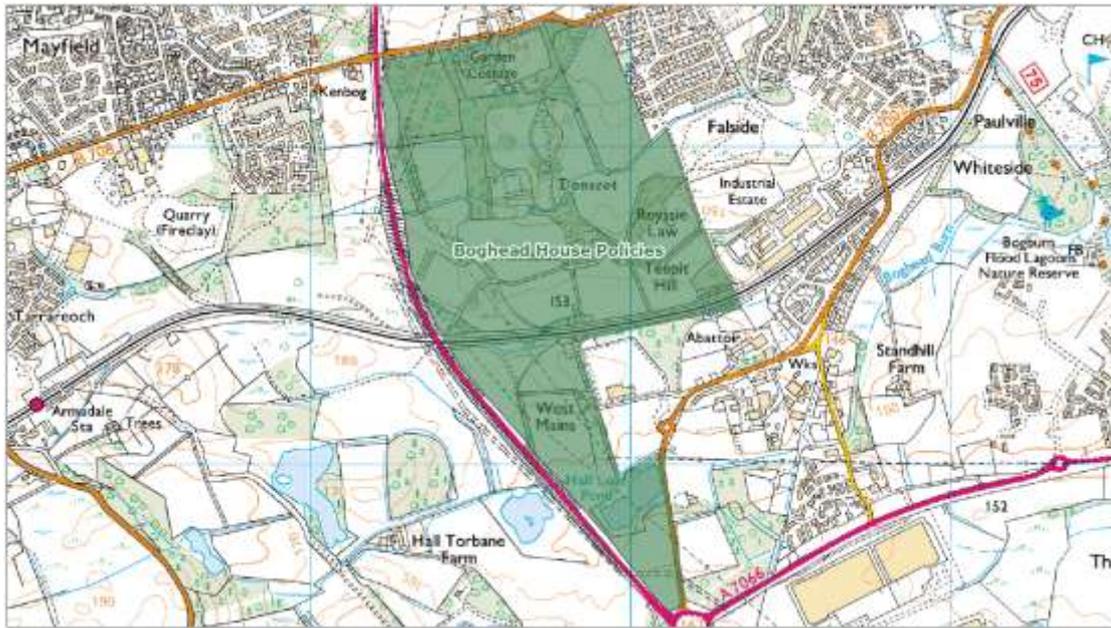
Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)

- Urban

Key landscape characteristics

- The character of these areas is influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the surrounding settlement.
- Urban greenspace character, with maintained paths, gates, fences and railings.
- Significant woodland and quiet riverside areas within the urban context.
- Valued recreational resources and green infrastructure.

Boghead House Policies ASLC



Location, extent and boundaries

This ASLC is located west of Bathgate. It is a relatively small area bordered to the north by the B708 and to the west by the A801, and subdivided by the reopened Airdrie to Bathgate railway.

Total area: 104 ha

Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan

"The mature woodland policies of the former Boghead House to the west of Bathgate create an attractive edge to the town and, despite overhead power lines, provide a pleasant aspect from the A801. The area includes Half Loaf Pond, a local landmark and wildlife site north of Inchcross."

Overlapping designations

The ASLC is within the Bathgate – Whitburn Countryside Belt.

Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)

- 9 Armadale / Bathgate Plateau

Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011

- Enclosed landscape where mature woodland policies of the former Boghead House and extensive shelter belts are important landscape features providing an attractive western edge to Bathgate.
- Large areas of open water are attractive features in the landscape, including Half Loaf Pond.
- A801 is a dominant major transport corridor, passing on embankment, with the reopened Airdrie to Bathgate railway and associated infrastructure creating major intrusions in the landscape.
- Overhead power lines and substation dilute the rural character of the landscape.

Barbauchlaw Glen, Armadale ASLC



<p>Location, extent and boundaries</p>	<p>This narrow linear stretch runs along the Barbauchlaw Burn north east from the northern edge of Armadale joining the Blackridge Heights AGLV at its two endpoints.</p> <p>Total area: 87 ha</p>
<p>Description taken from the West Lothian Local Plan</p>	<p><i>"Barbauchlaw Glen is an attractive, well-wooded, meandering glen within the western approach to Armadale from Blackridge, which provides a well-hidden walkway on the fringe of the town."</i></p>
<p>Overlapping designations</p>	<p>None identified</p>
<p>Landscape character types (WL-LCA 2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 Avonbridge to Armadale Plateau Edge
<p>Key landscape characteristics, derived from the WL-LCA 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former woodland policies within the Barbauchlaw Burn Valley form a significant landscape feature providing an attractive mature managed character with broadleaved woodland, fine roadside beech avenues and clipped beech hedges. • Meandering form of the Barbauchlaw Burn and in places the steep sided Barbauchlaw Glen north of Armadale. • The northern edge of Armadale is a generally low lying, open and gently terraced pastoral landscape for sheep grazing.

Appendix 2

Results of the evaluation of the West Lothian landscape

The following pages present the evaluation sheets which were completed for each of the 23 landscape units as part of a comprehensive quantitative evaluation of the West Lothian landscape. The evaluation methodology is described in Section 2 of the report, and the findings are summarised in Section 4.

Landscape Unit: 1 Western Pentland Hills

Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	As a relatively wild area of open upland hills, the Pentland summits and high slopes are not typical of the wider lowland landscapes of West Lothian. However the Pentland range is widely visible from numerous viewpoints across West Lothian and makes a strong positive contribution to a sense of place wherever the hills are seen.	Medium
Rarity	Within West Lothian, the Pentland Hills are the only extensive area of high ground, being almost entirely over 300m, and the only significant hills, rising to 562m at West Cairn Hill.	High
Condition	The open hills do not display signs of neglect or mismanagement. Walls are in good condition, and access routes are well maintained.	High
Intactness	The open hills are largely intact. There are extensive coniferous plantations extending up the slopes at West Cairns, though these do not impinge upon the openness of the hills.	High
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	The Pentland Hills offer a dramatic landscape experience compared to other West Lothian landscapes.	High
Views	The Pentland ridge is a highly visible feature in the landscape, visible across the whole of West Lothian. The high points of the Pentlands, including West Cairn Hill and the Cauldstane Slap, offer the most elevated views available within West Lothian. West Cairn Hill is recognised as an important viewpoint in the council's Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Farms (2011).	High
Enjoyment	The northern part of this unit is within the Pentland Hills Regional Park, and includes the right of way over Cauldstane Slap. There are other routes into the Pentlands for walkers, though it is recognised that access to the hills from the western fringe is limited.	High
Cultural qualities	Aside from hill-top cairns there are no protected monuments in the area. The "Thieves Road" over the Cauldstane Slap is part of an ancient drove road which formerly linked Linlithgow with the Borders and England beyond. The wider Pentlands have strong literary associations with R L Stevenson and Allan Ramsay.	High

Naturalness	This landscape has a higher degree of wildness, compared to other parts of West Lothian, being a quiet, undeveloped upland area. For the most part it comprises semi-natural upland vegetation. Craigengar SSSI and SAC, at the south point of this unit, is designated for upland habitats including blanket bog and subalpine.	High
Settlement setting	The Pentland skyline plays a role in the setting of numerous south and central West Lothian settlements and in particular Livingston, though there are no adjacent settlements and the relationship is indirect. The Pentlands also have a role in the 'setting' of West Lothian as a whole.	High
Non-ranked criteria		
Landscape consistency	This is a consistent landscape of wild, open upland.	
Landscape relationships	Strong physical continuity with the rest of the Pentland range in Edinburgh, Midlothian, Borders and South Lanarkshire. Strong visual relationship with the fringe areas (units 2 and 3) to the north and, to a lesser but still significant extent, with the rest of West Lothian.	
Other designations	Craigengar SSSI and SAC is located in the south of this area. The Pentland Hills Regional Park includes the area north of West Cairn Hill.	

Landscape Unit: 2 North-West Pentland Fringe		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	A relatively wild landscape on the upland hill fringes, not typically associated with the area of West Lothian: it resembles areas of the Southern Uplands with large scale rolling landform and limited development. The area is not as visible as the neighbouring hills, and it makes little contribution to wider identity.	Low
Rarity	This landscape is rare within the area though not within Scotland. There are few such open areas of upland fringe within West Lothian. Locally uncommon features include the outlying hills of Auchinoon and Corston, and the hill-foot reservoirs of Harperrig and Crosswood.	High
Condition	This is an area of marginal farmland, which is reflected in the condition of field boundaries including remnant stone walls and mature, outgrown beech hedges.	Medium
Intactness	Although the A70 'Lang Whang' road corridor is busy it does not detract from the general intactness of the landscape. Blocks of plantation forestry on the lower slopes of the hills while with some un-natural straight edges have begun to be re-planted sympathetically and are starting to merge with the surrounding character. A line of pylons runs between Auchinoon Hill and Corston Hill.	High
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	Attractive low hills rising to the north, and the backdrop of the Pentlands to the south, make a scenic setting around Harperrig Reservoir.	High
Views	This landscape is highly visible in views to the Pentlands and from the A70. Auchinoon and Corston Hills are visible landmarks from Livingston. Other lower-lying areas are less visible. Due to the general lack of vegetation, there are open and distant views from within this landscape to surrounding areas of higher and lower ground. Harperrig Reservoir is recognised as an important viewpoint in the council's Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Farms (2011).	High
Enjoyment	This area includes part of the Pentland Hills Regional Park, and as such is highly valued as a recreational resource. Harperrig Reservoir is a key location within the park with walking routes clearly marked across the area. Routes to the Pentland summits, including via the Cauldstane Slap, are accessed from this area, though parking is limited. Fishing is permitted on Harperrig Reservoir and it is a proposed Local Nature Reserve.	High

Cultural qualities	The remains of Cairns Castle overlooking Harperrig Reservoir are among scant remains of past settlement in the area. There are cultural associations with the Pentlands, and the Cauldstane Slap drove road passes through the area. The Water of Leith emerges into and then out of Harperrig Reservoir that was built to control water for mills further downstream within Edinburgh.	High
Naturalness	Wild and exposed feeling in much of the landscape, with the human elements having limited presence among the extensive natural land cover. Away from the A70, for example at Auchinoon, and around Harperrig, this is a quiet landscape.	High
Settlement setting	There are no villages or larger settlements within this area. Small clusters of one or two dwellings only emphasise the scale and remoteness of the landscape. Areas of higher ground in the north of this area are visible from Livingston, and form part of the wider setting of the main West Lothian town.	Low
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	This landscape is generally consistent in terms of its rolling landform and representative ground cover. The corridor of the A70 locally affects landscape character.	
Landscape relationships	This area comprises the foothills of the Pentlands, and is closely related to the hills to the south and to other areas of hill fringe to the north-east and south.	
Other designations	The Pentland Hills Regional Park covers the north-eastern part of this area.	

Landscape Unit: 3 Gladsmuir / Woodmuir / Camilty Fringe		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	The gently rolling to flat, plateau like landform is dominated by boggy grassland, grazing and forestry, and is untypical of the wider landscape of West Lothian. The extensive forestry and former mining landscapes present a picture which does recur in some places across West Lothian. These features make only a limited positive contribution to historic identity.	Low
Rarity	This landscape is relatively unusual within West Lothian due to the elevated and often exposed moorland landform, and the extent of very large forestry plantations. It is not a rare landscape in Scotland.	Medium
Condition	The smaller areas used for pastoral farming are marginal but remain in reasonable condition. There are areas of former mining activity, and current quarrying, where remnant buildings and spoil heaps continue to have a negative effect on landscape condition. Where forestry and quarrying operations are ongoing these can have a temporary adverse effect on condition.	Medium
Intactness	This area has been extensively affected in the past by mining and quarrying activities, which still continue on a large scale at Levenseat. Since the 1970s large coniferous plantations have been established across the area, significantly altering perceptions of the landscape. An overhead power line runs east to west. More recently, wind farms have been constructed at Pates Hill and Black Law, with further proposals including the consented Tormywheel site.	Low
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	There is little variation between areas of higher and lower ground within this landscape, and limited scenic diversity. The watercourses of the Camilty and Linhouse burns create some localised complexity. Large forestry plantations obscure the landform in many areas.	Medium
Views	Key views to the Pentland Hills to the south-east, and extensive views in places across the settled areas of the Almond Valley to the north. Views are frequently obscured by large-scale forestry plantations.	Medium
Enjoyment	The area is at the fringe of the Pentland Hills Regional Park, and has accessible forestry plantations, principally the Forestry Commission owned Camilty and Woodmuir which have parking facilities. Cobbinshaw Reservoir and Morton Reservoir and Fishery provide recreational resources within the area.	Medium

Cultural qualities	The area has important scheduled remains including the Roman camp at Castle Greg, and a 19 th -century coking works at Woodmuir. The latter, albeit derelict, is representative of a rich heritage of mining and allied industries which once prospered across the area.	High
Naturalness	The wildness of this area is reduced by the extensive forestry plantations, mineral extraction, road corridors, railway line and wind turbines in the west. There are some areas with a more remote character, particularly the tranquil landscape around Cobbinshaw Reservoir. Important areas of habitat include the bog and wetlands of Cobbinshaw Moss and Cobbinshaw Reservoir SSSIs.	Medium
Settlement setting	There is limited settlement in this area, though the Gladsmuir Hills to the west form part of the setting of Fauldhouse and the surrounding Breich Valley villages.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	Alternates between forestry, open grassland, farmland and bodies of water, resulting in local variations in landscape character.	
Landscape relationships	Areas of forestry cross the boundary to the east into landscape unit 2 (North-West Pentland Fringe), and south into South Lanarkshire. At its eastern edge this landscape unit has a strong relationship with the Pentland Hills.	
Other designations	Cobbinshaw Moss and Cobbinshaw Reservoir SSSIs cover an extensive area in the south.	

Landscape Unit: 4 Harburn / Hartwood Fringe		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	This area of Upland Hill Fringe consists of gentle landform with largely farmed land with clearly defined field boundaries. The mixed landscape of pasture, arable, and settlement, with woodland and forestry, and occasional mining remnants, is typical of the wider landscape of West Lothian. Distinctive features include the lines of beech along country roads, contributing to a sense of place.	High
Rarity	There are few rare features in this landscape. The designed landscape around Harburn House, and the intact pattern of trees and woodland, are unusual in West Lothian.	Low
Condition	Occasional marginal areas, with underused farmland colonised by scrub. Agricultural land occasionally has broken field boundaries and fallen trees, although other areas are well maintained.	Medium
Intactness	The landscape structure of relatively small fields and field boundaries of beech trees is intact across parts of this area. There has been mining within this area, though visible remains are now few except in the far west near Breich. Pylons are prominent features over some areas. Coniferous plantations are more frequent to the south.	Medium
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	There is relatively little scenic diversity in this landscape. There are attractive features such as the lines of beech trees. Long views are available, but the landscape has limited scenic quality in its own right. However there is attractive farmland, vestiges of woodland enclosure pattern, mature field trees and rural buildings which have scenic contrast to the great swathes of conifer forest to the south.	Medium
Views	Views north to Livingston and south to the Pentland Hills. The Five Sisters can be viewed from higher ground within this area, though pylons interrupt some views. Glimpses of views to the wider area are caught from the road, through breaks in vegetation and from slightly higher ground.	Medium
Enjoyment	Sites of recreational activity exist within this landscape, including Hermand Birchwood nature reserve, Harburn Golf Course and numerous horse riding stables. Rights of way link some of the settlements to the north.	Medium

Cultural qualities	Numerous disused quarries and former open cast workings across the area. Murieston Castle is a scheduled monument: built in the 16 th century as a simple keep and restored as a folly in the 19 th century; it now exists as a ruin. Harburn House is listed on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, and there are other localised estate landscapes.	Medium
Naturalness	This is a farmed and settled landscape. Pockets of natural land cover exist in isolation, such as the birch woodland at Hermand nature reserve and along watercourses.	Low
Settlement setting	This rising landscape, and the shallow valley of the Harwood Water, contributes to the rural setting of West Calder, Polbeth, and southern areas of Livingston along the northern boundary of the area.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	Largely consistent with general uniformity in land use across the area, though some local variation.	
Landscape relationships	Related to the south to surrounding areas of Upland Hill Fringes.	
Other designations	Harburn House is listed on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. Hermand Birchwood is a SSSI and a Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) reserve, and there is another small SSSI at Hermand Quarry. The north-eastern part is within the West Lothian Countryside Belt.	

Landscape Unit: 5 Bathgate Hills

Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	This area is the only example of its landscape type and is therefore untypical of West Lothian, although some of the key features are recurrent elsewhere. However, the area is very distinctive and prominent in views. This landscape of rolling hills contributes strongly to local identity and sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	This undulating landscape of 'crag and tail' hills and intervening valleys occurs only once within West Lothian and has a high rarity value. Individual volcanic plugs forming rocky hills such as Cockleroy, the Knock and Binny Craig are rare within West Lothian, and only occur in this area.	High
Condition	Whilst the car parks next to the key viewpoints and landmarks are not well maintained and some of the stone walls are neglected, the overall condition of hedges, tree lines and features is good, though there are some notable exceptions.	Medium
Intactness	Extensive plantations of non-native species and strong field patterns are apparent although their presence does not affect the overall intact character of the whole landscape.	High
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	Pleasant combination of landscape features and distinctive hill landforms contribute to scenic diversity in this landscape. Combination of strong field patterns, blocks of woodlands, lines of trees and rocks provide high visual interest.	High
Views	Cockleroy, the Knock, and Binny Craig are recognised as important viewpoints in the council's Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Farms (2011). The hills are important landmarks and are visible from the majority of West Lothian.	High
Enjoyment	Variety of accessible walking routes and path linkages between major settlements. A number of car parks and visitor facilities at key tourist attraction points enhance area's accessibility. Beecraigs Country Park is a major recreational resource and the most visited countryside park in West Lothian. It has good footpath links to Linlithgow, though less so to Bathgate or Livingston.	High

Cultural qualities	Bangour Village Hospital and Torphichen village are conservation areas, and include a number of category A-listed buildings such as Torphichen Preceptory. Cairnpapple Hill is one of the most important prehistoric sites in mainland Scotland. Remains of silver mines are located near the Cairnpapple communication mast and also north of Beecraigs. Various iron age hill forts cover several hilly outcrops.	High
Naturalness	East Kirkton Quarry SSSI, near Bathgate, is designated for its fossils; Petershill SSSI is designated for both geology and habitats; Lochcote Marsh is the only example of basin mire within West Lothian. Intensive farmlands occur on the south and north fringes of the area. The majority of the hills in the central area exhibit tranquillity and more natural land cover.	Medium
Settlement setting	The landscape forms a significant backdrop for the settlement of Bathgate, Linlithgow and the village of Torphichen and performs a key function in providing the setting for these settlements. The Bathgate Hills also form the backdrop and wider setting of Uphall / Broxburn, Bridgend and Livingston.	High
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	Some variations in landscape character are apparent however overall the area is consistent.	
Landscape relationships	The landscape has physical relationships with other areas that surround the Bathgate Hills, particularly the fringe areas to north and south.	
Other designations	There are SSSIs at East Kirkton Quarry, Lochcote Marsh and Petershill, which is also a SWT reserve. There are large Conservation Areas at Torphichen and Bangour Village.	

Landscape Unit: 6 Upper Almond Valley

Criteria	Description	Rank
Landscape character criteria		
Representativeness	The Upper Almond Valley is an area of marginal farmland typical of West Lothian, including the River Almond and a wide area of farmland to the south. Like the wider landscape, this is a mixed area of pasture and arable, woodland and settlement. However, these features make a generally limited positive contribution to local identity. Only the iconic Five Sisters bing near West Calder makes a strong positive contribution to sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	Although bings and other mining landscape features are relatively common across the area, the Five Sisters shale bing is one of the most complete and prominent examples of the type, and as the most easily recognisable by its unique landmark form. Otherwise the landscape features of this area do not have significant rarity value.	Medium
Condition	Field boundaries and tree lines are patchy giving an occasionally unmanaged appearance, and the farmland is marginal in character. Areas adjacent to settlements have an urban fringe character.	Low
Intactness	The farmed part of this landscape is reasonably intact with strong, clear field patterns. Evidence of mining in the past is illustrated in the landscape, though only the Five Sisters remains prominent. The Gavieside area by Livingston is allocated for development, as is the western fringe of Whitburn.	Medium
Landscape quality criteria		
Scenic qualities	Minor roads lined with mature beech trees add scenic quality to the landscape. The more intimate wooded valleys that connect into the wider, generally shallow, Almond Valley provide pockets of attractive scenery.	Medium
Views	Open views across to the Pentlands from many locations within this area. The most distinctive views in this area are towards the landmark Five Sisters bing.	High
Enjoyment	Polkemmet Country Park provides the main recreational resource. Paths and cycleways link Livingston with Seafield along the Almond, and Whitburn with Stoneyburn via disused railways.	Medium
Cultural qualities	The area's mining heritage is apparent from the bings and disused mining buildings. Polkemmet Country Park combines mining heritage with a former estate landscape. Blackburn House is a prominent historic building near Seafield, recently restored. The Five Sisters bing is scheduled as a monument of national importance.	Medium

Naturalness	There is strong evidence of human activity throughout this landscape, which is largely settled and farmed. Natural landcover only occurs in limited pockets, and there is limited remoteness.	Low
Settlement setting	This landscape makes some contribution to the setting of several settlements at its periphery, including Blackburn and Seafield along the Almond, and West Calder which is seen against the Five Sisters bing.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	The use of this landscape is fairly consistent though the bings, in particular the Five Sisters, alter the general consistency of the landscape.	
Landscape relationships	The landscape has limited relationships with adjacent areas, with gradual transitions to the south and west. The area is largely surrounded by settlement.	
Other designations	Longridge Moss near Bents is an SWT reserve. Areas to the east and north are within the West Lothian Countryside Belt.	

Landscape Unit: 7 Couston Valley

Criteria	Description	Rank
Landscape character criteria		
Representativeness	This small area of broad valley lowlands comprises farmland with a strong presence of infrastructure. It is fairly typical of the more developed areas of West Lothian, but the landscape features make a limited positive contribution to sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	There are no landforms or other landscape features within Couston Valley which have significant rarity value.	Low
Condition	This is a relatively well-wooded landscape along its eastern and southern edges, with deciduous woodland and field boundaries. In the centre there is intensive agriculture and further west some areas of unused land and former workings.	Medium
Intactness	Human influence is evident across this landscape. The A801 is a major road corridor linking the M8 and M9, and there are several overhead power lines adjacent. A former sand quarry at Couston has been rehabilitated and flooded to form ponds. Other changes include field amalgamation, small plantations and a large sewage works north of Bathgate.	Low
Landscape quality criteria		
Scenic qualities	This area does not possess scenic diversity or strongly attractive features. It forms part of the wider landscape setting of the western Bathgate Hills around Torphichen.	Low
Views	This area is mainly viewed from the A801 strategic corridor which runs centrally through this landscape from north to south. The views available overlook open fields, with occasional glimpses east to the Bathgate Hills.	Medium
Enjoyment	This landscape can be accessed via paths around the fringes of Bathgate, though there are no significant recreational resources in the area.	Low
Cultural qualities	There are few features of cultural heritage interest in this landscape unit.	Low
Naturalness	This is an extensively man modified landscape, with no significant areas of natural land cover or tranquillity.	Low
Settlement setting	No settlements are located within this area, though it provides a semi-rural approach to Armadale and Bathgate from the north. The area has some role as a foreground setting to Torphichen.	Medium
Non-ranked criteria		

Landscape consistency	Land use changes between farmed and unfarmed land with interruption from road infrastructure and pylons.	
Landscape relationships	Related to landscapes to the north (Avon Valley into the Falkirk Council area) and south (Armadale/Bathgate Plateau) linked by the A801.	
Other designations	There are no relevant designations within the area.	

Landscape Unit: 8 Polkemmet Moor

Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	The combination of former mining and plantation forestry across moorland does recur elsewhere in West Lothian, though not frequently. These features make a limited positive contribution to sense of place, mainly in terms of historic identity.	Low
Rarity	The remaining black coal bings along the moor road are unusual features in a West Lothian context, where other prominent bings tend to be reddish-pink shale. Also unusual in the West Lothian landscape are the wide peat bogs, although to some extent obscured by areas of forestry.	Medium
Condition	Trees along field boundaries are patchy and in poor condition with several fallen trees. Stone walls are also in need of maintenance. Within the moorland areas are ruined buildings and derelict mining remnants.	Low
Intactness	There is clear evidence of disturbance to the landscape caused by mining and forestry. The remains of large scale coal workings can be seen in the landscape, including bings, ruins and disused railway cuttings and embankments. Blanket forestry has since been established over large areas. The eastern part of the area will be redeveloped for housing and golf as part of the "Heartlands" project south east of Whitburn.	Low
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	There is limited scenic diversity in this landscape. Vegetation provides occasional/seasonal interest in the form of heather, gorse and trees.	Medium
Views	This landscape is not particularly visible from outside areas due to its undulating nature and forest cover. Long views outward to the hills behind Blackridge to the north, and to the Gladsmuir and Pentland Hills to the south.	Medium
Enjoyment	Forestry Commission land is accessible with woodland footpaths and some signs of use, including negative uses such as off-road motorcycling. Enjoyment of this area is likely to be by the local population rather than as a wider draw.	Low
Cultural qualities	Mining heritage is evident in the derelict buildings, which were part of the former mining village of East Benhar. Almost all of the workings of Polkemmet Colliery have been removed as part of the "Heartlands" redevelopment.	Medium

Naturalness	The general absence of roads and settlement, and the presence of moorland and bog, adds to a sense of remoteness, even in forested areas. Along the minor road between Fauldhouse and Harthill the influence of mining and forestry is prevalent.	Medium
Settlement setting	This upland area forms the backdrop to Fauldhouse and Whitburn.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	Very consistent with overall uniformity.	
Landscape relationships	This landscape character area continues westwards over the council area boundary into North Lanarkshire.	
Other designations	There are no relevant designations within the area.	

Landscape Unit: 9 Armadale / Bathgate Plateau		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	Open and relatively flat grasslands, pastures, farmlands with plantation woodlands, and infrastructure are the key characteristics of the area. These features recur across West Lothian, though they make limited positive contribution to sense of place, and this area has a lack of identity.	Medium
Rarity	No features which are rare or unique within the West Lothian area.	Low
Condition	Post and wire fences are typical field boundaries, with scrub vegetation and areas of gorse. Derelict buildings and collapsed stone walls are noticeable across the area. Settlement fringe, prominent overhead power lines, and major road corridors have a negative effect on condition.	Low
Intactness	The A801, A706 and the Bathgate – Airdrie railway line passing through the centre of the area are major intrusions in the landscape. Whilst the west area predominantly consists of semi-natural grasslands, some raised bogs and pastures, the area between Armadale and Bathgate is affected by prominent overhead power lines. The Armadale Core Development Area (CDA) extends into this area.	Low
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	Open, relatively flat grasslands, pastures and woodland are relatively pleasing. The lack of any prominent landforms or contrasting typography results in limited visual diversity. Overhead lines and pylons are prominent over the large area between Armadale and Bathgate.	Low
Views	Whilst the area is generally exposed, there are only limited views out, for example to the Bathgate Hills and Pentland Hills from the A801 and B8084. Eastcraigs and Westcraigs Hills form the backdrop to the whole area. Whilst there are no major landmarks or focal points, the whole area is visible from the railway and main road corridors.	Medium
Enjoyment	Several local paths exist within community woodlands that surround Armadale and Bathgate, including the Boghead House policies. Walks and trails within the area are accessible and well used by local people.	Medium
Cultural qualities	Remnants of the designed landscape of Boghead House remain along the western edge of Bathgate. Individual former quarries are among the few visible remains of the mining history in the area.	Low

Naturalness	Natural landscapes have been affected by agricultural and urban activity and generally have a low degree of wildness, although there are areas within community woodlands and ponds that have some naturalness value, particularly given the context of settlement.	Medium
Settlement setting	Fairly flat and exposed grasslands, wetlands and farmlands surround Armadale and Bathgate, although they do not form distinctive settings for these settlements.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	Although variations within the landscape character are noticeable, the whole area is relatively consistent.	
Landscape relationships	Plantation woodlands and open farmlands and pastures continue westwards towards North Lanarkshire. The whole area gently rises up towards the north creating minor undulations that gradually transform into hills surrounding Bathgate and Blackridge.	
Other designations	The eastern parts of this area are within the West Lothian Countryside Belt.	

Landscape Unit: 10 Livingston / Blackburn Plateau		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	This landscape is very typical of West Lothian. It contains many features which recur across the area, such as bings, forestry, fragmented farmland, and transport corridors, all close to large settlements and commercial development. However, few of these features make a strong positive contribution to local identity or sense of place, other than the Seafield Law bing.	Medium
Rarity	The regular grid pattern of Easter Inch Moss has some rarity value. The adjacent Seafield Law, is one of the few shale bings with formal access. Seafield and Dechmont Laws are unusual in their accessibility and close proximity to settlements. The 'pyramids' along the M8 are distinctive.	Medium
Condition	Condition is affected by the location on the settlement fringe, with evidence of fly-tipping and other negative attributes. It is evidently a managed landscape. The remaining farmland in the area is marginal.	Low
Intactness	The area has been affected by past mining and industrial activity, which has now completely ceased. Where farming continues, it is intensive with large fields. The area has been almost surrounded by industrial and residential development forming the fringes of Bathgate and Livingston. The railway line, M8 and A779 dissect the area.	Low
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	This area has limited scenic value in itself, though some scenic quality is added by points of isolated visual interest, particularly views from Seafield Law and Dechmont Law.	Low
Views	Large areas of West Lothian can be viewed from the summit of Seafield Law, with views beyond the area towards Edinburgh and the Pentland Hills. Dechmont Law similarly offers broad views both south across Livingston to the Pentlands and north to the Bathgate Hills. Both hills are visible from surrounding settlements, and can be seen from the M8. From the M8 the 'pyramids' earth sculpture is a prominent landmark.	High
Enjoyment	Footpaths and cycle routes, including NCN Route 75 across Easter Inch Moss Local Nature Reserve, are well marked and well used. The area is very accessible from Bathgate, Blackburn, Seafield and Livingston. Dechmont Law and Seafield Law are both popular walking locations.	High
Cultural qualities	Mining heritage is evident through the presence of bings, though there is limited other evidence. Modern roadside	Low

	sculptures offer some cultural interest.	
Naturalness	Part of this area forms Easter Inch Moss Local Nature Reserve, and there is also a SSSI at Tailend Moss. However, although the land cover is apparently natural in places, most of this area has been reclaimed, and is evidently man modified and managed. Its location on the settlement periphery and the presence of the railway and particularly the M8 reduce any sense of remoteness.	Medium
Settlement setting	Seafield Law forms the backdrop to Seafield, and Blackburn to the west. The area plays a very limited role in the setting of Bathgate. Dechmont Law has a more important role in forming the northern high point of Livingston.	Medium
Non-ranked criteria		
Landscape consistency	The landscape of this area varies between areas which are farmed, and former industrial land and raised bogs now managed as nature reserves, although it shares the same settlement fringe context.	
Landscape relationships	The area is not strongly related to other landscape units, though there are important links with the green corridors which run through and between the adjacent settlements. There is a visual link north to the Bathgate Hills and south to the Five Sisters. Dechmont Law has a visual link to the Bathgate Hills across the M8.	
Other designations	Easter Inch Moss and Seafield Law are a LNR. Tailend Moss SSSI is an SWT reserve. Most of this area is within the West Lothian Countryside Belt.	

Landscape Unit: 11 Avonbridge to Armadale Plateau Edge		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	The area consists of gently undulating farmlands and pastures with defined field boundaries and several blocks of plantation woodlands. It contains some features which recur through West Lothian, including former quarries and lines of mature beech trees. These make some contribution to a sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	The landscape is dominated by intensive agriculture which is not rare across the area. There are localised designed landscapes and mature deciduous woodland which are less common in West Lothian.	Low
Condition	A varied landscape in which some areas have well-established landscape features deriving from local designed landscapes, while other areas are more marginal with gappy hedges and gorse patches.	Medium
Intactness	Although some remains of former quarries are apparent, the landscape has mainly been affected by agriculture and to a lesser extent forestry. Some overhead lines and electricity pylons are noticeable. The landscape structure appears to be intact with mature trees, woodlands and shelter belts.	Medium
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	Undulating agricultural landscape provides some visual interest. Wide, open views with lines of mature beech trees and well maintained hedges increase the scenic value of the area. Barbauchlaw Glen is a small but attractive wooded valley set within the wider farmed landscape.	Medium
Views	Wide panoramic views are available from the majority of the roads running across the area, for example towards the Bathgate Hills from the Craigengall area. There are few landmarks within this landscape. There are few inward views from routes, though the area is glimpsed through trees from the A801. Barbauchlaw Glen is visible from Armadale.	Medium
Enjoyment	There are a number of rights of way and marked walking routes in this area. Barbauchlaw Glen provides for recreational use by local people. There is a disused golf course north of Armadale.	Low

Cultural qualities	Armadale is a mining settlement with several former brickworks and mines being located around the settlement, though little now remains to be seen. Significant historic buildings include the 16 th century Bridge Castle to the north of Armadale, and the eccentric 19 th -century Gowanbank House.	Medium
Naturalness	Some areas located closer to Blackridge Heights are more natural in character and have retained greater biodiversity value. The majority of the landscape has been affected by agricultural activities, though there are pockets of mature deciduous woodland.	Medium
Settlement setting	The landscape is adjacent to the settlement of Armadale, which lies to the south, though it has a somewhat limited role in its setting. New development has been planned for the area adjacent to Westfield as part of the redevelopment of the former Mill complex.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	The area is consistent with localised variation in landscape.	
Landscape relationships	Pastures and farmlands continue further to the north and east. More natural grasslands and plantation woodlands to the west, relating to the character of Blackridge Heights.	
Other designations	There are no relevant designations within the area.	

Landscape Unit: 12 Blackridge Heights		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	Natural grasslands, plantation woodlands and low intensity farmlands and pastures recur across some parts of West Lothian, but open moorland is not typical of the wider area. The lowland bog and rocky hills make a positive contribution to identity and sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	Blawhorn Moss is an exceptional large-scale wetland feature of this area. It is the most extensive and last remaining wetland of this type in the Lothians and central Scotland. Open and gently undulating semi-natural grasslands are not rare within the area.	High
Condition	This is a landscape of marginal farmland. Fences, hedgerows and stone walls generally appear somewhat neglected. Pasture is rushy and there are areas with a settlement fringe character.	Low
Intactness	Plantation woodlands have been established at the north and west edges. The A89 road corridor and the railway line cut through the landscape. Elsewhere there are isolated buildings and former quarries. Around Eastcraigs and Westcraigs Hills the landscape is fairly intact, comprising open grasslands without noticeable field boundaries.	Medium
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	Semi-natural, open grasslands contrast with more intensively used agricultural fields of areas further east, and have some scenic value. Limited tree cover and lack of field boundaries enable long views which contribute to the scenic quality of the area.	Medium
Views	Eastcraigs and Westcraigs Hills are visible from the A89, M8 and other areas to the south. These are landmark features of the area, and provide long views to the Pentland Hills and the settlement of Blackridge. Blawhorn Moss National Nature Reserve (NNR) is recognised as an important viewpoint in the council's Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Farms (2011).	High
Enjoyment	Blawhorn Moss NNR with its 2km long boardwalk, art works and surfaced track is a visitor attraction of the area. No other tourist facilities have been identified, although the NCN Route 75 follows the rail line south of Blackridge. The area provides rights of way and local footpaths.	Medium

Cultural qualities	The village of Blackridge is a former mining settlement that developed as a result of a coal mining expansion in 19 th century with remains of quarries and bings being still apparent to the south of the settlement.	Low
Naturalness	Although the A89 road corridor, the railway and some remains of the former quarries affect the south and west areas, the majority of this landscape seems wild and natural with little manmade influence. The extensive Blawhorn Moss NNR provides access to tranquil areas and has high biodiversity value.	High
Settlement setting	Gently undulating terrain around both Eastcraigs and Westcraigs Hills create a significant backdrop for Blackridge and Westrigg.	High
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	The character of the landscape varies, from farmlands with quarries at the west to natural, open grasslands at the east, centred on the NNR. Overall the landscape is fairly consistent.	
Landscape relationships	The area comprises farmlands, grasslands and pastures and is closely related to adjacent areas. This landscape extends north into Falkirk, where there are further areas of moss, and where a wind farm near the administrative boundary at Burnhead has recently been approved. It also extends along the Barbauchlaw Glen to the east.	
Other designations	Blawhorn Moss is protected as a SAC, SSSI and NNR.	

Landscape Unit: 13 Kirknewton Plain

Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	Rolling farmland with woodland and forestry is typical of West Lothian but there are few strong landscape features contributing to a sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	No particularly rare features have been identified within this area. There are designed landscape elements and mature woodland.	Low
Condition	Farmland is well maintained, with well managed tree belts and woodland. There are peripheral areas where hedges are gappy, and the disused airfield has an effect at the Council boundary. Elsewhere the parkland around Kirknewton House is well maintained.	High
Intactness	Large pylons and busy infrastructure routes (A70, A71, railway) cut across the farmed landscape. The underlying patchwork pattern of fields set within shelterbelts remains legible, extending to similar landscape patterns on the Edinburgh side of the boundary. The area between Ormiston and Belstane along the Gogar Burn remains intact, along with the parkland around Kirknewton House.	Medium
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	The scenic qualities of this area derive from vegetation: tree belts on the horizons of high rolling hills highlight the landform; gorse provides seasonal interest; and there is a sculptural quality provided by the trees that have been shaped by the prevailing wind. Attractive parkland landscapes occur in places.	Medium
Views	The area is viewed from the A71 and A70 and Edinburgh to Carstairs railway line, and the higher areas are visible from Livingston. Open views to the Pentland Hills and Arthurs Seat in Edinburgh from higher ground. Wide views north from Leyden Road at Edgehead.	Medium
Enjoyment	Selm Muir Forest (Forestry Commission) provides local recreation. NCN Route 75 passes through Kirknewton, and there are riding stables in the area, though few footpaths.	Medium
Cultural qualities	Localised designed landscape influences evident in the landscape as gateways and follies at Kirknewton House, Hatton House and Linburn.	Medium
Naturalness	Human influence is evident throughout this settled and farmed landscape, and there is limited tranquillity.	Low
Settlement setting	This landscape provides a rural setting primarily for Kirknewton on the sloping ground. East Calder and Wilkieston are also adjacent.	Medium

Non-ranked criteria		
Landscape consistency	Very consistent in terms of land use with farming throughout.	
Landscape relationships	Views both to and from the Pentland Hills. Strong visual relationship with Dalmahoy Hill to the east, within Edinburgh.	
Other designations	The area between the A71 and the railway is identified as an Area of Special Agricultural Importance (ASAI).	

Landscape Unit: 14 East Calder / Livingston / Broxburn Plain		
Criteria	Description	Rank
	Note: This area of farmland is divided in two by the Almond Valley, which is considered separately as area 17.	
Landscape character criteria		
Representativeness	This area is typical of West Lothian farmland and settlement fringe, traversed by major transport corridors. Actively-worked bings and large scale poultry sheds also recur across West Lothian. However, none of these landscape features makes a substantial positive contribution to sense of place. Aside from the Union Canal, the landscape has limited identity.	Medium
Rarity	This area contains a number of features, including urban fringe, and intensive agriculture, which are not rare across West Lothian. The bings at Drumshoreland and south of Uphall have either been remediated or are active extraction sites, and are not prominent in the landscape.	Low
Condition	The area shows some well managed field boundaries, but there are other areas where the landscape has been less well maintained, particularly in association with active or disused industrial sites, and at settlement fringe locations.	Medium
Intactness	This area has been extensively modified in the past, though shale oil workings around Drumshoreland and Pumpherston. More recently these have been remediated, with removal of material ongoing. Other changes include the M8 crossing the area, and large-scale poultry farming buildings. Areas in the vicinity of Pumpherston and Uphall are allocated for development within the West Lothian Local Plan, while the southern part of the landscape unit is almost entirely within the Calderwood CDA.	Low
Landscape quality criteria		
Scenic qualities	The area has limited scenic diversity and visual interest, as it is dominated by intensive farmland, with unattractive industrial sites and buildings.	Low
Views	Parts of this landscape are highly visible, with views across the area from the M8, A89 and A71, as well as the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway. The low-lying landscape does not offer significant outward views, though the Pentlands and Binny Craig are occasionally glimpsed.	Medium
Enjoyment	There are footpath/cycle links across this area following the Union Canal and the disused railway line, and linking Uphall, Broxburn and Livingston with Almondell and Calderwood Country Park and East Calder. There are other local path networks close to settlements. Formal recreation includes golf courses and a fishing pond.	Medium

Cultural qualities	There are the remains of industrial heritage in this area, particularly around Roman Camp, including the remains of Drumshoreland Bing. The earthworks which gave Roman Camp its name are not now thought to have been Roman in origin. The Union Canal crosses the landscape. The 17 th -century Houstoun House is located adjacent to Uphall, and is part of the Uphall conservation area.	Medium
Naturalness	The landscape is dominated by farmland, and by former industrial sites which are remediated to a greater or lesser degree. While some areas have regained biodiversity value, for the most part this area is perceived as a strongly man-modified landscape, extensively influenced by infrastructure and development	Low
Settlement setting	This landscape is adjacent to the settlements of Broxburn and Uphall to the north, Uphall Station and Pumpherston to the west where a large residential expansion is proposed, and East Calder to the south that comprises the Calderwood CDA. For the most part the boundaries of these settlements with the landscape are indistinct.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	The area is largely consistent in terms of its landscape qualities, though the wooded post-industrial character around Pumpherston and Drumshoreland differs from the more open farmland to the east.	
Landscape relationships	This landscape unit is bounded by settlement to north and west, and has some relationship with areas to the east around Newbridge within the City of Edinburgh Council area, which are similar agricultural landscapes influenced by infrastructure. To the south of the Almond, the landscape is related to the rising ground to the south around Kirknewton.	
Other designations	The western parts of the area are included in the Countryside Belt, while the eastern part is identified as an ASAI. Western parts of this area are within the West Lothian Countryside Belt.	

Landscape Unit: 15 Winchburgh / Niddry Plain		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	This small area comprises farmland and former mineral workings, which are typical of West Lothian and the wider area. It is lent a strong sense of place by the Faucheldean, Greendykes and Niddry Castle bings, which are iconic features representative of the scale of the now-defunct shale oil industry in West Lothian.	High
Rarity	The scheduled bings at Faucheldean and Greendykes are examples of the few remaining intact shale bings in Scotland, and are unique within West Lothian in their extent.	High
Condition	The area contains settlement fringe landscapes which are less well maintained and have negative attributes such as fly tipping. Field boundaries in the adjacent farmland are occasionally missing, and the former industrial land uses continue to have an impact on landscape condition.	Low
Intactness	This area has been significantly affected by the exploitation of shale oil in the 19 th and 20 th centuries. The shale bings and associated former works sites dominate the area and elsewhere agriculture has intensified. Little of the earlier landscape structure remains. The northern parts of this landscape unit fall within the Winchburgh CDA, while areas to the south are also allocated for development.	Low
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	The landscape has visual diversity in the contrast of farmland and regenerating woodland with the stark red bings. They are an industrial monument of the past and contribute to the scenery of West Lothian. The canal and Niddry Castle also offer scenic interest.	High
Views	Both Greendykes and Niddry Castle bings are major landmarks of the Central Belt, being highly visible from the M8, M9, and the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway. The bings also offer panoramic views for those who climb them. Niddry Castle is briefly glimpsed from the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway.	High
Enjoyment	The Union Canal forms a walking and cycling route through the area, with some adjacent rights of way, and there is a golf course at Niddry Castle. The bings are informally used by local walkers, as well as by off-road motorcyclists.	Medium

Cultural qualities	The bings at Faucheldean and Greendykes are scheduled monuments in recognition of their national importance to the history of Scotland's shale mining industry. The wider landscape is strongly associated with shale oil, and hosted the Broxburn Albyn works; the Hopetoun works at Faucheldean; and the Niddry Castle works at Winchburgh, all linked to the Union Canal. The only built remains are the surviving miners' rows in Winchburgh. Earlier history is also represented by the 15 th -century Niddry Castle.	High
Naturalness	This landscape is extensively man-modified, with the bings exerting a pervasive influence over the surrounding intensive agriculture. The regenerating vegetation on the bings has given rise to plant communities of some interest.	Low
Settlement setting	The bings provide an essential aspect of the setting of Winchburgh and north and east Broxburn. The adjacent farmland is of more limited importance in settlement setting.	High
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	This landscape consists of contrasting land uses of farmland and former industrial sites, though it is not inconsistent in character.	
Landscape relationships	The area is relatively self-contained, though the bings have visual importance in all surrounding areas.	
Other designations	Greendykes and Faucheldean Bings are scheduled monuments, as is the Union Canal. The central portion of this area is within the West Lothian Countryside Belt.	

Landscape Unit: 16 Avon Valley

Criteria	Description	Rank
Landscape character criteria		
Representativeness	The steep, narrow, wooded valley of the Avon is not a combination of features which recurs frequently in West Lothian. The valley landscape does make a strong contribution to a sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	There are similar wooded incised valleys within the study area, though they are uncommon in the context of the generally open landscapes of West Lothian. The gorge-like landform of parts of the Avon Valley is a rare feature, paralleled within West Lothian only in the Almond Valley.	High
Condition	The valley landscape is in good condition, in relation to its principal land cover of native ancient woodland. There are farmed areas with some field boundaries less intact.	High
Intactness	The valley is generally unaffected by recent development and has not experienced any significant decline in quality.	High
Landscape quality criteria		
Scenic qualities	The valley presents an attractive landscape, particularly in its narrower, more intricate sections. There are scenic contrasts of river, woodland and farmland, enhanced by the variety of viewpoints from paths and bridges.	High
Views	The northern part of the area, at the edge of Linlithgow, is visible from the settlement edge and from the railway line. The valley itself is more enclosed and visually contained, and though the A706 follows the valley there are few views of the river. The Avon Aqueduct is recognised as an important viewpoint in the council's Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Farms (2011).	Low
Enjoyment	The River Avon Heritage Trail links Avonbridge and Inveravon in Falkirk via Linlithgow Bridge, with path sections on both sides of the river through this landscape. Also on the Falkirk side is Muiravonside Country Park, a popular resource which is accessible from Linlithgow via the Union Canal towpath and aqueduct.	High
Cultural qualities	Sites along the river provide a range of historic interest celebrated in the River Avon Heritage Trail. Mills include the scheduled Torphichen Mill, the birthplace of steam-boat inventor Henry Bell. Several river crossings are listed, including the Avon Viaduct at Linlithgow Bridge, the disused Westfield Viaduct, and the Avon Aqueduct at Muiravonside. The battle of Linlithgow Bridge was fought across the haughs/flats of the River Avon in 1526, though the bridge has been replaced and part of the designated battlefield has been built over.	High

Naturalness	The steep slopes of the valley are densely wooded for the most part, with several areas of ancient woodland. Carriber Glen SSSI is designated for its native woodland. There are tranquil areas in this landscape, away from the roads.	High
Settlement setting	The northern part of this area forms part of the setting of Linlithgow Bridge, though there are no other settlements within or adjacent to this landscape unit.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	This is a consistent landscape unit comprising a single valley, though there are differences in character at the western upstream extent towards Avonbridge which is more open, and around the haughs/river flats by Linlithgow Bridge at the downstream end.	
Landscape relationships	The eastern side of the valley is clearly strongly related to the western bank within Falkirk. The main part of the valley is self-contained, though the more open areas to the west are related to the adjacent plateau.	
Other designations	Carriber Glen SSSI covers a section of the river and adjacent woodland. The area west of Linlithgow Bridge is included in the Inventory of Historic Battlefields.	

Landscape Unit: 17 Almond Valley

Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	This wooded, steep-sided valley landscape is not typical of the wider area. The River Almond is the principal watercourse of West Lothian and its valley has a strong sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	There are similar landscapes within West Lothian, associated with the other lowland river valleys. However, the densely wooded, enclosed landform is unusual within the context of the generally open landscapes of the study area, and the most deeply incised parts are only matched by the Avon Valley.	High
Condition	The landscape of the Almond Valley is well maintained, particularly where it is actively managed as part of Almondell Country Park.	High
Intactness	The southern part of the area is generally more intact, with extensive mixed and native woodlands within the steep valley. The insertion of a large sewage works near Mid Calder has a relatively limited impact on the valley landscape. To the north, where the valley is more open, the area is affected by the M8 passing over, and at the extreme north comes up against commercial development at the fringes of Newbridge. The southern edge of the valley abuts the Calderwood CDA.	High
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	The small-scale valley landscape has scenic qualities in the combinations of steep wooded slopes and rocky watercourse, and in the juxtaposition of the often turbulent river with impressive bridges and aqueducts. The former Almondell Estate plantings of mixed woodland offer visual interest.	High
Views	The valley landscape is generally enclosed, with relatively little intervisibility with adjacent landscapes. However, within the valley there are important vantage points in the several river crossings. To the north, the valley is less enclosed, although the river is less conspicuous in the landscape. There are views across this area from the M8 and the Edinburgh-Glasgow railways.	Low
Enjoyment	Almondell and Calderwood Country Park is a popular location for outdoor recreation in West Lothian. The northern part of the park is within this landscape unit, and provides walking routes which are readily accessible via paths from the surrounding settlements.	High

Cultural qualities	The estate landscape of the former Almondell House lies within this area, and forms the northern part of the country park. The house was demolished in the 1960s, but significant buildings survive in the Alexander Nasmyth-designed bridge and the stable block. The Astronomical Pillar from Kirkhill stands in the grounds, and has inspired a modern installation of planet-themed sculpture across the wider area. Beyond the country park are the Union Canal feeder and aqueduct, the Almond railway viaduct, and the 17 th -century Illieston House.	High
Naturalness	The native woodland along the valley is a natural land cover, valued both as a habitat and in its own right as a resource. The riverside walkways are tranquil and with a valuable degree of relative remoteness, particularly given their proximity to Livingston.	High
Settlement setting	The west end of this section of the Almond Valley plays a role in the setting of East Calder, and particularly Mid Calder in its location at the Murieston Water / River Almond confluence. Elsewhere this landscape unit is not related to settlements.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	The river valley is generally consistent, although the northern section is more open and less wooded. The river corridor becomes almost wholly open north of the M8 and Birdsmill near Broxburn.	
Landscape relationships	The Almond Valley extends upstream to the west, within the Livingston settlement boundary, though the river corridor is largely uninterrupted until the A899 crossing. To the south, the Murieston and Linhouse valleys also form a continuation of this river corridor. The adjacent farmland is less strongly related to the valley.	
Other designations	Almondell and Calderwood Country Park includes the southern part of this area. A small area to the south is within the West Lothian Countryside Belt.	

Landscape Unit: 18 Murieston / Linhouse / Camilty Waters		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	This area covers the combined valleys of several small tributaries of the River Almond. It is relatively typical of river valleys in West Lothian, with features such as incised wooded slopes and more open sections which occur elsewhere. Where the valleys are more enclosed, they offer a greater contribution to sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	There are few features in this valley landscape which are considered rare in the study area, although the deeply incised valleys and dense wooded "island" landscape of Calder Wood between the Murieston and Linhouse Waters is unusual in the West Lothian context.	Medium
Condition	The upland parts of this area are marginal in character, with some ruined farm buildings and unused farmland. Elsewhere the landscape is in better condition, particularly where managed for access as at Calderwood Country Park.	Medium
Intactness	Roads and railway lines dissect the northern part of the valley, which is also close to settlement edges and an industrial estate on a former bing complex. Lines of pylons also impact on the landscape further south, and there are outlying blocks of conifers around Camilty. There are nevertheless extensive intact areas of woodland and riparian vegetation.	Medium
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	The river valleys provide some scenic diversity, particularly in the more intimate incised wooded areas. There are features of scenic interest along the watercourses, including waterfalls and bridges. A sculptural quality is provided by trees moulded by the prevailing wind.	Medium
Views	This landscape is not extensively visible or overlooked from transport routes. The northern area is viewed from settlement edges. Open views are offered from areas of higher ground on valley edges, where the valley is broader. There are views from above Linhouse Glen looking north to the Bathgate Hills, though visibility is restricted from within the valley.	Medium
Enjoyment	Calderwood Country Park is an important resource, easily accessible from the A71 with parking provided, and also directly accessed from Livingston, East Calder and Mid Calder. Paths extend along the valley to Linhouse Glen nature reserve. Further south access is less formal, though there are still opportunities for walking.	High

Cultural qualities	Disused mills and weirs are evidence of past industry along the valley, most impressively shown by the remains of the gunpowder mill at Camilty. The railway viaduct and the 16 th -century house at Linhouse are both category A listed, and there are small-scale designed landscape influences around Linhouse.	Medium
Naturalness	Despite proximity to settlement, the area has secluded and natural wooded valley landscapes, providing valuable tranquillity and relative remoteness. Calder Wood offers a relatively large area of native woodland habitat, and there are two extensive SSSIs within the valley, both of which are publicly accessible.	High
Settlement setting	The area borders the south-west of Livingston, though as the valley is low-lying it does not add significantly to any settlement setting. On a local scale, the river does play an important role in the setting of Mid Calder at the confluence of the River Almond and Linhouse Water.	Medium
Non-ranked criteria		
Landscape consistency	The valley broadens and narrows though its character is largely consistent.	
Landscape relationships	Bordering many other landscapes due to the path of Linhouse / Camilty water. Closely related to Livingston and Kirknewton Plain as the A71 and railway line pass from these areas across the valley.	
Other designations	Calderwood SSSI is part of Almondell and Calderwood Country Park, and further to the south is Linhouse Valley SSSI and SWT reserve. An area adjacent to East Calder is within the West Lothian Countryside Belt. The Mid Calder Conservation Area extends across the river valley.	

Landscape Unit: 19 West Calder Burn / Breich & Harwood Waters		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	The landscape adjacent to the Breich and Harwood Waters is typical of West Lothian river valleys, comprising shallow open and incised sections with some native woodland. The river corridor consists of farmland, settlement fringe and former industrial features, which recur in the wider West Lothian landscape, but make limited contribution to a sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	This type of farmed landscape with settlement is not rare within West Lothian. North Addiewell Bing nature reserve is a unique feature forming a recognisable local landmark. No other features in the area are considered to have rarity value.	Low
Condition	Field boundaries are in reasonable condition. Hedges are patchy, though maintained. The majority of the farmlands are well managed, although some unmaintained areas are apparent.	Medium
Intactness	Farmland along the Breich Water is fairly intact. However the area as a whole has been significantly affected by mining activities in the past. Since then, settlement expansion has taken place, and afforestation of the upper valley. The railway line and the A71 road corridor affect the landscape where they are carried on embankments.	Low
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	Whilst the Breich Water is an attractive feature, it is hidden within the valley and does not particularly contribute to wider scenic qualities. No dramatic combinations of features across the area. There is visual interest in the bings and wooded glen north of Addiewell.	Low
Views	The area is located in the valley and there is minimal outward visibility from within the area. The Five Sisters bing is visible from the valley edges, such as at West Calder. There are no key viewpoints although the area is visible from the A71 road corridors and railway line.	Medium
Enjoyment	Very few signed paths or cycling routes. North Addiewell Bing is an accessible nature reserve but otherwise access into this landscape is limited, although there is a golf course at Greenburn by Fauldhouse.	Medium
Cultural qualities	Several mining settlements are located within the area. Mining heritage is a distinctive feature of the landscape. The extensive Addiewell oil works formerly occupied the land between Addiewell and West Calder, though this is now the site of the prison and waste recycling plant.	Medium

Naturalness	Mining activities have affected the landscape in the past. Nowadays the majority of the land is used for agriculture or housing developments. There are pockets of natural land cover mainly in the regenerating bings, which are now valued for their biodiversity.	Medium
Settlement setting	The Breich Valley provides distinct settings for several settlements, including West Calder, Polbeth and Fauldhouse.	High
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	Similar landscapes continue along the Breich Water creating a consistent character throughout the area. There are local variations, depending on the woodland cover and local landform.	
Landscape relationships	Relatively flat fields and pastures continue to the north and are the key landscape features of the Almond Valley Lowlands. Landscape relationships are also noticeable towards Harburn / Hartwood Fringe to the south.	
Other designations	Skolie Burn SSSI at Addiewell / Loganlea is designated for grassland and geology. North Addiewell Bing is a SWT reserve	

Landscape Unit: 20 Linlithgow Fringe		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	This landscape exhibits characteristic features which recur through the area, such as the mix of rolling farmland and woodlands. Linlithgow Loch with its landscape and townscape setting makes a very strong contribution to wider identity and sense of place.	High
Rarity	There are relatively few lochs across West Lothian, and the combinations of townscape and landscape in this location give it some rarity value. However the surrounding farmland does not exhibit unusual features.	Medium
Condition	The farmland around Linlithgow has the overall appearance of being very well maintained. Stone walls remain in very good condition. Settlement edges are well-defined and there is little evidence of neglect of landscape features.	High
Intactness	Although the M9 passes the north side of Linlithgow Loch, it is well screened and its impact both locally and in the wider landscape is surprisingly limited. The expansion of Linlithgow has similarly not impacted the wider landscape. Tree lined field boundaries are intact and, although there has been intensification of agricultural production, the landscape structure remains legible.	High
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	The well-known combination of Linlithgow Loch, the Palace and St Michael's Kirk is visually attractive. Rolling wooded farmland, particularly on Airngath Hill to the north, provides a scenic backdrop to this 'set piece'. The remaining areas serve as an attractive setting for the town.	High
Views	The landscape is viewed daily by a high volume of road users on the M9 and the A803, and is overlooked by residents of Linlithgow. There are views across the area from Cockleroy Hill, adjacent to Beecraigs Country Park, and other popular locations within the Bathgate Hills. From within this landscape, there are fewer views out, as it lies between areas of higher ground.	High
Enjoyment	Linlithgow Loch and Palace are a key tourist draw in West Lothian. The Union Canal passes through the town, and is also a very important recreational resource. There is a good network of footpaths linking Linlithgow to Beecraigs Country Park. A golf course overlooks the town from the south-west.	High

Cultural qualities	Linlithgow Palace has been at the heart of the town and of this landscape for several centuries, and brings a wealth of associations as the chief residence of the later Stewart kings and queens. The area of the Peel also has older associations with the Wars of Independence, and a large parkland area around the loch is scheduled. Linlithgow later became a Burgh, then County Town, and several grand houses and estates contribute to the surrounding landscape, including Preston House, and Grange on Airngath Hill with its prominent monument.	High
Naturalness	There is no sense of wildness or remoteness, though some tranquil pockets within this landscape exist. Due to this area's proximity to Linlithgow and strategic road and rail connections, and its farmed and settled nature, there is a presence of human influence throughout the area.	Low
Settlement setting	This landscape frames Linlithgow on three sides. The Bathgate Hills to the south, and Airngath Hill to the north, provide the essential setting for the town. Airngath Hill in particular is visible from several locations within the town.	High
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	The area is largely consistent in terms of landscape character, though the farmland areas to the west and south are less remarkable than the area around the Peel and Airngath Hill.	
Landscape relationships	This area most strongly relates to the Bathgate Hills to the south, having a strong visual link to the summits of Cockleroy and nearby Bowden Hill. The landscape of this area extends east to the Bathgate Hills Fringe and west into Falkirk.	
Other designations	Linlithgow Loch is a SSSI as well as part of the scheduled monument covering the Palace, Peel and Royal Park. This area also lies within the Linlithgow Palace and High Street Conservation Area.	

Landscape Unit: 21 Bathgate Hills Fringe		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	Intensive farmlands and settlement recur across West Lothian. Also typical of West Lothian are the undulations of the terrain and lines of beech trees. The combinations of features lend some sense of place.	Medium
Rarity	Gently undulating intensive farmlands occur across the Bathgate Hills Fringe and beyond, and are not especially rare features across West Lothian. There are occasional rocky hills which have some rarity value.	Medium
Condition	Intensively managed landscape with associated loss of traditional field boundary features, but generally well cared for farmlands.	Medium
Intactness	The area is intensively farmed but has otherwise been largely unaffected by industrial activities or forestry. Settlement expansion affects the southern edge of this area at Uphall and Broxburn, where there are areas allocated for housing.	High
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	Simple, rolling landscape with a positive landform. Where there is stronger variation, for example around Ecclesmachan, this is an attractive landscape. Prominent lines of beech trees and well maintained hedges create a pleasing combination of features.	Medium
Views	Long panoramic views from the roads to the north and east of the area, for example looking north from the Ochiltree Road. To the south the landscape becomes more enclosed with fewer views. The area is visible from the M8 and M9, in association with the Bathgate Hills.	High
Enjoyment	There is limited recreational access to this landscape. Some footpaths exist within the community woodland to the north of Broxburn and Uphall providing recreational resources for local residents. There are riding stables and a golf course in this area.	Low
Cultural qualities	Ochiltree Castle is a 17 th century laird's house, and there are also significant historic buildings at Kingscavil and Ecclesmachan, a 12 th century church.	Medium
Naturalness	The majority of the Bathgate Hills Fringe is given over to intensive agriculture. The landscape does not exhibit natural land cover or remoteness, except in very small pockets of woodland.	Low
Settlement setting	Undulating intensive farmlands and individual hills provide a backdrop and rural setting for the settlements of	High

	Broxburn, Uphall and Bridgend.	
Non-ranked criteria		
Landscape consistency	This is a generally consistent landscape, although there is some variation in character between the open sloping farmland and more undulating areas around Ecclesmachan and west of Ochiltree.	
Landscape relationships	The main physical and visual relationship is with the core of the Bathgate Hills to south and west. Intensive farmlands and pastures extend north as the key features of the West Lothian Coastal Farmlands.	
Other designations	The south-east part of this landscape is within the West Lothian Countryside Belt.	

Landscape Unit: 22 West Lothian Coastal Farlands		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	The area predominantly consists of gently undulating intensive farmlands and pastures that become flatter towards the M9 corridor. The combination of features, including transport, settlement, farmland and bings, is typical of the wider West Lothian landscape. While not all of these features contribute to sense of place in a positive way, many do including the Union Canal, bings, and deciduous woodlands.	High
Rarity	Whilst this type of landscape occurs across West Lothian, the combination of the Union Canal and the prominent and intact remains of mining, within an open rolling farmland setting, are rare in the context of the study area.	Medium
Condition	Majority of landscape features are in reasonable condition with some minor areas being less maintained or managed, for instance around Philpstoun Bings.	Medium
Intactness	Mining activities have taken place in the past and affected the landscape extensively between Philpstoun and Winchburgh. Elsewhere there has been an intensification of farmland, though areas around Duddingston remain intact. The M9 and railway line cut through the landscape. Large areas around Winchburgh will be developed as part of the CDA.	Medium
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	The landscape is fairly consistent with limited combinations of diverse landscape features. The setting of the Union Canal provides a pleasant landscape, unfolding along the waterway. Woodlands locally add to visual interest.	Medium
Views	The landscape is visible from the M9, railway line and from higher ground to the south. It is also seen from the canal, a key route through the area. There are few distinctive landmarks, and the low lying landscape offers limited outward views.	Medium
Enjoyment	The Union Canal is used by walkers and cyclists and for boating. It has a range of associated facilities, car parks, trails and tourist attractions providing accessible opportunities for appreciation of the landscape.	High
Cultural qualities	Duntarvie Castle, a 17 th century house that is currently undergoing renovation, is the most prominent monument in this area, though most of the heritage value of the landscape is more recent. The Union Canal provided a focus for 19 th century exploitation of coal and shale, with extensive bings being the main reminder of the works	High

	either side of the canal, east of Philpstoun.	
Naturalness	The area comprises intensive farmlands and pastures with little or no natural land cover. Features of biodiversity value contributing to the landscape are limited to pockets of native woodland. The Union Canal is an important wildlife corridor, particularly the south side where there is no tow path.	Low
Settlement setting	Agricultural fields surround Winchburgh, although they do not contribute strongly to settlement setting. The area will provide the setting for further development in this area. The Union Canal provides a prominent setting for Philpstoun, as well as the eastern approach to Linlithgow.	Medium
Non-ranked criteria		
Landscape consistency	The landscape consists of intensive farmlands consistently running along the canal. The area around Duddingston has a slightly different character, being higher and with coastal views.	
Landscape relationships	Farmlands continue south to the Bathgate Hills Fringe. To the north the West Lothian Coastal Hills are more visually separated, although there is a visual link to Binns Tower. The Union Canal ties together a number of West Lothian landscapes as well as being a wildlife corridor.	
Other designations	Philpstoun Muir SSSI is designated for birch woodland. The area east of Old Philpstoun, and north of the railway, is identified as an ASAI.	

Landscape Unit: 23 West Lothian Coastal Hills		
Criteria	Description	Rank
<i>Landscape character criteria</i>		
Representativeness	This coastal landscape is not typical of West Lothian, and contains few features which recur with any frequency. The area does have a strong sense of place. This is due largely to the well-known country houses of Hopetoun and The Binns, and the distinctive shoreline and views over the Forth.	Medium
Rarity	This area is the only genuinely coastal landscape of West Lothian, facing onto the Firth of Forth, and the steep wooded coastal braes/slopes here are not found elsewhere in West Lothian. The extensive designed landscapes which cover much of the landscape contribute to a high level of deciduous tree cover.	High
Condition	The area is well maintained, with the designed estate landscapes in particular being carefully presented as tourist attractions. Most features of the landscape are in good condition: estate walls are intact; and historic buildings have been restored.	High
Intactness	There are few recent interventions in this area, aside from a large factory close to South Queensferry which is on a low-lying site. The landscape structure of fields, walls and woodlands is largely intact across the area, particularly around the designed landscapes.	High
<i>Landscape quality criteria</i>		
Scenic qualities	The Forth shore has scenic value in its combination of steep wooded braes above a gentle but rocky shoreline. There are several attractive wooded glens running through the parkland and farmland. The designed landscapes have been laid out for dramatic effect, whether formal as at Hopetoun, or more picturesque at The Binns.	High
Views	The area is seen from the A904 which follows its southern edge. There are fewer views into the western area, though to the east the road offers open views over the Forth. The layby east of Newton, and the Binns Tower, are recognised as important viewpoints in the council's Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Farms (2011). The Binns Tower, sited on a ridgeline, is a highly visible landmark in the wider area. This landscape is visible from areas across and around the Forth, including from the Forth Road Bridge where Hopetoun House is a feature.	High

Enjoyment	The Binns and Hopetoun House are both popular visitor attractions in their own right, drawing paying visitors. The paths along the shore and through the Hopetoun Estate are relatively well used. A core path follows the shore and NCN Round the Forth Route 76 crosses the area.	High
Cultural qualities	The designed landscapes of The Binns and Hopetoun are of national importance, and contribute greatly to the wider landscape both of this landscape unit and its neighbours. The Binns in particular has historical associations going back to the 17th century. There are several scheduled monuments and listed buildings, both associated with the designed landscapes and elsewhere such as Philpstoun House, Abercorn Kirk and Midhope Castle.	High
Naturalness	The landscape of this area is generally either farmed, or has been arranged for aesthetic effect, with ornamental rather than native woodland. The wooded glen of the Midhope Burn offers a more natural landscape, with native woodlands. The shore also has a level of naturalness, though tempered by the presence of the bridges and docks.	Medium
Settlement setting	There are no defined settlements within this area, though the landscape has a role in the setting of the adjacent villages of Newton and Woodend. The area also plays a role in the wider settings of Blackness and South Queensferry on the Forth coast.	Medium
<i>Non-ranked criteria</i>		
Landscape consistency	This landscape shows local variations between farmed areas and the parkland, but is generally consistent in overall character.	
Landscape relationships	There are relationships between this area and the adjacent landscapes on the south shore of the Forth, running east to South Queensferry and beyond, and west to Blackness and Bo'ness.	
Other designations	The foreshore of the area forms part of the Firth of Forth SPA, SSSI and Ramsar site. The Binns and Hopetoun House are listed on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.	