

<p>Topic Schedule</p>	<p>06. Countryside Belts / Green Belt</p>
<p>Information required by the Act and NPF4 regarding the issue addressed in this section</p>	<p>Town and Country Planning (Scotland) (Act) 1997, as amended Section 15(5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district. • The principal purposes for which the land is used. <p>National Planning Framework 4 (adopted 13 February 2023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPF4 – Part 1: A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045, there are six national developments that support the delivery of Liveable Places including the Central Scotland Green Network which overlaps with the purposes of green belt and relates to West Lothian. • NPF4 Policy 8 Green Belts - LDPs should consider using green belts, to support their spatial strategy as a settlement management tool to restrict development around towns and cities. Green belts will not be necessary for most settlements but may be zoned around settlements where there is a significant danger of unsustainable growth from car-based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside. Green belts should be identified or reviewed as part of the preparation of LDPs. Boundary changes may be made to accommodate planned growth, or to extend, or alter the area covered as green belt. Detailed green belt boundaries should be based on evidence and should be clearly identified in plans. <p>This Topic Schedule aims to avoid repeating the content of other topics covered by the LDP2 Evidence Report. The Countryside Belts Topic Schedule should be read in conjunction with the following other Topic Schedules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 01 - Climate Change • 02 - Biodiversity • 03 - The Water Environment and Flooding • 04 - Natural Places and Soils • 05 - Forestry, Woodland and Trees • 07 - Historic Assets and Places • 09 - Indicative Local Housing Land Requirement • 11 - Brownfield Land • 17 - Business and Industry, CWB and Rural Development • 25 - Local Living and Community Infrastructure • 26 - Blue and Green Infrastructure and Open Space • 29 - Site Appraisal Methodology,
<p>Links to Evidence</p>	<p>WLC 076 NatureScot Landscape policy and guidance</p>

<p>WLC 078 NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment</p> <p>WLC 081 Scotland's Landscape Monitoring Programme</p> <p>WLC 084 Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions</p> <p>WLC 142 Local Development Planning Guidance</p> <p>WLC 320 Landscape Character Classification</p> <p>WLC 332 Local Landscape Designation Review (includes statement for each of the special landscape areas, SLA)</p> <p>WLC 395 West Lothian Natural Capital Assessment</p> <p>WLC 405 Working Together for Nature - West Lothian's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-35</p> <p>WLCXX West Lothian Landscape and Countryside Belt Review Method Statements</p>
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Summary of Evidence

West Lothian does not currently have a green belt. This Topic Schedule focuses on evidence related to the extant Countryside Belts designated in the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP1) and the potential to designate these as green belt.

Part 1 - Countryside Belts in LDP1

- 1.1 The adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP1) identifies five countryside belts for the following settlements: Livingston, Armadale/ Bathgate/ Whitburn, Winchburgh/ Broxburn, East Calder/ Kirknewton, Linlithgow/ Philpstoun and Bridgend.
- 1.2 Countryside Belts have been in place for several West Lothian local development plan cycles. Countryside Belts were an important policy mechanism for the shape and extent of the spatial strategy for the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan; used in the assessment of site allocations, and to determine development proposals at application stage.
- 1.3 To inform the designation of the Countryside Belts in LDP1, the council undertook a Local Landscape Designation Review (**WLC 332**) in 2013 which in turn identified 'Candidate' Special Landscape Areas (SLAs), seven of which were adopted through LDP1.
 - Airngarth Hill SLA;
 - Almond and Linhouse Valleys SLA;
 - Avon Valley SLA;
 - Bathgate Hills SLA;
 - Blackridge Heights SLA;
 - Forth Coast SLA; and
 - Pentland Hills.
- 1.4 The Council also undertook a landscape character review in 2014 - the West Lothian Local Landscape Character Classification (**WLC 320**) This assessment identifies and maps Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which represent areas of consistent and recognisable landscape character.

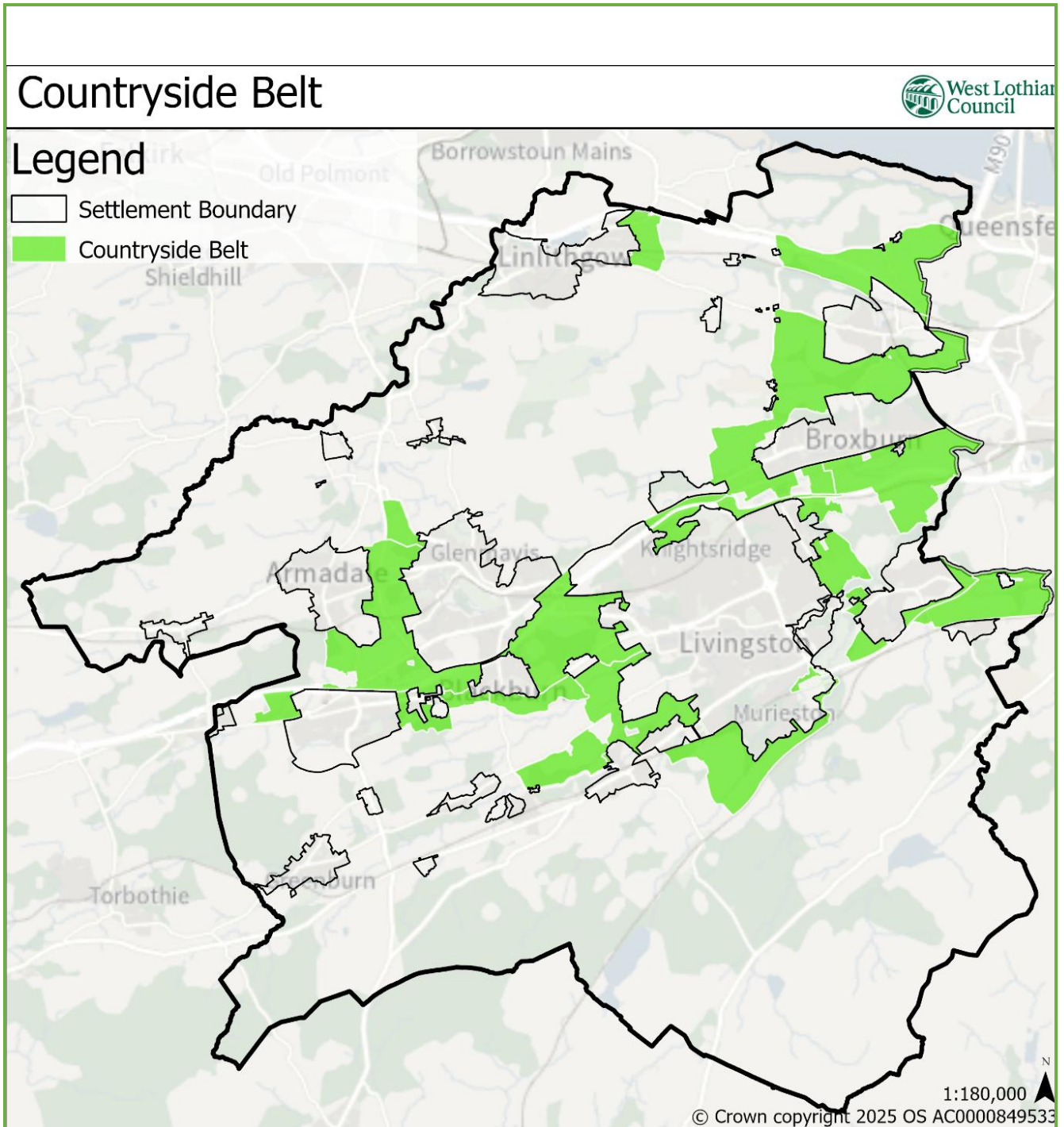


Figure 22. Countryside belts identified in LDP1 (2018). Countryside belts = green tint; settlement boundaries = thin black line.

Part 2 - Use of green belts in West Lothian LDP2

2.1 NPF4 policy 8 sets out that LDPs should consider using green belts, to support their spatial strategy as a settlement management tool to restrict development around towns and cities.

- 2.2 It is the council’s view that Countryside Belts in West Lothian function as nominal green belts and generally fulfil the same policy requirements as NPF4 Policy 8. However, it is recognised that there is a difference between the two policies which needs to be resolved.
- 2.3 In order for the council to evaluate the potential to designate the extant countryside belts as green belts in LDP2, in January 2026 the council commissioned a **West Lothian Landscape and Countryside Belt Review**.
- 2.4 This study will report from March 2026 to May 2026 to inform the proposed plan. A timetable for completion of the study is shown below:

Project Stage	Dates
Commission Study	January-March 2026
First Draft of Study	May 2026
Finalisation of Study	August 2026

Table x: West Lothian Landscape and Countryside Belt Review Timetable

- 2.5 The **West Lothian Landscape and Countryside Belt Review** includes:
- an updated **Landscape Character Assessment for West Lothian** (this was last updated in 2013) and a review of West Lothian’s **Local Landscape Designations** (Special Landscape Areas) (this was last updated in 2013/14) to include an assessment boundary remain appropriate given development since 2014;
 - **a review of West Lothian Countryside Belts and potential for Green Belt designation** including their spatial form, function, integrity, compliance with NPF4 Policy 8 and other relevant national guidance, their strengths, weaknesses and other considerations relevant to potential Green Belt designation such as the Development Planning Guidance.
- 2.6 The **West Lothian Landscape and Countryside Belt Review Method Statements** (WLCXX) for the three studies are published for engagement.
- 2.7 The council has also commissioned two additional **Landscape Sensitivity Studies** for strategic-scale renewable energy and for woodland expansion (two separate studies) which will support future Planning Guidance on Renewable Energy and the Forestry and Woodland Strategy.
- 2.8 The aim of this work is to provide a robust and consistent landscape baseline across the area to underpin crucial decisions regarding land use, land management and development, as part of the preparation of the proposed plan.

Part 3 – Next steps and cross-boundary engagement

- 3.1 Cross boundary collaboration with the neighbouring authorities forming part of the Edinburgh Green Belt is required as part of any potential designation, specifically in terms of its relationship to the facing flank of West Lothian, and issues related to regional land use pressures.

3.2 The consultants engaged by West Lothian Council are currently preparing updated Landscape and Green Belt studies for the Edinburgh and Lothian's Green Belt and the brief has been co-ordinated to ensure a comparable assessment is carried out.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

This will cover what the evidence means for the plan, e.g. the spatial strategy, the Delivery Programme or plan preparation.

Based on the evidence the proposed plan will be required to:

1. Review the use of existing Countryside Belts in accordance with NPF4 policy 8 Green Belts and Local Development Planning guidance (**WLC 142**) to consider designating these as green belt in respect of the findings of the West Lothian Landscape and Green Belt Review.
2. Consider settlement identity and setting of local communities, in terms of settlement identity, landscape setting and local landscape designations, particularly those such as the Bathgate Hills Special Landscape Area which act as countryside/ greenbelt limits for containment.
3. To encourage, promote and facilitate compact urban growth and use the land around West Lothian's towns and villages, the plan should consider the suburban character and lower densities of settlements in West Lothian and propose approaches for greater urbanisation to reduce urban sprawl and to support local living.
4. Consider the use of West Lothian's Countryside Belts cross-boundary with the Edinburgh and Lothian's Greenbelt.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

To be completed post April 2026 engagement

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

To be completed post April 2026 engagement