

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Performance Assessment | Cohort 3 | December 2024



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Scoring Matrix

1	Making excellent progress	<u>Consolidate</u> Share learning with others
2	Making good progress	<u>Build upon</u> Increase ambition in targets Share learning with others
3	Making fair progress	<u>Develop</u> Increase ambition in targets Review and improve implementation
4	Making limited progress	<u>Review</u> Review ambition Review approach taken Inform NPI Learn from others
5	No progress	<u>Prioritise</u> Prioritise fundamental review and revisit approach taken. Engage with NPI Learn from others

Introduction

Midlothian Council lies to the south of Edinburgh, bordered by the Pentland Hills to the northwest and the Moorfoot Hills to the south offering a significant amount of countryside across the region. Ranking 21st out of 32 local authorities across Scotland in area size, places Midlothian as one of the smaller council areas. In contrast to this, Midlothian is the fastest growing local authority in Scotland with the population growing significantly higher than the national average due to a considerable growth of the regions towns. Amid the opportunities and challenges faced by the growing population, we will work to maintain and support communities whilst promoting sustainable growth and development throughout Midlothian.

The National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) has been produced by the Improvement Service in collaboration with stakeholders and replaces the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) that the Planning Authority previously published over the last 12 years. The NPIF process aims to put a renewed focus on improvement. Local Authorities are progressing on from the 15 scoring markers in the PPF to a self-assessment against 12 attributes of a high performing Planning Authority, to identify areas of improvement. The NPIF introduces a peer collaborative review to involve stakeholders and users of the planning system into discussions around the improvement action plan identified through the self-assessment.

Midlothian Council are part of the third and final cohort to take part in the pilot of the NPIF. This process has allowed the Planning Authority to identify areas of improvement that can be improved when future changes are considered. The Peer Review is an important aspect of the new NPIF process and we would like to thank the individuals who took the time to attend and contribute during our meeting.



PEOPLE

A high performing planning authority needs to have the right number of people to do the work expected of it with the right skills set. It also needs to have a strategy to ensure that it retains and recruits the right staff in the future. It supports staff to upskill and to be prepared for changes in policy, legislation, and new circumstances.



ATTRIBUTE 1: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AND SKILLS TO MAXIMISE PRODUCTIVITY

- Does the planning authority have the sufficient level of staff to carry out all activities within the required timeframes?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current budget?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current income?
- Does the planning authority receive responses from consultees within the prescribed timescale when assessing planning applications?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to access the appropriate advice, expertise, evidence and data it requires?

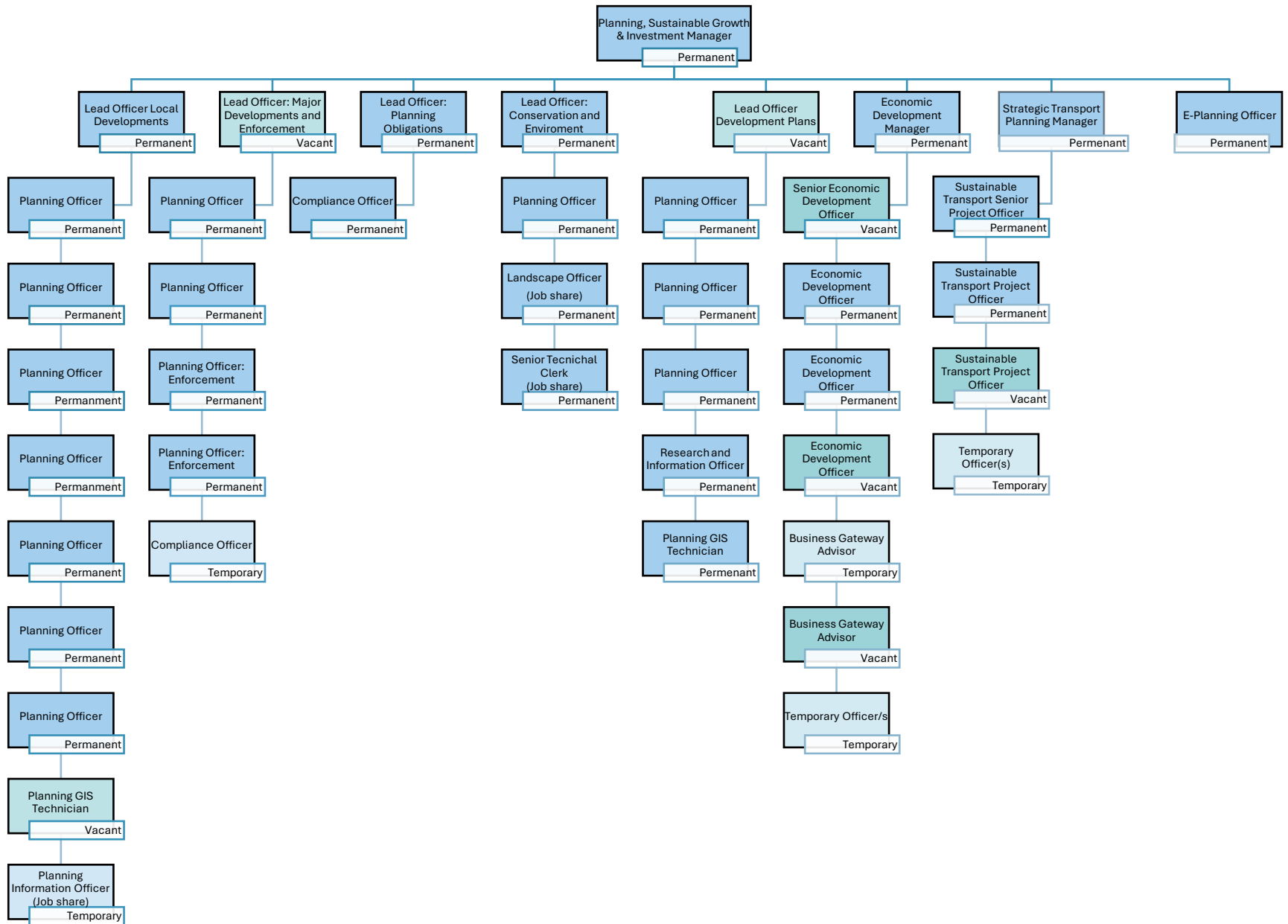
Narrative

Staff Levels

Midlothian's Planning Service sits within the council's Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Service with approximately 43 posts falling under this section of the council. The two main teams within the Planning Service are the Planning Applications Team who deal with enforcement matters alongside planning applications and the Policy Team who are responsible for producing the next Local Development Plan and other planning policies.

As a smaller local authority, a handful of staff changes in the 2023/24 period including: The duty planning officer post becoming vacant, the loss of two full-time planning officers and the loss of the Lead Officer, Planning Obligations and Enforcement towards the end of the reporting period put an increased pressure on the remaining staff in the interim.

Staffing Structure



Budget & Income

Like many local authorities in Scotland, Midlothian Council faces the challenges of budget cuts, loss of services and a lack of disposable funds. To offset some of this pressure, the Planning Service introduced fees for discretionary charging on 3rd July 2023. The introduction of fees for these services has become more common across planning authorities since being introduced under the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 2022.

The introduction of discretionary charging has created an income from services such as; pre-application submissions, non-material variations, and condition submissions. This was projected to generate an income of approximately £10,000 for 2023/24.

Consultee Responses

Consultation responses are an integral part of the planning assessment process. More often than not, the Planning Applications Team have found that external consultees will respond within the agreed upon time. External consultees will commonly reach out if an extension of time is needed. However, it can be difficult in the early stages of an application assessment to provide consultees with the increased data they are requesting to provide a response.

There is a growing trend amongst external consultees to fall back on generic responses and standing advice. Although generic advice can be repetitive, this is sufficient for some application types (e.g. connection availability to a water supply). The Coal Authority have been found to be one of our more detailed consultees at providing site specific advice.

A large amount of the consultees planning utilise are based within the wider council (housing, road services, environmental health). The experience with internal consultees varies vastly throughout different departments. In spite of these consultees being internal, it is more likely that their responses go over the requested timeframe and without an extension request. In addition to this, the loss of experienced internal consultees who are familiar with the planning process can be challenging.

Access to Advice, Expertise, Evidence and Data

A growing issue for planning officers in the Planning Applications Section is the inability to access the appropriate advice, expertise, evidence and data. In some cases, this stems from the external consultees restricting their involvement with the development management process or not having the appropriately skilled internal resources. At times, the officers simply do not have enough time to obtain and assess information and data within the expected timeframe.

From a policy perspective, the need for advice, expertise, evidence and data varies depending on the stage in the plan cycle. During this period, the LDP team were evidence gathering for the next LDP. Access to evidence and data was reasonable, with only some gaps that is detailed within MLDP2 Evidence Report. Access to advice and expertise is more challenging and reflects the experience of the Planning Applications Section.

ATTRIBUTE 2: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A VALUED AND SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

- Does the planning authority have a workforce planning strategy in place?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to support staff development and upskilling and send staff on relevant courses?
- Does the planning authority have a deliverable commitment to support staff health and wellbeing?

Narrative

Workforce Strategy

Midlothian Council has a Workforce Strategy covering 2024-34. This strategy highlights some of the key issues across the council such as staffing shortages and a lack of experienced workers. The Workforce Strategy identifies an action plan to target these issues embracing the 5 pillars of the workforce journey (Plan, Attract, Train, Employ and Nurture). The strategy is based over a period of 10 years with a 3 year action plan and can be accessed [here](#).

Health and Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of the Planning Service and the wider council is paramount. Staff are encouraged to speak to their line managers and utilise available support services.

The staff weekly emails regularly highlight resources of support, including but not limited to: Mental health, financial health, stress management and physical health. In addition to this, the staff intranet page provides a wellbeing support section for employees.

Midlothian Council has been identified as a Disability Confident employer on account of demonstrating commitment to; Ensuring those with a disability are provided with a fair chance, challenging attitudes towards disability, removing barriers to disabled employees along with those with long-term health conditions and making the most of the talents disabled people bring to the workplace.

Staff Development and Upskilling

Staff progression has been supported through the Planning Service by way of 'acting up' roles. Acting positions allow staff members to work closely with experienced officers, picking up the skills necessary to do the position by on-the-job training. This method involves shadowing, 1-2-1 meetings and leads to the 'acting' staff member picking up more work as they become more confident.

To identify development needs, planning staff are required to complete annual MPM (Making Performance Matter) forms. MPMs are individual development plans used to identify training needs of staff with their lead officer and how they can be achieved. In some cases, the goals can be satisfied through in house training, mentoring, group work or sending officers on relevant courses. To check in on the progress of the MPMs, a review is carried out every 6 months.

Due to financial constraints within the council and the wider cost implications, it is not feasible to send multiple officers on every planning related course that becomes available. The Planning Service do circulate free training courses that may be of interest to some officers and the courses made available by the Improvement Service. Some of the courses planning colleagues have attended in this reporting period are detailed below.

2023/24 TRAINING COURSES & SESSIONS	
Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods	- Improvement Service (April 2023)
Planting for SUDS	- Scottish Water (May 2023)
Place Forum: Towards Zero Carbon Places – Making it Happen	- A&DS (June 2023)
NPF4 Biodiversity	- Improvement Service (June 2023)
Development Management Pitfalls	- Cornerstone Barristers (September 2023)
Implication of Coal Mining for Public Safety in Relation to Development	- Mining Remediation Authority (January 2024)
Children's Rights and Placemaking	- Improvement Service (February 2024)
Shaping Places for Wellbeing	- Improvement Service (March 2024)

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN (PEOPLE THEME)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	4
The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Review staffing structure to ensure there is sufficient staff required to carry out all tasks	Planning Manager	High	Short/ Medium	
Look into the possibility of seeking outside help to support in the production of MLDP2	Policy Team	High	Short	
Assess the impact of discretionary charging (pre-application submission rates, workloads, timescales)	Planning Service	Medium	Short	Statistics from E-Planning Officer
Introduce a staff survey to identify what is working well and internal improvements	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Survey (online) – Digital Team
Look into increasing the number of planning staff trained in complaint handling	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Liaise with the Continuous Improvement Team

Investigate ways to make the current consultation process more effective	Planning Applications Team	High	Medium	Liaising with the relevant departments within the council
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CULTURE

A high performing planning authority has a positive culture through ensuring it has sound governance, effective leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement. The authority has an identified chief planner, who is supported by a strong leadership group to advise on decision-making, policy and operational management.



ATTRIBUTE 3: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EMBEDDED CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

- Has the planning authority undertaken an annual assessment of its performance and acted upon areas previously identified as in need of improvement?
- Has the planning authority achieved recognition at relevant awards or through performance accreditation frameworks?
- Has the planning authority engaged in peer review, good practice exchange or improvement activities?
- Has the planning authority addressed any complaints upheld by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and have evidence of this and that it has learned from valid cases?

Narrative

Annual Performance

The Planning Service has actioned the identified needs of improvement in the 2022/23 Planning Performance Framework for the 2023/24 period. Details of the improvements and actions taken over this reporting period are detailed below.

Improvement: To work alongside colleagues in the Web Content and Communications Teams to develop then implement a range of engagement methods and activities to advertise LDP2 evidence gathering.

Action (achieved): Planning Officers have engaged with each other and the Council's Web Team to create new web content on LDP2 activities and refresh existing content. This has included updates via social media and LDP2 newsletters. A report setting out the full engagement plan was endorsed at the Planning Committee in May 2023.

Improvement: To hold a series of seminars to discuss the content of NPF4, its implications for development management decision making, collectively agree solutions to any issues and note implications for LDP2. To recruit a GIS-Technician to work across the Development Plans and Planning Applications Sections of the department.

Action (achieved): Seminars were held in spring 2023. They were co-ordinated by the Lead Officer for Planning Applications with input from staff across the department. The new GIS Technician was in post in early 2024.

Improvement: To arrange a series of workshops with Elected Members to further inform them of the implications of NPF4 and to capture their ambitions for MLDP2;

Action (achieved): Workshops were held in spring and winter 2023 with Councillors to again provide their input on the content of MLDP2, with the Planning Manager, LDP2 Lead Officer and Planning Officers attending to capture their thoughts and respond to queries.

Improvement: Assisting owners to restore key historic buildings identified as priorities as part of the Penicuik Heritage Regeneration Project;

Action (achieved): This project was extended to 31st December 2024 to ensure final key projects were completed.

Improvement: To hold further community engagement, training and educational events as part of the Penicuik Heritage Regeneration Project;

Action (achieved): Students from Beeslack and Penicuik High Schools were provided with the opportunity to experience hands on training for repairing and restoring areas of the boundary wall at St. Mungo's Churchyard, Penicuik.

Improvement: To complete a GIS-based accessibility analysis of possible LDP2 land allocations to determine their potential for satisfying the requirement of NPF4 for creating 20-minute neighbourhoods;

Action (achieved): The Research & Information Officer used NPF4, SesTrans and HiTrans methodologies to map out various community facilities and GIS software to perform a detailed analysis to establish accessibility to them.

Improvement: To provide feedback on both the revised Shawfair Town Centre Strategy scope and its indicative schedule to allow developers to progress this significant workstream in 2023/24;

Action (achieved): Two Planning Officers provided feedback on the draft Town Centre Strategy and project schedule in spring 2023.

Improvement: To implement the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 2022, including by drafting a Planning Fees Charter, gaining approval of it from Elected Members at Planning Committee and working with Council administrative staff on procedures for taking payments.

Action (achieved): A report on proposing its implementation was approved by Planning Committee in May 2023 with arrangements having subsequently been made to take payments and put procedures in place to ensure applicants/agents contacting Council

staff are channelled to make payments for services. The Fees Charter is available from the Council website.

Awards and Recognition

The Planning Service have created a strong working relationship with Public Health Scotland (PHS) as part of the ongoing work to produce MLDP2. In recognition of the effort that has been put into the health aspect of the Evidence Report, an invitation was extended to the respective planning officer to present the ongoing LDP work to the Public Health Scotland Partnership Team. PHS expressed their desire for someone familiar with the new planning regulations to speak directly to their staff and felt the planning officer would be a 'great choice.'

Working Collaboratively

Midlothian Council set up a Lothian and Borders Planning Officers Group, to share issues of mutual interest on planning policy. The first meeting was held in September 2023 and is run approximately every 6 weeks. The meetings provide the opportunity to discuss mutual issues such as LDP work, Green Belt Review and other matters. Occasionally there is an agenda to discuss specific matters and other times discussions will evolve around the attendees interests at that time.

Since 2021, the Planning Service have checked the weekly planning lists for bordering councils and have prepared responses in relation to large scale proposals. This work includes liaising with planning officers from other local authorities, local councillors and internal colleagues where relevant (i.e. travel, landscape). These responses are generally related to larger housing developments in the Wisp, Edmonstone and Gilmerton areas. We have also regularly attended HoPS DP sub-committee, and attended GIRFEC Board Children & Young People Sub Group.

Complaints

Midlothian Council launched a new complaints system in April 2023, staff training sessions were held in the preceding months. Complaints provide



valuable feedback, identifies areas of improvement and the opportunity to better the experience for our customers.

The majority of the complaints that are received are dealt with at Stage 2 of the complaint process the council operate. If a customer is not satisfied with the outcome or how the complaint has been handled, the complaint can be referred to the SPSO. There have not been any complaints upheld by the SPSO in the 2023/24 reporting period.

Customers can submit complaints through the [Contact us](#) section on the council website.

ATTRIBUTE 4: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SOUND GOVERNANCE

- Does the planning authority have an effective scheme of delegation in place?
- Have all councillors who exercise a planning function undergone statutory training and is there is evidence of ongoing training for members?
- Have more than x % of officer recommendations have been overturned by councillors at committee or Local Review Body.

Narrative

Scheme of Delegation

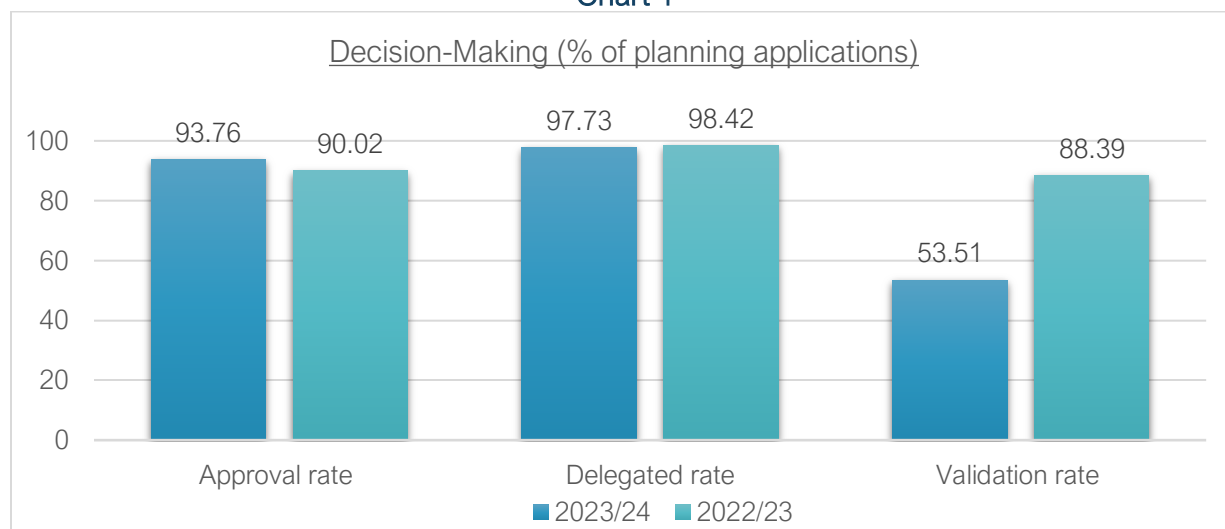
Midlothian Council has an effective Scheme of Delegation and is available to view on the council's planning [website](#). The Scheme of Delegation was approved by the Scottish Government in July 2022 and sets out the procedures for the delegation of planning applications.

In 2023/24, 97.73% of planning applications were determined under delegated powers, aligning with the Scottish average delegation rate of 96.5% for this period.

The delegation rate in Midlothian has remained relatively unchanged in the past couple of years ranging from 97.73% to 98.97%, resulting in the majority of applications being determined by planning officers. The approval rate has increased by almost 4% since the previous year aligning with the Scottish average of 92.3%.

At the beginning of this reporting year, the Planning Information Officer(s) role was vacant. One responsibility of this role is the registration of new planning applications. In June 2023, the Planning Service employed 1 full-time and 1 part-time colleague to fill this position. This transition period may have impacted the decrease in validation rates from the previous year, as part of the action plan the council will review this against the next reporting year.

Chart 1



Elected Member Training

Elected members have undertaken mandatory training prior to playing a part in the determination of appeals or applications that cannot be determined under delegated powers. In addition to training sessions, a Midlothian Council “Guide to Planning” summary document was produced for members. The requirement for training for elected members was included in the Planning (Scotland) 2019 Act.

Throughout 2023/24, elected members attended workshops for the preparation work for Midlothian Local Development Plan 2. These sessions inform members of the status of works whilst also providing an avenue to answer any queries.

Local Review Body

Local Review Body meetings are held approximately every 6 weeks and are held to determine appeals received for applications determined under delegated powers. Appeals can be submitted to overturn a refused decision or to amend/ remove a condition attached to an approved planning consent.

In the period from April 1st, 2023, to March 31st March 2024, a total of 25 applications were reviewed by the Local Review Body. Of these applications, the overturn rate that upheld the planning officers decision was 16%. This has decreased from the previous years of 36% and 38.46%.

Council Planning Committee and Local Review Body Meetings can be watched via the Meetings page on the councils [website](#).

ATTRIBUTE 5: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

- Does the planning authority have an identified Chief Planning Officer in place?
- Does the Chief Planning Officer advise on corporate decision making and policy within the broader organisation?
- Is the planning authority's Chief Planning Officer a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute?
- Does the Chief Planning Officer advise and support external bodies through engagement in organisations' committees, advisory groups or working groups?
- Does the planning authority have a strong leadership team that supports a culture of continuous improvement?

Narrative

[Chief Planning Officer](#)

Midlothian Council's Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Manager is also the Council's Chief Planning Officer and a Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute with over 25 years' experience working within local planning authorities.

The Chief Planning Officer contributes towards corporate decision making and policy within the broader organisation - The Chief Planning Officer, in addition to being the corporate lead on Planning matters, is also responsible for the Council's Economic Development and Strategic Transport Planning Services and Climate Change Policy. The Chief Planning Officer is also a member of the Council's Capital Plan and Asset Management Board which is responsible for the delivery of the Council's capital projects (i.e. new schools and infrastructure projects).

The Chief Planning Officer is part of the Council's 'Place' Management Team which comprises lead officers from across all the Council's environmental based services – the Place Service has an improvement plan which is being implemented. The Chief Planning Officer chairs a fortnightly Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Service Management Team which comprises lead officers from across Planning, Economic Development and Strategic Transport Planning – the Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Service has an improvement plan which is being implemented. The Council also supports an individual staff officer 'Making Performance Matter' annual programme based on individual continuous improvement.

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN (CULTURE THEME)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	3
This Planning Authority has sound governance	3
This Planning Authority has effective leadership	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Work collaboratively with bordering Local Authorities to carry out work required for MLDP2	Policy Team	Medium	Short	Liaise with other local authorities in Edinburgh/ Lothians
Review validation rates from current reporting year and take necessary steps to increase figure (if required)	Planning Applications Team	Medium	Short	Statistics from E-Planning Officer
Review of current elected member training	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Refer to online regulations

TOOLS

A high performing planning authority needs to have an effective local development plan and other strategies in place to provide a vision for the future of the area. It needs to be able to set and deliver on policy ambitions and priorities by clearly informing decision making and providing certainty and predictability for communities, developers and investment. The authority's development management systems need to be effective in making the right decisions about development and be efficient as possible in doing this. The planning authority makes best use of digital technology and how it manages and uses data.



ATTRIBUTE 6: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A ROBUST POLICY AND EVIDENCE BASE

- Does the planning authority have an up to date Local Development Plan in place and/ or is on track to adoption?
- Does the planning authority have an up to date Regional Spatial Strategy in place/ or on track to adoption?
- Has the planning authority's Local Development Plan Evidence Report been approved by the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals and/ or on track for approval?
- Have the application of the Local Development Plan's policies been found to be deficient at appeal or judicial review?

Narrative

[Local Development Plan and Evidence Report](#)

Midlothian's current Local Development Plan (MLDP) was adopted on November 7th, 2017. The Planning Service are working on the production of Midlothian Local Development Plan 2 (MLDP2).

The Policy Team within the Planning Department developed a 10 Stage approach (chart below) to draft the next LDP and were on track in April 2024. The Team have concluded the Call for Ideas (Stage 4) and are now working on the proposed plan. A number of engagement events took place to gather the views of Midlothian as it is now and future developments from those living and working there, in advance of the Evidence Report being prepared.

The Evidence Report was approved by Midlothian Council on June 25th, 2024. Following this, the Evidence Report was submitted to Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) for assessment. DPEA are required to review the submission and determine whether the report provides a sufficient evidence base to prepare MLDP2. On September 19th, 2024, the Planning Team were notified the Evidence Report had met the criteria to proceed with the next Local Development Plan.

Within the 2023/24 period, the application of the Local Development Plan's policies have not been found to be deficient at appeal or judicial review.

Regional Spatial Strategy

An interim Regional Spatial Strategy for Edinburgh and the South East Scotland Region, inclusive of Midlothian was produced in 2020 in line with the [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#). There is not a timetable for production working with adjacent authorities.



ATTRIBUTE 7: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY MAKES BEST USE OF DATA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

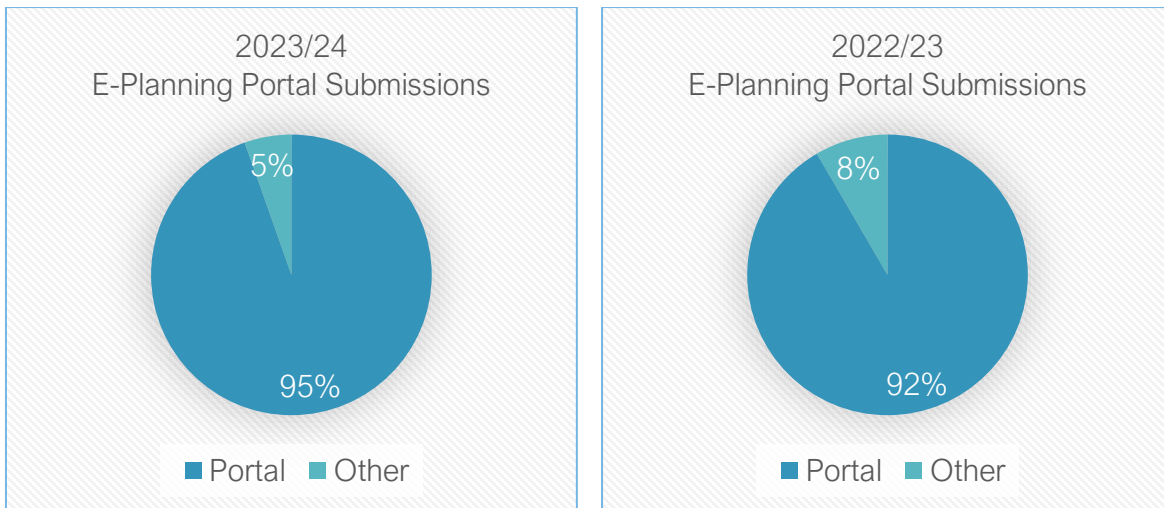
- Has the planning authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?
- Does the planning authority have a data governance strategy in place for the management of planning data?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to use interactive web-mapping, GIS and spatial data?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to use digital approaches to engagement, including website, social media and other platforms?

Narrative

E-Development Portal

The Planning Service promote a digital-by-default approach, the electronic submission of planning applications is strongly encouraged on the planning [website](#).

In 2023/24, there was a slight increase in the (%) of application submissions received via the e-planning portal. The figures shown below do not include the submission of pre-application enquiries as Midlothian Planning Service accept these via email through the duty planning service mailbox.



Data Governance Strategy

Midlothian Council has corporate wide processes in place for data management including; type of data collected, how the data is used, how the data is shared and stored, the transferring and

processing of data. Further details of this can be found [here](#). The Planning Service does not have an independent strategy for the management of planning data.

[Interactive Web-Mapping, GIS and Spatial Data](#)

Midlothian Council's Planning team has a dedicated GIS Technician with access to interactive web-mapping, GIS and spatial data across several platforms, primarily QGIS, ArcGIS Pro, ArcGIS Online and Uniform.

QGIS is the main software used by the GIS Technician for producing maps, plotting complicated sites and planning applications, manipulating GIS data and performing spatial data analysis. Midlothian have also linked into the valuable Web Feature Service of planning application boundaries provided by the Improvement Service. This can be queried to extract particular sites that are then loaded into a set template format for plans going to our Planning Committee and Local Review Body, enabling maps in a neat, standardised style to be produced efficiently. ArcGIS Pro is used in a similar way, to link into our Uniform databases to extract newly plotted applications which are then packaged up for screening by our biodiversity consultants.

To take advantage of the availability of QGIS, several staff were trained to perform basic tasks on using it such as loading and editing shapefiles, site digitisation and producing simple maps as PDFs or JPEGs. This was combined with a brief but important look at background topics like map projections and copyright issues. This facilitated some key tasks relating to our next Local Development that had a strong GIS-element, such as our Play Sufficiency Assessment or Forestry and Woodland Strategy, without the involvement of the GIS Technician, which freed them up to work on more technical issues and therefore made for a more efficient use of staff time.

The desktop GIS available within Midlothian is supplemented by our ability to produce web maps via the ArcGIS Online platform. This has been utilised for many years in providing maps that are updated annual to accompany our [Housing Land Audit](#), [Tree Preservation Orders](#) and our [Employment Land Audit](#). More recently, ArcGIS Online has facilitated Planning Policy staff evaluate potential development sites submitted for our next Local Development Plan. These were first digitised in QGIS then uploaded to two web maps. One of these incorporates various environmental considerations such as prime agricultural land and native woodland for the department's Landscape Officers to determine sensitive areas to avoid.

Both the assistance of the Improvement Service and advice on the "Knowledge Hub" platform from equivalent staff elsewhere in other Scottish Councils also continues to assist Midlothian Council performing its duties in this area.

[Digital Approaches to Engagement](#)

MLDP2 progress updates can be viewed on the Development Plans and Policies section of the council website. A breakdown of the current stages and next steps in the ongoing work for the next Local Development Plan is provided and updated when there are any changes.

The Planning Service have a designated email address for MLDP2 queries and a mailing list for interested parties. Further details of this can be found [here](#).

The Planning Service utilises the use of the council wide social media pages as we do not have a separate platform. In 2023/24, sites such as Facebook have been used to promote survey responses for the next Local Development Plan, community drop-ins at local libraries on land use throughout Midlothian and the advertisement of planning officer roles.

ATTRIBUTE 8: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

- Does the planning authority planning have the ability to make decisions on planning applications within the required timeframes?
- Are less than x% of planning decisions overturned at appeal or judicial review?
- Does the planning authority have an up to date Enforcement Charter in place?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to resolve enforcement cases?

Narrative

[Planning Applications](#)

In comparison to last year's figures, the Planning Service saw a decrease in the amount of time taken to determine local scale applications in 2023/24 by over 2 weeks to 9.2 weeks. In contrast, the determination time for householder and major applications has increased (See table 1).

The loss of two full-time planning officers in March 2023 has contributed to the increase in time taken to determine planning applications. In September 2023, two new planning officers were recruited to fill these vacancies. This should assist in reducing the timeframe of determination in the next reporting period. The approval rate has increased by almost 4% since the previous year (See chart 1), aligning with the Scottish average of 92.3%.

The Local Review Body determined 25 planning applications in 2023/24, this has remained unchanged from the previous year. The amount of applications upholding their original decision has dropped from 36% to 16% (See table 3). There were 0 appeals determined by Scottish Ministers in this year, or the previous.

[Enforcement Charter](#)

Midlothian's Enforcement Charter was approved at Planning Committee in October 2022, the charter can be viewed [here](#). There is a requirement to review the charter every two years. So, within the 2023/24 period this remained up to date. A review of the charter is now required.

The council are responsible for dealing with breaches of planning control throughout Midlothian. The Enforcement Charter sets out how the council deal with unlawful development in line with planning regulations and public interest.

Enforcement Cases

The volume of enforcement cases received in 2023/24 has remained relatively consistent with the previous year having received 5 additional cases (See table 4). Over this reporting period, a total of 93 enforcement cases were closed.

This period was extremely challenging. In addition to serving 32 Notices, one Report was sent to the Procurator Fiscal and two other PF Reports were being worked on during this reporting period which will be accounted for in the 2024/25 figures. Furthermore, the coordinating of multiple statements, compiling large numbers of productions, using the Procurator Fiscal system was incredibly time consuming. In addition, planning enforcement successfully defended three separate DPEA appeals.

There is a longstanding planning enforcement resourcing problem. Midlothian are one of very few local authorities in Scotland with only one full-time planning enforcement officer to deal with the above issues. Given that there is around a population of around 100,000, this can seem an impossible task. This reporting year also saw the loss of the Lead Officer, Planning Obligations and Enforcement towards the end.

Table 1

Decision-making timescales	No. of weeks to decision	
	2023/24	2022/23
Major developments	45.42	36.32
Local developments (non-householder)	9.32	11.7
Householder developments	11.17	7.20

Table 2

Legacy cases	No. of applications	
	2023/24	2022/23
Number cleared during reporting period	2	2
Number remaining	5	7

Table 3

	Total no. of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2023/24		2022/23	
		No. of decisions	% of decisions	No. of decisions	% of decisions
Local reviews	25	4	16.0	9	36.0
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4

Enforcement	No. of cases	
	2023/24	2022/23
Complaints lodged and investigated	108	103
Potential breaches identified – no need for further action	80	130
Cases closed	93	156
Notices served	32	55
Direct action	0	1
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	1	0
Prosecutions	0	0

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN (TOOLS THEME)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
The planning authority has a robust policy and evidence base	3
The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	2
The planning authority has effective and efficient decision making processes	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Internal staff training days to develop skills (including GIS skills)	Planning Service	Medium	Short/ Medium	
Update of Enforcement Charter to meet regulations	Planning Applications Team (Enforcement)	High	Short	Refer to online regulations

ENGAGE

A high performing planning authority should ensure a wide range of people are involved in shaping their future places. Engagement should be fair and inclusive, early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate and should include difficult to reach groups. The authority should engage with a wide range of partners at a national, regional and local level to ensure a joined-up approach and that links are made across policies and programmes. The planning authority should demonstrate good customer care, transparency and effective communication.



ATTRIBUTE 9: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS GOOD CUSTOMER CARE

- Does the planning authority have the ability to offer pre-application advice where it is requested?
- Has the planning authority held regular engagement events with developers and communities?
- Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that customers are satisfied with the service offer by the planning authority?

Narrative

Pre-application Advice Service

The Planning Service promote the use of their pre-application advise service on the planning [website](#) to any agent or applicant considering submitting an application. This service provides clear, impartial advice at the earliest point of contact with the Planning Team. The feedback can highlight potential issues with the proposal and in turn could save the agent or applicant money from submitting an application that is unlikely to be supported.

The number of applications subject to pre-application advise has dropped 6.7% in 2023/24. The Planning Service introduced fees for discretionary charging for some services that were previously free, such as the pre-application advice service. Given this, it was expected that initially there would be a decrease in the number of pre-application enquiries received.

Table 5

Project planning	2023/24		2022/23	
	No. of applications	% of applications	No. of applications	% of applications
Applications subject to pre-application advice	41	7.75	49	14.43
Major applications subject to processing agreements	6	26.08	6	40.0

Engagement with Developers and Communities

In preparation for the next LDP, the Planning Team held a number of engagement events throughout Midlothian to involve communities and developers from the outset. This included establishing a new mailing list with a dedicated email address (LDP@midlothian.gov.uk) for individuals and organisations to receive updates and newsletters regarding MLDP2 progress. Enquiries can also be sent to this email address.

During the evidence gathering stages of MLDP2 preparation works, a number of planned events with the community and developers were proposed in mid-2023. The objective of these events were to gather the views of those living and working within Midlothian and use their lived experiences in developing the next LDP.

In the months of May to June (2023), one of the engagement activities conducted was seven in-person drop-in events held at local libraries around Midlothian. In total, 161 individuals attended the events. Those in attendance were able to provide their thoughts on their existing community and any changes they would like to see happen.

Online and in-person meetings were also planned with developers over the spring to autumn months, these meetings included hearing feedback and addressing housing and climate issues. Meetings were held with a mix of developers, including private housing and registered social landlords. In total, around 140 engagement activities were planned from 1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024.



Customer Service

Customers are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the service they received whilst dealing with the Planning Team. This is achieved through sending out feedback forms to agents and applicants and asking them to provide details of their experience. Regular feedback allows

the team to recognise matters that are working well and identify any areas of improvement. Examples of positive feedback received in 2023/24 include:

- *Easy to apply via Scottish web portal. Very good support from planning officer throughout the process!;*
- *The application was dealt with quickly and reasonable comments made by your case officer were taken onboard with revised plans being submitted and an approval granted within 8 weeks;*
- *Very pleased with the processing and in particular the timescale for the decision;*
- *Midlothian has an incredible and professional planning team. Really appreciate your assistance;*
- *Prompt efficient and courteous service.*

ATTRIBUTE 10: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITIES

- Does the planning authority have a community engagement strategy and infrastructure in place to ensure engagement is early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate?
- Has the planning authority undertaken community engagement, for example consistent and effective use of the Place Standard Tool, to inform decision-making processes? Has the planning authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?
- Has the planning authority engaged with a good representation of the community including young people, gypsies and travellers, people with protected characteristics, including disability, race, age, sex and sexual orientation, and including people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds?
- Has the planning authority supported the production of Local Place Plans when requested?
- Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that stakeholders are satisfied with their collaboration with the planning authority?

Narrative

Community Engagement

Early engagement in the early stages of the next LDP encourages local communities to contribute to the decision making process from the outset. As part of the preparation works, the Planning Service produced an Engagement Plan setting out the details of the planned events and meetings to use as part of the Evidence Report. The Engagement Plan was approved at Planning Committee in May 2023.

In the process of preparing the Evidence Report, the Planning Service are required to facilitate engagement activities that consult with disabled persons, gypsies and travellers; and children and young people as specified in the 2019 Planning (Scotland) Act. The planned engagement activities were varied to include a wide representation of different people including those with protected characteristics.

In addition to the drop-in events with the wider public explained in Attribute 9, the Planning Service created online forums and held an in-person meeting with the gypsies and travellers community to discuss the resident's views. To gather views from older people in Midlothian, a mix of in-person events at local institutes were held such as; Coffee mornings, cafes and at a voluntary establishment.

Further events included but were not limited to; meetings with homeless people, online and in-person meetings with disabled people and separate meetings with woman were organised.

A separate participation report was prepared for children and young people to gain an insight on their opinions about where they live. The engagement involved a mix of online and in-person evidence gathering activities conducted from May – October 2023 in schools, colleges, youth groups to gather the views of 157 children and young people.



Place Standard Tool & Local Place Plans

The Planning Team published an online survey from March to August 2023 as an element of the engagement with the community and LDP preparation works. The survey was based on the Place Standard tool and included the 12 topics below.



In the survey, the respondents were able to rate each topic on a scale of 1 to 7 indicating the level of improvement they feel is required for each one. A total of 243 responses were received and those responses were divided and recorded within the Participation Report as part of the MLDP2 Evidence Report.

To engage with children and young people, 3 online Place Standards surveys were created to obtain views on the place that they live. The surveys were divided into age categories (4-11

years), (12-15 years) and (16-25 years) and they were asked about the positives of where they live, the issues and what changes they would make.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced Local Place Plans (LPP) as part of the reform of Scotland's Planning System. LPPs provide an opportunity for community bodies to set out proposals for the development or use of land in their local area.

In early 2023, the Planning Team sent invitations to known community bodies to prepare [Local Place Plans](#) when work began on Midlothian's next Local Development Plan (LDP).

To support community bodies with this process, the Planning Team produced substantial guidance detailing the process, timescales, available resources and background information to assist the community bodies in preparing their LPPs.

Local Place Plans were to be submitted to the Planning Team by the end of October 2023. In cases where the LPP was not available, community bodies were required to submit a draft followed by a final version by 31st March 2024. The registration of the local place plans took place in the early part of the next reporting period.

[Stakeholder Survey](#)

The Planning Service participated in the first National Customer and Stakeholder Survey conducted towards the end of 2024. The survey was shared through multiple channels and will be reviewed in the next reporting period.

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN (ENGAGE THEME)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
This planning authority has good customer care	3
The planning authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities.	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
We will continue to review the feedback forms received from customers dealing with the Planning Service in addition to the Stakeholder Survey to identify areas of improvement from a customer perspective	Planning Service	Medium	Ongoing	
Liaise with Key Groups in the next stages of MLDP2 policy preparation	Policy Team	High	Short/ Medium	Communication with Key Agencies

PLACE

A high performing planning authority should demonstrate place leadership by taking a collaborative place-based approach in line with the Place Principle. It should use the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes in decision-making processes, to achieve the three spatial principles outlined in NPF4: Sustainable places, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; Liveable places, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and Productive places, where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy. The planning authority should seek to ensure that there are no impediments to delivering agreed development.



ATTRIBUTE 11: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE, LIVEABLE AND PRODUCTIVE PLACES

- Is the planning authority aware of the [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#), the evidence that sits behind them and is it using them in decision-making processes?
- Has the planning authority identified tools and approaches to delivering sustainable, liveable and productive places and is implementing them?

Narrative

[Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

Midlothian's Planning Team are aware of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes with a high volume of the staff having attended the webinar sessions held by the Improvement Service. The Place and Wellbeing Outcomes focus on a place-based approach and the importance of 20 minute neighbourhoods. The Planning Service are aware of the importance of incorporating these in the next LDP.

A pilot project using the Place and Wellbeing Outcome Indicators was undertaken by the Planning Service to assess the percentage of homes in Midlothian that have access to local living services within 20 minutes. The report identified services that were working well and areas in need of improvement throughout communities and Midlothian as a whole. The pilot analysed a total of 12 categories falling under different outcomes. This was conducted as part of the Evidence Report in preparation for MLDP2 and the results will be a contributing factor in shaping future policies.

During the assessment of planning applications, the Place and Wellbeing outcomes are not actively referred to within the delegated reports. Nevertheless, the outcomes are considered in the decision making process. The Place and Wellbeing Outcomes have shaped a number of NPF4 policies that consistently form part of the planning assessment. Examples of these being used in decision making are; Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport) feeds into the Movement

outcomes, Policy 14 (Design, quality and place) connects to the Space outcomes and Policy 15 (Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods) is a key feature of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes.

The time available, skillsets to access the available resources, application type and the status of the development can determine the extent the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes are used. However, the use of the outcomes when assessing housing sites, is considered useful, in particular with larger projects.

ATTRIBUTE 12: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF CONSENTED DEVELOPMENT

- Has the planning authority provided clear and proportionate expectations of Section 75 agreements and set these out in the LDP and pre-application discussions and they are concluded within 6 months of resolution to grant?
- Does the planning authority take a proportionate approach to imposing conditions?
- Does the planning authority have an ambitious local housing land requirement that exceeds the Minimum All Tenure Housing land requirements in NPF4 and is it on track to support delivery?
- Are the number of processing agreements the planning authority has agreed with applicants increasing?
- Does the planning authority have an effective delivery programme in place that supports the delivery of development on the ground?

Narrative

[Section 75 Agreements](#)

The Planning Service actively monitors Section 75 agreements whilst also acting as a point of reference to other services regarding developer contributions funding. Engagement on Heads of Terms is available at all stages of the planning application process.

Midlothian's Local Development Plan refers to developer contributions throughout its plan, specifically Policy IMP1 & IMP2 relating to 'New Development' and 'Essential Infrastructure Required to Enable New Development to Take Place'. These policies set out the range and expectations of developer contributions alongside Midlothian's Supplementary Guidance on Developer Contributions.

Every effort is made to ensure that legal agreements are dealt with in a timeous fashion and within 6 months, however it is noteworthy to mention that the timeframe of legal agreements is also dependent on the agent or applicant.

[Planning Conditions](#)

The Planning Applications officers within the Planning Team are guided by the regulations set out in the [Planning Circular 4/1988](#) when attaching conditions to an approved planning consent. The conditions imposed on an approved consent will meet the tests detailed in the circular and will be reviewed by a lead officer prior to the decision being issued.

Planning conditions are fundamental in regulating development where they are deemed relevant. The MLDP highlights the importance of conditions in appropriate developments where the protection of valuable ecosystems, sites and species is essential. Conditions allow for restoration

works to be carried out ensuring sites are returned to their former status. Additionally, enforceable conditions enable the necessary actions to be carried out when they are not complied with.

During the period of 1st April 23 – 31st March 24 the Planning Team received 17 Section 42 applications with none relating to that year. To date, two S42 applications have been received regarding the 23/24 period, 1 withdrawn and 1 approved. These figures do not reveal any concerns with the current approach for imposing conditions.

MATHLR

The Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) as identified in NPF4, is the minimum amount of land, expressed in housing units, to be provided over a 10-year period. Local Development Plans are expected to identify a Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR). The Midlothian MATHLR was 8850 units, and Midlothian Council has established a 10-year LHLR of 8851 units for Midlothian Local Development Plan 2 (MLDP2), that is in preparation. The LHLR was accepted by Scottish Government Reporters in the Gate Check for the MLDP2 Evidence Report. This would equate to a build rate of around 885 units per annum. The future programming for housebuilding in Midlothian's Housing Land Audit 2024 is in most years short of 885 per annum, although there remain large numbers of units at effective sites which could come forward if demand and housebuilder capacity were there. The Council is considering the extent to which additional allocations in MLDP2 are required to meet the LHLR.

The use of processing agreements is encouraged through the council's [website](#) at pre-application stage for all major applications.

Development on Ground

The Planning Service's Action Programme was approved in February 2018 following the adoption of Midlothian Local Development Plan 2017 (MLDP). The Action Plan was updated in June 2021.

The Action Programme reviews the current policies and identifies the actions required to promote growth throughout Midlothian.

Moving forward, the Policy Team within the Planning Service have been working on the Draft Delivery Programme for 2025-27 to replace the 2021 Action Programme. This is in accordance with the expectation from Scottish Ministers that a revised delivery programme for Local Development Plans will be completed by March 31st, 2025, to fall in line with NPF4 expectations and the need for a plan-led approach.

At Midlothian Council's Planning Committee on December 17th, 2024, the Draft Delivery Programme for 2025-27 was approved by Councillors.

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN (PEOPLE THEME)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
The planning authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places	3
This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Explore the possibility of including the Place and Well-being outcomes in the assessment of planning applications	Planning Applications Team	Medium	Medium/ Long	

ACTION PLAN

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Review staffing structure to ensure there is sufficient staff required to carry out all tasks	Planning Manager	High	Short/ Medium	
Look into the possibility of seeking outside help to support in the production of MLDP2	Policy Team	High	Short	
Assess the impact of discretionary charging (pre-application submission rates, workloads, timescales)	Planning Service	Medium	Short	Statistics from E-Planning Officer
Introduce a staff survey to identify what is working well and internal improvements	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Survey (online) – Digital Team
Look into increasing the number of planning staff trained in complaint handling	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Liaise with the Continuous Improvement Team
Investigate ways to make the current consultation process more effective	Planning Applications Team	High	Medium	Liaising with the relevant departments within the council
Work collaboratively with bordering Local Authorities	Policy Team	Medium	Short	Liaise with other local authorities in Edinburgh/ Lothians

to carry out work required for MLDP2				
Review validation rates from current reporting year and take necessary steps to increase figure (if required)	Planning Applications Team	Medium	Short	Statistics from E-Planning Officer
Review of current elected member training	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Refer to online regulations
Internal staff training days to develop skills (including GIS skills)	Planning Service	Medium	Short/ Medium	
Update of Enforcement Charter to meet regulations	Planning Applications Team (Enforcement)	High	Short	Refer to online regulations
We will continue to review the feedback forms received from customers dealing with the Planning Service in addition to the Stakeholder Survey to identify areas of improvement from a customer perspective	Planning Service	Medium	Ongoing	
Liaise with Key Groups in the next stages of MLDP2 policy preparation	Policy Team	High	Short/ Medium	Communication with Key Agencies
Explore the possibility of including the Place and Well-being outcomes in the assessment of planning applications	Planning Applications Team	Medium	Medium/ Long	

CASE STUDY 1

WHICH ATTRIBUTES OF A HIGH PERFORMING PLANNING AUTHORITY DO THIS RELATE TO:

- [Attribute 1](#): The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- [Attribute 2](#): The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- [Attribute 3](#): This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- [Attribute 4](#): This Planning Authority has sound governance
- [Attribute 5](#): This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- [Attribute 6](#): This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- [Attribute 7](#): This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
- [Attribute 8](#): This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes
- [Attribute 9](#): This Planning Authority has good customer care
- [Attribute 10](#): This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- [Attribute 11](#): This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
- [Attribute 12](#): This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

CONTEXT

The GIS Technician post within the Planning Section of the council had been vacant for a period of time and has been filled during the 2023/24 reporting period. The GIS post plays an important role within the Planning

Service including tasks such as: Producing maps for meetings or documents, the plotting of sites and planning applications on the councils' internal systems and online for public use.



WHAT HAPPENED?

Amongst the wider staff of the department, Planning Officers continue to have constraints layers available to them for viewing which overlap applications they are working on and which therefore must be factored into their consideration when deciding on applications. A major task for the

Planning GIS Technician in 2024 was updating the datasets used in these, with a variety of in-house and third party data, such as Edinburgh Airport safeguarding consultation zones and Network Rail land ownership. In addition to this, the GIS technician has been a key factor in the background of the MLDP2 preparation and in assisting planning staff not familiar with the QGIS on creating their own maps.

AREAS OF COLLABORATION

GIS Technician: *Richard Lamond*

Collaboration: *Planning Team and relevant external sources (for data collection).*

WHAT WAS THE OVERALL RESULT

A number of data sets frequently used by the Planning Applications Team are now up to date, the Policy Team have continuous support in the production of data and maps for MLDP2. Some planning colleagues have been trained with a basic knowledge of QGIS to carry out their own tasks.

LESSONS LEARNED

SUCCESSSES:

Planning staff have expanded their skills sets to undertake basic QGIS tasks without support. This reduces the amount of time taken to complete the overall tasks as no third party involvement is required. In addition to this, a number of data sets are up to date to provide accurate and reliable information for users.

CHALLENGES:

Ensuring the GIS software, we rely on works within the context of the Council's networking and IT arrangements.

The implementation of an update of the records management software we use for processing planning applications, such as plotting their boundaries and constraints checking has also presented challenges. This is likely to remain a focus of our GIS work for considerable time.

There has been a tendency to move away from using locally held spatial data, such as layers held as shape files

and geopackages, in favour of those provided over the internet, such as Web Feature Services. This has brought problems, such as but not limited to, those associated with the need to "white-list" certain URLs and limits regarding the amount of data that can be transferred over them at one time. This can be viewed as a backwards step that has brought greater complications than if we were able to download files as shape files or geopackages to store and then load in from our own systems.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Training of staff on the basics of GIS tasks can present challenges, due to the technical nature of the work. It has been necessary to outline the basics of map projections and file storage naming and locations before users can start doing mapping tasks.

WHAT CONTRIBUTION WILL IT AIM TO MAKE TOWARDS DELIVERING OUTCOMES?

SUSTAINABLE PLACES

- Climate change and nature crisis
- Climate mitigate and adaptation

- Biodiversity
- Natural Places
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees
- Historic assets and places
- Green belts
- Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- Coast development
- Energy
- Zero waste
- Sustainable transport

LIVEABLE PLACES

- Design, quality and place
- Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods
- Quality homes
- Rural homes
- Infrastructure first
- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

PRODUCTIVE PLACES

- Community Wealth Building

- Business and industry
- City, town, local and commercial centres
- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture
- Minerals

PLACE AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES

- Movement
- Spaces
- Resources
- Civic
- Stewardship

CASE STUDY 2

WHICH ATTRIBUTES OF A HIGH PERFORMING PLANNING AUTHORITY DO THIS RELATE TO:

- [Attribute 1](#): The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- [Attribute 2](#): The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- [Attribute 3](#): This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- [Attribute 4](#): This Planning Authority has sound governance
- [Attribute 5](#): This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- [Attribute 6](#): This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- [Attribute 7](#): This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology

[Attribute 8](#): This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes

[Attribute 9](#): This Planning Authority has good customer care

[Attribute 10](#): This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities

[Attribute 11](#): This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places

[Attribute 12](#): This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

CONTEXT

Local Place Plans are community led plans introduced through the 2019 Planning (Scotland) Act. LPPs function as a tool for local authorities to collaborate with communities by asking them to set out proposals for the

development and use of land in their area.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Requests were sent out to Community Councils inviting them to create their own LPP. In addition to the guidance documents prepared for the Community Councils, the Policy Team offered meetings and held initial workshops to assist in the preparation.



Assistance continued to be offered during the drafting and final submission stage (March 2024).

AREAS OF COLLABORATION

Key Officer: *Keith Luke*

Collaboration: *Community Councils throughout Midlothian*

WHAT WAS THE OVERALL RESULT

At its Planning Committee at the beginning of June (2024), Midlothian Council registered 8 Local Place Plans for: Bonnyrigg & District, Damhead & District, Eskbank & Newbattle, Gorebridge & District, Mayfield & Easthouses, Newtongrange, Rosewell & District and Roslin & Bilston.

LESSONS LEARNED

SUCCESSSES:

There was a good level of interest from local communities and community bodies in the LPP process. This resulted in LPPs being prepared by 8 of

the 15 community councils in Midlothian.

The Planning Service received positive feedback about the assistance provided to community bodies throughout the LPP process through dedicated web pages, guidance, and workshops.

CHALLENGES:

The short timescale to manage and prepare LPPs was a particular challenge for community bodies.

Limited resources impacted on the ability of community bodies to prepare LPPs. The cost involved in preparing LPPs, and limited funding options available, was also a challenge.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Community bodies require more time and support, for example, assistance in preparing maps.

The LPPs are an invaluable source of local information and community bodies would benefit from more funding options to enable them to prepare LPPs.

They are also very important for the preparation of the LDP Evidence Report and Proposed Plan.

WHAT CONTRIBUTION WILL IT AIM TO MAKE TOWARDS DELIVERING OUTCOMES?

SUSTAINABLE PLACES

- Climate change and nature crisis
- Climate mitigate and adaptation
- Biodiversity
- Natural Places
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees
- Historic assets and places
- Green belts
- Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- Coast development
- Energy
- Zero waste
- Sustainable transport

LIVEABLE PLACES

- Design, quality and place
- Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods
- Quality homes

- Rural homes
- Infrastructure first
- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

PRODUCTIVE PLACES

- Community Wealth Building
- Business and industry
- City, town, local and commercial centres
- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture
- Minerals

PLACE AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES

- Movement
- Spaces
- Resources
- Civic
- Stewardship

CASE STUDY 3

WHICH ATTRIBUTES OF A HIGH PERFORMING PLANNING AUTHORITY DO THIS RELATE TO:

- [Attribute 1](#): The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- [Attribute 2](#): The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- [Attribute 3](#): This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- [Attribute 4](#): This Planning Authority has sound governance
- [Attribute 5](#): This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- [Attribute 6](#): This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- [Attribute 7](#): This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
- [Attribute 8](#): This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes
- [Attribute 9](#): This Planning Authority has good customer care
- [Attribute 10](#): This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- [Attribute 11](#): This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
- [Attribute 12](#): This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

CONTEXT

A proposal to build a replacement school on the site of the old Newbattle High School in Easthouses was consented in March 2023. The development included a new primary school with an Additional Support Needs (ASN) facility and nursery. A tight schedule was proposed for the following August (2024) that would see the school open to the public for the start of the new school year.



WHAT HAPPENED?

The Planning Service worked with departments across the council (Roads, Environmental Health) to see that the pre-development conditions were discharged in a timely manner, allowing works to get underway by May 2023. Continuous communication (meetings, emails, etc.) were continued throughout the ongoing work to support the timetable for delivery.

AREAS OF COLLABORATION

Case Officer: *Graeme King*

Collaboration: *Internal (Environmental Health, Roads, etc.). Coal Authority, SEPA and Scottish Water, Mayfield and Easthouses Community Council & the Planning Committee.*

WHAT WAS THE OVERALL RESULT

The primary school opened as planned in August 2024 and has the ability to accommodate 459 children, 16 spaces for children with ASN and a further 80 spaces for pre-school children

LESSONS LEARNED

SUCCESSSES:

The opening of the primary school and nursery at the start of the new term was positive news for the community. Teachers and pupils were able to settle into their new campus without the disruption moving to the school part-way through the year, had the school not opened on time.

CHALLENGES:

The discharging of conditions, particularly when there is a time constraint on the project can be difficult. This can also lead to a difference of opinions to move the project along.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The project emphasised the benefits of engaging in detailed pre-application discussions, and the co-ordination of different Council regulatory functions whilst discharging conditions.

WHAT CONTRIBUTION WILL IT AIM TO MAKE TOWARDS DELIVERING OUTCOMES?

SUSTAINABLE PLACES

- Climate change and nature crisis
- Climate mitigate and adaptation
- Biodiversity
- Natural Places
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees
- Historic assets and places
- Green belts
- Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- Coast development
- Energy
- Zero waste
- Sustainable transport

LIVEABLE PLACES

- Design, quality and place
- Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods
- Quality homes
- Rural homes
- Infrastructure first
- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure

- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

PRODUCTIVE PLACES

- Community Wealth Building
- Business and industry
- City, town, local and commercial centres
- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture
- Minerals

PLACE AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES

- Movement
- Spaces
- Resources
- Civic
- Stewardship