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Additional information:

East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026: Technical Report, Appendices 1 to 5 and Mapping, linked to the Report to Cabinet on East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 (20 January 2026).

Authorised By	Eamon John
Designation	Head of Communities & Partnerships
Date	17/12/25

For Office Use Only:	
Library Reference	01/26
Date Received	17/12/25
Bulletin	Jan26

TECHNICAL REPORT

# **EAST LoTHIAN** **OPEN SPACE STRATEGY** 2026

A Strategic Framework for Parks, Greenspaces,  
Sports Pitches and other Open Spaces  
in East Lothian's Communities



## Contents

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1	East Lothian's Parks and Open Spaces.....	6
1.2	Purpose and Key Roles of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 .....	6
1.3	Definitions of Open Space, Green Infrastructure and Green Networks .....	7
1.4	What is an Open Space Strategy? .....	7
1.5	What will change as a result of this strategy? .....	9
1.6	Legislative requirements for an Open Space Strategy .....	10
1.7	What does the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 include? .....	12
1.8	Open Space and Sports Pitches .....	13
<b>2.0</b>	<b>THE IMPORTANCE OF EAST LOTHIAN'S OPEN SPACE AND GREENSPACE.....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1	The Importance of Open Space and Greenspace .....	15
2.2	The Value of Parks and Greenspaces to People in East Lothian .....	16
2.3	Key Themes and Focus of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 .....	18
2.3.1	Climate .....	18
2.3.2	Nature .....	20
2.3.3	Health and Wellbeing .....	22
2.3.4	Interconnecting Themes .....	25
<b>3.0</b>	<b>POLICY CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1	National Planning Policy .....	27
3.2	Policies on Inclusion.....	28
3.3	Local Policy Context .....	29
3.4	Key Partnerships for Delivery .....	31
<b>4.0</b>	<b>AIMS, VISION AND KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE EAST LOTHIAN OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2026 .....</b>	<b>33</b>
4.1	Aims of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026.....	33
4.2	East Lothian Vision for Open Space .....	33
4.3	Vision Statement for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026.....	35
4.4	Outcomes of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 .....	35
4.5	Strategic Context: Key Issues and Threats .....	35
<b>5.0</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT OF THE EAST LOTHIAN OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2026 .....</b>	<b>37</b>
5.1	Previous Open Space Audits 2009 and 2016 .....	37
5.2	Progress Since 2018: Open Space Improvements 2018–2026 .....	37
5.3	Consultation and Engagement to inform the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 .....	44
5.4	Impact Assessments .....	45
5.4.1	Strategic Environmental Assessment.....	45
5.4.2	Integrated Impact Assessment .....	45
5.4.3	Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment Screening.....	45

<b>6.0</b>	<b>EAST LOTHIAN OPEN SPACES.....</b>	<b>46</b>
6.1	History of East Lothian’s Open Spaces.....	46
6.2	The East Lothian Open Space Audit 2024/25 .....	47
6.2.1	Type, Size and Number of Open Spaces .....	47
6.2.2	Open Spaces in Audit including Typology .....	48
<b>7.0</b>	<b>EAST LOTHIAN OPEN SPACE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>50</b>
7.1	Background and Context .....	50
7.2	Objective: Setting Standards for East Lothian .....	50
7.3	East Lothian Open Space Standards: Quantity, Quality and Accessibility .....	51
7.4	QUANTITY OF OPEN SPACE.....	52
7.4.1	Quantity: Is there enough open space and is it equitably distributed? .....	52
7.4.2	Quantity Standard for Open Space .....	52
7.5	QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE .....	53
7.5.1	Quality: Is open space ‘fit for purpose’? .....	53
7.5.2	Quality Standard and Requirement for Open Space.....	53
7.5.3	Methodology: East Lothian Open Space Quality Assessment .....	54
7.5.4	East Lothian Open Space Quality Standard.....	56
7.6	ACCESSIBILITY OF OPEN SPACE.....	57
7.6.1	Accessibility: Is open space accessible to communities? .....	57
7.6.2	East Lothian Open Space Accessibility Standard.....	58
7.6.3	Accessibility Standard for Sports Pitch Provision.....	58
7.6.4	Accessibility Assessment: Distance Thresholds Mapping .....	59
7.6.5	Accessibility Assessment: ‘Isochrone’ Mapping.....	59
7.6.6	Open Space Hierarchy.....	59
7.7	East Lothian Standards Table.....	61
<b>8.0</b>	<b>APPLICATION OF QUANTITY, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR OPEN SPACE ACROSS EAST LOTHIAN .....</b>	<b>63</b>
8.1	FINDINGS: QUANTITY OF OPEN SPACE ACROSS EAST LOTHIAN .....	63
8.1.1	Quantity of Open Space across East Lothian’s Settlements .....	63
8.1.2	Quantity of all Open Space by Cluster Area .....	64
8.1.3	Cluster Analysis: Quantity of Parks & Gardens, Amenity Greenspace and Playspaces .....	65
8.2	FINDINGS: QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE ACROSS EAST LOTHIAN.....	69
8.2.1	Findings of Quality Assessment for all Open Space across East Lothian’s Settlements.....	69
8.2.2	Quality of all Open Space by Cluster Area .....	71
8.2.3	Future Management Priorities to enhance Quality of open spaces, identified through the Open Space Audit	73
8.3	FINDINGS: ACCESSIBILITY OF OPEN SPACE ACROSS EAST LOTHIAN .....	75
8.3.1	Findings of Accessibility Assessment: Distance Thresholds Mapping.....	75
8.3.2	Findings of Accessibility Assessment: ‘Isochrone’ Mapping .....	75
8.3.3	Accessibility Assessment: Quality of Accessibility of Open Spaces across East Lothian .....	75

8.3.4	Findings on Accessibility from the public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy 2026 .....	76
8.3.5	Disability access and inclusion .....	78
8.3.6	Priorities for enhancing Accessibility of open spaces, identified through the Accessibility assessment ....	79
8.4	FINDINGS: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PARKS & GREENSPACES .....	80
<b>9.0</b>	<b>STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS FOR OPEN SPACES AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.....</b>	<b>82</b>
9.1	Introduction .....	82
9.2	Findings from the Public Consultation with Communities: What would make our parks and greenspaces better? .....	82
9.2.1	Issues preventing people's use or enjoyment of parks and greenspaces .....	82
9.2.2	Public feedback on improvements needed to parks and greenspaces.....	83
9.3	Public Priorities for Public Parks & Greenspace Improvements and Enhancements .....	85
9.4	Principles for the Development, Maintenance and Use of Parks, Greenspaces and other Open Spaces in East Lothian .....	87
9.5	Key Priorities for Improvements and Enhancements to Existing Parks & Greenspaces and to Incorporate in New Parks & Greenspaces .....	87
9.6	Key Management Issues, Actions and Solutions .....	89
9.6.1	Safety: Aiming for safer, more welcoming and more inclusive parks and greenspaces.....	89
9.6.2	Access Routes / Paths / Active Travel Improvements.....	91
9.6.3	Provision of Seating and Other Facilities in Parks and Greenspaces .....	93
9.6.4	Expand Nature Network Enhancements for Biodiversity and Climate Resilience .....	95
9.6.5	Dogs in Parks and Greenspaces .....	96
9.6.6	Climate change adaptation and resilience, including flooding and coastal change impacts .....	97
9.7	Funding .....	98
9.7.1	Proposal: Explore alternative funding mechanisms for Council parks and open space .....	98
9.7.2	Proposal: Work with partners to identify and deliver actions in privately owned open spaces .....	99
9.7.3	Proposal: Strengthen Developer Contributions for Open Space .....	99
9.7.4	Proposal: Embedding Community Wealth Building in Open Space Delivery .....	99
9.7.5	Proposal: Open Spaces as Drivers of Tourism and Place Economy.....	100
<b>10.0</b>	<b>APPLICATION OF QUANTITY, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR EACH TYPE OF OPEN SPACE.....</b>	<b>101</b>
10.1	Introduction .....	101
10.2	Green Networks.....	101
10.3	Public Parks & Gardens.....	105
10.4	Amenity Greenspace .....	114
10.5	Civic Spaces.....	119
10.6	Sports Areas / Sports Pitches.....	121
10.7	Playspaces and Equipped Play Areas .....	128
10.8	Allotments and Community Growing Spaces .....	134
10.9	Cemeteries and Churchyards.....	137
<b>11.0</b>	<b>PROPOSALS AND GUIDANCE FOR OPEN SPACE IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS .....</b>	<b>140</b>
11.1	Context and Guiding Principles.....	140

11.2	Current Minimum Open Space Standard for New Housing Development in LDP 2018 .....	140
11.3	East Lothian Requirements and Principles for Open Space in New Developments .....	141
11.3.1	Requirements and Expectations for Open Space in New Developments: .....	141
11.3.2	East Lothian Council's Principles for Open Space in New Developments: .....	142
11.3.3	Quantity, Quality and Accessibility Standards for Open Space for New Developments .....	142
11.4	Guidelines for Development: Open Space Requirements for New Development .....	144
11.4.1	Open Space provision required for new developments in East Lothian: .....	144
11.4.2	Key Priorities for Open Space expected in new developments in East Lothian: .....	148
11.4.3	Green Infrastructure requirements and expectations for new developments: .....	149
11.4.4	Phasing the delivery of open space in new developments: .....	150
<b>12.0</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN.....</b>	<b>151</b>
12.1	Action Plan Table .....	152
<b>13.0</b>	<b>NEXT STEPS.....</b>	<b>160</b>
13.1	Delivery .....	160
13.2	Monitoring and Evaluation .....	160
13.3	GIS Mapping and Database Design .....	160
<b>14.0</b>	<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>161</b>

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1:** East Lothian Open Space Typology used for the Open Space Strategy and Audit

**Appendix 2:** Findings of Quality Assessment for each Cluster Area from the Open Space Audit 2024/25 for all open space sites audited (including both Council owned and privately owned sites)

**Appendix 3:** Summaries of the findings of East Lothian Open Space Audit by Cluster Area

**Appendix 4:** Open Space Sites included in the East Lothian Open Space Audit

**Appendix 5:** Respondents to the Public Consultation on the Draft East Lothian Open Space Strategy

## **LIST OF MAPS**

**All Audited Open Space Sites are shown on an [interactive ArcGIS Online Map](#) (in 'Map Viewer').**

Map 1: Cluster Location Plan

Map 2a: Open Space Type – Musselburgh Cluster

Map 2b: Open Space Type – Prestonpans Cluster

Map 2c: Open Space Type – Tranent Cluster

Maps 2d.1, 2d.2, 2d.3: Open Space Type – North Berwick Cluster

Maps 2e.1, 2e.2: Open Space Type – Haddington Cluster

Maps 2f.1, 2f.2, 2f.3, 2f.4, 2f.5: Open Space Type – Dunbar Cluster

Map 3a: Public Parks Provision – Musselburgh Cluster

Map 3b: Public Parks Provision – Prestonpans Cluster

Map 3c: Public Parks Provision – Tranent Cluster

Maps 3d.1, 3d.2: Public Parks Provision – North Berwick Cluster

Maps 3e.1, 3e.2, 3e.3: Public Parks Provision – Haddington Cluster

Maps 3f.1, 3f.2: Public Parks Provision – Dunbar Cluster

Map 4.1: Accessibility of Regional Open Space

Map 4.2: Country Park 10km Catchment

Map 5a: Sports Pitch Provision – Musselburgh Cluster

Map 5b: Sports Pitch Provision – Prestonpans Cluster

Maps 5c.1, 5c.2: Sports Pitch Provision – Tranent Cluster

Maps 5d.1, 5d.2: Sports Pitch Provision – North Berwick Cluster

Maps 5e.1, 5e.2: Sports Pitch Provision – Haddington Cluster

Maps 5f.1, 5f.2, 5f.3: Sports Pitch Provision – Dunbar Cluster

Map 6a: Equipped Play Areas Provision – Musselburgh Cluster

Map 6b: Equipped Play Areas Provision – Prestonpans Cluster

Maps 6c.1, 6c.2: Equipped Play Areas Provision – Tranent Cluster

Maps 6d.1, 6d.2: Equipped Play Areas Provision – North Berwick Cluster

Maps 6e.1, 6e.2, 6e.3, 6e.4, 6e.5: Equipped Play Areas Provision – Haddington Cluster

Maps 6f.1, 6f.2, 6f.3: Equipped Play Areas Provision – Dunbar Cluster

Map 7: Strategic Green Networks

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 East Lothian's Parks and Open Spaces

East Lothian's parks, greenspaces, open spaces, civic spaces and sports areas are the green hearts of our communities, functioning as fundamental spaces to benefit people's health and wellbeing, to tackle climate change, and to support and enhance nature.

They form the character and setting of our towns and villages, provide places for outdoor play, sports and physical activity, social gathering, civic events, and local food growing, in the heart of our communities, and bring economic benefits to the area through tourism.

In addition, they are green places of nature networks, capturing (sequestering) and storing carbon, with trees and areas of natural habitat that provide shade in our hotter summers, reduce localised flooding, create homes for nature, and provide us with nature-based solutions in our urban areas.

East Lothian's parks, sports pitches and open spaces form a central part of the area's character, ranging from expanses of coastline to destination parks and play areas, from village greens to harbours and promenades.



*West Barns Memorial Park*

### 1.2 Purpose and Key Roles of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026

**The purpose** of this updated East Lothian Open Space Strategy is to review the provision, quantity, quality and accessibility of the public parks, greenspaces and open spaces within and on the edge of East Lothian's towns and villages.

**The key roles** of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy are:

1. To protect and enhance the publicly accessible open spaces that we have; and
2. To provide high quality new open spaces for the future.

The Open Space Strategy 2026 is a 10-year strategy, which updates and refreshes the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018<sup>1</sup>, setting out the new and updated national and local policy context, the practical differences and improvements that have taken place on the ground since the previous strategy, and an updated audit, assessment and mapping of the public open spaces across East Lothian's communities.

This refreshed strategy will also emphasise that the need to protect and enhance our publicly accessible parks, greenspaces and other open spaces is greater than ever before, as we tackle the interlinked crises of the climate and nature emergencies, the social inequalities across our society and the public health need for places and spaces in our communities that benefit health and wellbeing.

The strategy sets out revised and updated proposals on the development, maintenance and use of open spaces and green networks in East Lothian, and an evidence-based high-level Action Plan with monitoring and evaluation framework to guide delivery over the coming years.

### 1.3 Definitions of Open Space, Green Infrastructure and Green Networks

**"Open Space"** means space within and on the edge of settlements comprising green infrastructure or civic areas such as squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function.

**"Green Infrastructure"** means features of the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem and social benefits.

**"Green Networks"** means connected areas of green infrastructure and open space.

### 1.4 What is an Open Space Strategy?

An Open Space Strategy sets out proposals for the development, maintenance and use of open spaces in a local authority's area, and proposals to meet future need and demand. Preparing an Open Space Strategy is a statutory duty for local authorities under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019<sup>2</sup>, and it must be taken into consideration in the Local Development Planning process.

East Lothian Council already has an existing East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018 in place, which was approved by Cabinet in 2018. It set out objectives and actions for the provision and management of open space and established open space standards to ensure suitable future open space provision through the development planning process. This now requires to be refreshed and updated.

This report, along with the accompanying mapping, forms the Open Space Strategy 2026 for East Lothian, thereby fulfilling the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. The Strategy sets out the policy framework and vision for the protection, management and enhancement of existing open space as well as the requirements for new open space and outdoor sports provision in East Lothian towns and villages.

The range of benefits associated with open space are dependent upon the way the resource is planned, designed and managed to secure spaces that are 'fit for purpose' and address the needs of our communities.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16252/cabinet> (report 03)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/13/section/3>

Open spaces contribute to a range of national and local commitments and policies, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity enhancement, green network, social equity, health, wellbeing and physical activity, healthy living, outdoor learning and sustainable transport policies. The Open Space Strategy seeks to provide a prioritised framework for investment, maintenance and management.

The Strategy intends to help inform decisions regarding the provision, development and management of open space over the period of 2026–2036. It will be reviewed at least every 5 years, to reflect changing needs, demands for specific facilities and the Local Development Plan context.



*Haugh Park, Musselburgh*

## 1.5 What will change as a result of this strategy?

The **East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026** introduces several significant enhancements from the previous version that will shape how parks, greenspaces, and other open spaces are managed and developed over the next decade.

*By engaging with and listening to communities in informing this strategy we expect to see more people enjoying and benefiting from our open and green spaces.*

The key changes and outcomes are:

- **Updated, evidence-led standards and requirements** for open space in East Lothian, informed by detailed audits of 462 sites and feedback from public consultation;
- **Stronger focus on climate, nature and health and wellbeing**, embedding climate resilience, nature enhancement, and health equity into open space management, planning and design;
- **Improvements and enhancements to open spaces**, informed by community engagement and involvement and embedding equity and inclusion, with a particular focus on open spaces most in need of improvement as identified through this strategy;
- **Specific commitments to improve greenspace quality and provision in more deprived areas and address barriers for particular groups** including minority ethnic communities, women and girls<sup>3</sup>, older people, and those with disabilities, through community-informed infrastructure, amenity and nature-based enhancements;
- **Setting guidance to inform the next Local Development Plan**, to ensure provision of high-quality, multi-functional open spaces and green networks in new developments, guided by updated open space standards;
- **A framework to focus and prioritise the management and maintenance of open space**, ensuring that the Council has a clear strategic direction to its open space investment and asset management, and as a basis to seek and obtain funding for delivery through a range of funding mechanisms.



<sup>3</sup> In this strategy the term “women and girls” includes those who have identified as female and have responded to our consultation; where feedback has been provided by representatives of organisations, they have communicated information on behalf of the individuals from the demographic they represent.

## 1.6 Legislative requirements for an Open Space Strategy

**The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019<sup>4</sup>** Part 1 (Development Planning), Section 3, sets out requirements for an Open Space Strategy as follows:

**The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019<sup>1</sup> Part 1 (Development Planning), Section 3, requirements for an Open Space Strategy:**

***“3 Open space strategy***

*(1) The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 is amended as follows.*

*(2) After section 3F insert—*

***“3G Open space strategy***

*(1) A planning authority is to prepare and publish an open space strategy.*

*(2) An open space strategy is to set out a strategic framework of the planning authority’s policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their district, including open spaces and green networks.*

*(3) An open space strategy must contain—*

- (a) an audit of existing open space provision,*
- (b) an assessment of current and future requirements,*
- (c) any other matter which the planning authority consider appropriate.*

*(4) In this section—*

*“green infrastructure” means features of the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem and social benefits,*

*“green networks” means connected areas of green infrastructure and open space,*

*“open space” means space within and on the edge of settlements comprising green infrastructure or civic areas such as squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function.”*

**The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023<sup>5</sup>**, Part 3 (Local Development Plans), Section 9, sets out the information and considerations to which the planning authority are to have regard to in preparing a local development plan. These include, at s.9(2)(x), any open space strategy published under section 3G of the Act.

Existing guidance in the Scottish Government’s Planning Advice Note **PAN 65 ‘Planning and Open Space’<sup>6</sup>** sets out essential aspects to cover in an open space audit as follows:

“The essential elements of an audit are to record the type, functions, size, condition, location and maintenance requirements of the spaces and to provide some insight on levels of use. The process should also identify community views on the value of open spaces and aspirations for their future role. It may

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/13/section/3>

<sup>5</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2023/101>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-advice-note-pan-65-planning-open-space/>

sometimes be useful to record details such as ownership or any history of flooding. Qualitative indicators, for example ranking quality and condition of facilities, can help to establish fitness for purpose.”

Greenspace Scotland, in their **Greenspace Quality Guide**<sup>7</sup>, provided guidance on undertaking a qualitative greenspace audit and on preparing a ‘Greenspace Strategy’, setting out that the strategy should link the findings of the audit to its strategic context and provide a blueprint for working in partnership with other authorities, stakeholders and local communities.

In 2021 the **Scottish Government consulted on a set of draft regulations** on Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments<sup>8</sup>. Their consultative guidance document set out their draft proposals for conducting an open space audit in the preparation of an Open Space Strategy. These are summarised below:

#### **Open Space Audit: Scottish Government Draft Regulations and Guidance:**

- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires the Open Space Strategy to contain an audit of existing open space provision.
- Draft Regulation 4(2) sets out that authorities must audit all open spaces in their area that are 0.2 hectares or greater, and any other smaller spaces that the planning authority considers appropriate to include.
- The 0.2 ha threshold relates to ‘open space’, which is defined as being spaces ‘within and on the edge of settlements’.
- Draft Regulation 4(3) requires audits to, for each open space included in the audit, provide, information on its location, size (in hectares), and type.
- Draft Regulation 4(4) requires that this is presented using GIS based digital mapping.
- Draft Regulation 4(5) suggests that the planning authority may include information on accessibility to the public, functions of open spaces, the extent to which open spaces deliver those functions, the presence of play opportunities in open spaces, and the condition of open spaces.
- The Draft Regulations require that audits of existing open space provision include statements covering the accessibility, quality and quantity for the totality of the open spaces in their area, and for the totality of the open spaces in respect of each locality within their area. This is intended to provide a high level picture as to the state of open space in each local authority area.

The proposed set of types of open space, which the Scottish Government stated it intends to cover in guidance, covers the full spectrum of ‘green’, ‘blue’ and ‘grey’ spaces - including green spaces, blue spaces (linked to water), and grey spaces (man-made civic spaces).

The key elements of Open Space Strategy development are:

- Strategic vision for open space
- Quantitative audit of the open space resource
- Qualitative assessment of the open space resource
- Open space strategy development based on audit intelligence and strategic vision
- Development of locally relevant open space standards
- Frameworks for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy

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<sup>7</sup> Greenspace Quality: A Guide to Assessment, Planning and Strategic Development (2008)

<https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Category/resources>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-open-space-strategies-play-sufficiency-assessments-regulations/pages/8/>

## 1.7 What does the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 include?

For this updated East Lothian Open Space Strategy, we have visited **462 publicly accessible open spaces and greenspaces** in towns and villages across East Lothian and undertaken a detailed audit of each of these sites during 2024/25. These 462 sites included both Council owned/managed and privately owned/managed open spaces, **within and on the edge of settlements**. Many of these are new open spaces developed since the last East Lothian Open Space Strategy in 2018, delivered in new housing developments arising from the East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018<sup>9</sup>.

We have followed the Scottish Government's draft regulations on Open Space Strategies in focusing on open spaces **over 0.2 hectares in size, plus other smaller urban open spaces that have important functions locally**, such as civic squares in town centres and neighbourhood playspaces.



*Neilson Park, Haddington*

The open space audit information that was collected was analysed. We then undertook a **public consultation**<sup>10</sup> **on the draft findings in our Draft Open Space Strategy**, to obtain feedback from our communities on various aspects for the proposed final Open Space Strategy. Data and findings from other recent relevant consultations undertaken by the Council, as well as direct engagement with organisations representing specific equality groups in East Lothian, were also incorporated into our findings to influence the final Open Space Strategy and ensure it represents the views of a range of people from across East Lothian. Further information about our consultation process is provided in section 5.3.

This Strategy presents our findings on the

- **Quantity**
- **Quality, and**
- **Accessibility**

of a range of open space types across East Lothian's towns and villages.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210547/planning\\_and\\_building\\_standards/12242/local\\_development\\_plan](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210547/planning_and_building_standards/12242/local_development_plan)

<sup>10</sup> <https://eastlothianconsultations.co.uk/policy-partnerships/consultation-on-east-lothian-open-space-strategy-r/>

The Strategy also sets out evidence-based, revised and updated **proposals on the development, maintenance and use** of open spaces and green networks in East Lothian, and an Action Plan with monitoring and evaluation framework.

This updated Strategy has a greater focus on **equitable access to greenspaces**, particularly to address health inequalities, and recognising the barriers beyond physical access (for example, gendered safety concerns, racism, cultural exclusion). It includes the commitments to:

- **Improve quality greenspace provision in deprived areas**
- **Prioritise investment where health inequalities are greatest**

The Strategy will provide those who use and manage open spaces with an up-to-date understanding of the open space resource that exists across the Council area, and presents an opportunity to assess strategically the needs and opportunities for open spaces and associated facilities.

## 1.8 Open Space and Sports Pitches

Open spaces play a critical role in the life of a community, providing a range of facilities and places for quiet reflection, physical activity, sport and civic events. The multi-functional nature of our open spaces can meet many of the local community needs close to where people live, provide us with ecosystem services ranging from carbon sequestration to flood regulation, and bring economic benefits to the area through inward investment and tourism. Open spaces can be used for sport, children's play, relaxation, education and can provide a place for local events. East Lothian's parks, sports pitches and open spaces form a central part of the area's character, ranging from expanses of coastline to school grounds, from village greens to harbours and promenades.



*Musselburgh Promenade*

Good quality open space contributes to the delivery of the 2022–27 East Lothian Council Plan<sup>11</sup> particularly the overarching objective of ‘Respond to the Climate Emergency’, and in terms of ‘Growing our People’ and ‘Growing our Communities’ by enhancing our communities, providing climate resilient, green and civic spaces that provide an attractive and safe resource that encourages people to lead healthy active lives, facilitates social interaction and improves health and wellbeing, by providing communities with the infrastructure and environment that will allow them to flourish.

This Strategy addresses:

- Open space within and on the edge of the towns and larger villages in the six Cluster areas of East Lothian, except private and shared residential gardens and agricultural land
- Open spaces over 0.2 hectares in size plus other smaller urban open spaces that have important functions locally, including parks, amenity greenspace, playspace (i.e. green spaces where the main function is play, for example an equipped play area in a greenspace), green corridors, natural / semi-natural greenspace, community growing spaces, golf courses, harbours and town squares
- Sports pitches (hockey, rugby, shinty, football, cricket, bowls, athletics, tennis) included in the Sports Pitch Strategy
- Both Council and privately owned/managed open space (for example factored parks and play areas forming part of housing estates)
- Accessible open spaces (free of charge and open to the public) and facilities that need to be booked and may charge for use (e.g. Sports pitches)

The Open Space Strategy will provide the Council with a ‘tool’ to improve its management of open space, ensuring that the Council has a clear strategic direction to its open space investment and asset management, and setting out a strategic framework for seeking external investment opportunities.

Although public, private and voluntary sectors at the current time have limited financial resources, the strong and multi-functional strategic aims and objectives of this strategy, which emphasise the fundamental importance of our open spaces, seek to set standards for achievable investment, delivery and implementation as resources become available.

### **The Council’s ambition is that everyone living in East Lothian should have:**

- Good quality Amenity Greenspaces on their doorsteps that benefit their health and wellbeing
- Local and equitable access to attractive, good quality parks in their town and neighbourhood (Town and Local Parks)
- Local and equitable access to good quality Sports Pitches
- Local and equitable access to good quality Play Areas
- Local connections to the Green Network, providing access to the countryside along a well-designed network of accessible path routes
- Access on a regional basis to country parks, regional sports facilities (Centre for Sporting Excellence) and high quality beaches

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/council-plan>

## 2.0 THE IMPORTANCE OF EAST LoTHIAN'S OPEN SPACE AND GREENSPACE

### 2.1 The Importance of Open Space and Greenspace

Parks, greenspaces and other open spaces are fundamental spaces in and around urban areas. They are essential for mitigating climate change and helping us to be more resilient to climate impacts, they create places for nature, benefitting both wildlife and people through connected nature networks, and they are fundamental to our health and wellbeing.

Well managed and maintained greenspaces and other green infrastructure have been shown to enhance economic productivity, benefit tourism and the economy, and can foster local Community Wealth Building<sup>12</sup>. They are fundamental spaces within '20 Minute Neighbourhoods'<sup>13</sup> through their role in place-making and urban design, reinforce local landscape character, contribute to the character, heritage and distinctive identities of our towns and villages, and form important places for social gathering, civic events and reducing social isolation.

**Figure 1: The Benefits and Impact of Quality Greenspace**



*Image reproduced with the kind permission of Greenspace Scotland<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210699/community\\_wealth\\_building/12853/community\\_wealth\\_building](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210699/community_wealth_building/12853/community_wealth_building)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-planning-guidance-local-living-20-minute-neighbourhoods/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/Pages/Category/greenspace-delivers>

As illustrated by Greenspace Scotland (Figure 1), quality greenspaces foster stronger and more cohesive communities, encouraging social interactions and reducing loneliness and social isolation, connecting communities through paths, active travel routes and green corridors.

Greenspaces create opportunities for natural play and outdoor sport and recreation, providing opportunities for physical activity close to where people live, as well as relaxing places to unwind. As sites for in and green social prescribing, they are vital for supporting the nation's health and wellbeing. Local food growing and allotment sites provide local benefits including healthy living, gathering spaces, intergenerational learning and physical and mental wellbeing, and support sustainable living. Trees and hedges in urban areas help filter out pollutants and improve air quality.

Greenspaces are places for environmental education, bringing people including children and young people closer to nature. Community participation in parks and greenspaces through volunteering boosts green skills and confidence, supporting lifelong learning and social, health and wellbeing benefits.

Well managed green infrastructure and green spaces create economic benefits, attracting inward investment and encouraging businesses and tourism into an area. Healthier workplaces with access to green infrastructure boost productivity and mental wellbeing. Opportunities to embed Community Wealth Building through enhancement projects bring local benefits, including economic benefits, to the communities who need it most. Green infrastructure and greenspaces have even been shown to reduce crime, with greener neighbourhoods having lower levels of crime.

East Lothian's open spaces are a foundation of our local economy. High-quality greenspaces, coastlines and civic spaces attract visitors, support our tourism and events sector, and underpin East Lothian's reputation as a place to live, work, visit and invest. The visitor economy contributes significantly to local employment and spend, with open spaces providing the setting for golf championships, festivals, and cultural events.

For residents and businesses, attractive and well-maintained open spaces contribute to town centre vibrancy, support inward investment, and help retain skilled workers by enhancing the county's quality of life offer. Open space management also creates local employment opportunities in landscaping, biodiversity management and events, with further potential for community enterprises to deliver services through Community Wealth Building models.

Perhaps most crucially of all, parks and urban greenspaces are fundamental in mitigating climate change, and enabling us to adapt to climate change and reduce climate-related risks in a rapidly changing world, and concurrently helping us to tackle the interlinked nature crisis by enhancing and protecting nature, wildlife and the natural systems that are fundamental to our survival.

### **Economic Value of Open Spaces**

National research has demonstrated that every £1 invested in parks and greenspaces generates multiple returns in health, social and economic value. Locally, investment in open spaces therefore delivers not only environmental benefits but also measurable economic outcomes, supporting East Lothian Council's Local Economy Strategy 2024–34.

## **2.2 The Value of Parks and Greenspaces to People in East Lothian**

Drawing on previous relevant consultations undertaken recently by East Lothian Council, in particular the consultations on the East Lothian Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces project, the Tree and

Woodland Strategy for East Lothian, the consultation to inform the Evidence Report for the next Local Development Plan, the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment, and the East Lothian Partnership's Local Outcome Improvement Plan consultations (see references in section 3), we have a volume of evidence from residents and visitors to East Lothian of the value and importance they place on parks, greenspaces, playspaces and other open spaces.

### Findings on the importance of East Lothian's parks and greenspaces from the public consultation on East Lothian Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces \*:

- 92% of survey respondents felt strongly that local parks and greenspaces were important to them.
- 63% of respondents live less than a 5 minute walk away from their nearest park / greenspace.
- 83% of respondents had visited their local park / greenspace more than once a week or more often within the last 12 months.
- 88% of respondents use East Lothian's parks and greenspaces to get outdoors.
- 75% of respondents use parks and greenspaces to be close to nature.
- 81% of respondents strongly agreed that they wanted to see more nature and biodiversity enhancement across East Lothian's parks and greenspaces.
- 89% of respondents strongly agreed that nature is important to them.

\* *Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities: Enhancing Nature Networks and Biodiversity in our Parks and Greenspaces*

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside\\_and\\_wildlife/12104/biodiversity\\_and\\_nature\\_networks/2](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside_and_wildlife/12104/biodiversity_and_nature_networks/2)

The East Lothian Partnership collated engagement data from a total of 13,626 voices through 60 different sets of data, including specific engagement with children and young people, to inform the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan<sup>15</sup>. Qualitative responses from a Place Standard Tool analysis (2025) found that 'strengths' highlighted our **natural spaces and parks**, and our well-kept pathways, accessibility, pleasant streets and high streets. '**Natural space**' scored most highly of all themes in the Place Standard Tool analysis, with '**Parks and open spaces**' scoring well in the thematic ratings for '*What is good now?*'.

The views of **children and young people**, gathered by Play Scotland to inform the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment, included many positive comments and feedback about the importance of parks and other natural spaces to them, and the value they placed on them. The following is quoted from the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment summary report:

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community\\_planning/12445/east\\_lothian\\_partnership/5](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community_planning/12445/east_lothian_partnership/5)

## Feedback on East Lothian's Parks and Green Spaces from Children and Young People:

from the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment summary report \*:

"Participants across all target groups spoke positively about the availability of natural spaces in East Lothian, with primary school children stating that they are generally very pleased with the natural spaces in East Lothian. The children stated that they appreciate their rural lifestyle and the green space, wildlife, and cleanliness that go along with it. Specifically, they appreciate hearing birds and other wildlife, seeing a variety of colourful flowers, and the woodlands and trees. The children further suggest that green spaces get you outside and are a good place for active socialising. Children also stated that the location of the formal play areas in wider 'green spaces' as being important, suggesting that they integrate the surrounding informal green spaces into their play which enhances their play experience.

"The young women and girls' group identified nature as important to their informal play and 'hang out' opportunities, and were very positive about the opportunities they had to access surrounding natural environments.

"The disabled families' groups identified the importance of access to natural resources and spaces to provide a variety of informal outdoor play experiences, however accessibility remains an issue."

\* East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment Summary Report

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play\\_sufficiency\\_assessment\\_report\\_-\\_march\\_2024](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play_sufficiency_assessment_report_-_march_2024)

### 2.3 Key Themes and Focus of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026

Recognising the fundamental benefits that parks and urban greenspaces bring to our communities, the focus of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 is on protecting and enhancing our parks, greenspaces and other open spaces, and ensuring we create high quality open spaces for the future.

This strategy aims to deliver outcomes based around the three key interconnected and overarching themes of **Climate**, **Nature** and **Health and Wellbeing**, and these are identified throughout this strategy. **Community Engagement and Involvement** is the 'golden thread' running through the strategy. Each of these key themes is explored in more detail below:

#### 2.3.1 Climate

##### ❖ Climate

*Mitigating climate change and increasing resilience to climate impacts*

Greenspaces and green infrastructure in and around our urban areas, including street trees, woodland, amenity grassland, hedges, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), swales and raingardens, are important in supporting adaptation to and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Greenspaces also create potential opportunities to support low-carbon ground source heating, for example through 'ParkPower' or 'Green Heat in Greenspaces' projects<sup>16</sup>. Ground source may be particularly relevant for smaller rural/off gas communities where a connection to any large scale district heating is not practical. A shared heat pump solution might be optimal and that may require an element of ground source as part of an overall heating solution.

East Lothian Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, publishing its first 5-year Climate Change Strategy in 2020, and most recently its updated Climate Change Strategy 2025–30 to reflect the latest guidance and developments to ensure we remain on the trajectory of emissions reduction towards net zero.

The current Climate Change Strategy also has a strong focus on adaptation to climate change, recognising that climate change is already impacting on our communities, and setting out actions to reduce climate risks, including identifying nature-based solutions to climate impacts and working with communities to improve their resilience to climate change, accounting for extreme weather and climatic shifts. It sets out the aim to continue to improve the quality and connectivity of our green and blue networks, with particular emphasis on areas which provide benefits to climate resilience, including enhancing water courses to manage flood risk, and planting trees in the right places to increase shade cover for heatwave events.

Scotland is already experiencing milder, wetter winters and warmer, drier summers. Severe weather events, including storms such as Storm Arwen, are becoming more frequent and intense, contributing to localised flooding and tree losses. These changes in our climate are projected to continue and intensify over the coming decades. Rising sea levels around East Lothian's coast and increased frequency of storm surges could lead to more widespread coastal flooding and erosion and an increase in areas of natural environment affected by coastal erosion. East Lothian Council are developing a Coastal Change Adaptation Plan (CCAP) to identify risks associated with coastal change and to create a long-term plan for adapting and managing our coastline.

### **Importance of greenspaces and green infrastructure in tackling the Climate Emergency**

- Green spaces, hedgerows and trees, including street trees and woodland belts in urban areas, have key roles in capturing (sequestering) and storing carbon, mitigating the 'greenhouse effect', improving air quality, filtering out pollutants, and cleaning and cooling the air, water and soil;
- Trees and green spaces reduce the urban heat island effect through evaporating water from trees and plants, creating shade and decreasing wind speed;
- Greenspaces and green infrastructure including SuDS, swales and raingardens have key roles in reducing floodwater run-off during periods of heavy rainfall, attenuating water flow and absorbing water, reducing flood impacts in urban areas;
- Connected green networks provide opportunities for active travel for commuting and everyday journeys, reducing reliance on the car;
- Parks and green spaces provide opportunities for local food growing and local heat and energy generation, for example through 'ParkPower' or 'Green Heat in Greenspaces' projects, increasing sustainability and climate resilience in our communities.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/Pages/Category/energy>

### 2.3.2 Nature

#### ❖ Nature

#### *Helping to tackle the Nature Emergency by protecting and enhancing nature networks and providing vital ecosystem services*

Parks and greenspaces have an important role in providing vital habitat supporting biodiversity in our towns and villages. Urban greenspaces designed and managed with biodiversity in mind can benefit both wildlife and the communities living alongside them. Connected nature networks will bring opportunities to connect nature corridors across East Lothian and beyond, and support biodiversity within our towns and villages, as well as increasing access to nature for our communities.

By incorporating and preserving natural habitats within our urban and semi urban spaces, we can create more liveable and sustainable communities. These natural habitats offer benefits including resilience to environmental changes, helping us to tackle the climate emergency, recreational opportunities, and educational value, bringing people closer to nature.

Recognising the global biodiversity crisis, in October 2023, East Lothian Council unanimously approved a motion to declare a Nature Emergency<sup>17</sup>, recognising that biodiversity is in decline and the impact that climate change is having on wildlife and nature. The motion also stated that urgent action must be taken to reverse the decline in nature.

The Council has taken, and continues to take, action to protect and enhance nature across the county, utilising a range of external funding opportunities and working in partnership with others including volunteers, community groups and partner agencies. These actions are reported in our Nature Emergency Updates, available on the Council's website<sup>18</sup>.

East Lothian Council's report on '**Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities: Enhancing Nature Networks and Biodiversity in our Parks and Greenspaces**' (2023)<sup>19</sup> provides details of a consultation survey undertaken with communities, to find out their views on and use of parks and greenspaces and biodiversity enhancements already undertaken and proposed within these parks.

The survey findings indicated that the following existing nature network / natural habitat types already found in our parks and greenspaces were particularly popular with communities:

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<sup>17</sup> [Council declares Nature Emergency | East Lothian Council](#)

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17330/east\\_lothian\\_council](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17330/east_lothian_council) (report 09);  
[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17510/members\\_library\\_service](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17510/members_library_service) (report 95/25)

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside\\_and\\_wildlife/12104/biodiversity\\_and\\_nature\\_networks/2](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside_and_wildlife/12104/biodiversity_and_nature_networks/2)

- Tree planting, street trees, hedgerows / shrubs / bushes;
- Pollinator friendly planting;
- Longer naturalised grass and meadows.

The priority habitat types that communities wanted to see more of across East Lothian parks and greenspaces are:

1. Pollinator friendly planting
2. Naturalised longer grassland
3. Meadows
4. Hedgerows
5. Tree planting

Other habitat types / nature networks suggested by respondents included orchards, allotments, green walls / roofs, bird boxes and sensory and natural play spaces for both people and wildlife.

The associated action plan to enhance nature networks and deliver natural habitats and biodiversity enhancements is being delivered, based on the community's views and preferences, across East Lothian's parks and greenspaces.

**"Nature-based Solutions** harness the power of nature to help provide cost-effective responses to challenges such as flooding and surface water management, urban heating and poor air quality, obesity, ill-health and health inequalities, and moving towards a net zero economy. They can also help us to address a range of additional social, economic and health outcomes which lie at the heart of a fair, low-carbon society..."

*The Improvement Service:  
'Nature-based Solutions', Elected  
Member Briefing Note*  
[https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/26434/EM-Briefing-Nature-Based-Solutions.pdf](https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/26434/EM-Briefing-Nature-Based-Solutions.pdf)

The **Tree and Woodland Strategy (TWS) for East Lothian**<sup>20</sup> aims to increase urban tree canopy cover, as trees play an important role in making our urban areas attractive, healthy and functional. All the trees in urban areas, in gardens and other private land, on institutional land, parks and open spaces and alongside streets form the urban tree canopy. The TWS states that good tree canopy coverage can:

- Improve amenity and climate change resilience by providing shade and shelter
- Reduce urban heat in summer through preventing the sun heating surfaces of roads and buildings and cooling the air
- Improve energy efficiency of buildings by reducing wind chill
- Support health and wellbeing by giving access to and views of trees
- Improve air quality and reduce impacts of air pollutants
- Contribute to the distinctive character, amenity value and place-making of settlements
- Enhance biodiversity and green networks
- Slow water run-off from hard surfaced areas into nearby watercourses, and improve water quality by filtering pollutants from roads
- Reduce the amount of water entering the combined sewerage system

Healthy ecosystems provide essential services (ecosystem services), ranging from carbon sequestration and flood regulation to recreational and tourism opportunities, that directly contribute to the region's prosperity. By recognising and valuing these services through natural capital valuation methods, we can make a compelling case for investing in biodiversity. For example, wetlands that naturally filter water and reduce flood risks can save public funds otherwise spent on potentially more expensive infrastructure projects. Moreover, the presence of rich biodiversity enhances property values and attracts eco-tourism, further boosting local revenue.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17106/cabinet>

In a recent study of cities in the US, researchers found that 30% urban tree canopy cover generated new ecosystem service benefits valued at \$10 million per city (£7.4 million) (range: £1.4 million to £45 million) through avoided stormwater runoff, air pollution removal, and carbon sequestration<sup>21</sup>.

### Importance of parks and greenspaces in tackling the Nature Emergency

- Opportunities to create natural habitat areas in parks and greenspaces, to benefit a range of wildlife including pollinators, amphibians and native mammals;
- Green and blue corridors in urban areas connect natural habitats, support biodiversity, enable movement of species and reduce habitat fragmentation;
- Preventing the loss of biodiversity and protecting our natural capital;
- Nature-based solutions, including SuDS, wetland areas and tree planting, enhance biodiversity and provide cost-effective solutions to issues such as air quality, surface water management and urban heat island impacts, with multiple benefits;
- Parks and greenspaces bring people and nature together close to where people live, with the environmental education, health and wellbeing benefits this brings and fostering a lifelong love of nature and green places, encouraging its protection for the future;
- Local volunteering opportunities, including through Friends Of parks, In Bloom groups, 'citizen science' projects, Path Wardens and Climate Action groups, foster community engagement and participation leading to protection, enhancement and enjoyment of greenspaces for nature and biodiversity.

### 2.3.3 Health and Wellbeing

#### ❖ Health and Wellbeing

*Fundamental spaces for encouraging healthy living, physical activity, social interaction and mental wellbeing*

There is now a volume of scientific evidence demonstrating that access to local, quality green space improves the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all sections of the community. The Marmot Review (2010)<sup>22</sup> recommends that improving the availability of good quality green spaces across the social gradient will help reduce health inequalities. Research also shows that the benefits of parks and green spaces are even greater to people in low-income brackets and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The World Health Organisation in their report on 'Urban Green Spaces and Health' (2016)<sup>23</sup> states: *"Urban green spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, and residential greenery, can promote mental and physical health, and reduce morbidity and mortality in urban residents by providing psychological relaxation and stress alleviation, stimulating social cohesion, supporting physical activity, and reducing exposure to air pollutants, noise and excessive heat"*.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s42949-025-00219-7>

<sup>22</sup> Fair Society, Healthy Lives, Marmot Review, 2010, cited in Fields in Trust report:

<https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/revaluing-parks-and-green-spaces>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2016-3352-43111-60341>

Giving evidence in 2023 to the UK Government's Levelling Up Housing and Communities Committee<sup>24</sup>, Dr William Bird notes that the built environment and particularly green space has a major effect on a child's development. He noted that mothers who live near green space and a well-suited built environment have healthier babies with a healthier weight. Children who live near open space have better health than those who do not. Access to open space early in a child's life is crucial for long term good health and development. Access to open and green spaces and outdoor play at a young age also helps to build up a child's immune system resulting in less asthma, eczema and hay fever and reducing likelihood of future cancers, dementia and heart disease.

Recent research in Kentucky, US, found scientific evidence that a "greening intervention", intentionally planting trees and shrubs in a neighbourhood, improved human health, showing that it led to lower levels of a blood marker strongly associated with cardiovascular health, diabetes and some cancers, meaning that "adding trees to a neighbourhood may reduce community members' risk of heart disease". The researchers stated that: *"Investing in trees is an investment in human health – while also making our cities a cooler, more beautiful, and more enjoyable place to live"*.<sup>25</sup>

The World Health Organisation indicates there is a need for small, local greenspaces very close to where people live and spend their day, as well as large greenspaces, offering formal provisions such as playing fields, and opportunities to experience contact with nature and relative solitude<sup>26</sup>.

"It is the view of Fields in Trust that few public services have such a wide-ranging, positive impact on local communities as parks and green spaces..."

*Fields in Trust (2018): 'Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces: Measuring their economic and wellbeing value to individuals'*

<https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/revaluing-parks-and-green-spaces>

The fundamental role of parks and urban greenspaces in preventative health is also increasingly being recognised. 'Green Health Prescribing'<sup>27</sup> is becoming more recognised as a way of addressing people's health concerns, assisting in recovery from ill health or injury, or to increase social connection, improving health and wellbeing. Green Health Activities can be 'active', such as walking, cycling, participating in outdoor sports, gardening or growing, or 'inactive' such as mindfulness and relaxation.

Researchers at the University of Stirling have developed guidance (2025) to help health and social care providers design and deliver nature-based programmes (otherwise known as 'greenspace programmes', that promote health through activities such as gardening, conservation, and forest walks) for people experiencing challenges with their mental health and with drugs and/or alcohol<sup>28</sup>, building on research showing the positive benefits of these nature-based programmes including feelings of purpose, improved social interactions, increased physical activity, and escaping the stresses of daily life.

In its 'Health Impact Assessment of Greenspace'<sup>29</sup> (2008), Greenspace Scotland stated that:

*"There is evidence of a positive relationship between greenspace and general health i.e. that greenspace improves health and wellbeing. By controlling for socio-economic status, the studies*

<sup>24</sup> [Levelling Up Housing and Communities Committee - Intelligent Health Evidence \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/kentucky/stories-in-kentucky/green-heart-project/>

<sup>26</sup> World Health Organisation, quoted from Greenspace Scotland 'Greenspace is our natural health service' <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/health>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.thinkhealththinknature.scot.nhs.uk/what-is-a-green-prescription/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.stir.ac.uk/news/2025/08/new-guidance-to-help-people-with-poor-mental-health-and-substance-dependence-get-out-into-nature/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/green-health-publications>

*indicate that better health is related to greenspace regardless of socio-economic status. The quantity and quality of greenspace is important.”*

Greenspace Scotland’s overall findings from its Health Impact Assessment of Greenspace<sup>30</sup> include:

- Greenspace provides direct protection from physical environmental exposures;
- Greenspace promotes restoration, relaxation and reduction in stress;
- Greenspace promotes physical activity: greenspace has the potential to increase physical activity by both providing an attractive area to exercise and the opportunity to undertake group-based physical activity with other people;
- Greenspace promotes social interaction and cohesion: however, minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities are less likely to visit and use greenspace. As greenspaces, particularly parks, are generally free, they are open to everyone and hence are used by different groups of people in many different ways. Communal greenspace activities e.g. allotments and community gardens can enhance community interactions and build local capacity and self-esteem.

From a public health perspective, high-quality greenspaces are linked to better physical and mental health outcomes. Equitable access to greenspace is essential for reducing health inequalities. Various studies have shown that use of greenspace is lower among people who experience higher levels of deprivation, older people and those from minority ethnic groups.<sup>31</sup>

‘Scotland’s Population Health Framework 2025–2035’<sup>32</sup> sets out the national approach to improving Scotland’s health and reducing health inequalities for the next decade. The Framework sets out a Prevention Focused System, and includes ‘Places and Communities’ as a key interconnected prevention driver of health and wellbeing. One key aim of the Framework is to: “improve the quality of the built and natural environments, including access to green and blue spaces”, recognising that it is essential to ensure that communities are at the heart of decisions about their local places to achieve meaningful change.

Scotland’s National Framework on ‘Physical Activity for Health’<sup>33</sup> identifies ‘Active Places and Spaces’ as a key strategic delivery outcome for improving physical activity in our population. The Framework seeks to integrate urban design, transport planning and land-use policies to enable and promote walking, cycling and other forms of physical activity within communities for daily living, and strengthen access to good quality public parks, open spaces, green and blue infrastructure and networks, play spaces and sports amenities, aligning with National Planning Framework 4<sup>34</sup>. A new East Lothian Physical Activity Strategy is underway, being developed in partnership with NHS Lothian as part of the East Lothian Community Planning Partnership.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/green-health-publications>

<sup>31</sup> For example see: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1618866724000074> and references therein.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-population-health-framework/pages/1/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/physical-activity-health-framework/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>

Fields in Trust undertook research<sup>35</sup> in 2018 to further the case for revaluing parks and green spaces in terms of the contributions they deliver across diverse policy agendas including tackling obesity, mental health, wellbeing and loneliness. They evaluated the value of the maintenance and continued existence of publicly accessible parks and green spaces, as well as the health and wellbeing value associated with frequent park use.

The findings of the Fields in Trust research are set out in the boxed text (see right).

**Greenspace is now recognised not just as an amenity, but as vital public health infrastructure.**

### **The Value of Parks and Green Spaces to Public Health**

#### **Research findings from Fields in Trust<sup>35</sup> (2018):**

The Wellbeing Value (which is based on measurements of life satisfaction including physical and mental health benefits that stem from park usage) associated with the frequent use of local parks and green spaces is worth **£34.2 billion per year** to the entire UK adult population;

Parks and green spaces are estimated to **save the NHS around £111 million per year** based solely on a reduction in GP visits.

#### **Importance of parks, greenspaces and open spaces for Health and Wellbeing:**

- Encourage exercise and physical activity by providing quality green spaces for walking, cycling, sports and play
- Contribute to a preventative health agenda by direct, positive impacts on health, and helping to reduce health inequalities
- Create opportunities and places for children to play outdoors
- Provide better opportunities for active travel and physical activity
- Improve mental wellbeing by providing access to nature and attractive green spaces and breathing spaces for relaxation
- Increase social cohesion and equality, by creating green spaces and civic spaces for socialising and events, promoting social interaction, inter-generational meeting places, reducing loneliness and isolation
- Create opportunities for community participation and volunteering
- Provide opportunities for growing food locally and healthy eating

### **2.3.4 Interconnecting Themes**

Each of these key themes for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026, of Climate, Nature and Health and Wellbeing, are interlinked and interconnected, and should not be viewed or addressed in isolation as any action or intervention to improve or enhance one aspect should therefore also have benefits for the other connected elements. **Our parks and greenspaces are vitally important in addressing these three key interconnected elements and are at the heart of these vital and fundamental priorities in our local communities.**

<sup>35</sup> <https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/revaluing-parks-and-green-spaces>

**Figure 2: Key Interconnected Themes of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026, that emphasise the importance of Parks and Greenspaces.**



- ❖ A 'golden thread' running through this strategy is **Community Engagement and Involvement**, at every stage, to ensure these benefits are delivered in the best way to address local issues and enhance people's lives locally.

## 3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

### 3.1 National Planning Policy

Open Space Strategies need to be set within a clear national and local policy framework, informed by local needs and opportunities. The preparation of the Open Space Audit 2024/25, which builds on the Open Space Audit 2016, was developed in response to the requirements set out in the **Planning (Scotland) Act 2019**, the **Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023** and the **National Planning Framework 4** (2023). The preparation of the Open Space Strategy was also informed by the **Planning Advice Note (PAN) 65 Planning and Open Space**.

The **National Planning Framework 4** (NPF4) includes a number of policies that should be considered during the preparation of the Open Space Strategy:

#### **Policy 2: Climate mitigation and adaptation**

Policy 2 seeks to ensure that emissions from new development are minimised as far as possible. This policy also supports proposals that result in places being more resilient to climate change impacts.

#### **Policy 3: Biodiversity**

This policy requires proposals to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, including by restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks. Adverse impacts, including cumulative impacts, of development proposals on the natural environment will be minimised through careful planning and design, taking into account the need to reverse biodiversity loss.

#### **Policy 6: Forestry, woodland and trees**

Policy 6 aims to protect and expand forests, woodland and trees

#### **Policy 14: Design, quality and place**

Policy 14 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate well designed development that makes successful places by taking a design-led approach and applying the Place Principle.

#### **Policy 15: Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods**

This policy promotes local living, including where feasible 20 minute neighbourhoods. Policy 15 reiterates the need for local access to open spaces, opportunities for food growing and allotments and sport facilities.

#### **Policy 18: Infrastructure first**

This policy requires that the impacts of development proposals on infrastructure should be mitigated and the policy makes reference to planning obligations or other legal agreements as a means of addressing the impacts on infrastructure.

#### **Policy 20: Blue and green infrastructure**

This policy aims to protect and enhance blue and green infrastructure and, amongst other things, maintain the overall integrity of the network and ensure proposals do not result in or exacerbate a deficit in blue or green infrastructure provision. Policy 20 explicitly states that the planning authority's Open Space Strategy should inform this. The policy also supports development proposals for or incorporating new or enhanced blue and/or green infrastructure that, where appropriate, should be an integral element of the design that responds to local circumstances. Policy 20 confirms that design will take account of existing provision, new requirements and network connections (identified in relevant strategies such as the Open Space Strategies)

to ensure the proposed blue and/or green infrastructure is of an appropriate type(s), quantity, quality and accessibility and is designed to be multi-functional and well-integrated into the overall proposals.

### **Policy 21: Play, recreation and sport**

Policy 21 (parts d and e) seeks to ensure that new development likely to be occupied/used by children/young people incorporates well-designed, good quality play opportunities, proportionate to the scale and nature of the development and existing provision in the area, and that new streets and public realm maximise opportunities for informal and incidental play.

### **Policy 23: Health and safety**

Part (a) of Policy 23 supports development proposals that will have positive effects on health, for example, proposals that incorporate opportunities for exercise, community food growing or allotments.

The NPF4 identifies the well-established **Central Scotland Green Network** (CSGN) as a National Development. East Lothian's open spaces are part of the CSGN, embedded within the NPF4. The vision for Central Scotland is that: *"By 2050, Central Scotland has been transformed into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people's lives are enriched by its quality"*. This national development is an ambitious green infrastructure project, which aims to play a key role in tackling the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss including by building and strengthening nature networks. A greener approach to development will improve placemaking, can contribute to the roll-out of 20-minute neighbourhoods and will benefit biodiversity connectivity.

The **CSGN Green Network** prioritises "enhancement to provide multi-functional green and blue infrastructure that provides greatest environmental, lifelong physical and mental health, social wellbeing and economic benefits", aiming to accelerate urban greening to improve quality of place and create new opportunities for investment.

PAN 65 states that *"Local authorities should aim to maintain or form networks of green and civic spaces, which:*

- *contribute to the framework for development;*
- *maintain and enhance environmental qualities;*
- *provide a range of opportunities for recreation and leisure;*
- *link and create wildlife habitats; and*
- *encourage walking and cycling and reduce car use, in line with local transport strategies and Core Paths Plans."*

## **3.2 Policies on Inclusion**

### **Children and Young People**

Strategies and policies must take account of the rights of children and young people. To support, embed and extend children's rights in Scotland, the Scottish Government introduced the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act**<sup>36</sup>, which received Royal assent in January 2024. The Act sets out an expectation of a Scotland where children's human rights are embedded in all aspects of society, with children and young people empowered to give their views and be included in conversations on matters that affect them.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD)** states that governments must ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation, and

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/1/contents/enacted>

leisure sporting activities<sup>37</sup>. National Planning Framework 4 requires new, replacement or improved play provision to be inclusive and accessible for disabled children<sup>38</sup>.

Both of these legislative requirements were taken into account during the preparation of this Open Space Strategy.

### Health Impact Assessment

Greenspace Scotland's **Health Impact Assessment of Greenspace**<sup>39</sup> have informed the policies and proposal in this Open Space Strategy.

## 3.3 Local Policy Context

East Lothian Council has a range of plans, policies and strategies in place to inform and co-ordinate the provision, management and maintenance of its Parks, Open Space and play areas.

The East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 links with existing local policies and strategies including the **East Lothian Poverty Plan, Physical Activity Strategy, Area Partnership Plans, Community Wealth Building, Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Nature Networks**, as well as **promoting an integrated approach to improving physical activity, inclusion and access to greenspaces, nature enhancement and climate resilience**.

The **East Lothian Local Development Plan**<sup>40</sup> (LDP 2018) Policies OS1 to OS5 seek to protect, enhance and promote the provision of new open space, play areas and allotments. The best open spaces are parts of wider networks and are designed to complement surrounding places, buildings and land uses. High quality open spaces are multifunctional and contribute to an area's sense of place and identity. Multifunctional open spaces can help to create better places, for example by including provision for a range of formal and informal leisure activities, by integrating with active travel networks, by including provision for biodiversity as well as forestry and woodland planting. Where appropriate open space may contribute towards flood management. Greenspaces and green infrastructure including SuDS, swales and raingardens help reduce surface water run-off during periods of heavy rainfall, attenuating water flow and absorbing water, reducing flood impacts in urban areas.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to LDP 2018 included the **Green Network Strategy SPG**<sup>41</sup>, with the aim being "to create a network which connects habitats and communities, improves access to the countryside and the coast, and enhances the character and appearance of the area". Green Networks are places of landscape quality that can help to define landscape or townscape structure, provide links with the countryside, promote walking and cycling, and enhance connectivity for species and habitats.

The next East Lothian Local Development Plan is in the early stages of preparation.

The current **East Lothian Plan 2017–27**<sup>42</sup> is currently being revised and updated by the East Lothian Partnership (ELP) in preparation of the next **Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)** for East Lothian.

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<sup>37</sup> [Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

<sup>38</sup> [National Planning Framework 4](#)

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/green-health-publications>

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210547/planning\\_and\\_building\\_standards/12242/local\\_development\\_plan](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210547/planning_and_building_standards/12242/local_development_plan)

<sup>41</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30113/green\\_network\\_strategy\\_spg](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30113/green_network_strategy_spg)

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community\\_planning/11857/the\\_east\\_lothian\\_plan\\_2017-27](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community_planning/11857/the_east_lothian_plan_2017-27)

Engagement to inform the new LOIP<sup>43</sup> included the voices of over 9,000 children, young people and families and over 15,000 community voices. This included a **Youth Vision** consultation<sup>44</sup> to help shape the East Lothian Youth Vision strategy 2026–2029, which will set out how the ELP will work together to ensure young people are Safe, Heard, and Included through high-quality youth work.

East Lothian Council is currently preparing an updated **Local Biodiversity Action Plan** with the East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership. The draft LBAP includes actions to benefit both nature and people in our urban landscapes.

East Lothian Council's **Climate Change Strategy 2025–2030**<sup>45</sup> recognises the importance of parks and urban green and blue networks to mitigate climate change and increase resilience to flooding and other weather event impacts.

The Council's **declaration of Nature Emergency (2023)**<sup>46</sup> recognises that nature plays a key role in meeting climate targets, and the benefits to our communities of tackling both.

Climate change and sea level rise will increasingly impact our coastlines. The Council is developing a **Coastal Change Adaptation Plan** (CCAP) to identify risks associated with coastal change and to create a long-term plan for adapting and managing our coastline, to improve resilience and adaptability along the coast and within coastal communities.

The Council has an existing officer working group in place, the **Climate and Nature Emergency Group** of officers from service areas across the Council working together to drive forward the Council's response to climate change and the nature crisis.

In 2024 the Council approved its **East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment**<sup>47</sup>, which assessed quantity, quality and accessibility of Play Areas across East Lothian and provided recommendations for future improvements.

In addition, a new **Physical Activity Strategy** is also underway, being developed in partnership with NHS Lothian as part of the East Lothian Community Planning Partnership.

**Area Partnership Area Plans**<sup>48</sup>, prepared by local Area Partnerships, are underway in our key communities and reference key focus areas around health and wellbeing and greenspace improvements.

The recently approved **Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian**<sup>49</sup> (TWS) includes a significant focus on increasing urban tree canopy cover with all of the climate, nature, amenity, wellbeing and place-making benefits this would bring to communities. The TWS includes actions to increase urban tree canopy cover and

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<sup>43</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community\\_planning/12445/east\\_lothian\\_partnership/5](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community_planning/12445/east_lothian_partnership/5)

<sup>44</sup> <https://eastlothianconsultations.co.uk/education/youth-vision-consultation/>

<sup>45</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13283/climate\\_change\\_strategy](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13283/climate_change_strategy)

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/news/article/14176/council\\_declares\\_nature\\_emergency](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/news/article/14176/council_declares_nature_emergency)

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210694/play\\_areas/12838/play\\_provision/2](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210694/play_areas/12838/play_provision/2)

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/12861/area\\_partnership\\_area\\_plans](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/12861/area_partnership_area_plans)

<sup>49</sup>

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210547/planning\\_and\\_building\\_standards/12249/trees\\_tpos\\_and\\_consult\\_for\\_tree\\_works/2](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210547/planning_and_building_standards/12249/trees_tpos_and_consult_for_tree_works/2)

support the delivery of the **East Lothian Climate Forest** – the policy intent to plant 2 million trees across East Lothian in 10 years.

East Lothian's **Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2024-29**<sup>50</sup> sets out the strategic vision, outcomes and actions which will enable the Council and its partners to deliver high quality housing and housing services which meet the needs of the local population across all tenures. Within its priority outcomes, the LHS seeks to achieve flourishing, distinctive and well-connected communities. It recognises the importance of high-quality open spaces and the benefits it has for communities, including improved health and wellbeing and achieving a sense of belonging. The LHS 2024-2029 aligns with the key themes and principles of this Open Space Strategy.

Other key East Lothian Strategies and Action Plans include the following:

- Local Economy Strategy
- Community Wealth Building policy
- Equality Plan
- Burial Ground Strategy
- Allotments and Local Food Growing Strategy (in preparation)
- Active Travel Improvement Plan
- Core Paths Plan

The Open Space Strategy 2026 prioritises nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation, supporting priorities in the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian, the East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025–2030, and the emerging updated East Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The connectivity of biodiversity enhanced areas will continue to be developed through the ongoing delivery of nature networks, including corridors and 'stepping stones' for nature, to provide enhanced natural capital and improved ecosystem services. In addition to providing benefits to nature, this will help people to adapt to future climate risks.

Infrastructure improvements are proposed to improve access to, use and enjoyment of our parks and greenspaces for everyone in our communities, to enable us to target any future funding opportunities to where they are most needed to ensure equity of access to the benefits that green and blue spaces provide. The strategy focuses on improving equity of access to green and blue spaces, prioritising areas of our communities where improvements to health and wellbeing and climate resilience are most needed.

### 3.4 Key Partnerships for Delivery

There is already **strong commitment and alignment across departments and partners**. East Lothian Council's Poverty Plan and emerging updated Local Outcome Improvement Plan prioritise equity of access to healthy environments. NHS Lothian Public Health team, with whom the Council works closely, is actively supporting whole-systems approaches to wellbeing, and our Community network has proven the value of social prescribing in addressing isolation and inequity. Community First's Life Map platform is being used to connect individuals to local nature-based activities. Volunteer Centre East Lothian (VCEL) is well-placed to mobilise and support grassroots groups, and local organisations such as Friends of Polson Park and Friends of Winterfield Park have demonstrated a strong appetite for collaborative design, stewardship and delivery of nature enhancements.

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<sup>50</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13805/approved\\_local\\_housing\\_strategy\\_lhs\\_2024-2029](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13805/approved_local_housing_strategy_lhs_2024-2029)

Existing walking and active travel improvement projects, and smaller community-led greenspace and community gardening projects and play space initiatives are already underway across the county supported by the Council. Existing community projects include community gardens, forest gardens and community growing spaces with nature enhancements, all of which have the potential for expansion through co-delivery.

**Future investment opportunities** will be explored through creating 'shovel-ready' projects in partnership with community organisations, including the potential for 'Green Finance' external private funding. Opportunities can be explored to work with local businesses to help fund and deliver nature-based solutions and projects, by building on the momentum that has been developed through the East Lothian 'Queen's Green Canopy' tree planting initiative, which saw trees planted across East Lothian, including being funded by local businesses and planted on private land owned by supportive local businesses including golf course land, and through the ongoing 'TreeTime East Lothian'<sup>51</sup> tree planting initiative, which enables individuals, groups and businesses to donate to plant and look after trees across East Lothian's urban greenspaces. We have already seen interest in further tree planting from local businesses – this would support East Lothian Council's approved policy intent for the East Lothian Climate Forest.

Community Wealth Building principles would be incorporated into enhancement projects to bring local benefits to the communities who need it most.

Further details of opportunities and proposals for the funding of open space and greenspace projects are set out in section 9.7.



*Community Forest Garden, Lindores Drive, Tranent*

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.tree-time.com/treetime-east-lothian/>

## 4.0 AIMS, VISION AND KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE EAST LOTHIAN OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2026

Improving access to nature and quality greenspaces will benefit health, wellbeing and physical activity, and benefit the local economy, social cohesion and civic pride. There is a pressing opportunity to shift from a reactive model of greenspace management to a proactive, strategic, and community-led system that delivers across health, wellbeing, climate resilience, biodiversity, and community pride with a sharpened focus on prevention and early intervention.

### 4.1 Aims of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026

The aims of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 are:

1. **To protect and enhance our existing parks and open spaces**, and provide a strategic framework for the management of open spaces to benefit our communities, for the following reasons in particular:
  - To tackle climate change,
  - To benefit and enhance nature,
  - To help improve people's health, wellbeing and physical activity,
  - To strengthen communities and create vibrant, liveable places where everyone benefits equally from accessible and safe open spaces and greenspaces.

This Open Space Strategy provides a framework for the preparation of 'shovel-ready' projects that will enable us to seek future funding opportunities to ensure delivery on the ground, working with community groups and other partners to ensure equitable access to quality green spaces.

2. **To provide high quality new open spaces for the future** and set out our expectations for future development sites in East Lothian, by setting out updated standards that must be met to ensure we have sufficient quantity of usable, high-quality, accessible and safe open spaces that will meet the needs of the community.

These standards are set out in proposals in the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 that will inform the next Local Development Plan (currently in development), and will help ensure we meet the requirements of National Planning Framework 4<sup>52</sup>.

### 4.2 East Lothian Vision for Open Space

#### Quality of Life

East Lothian is a wonderful county for enjoying the natural environment, both within its towns and villages and in the wider countryside and coastline. Attractive parks, open spaces and play facilities are a key component of East Lothian's Green Networks, providing places to play, enjoy sport and informal recreation. The Core Path and local path networks provide a variety of opportunities to connect to and explore the wider countryside and coast.

The natural environment and the attractiveness of towns and villages are major factors in the quality of life appreciated by residents and visitors, underpinning the health and wellbeing of communities and supporting the local economy.

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<sup>52</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>

### **Equitable Access to Greenspace to reduce health inequalities and support Living Well**

Development and engagement work on the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan has identified ‘Health’ as a key theme, with ‘leisure and recreation spaces’ recognised as important to this theme<sup>53</sup>. From a public health perspective, high-quality greenspaces are linked to better physical and mental health outcomes.

Equitable access to greenspace is essential for reducing health inequalities. Merely having local greenspace does not ensure that all community members can use it safely or comfortably. This strategy aims for local and equitable access to quality greenspace, to identify barriers, and to reflect the need for inclusive, barrier-free environments that serve all demographics, including those with disabilities, minority ethnic communities, and low-income households.

This updated Strategy includes specific commitments to improve quality greenspace provision in deprived areas and prioritise investment where health inequalities are greatest.

East Lothian has experienced rapid population growth and expansion of its towns and villages, particularly in the west of the county. Population projections from 2018 show that East Lothian’s population is set to increase by 7.2% over the next 10 years, the second highest percentage rate of growth in Scotland<sup>54</sup>. It is projected that East Lothian’s population will continue to grow to around 121,743 people by 2043, an estimated increase of 15.1% from 2018 to 2043, the equivalent of almost 16,000 additional people<sup>55</sup>. The East Lothian Plan 2017–2027 set out objectives to plan for the impacts of this growth in population on communities and the services they need, including the provision of high quality connected parks and open spaces.

East Lothian also has an ageing population. Over the past decade to mid-2024, East Lothian has had the greatest increase in the over 65 population (28.3%) when compared to all other Scottish local authorities<sup>56</sup>. Green spaces are important in helping people to live well and age well; and a healthier population, living well and ageing well, means reduced pressure on services including primary services, and emphasising the need for accessible spaces close to where people live.

**The long term vision** of the previous East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018 was that...

*“East Lothian has a network of well designed, multi-functional, connected and accessible open spaces with a rich diversity of wildlife and habitats that are an invaluable asset for communities and visitors. Our open spaces play a critical role in the life of a community, encouraging healthy living by providing opportunities for sport, children’s play, relaxation, education and local events, close to where people live. These important natural spaces contribute significantly to East Lothian’s quality of place, support biodiversity, flood and coastal management, whilst supporting the local economy. The contribution to the wider green network will provide high quality active travel and path routes to and between open spaces and the countryside around towns.*

*Realising this vision requires a framework of policy, funding and management approaches to continue to provide exciting, diverse, high quality open spaces, which meet the needs of local communities and the wildlife it supports. The Strategy emphasises the need to make more of existing resources, as opposed to adding to overall levels of supply and to ensure that the full potential of open spaces is realised, moving towards a more integrated and inclusive approach to their management.”*

<sup>53</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community\\_planning/12445/east\\_lothian\\_partnership/5](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community_planning/12445/east_lothian_partnership/5)

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/population-projections-for-scottish-areas-2018-based/>

<sup>55</sup> National Records of Scotland, 2020 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/mid-2024-population-estimates/>

This long term vision is still supported through the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026.

However, to focus on key objectives of the current strategy, a shorter vision statement has been prepared to align with the updated policy framework and key themes:

### 4.3 Vision Statement for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026

**East Lothian Council will work collaboratively with our community partners to create greener, fairer, and healthier urban environments in East Lothian, improving the climate resilience of our places, enhancing spaces and networks for nature, enabling access for all to improved, safe and welcoming parks and green spaces, while building community wealth – benefiting people and nature alike for generations to come.**

### 4.4 Outcomes of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026

The Outcomes for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 have been determined with community input through feedback received during the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026:

**The Outcomes for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 are:**

- Improving health, wellbeing and physical activity
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity
- Improving access for all to green spaces, open spaces and green networks
- Ensuring equality by meeting the needs of specific groups so everyone in society benefits
- Creating successful, vibrant, liveable and sustainable places

### 4.5 Strategic Context: Key Issues and Threats

#### **Strengths**

- The value and diversity of East Lothian's parks and green spaces, which are cherished and valued by local communities
- Community engagement and involvement in our parks and greenspaces, through volunteering, community groups and organisations, Friends Of groups and In Bloom groups
- The heritage and history of our parks and green spaces and the value and place they have in our communities
- The importance of parks and green spaces to people's health, wellbeing and physical activity
- The importance of parks, green spaces and our blue and green infrastructure to tackling the climate and nature emergencies, through enhancing climate resilience and nature networks for wildlife

- The wider context of access to East Lothian's wider countryside, with nature networks and connected green networks extending across the county, and a Core Paths network and other paths networks enabling access to wider countryside and coastal sites, all of which are valued by local people

### **Weaknesses**

- Council resources (funding and staff capacity) for parks and greenspace development and maintenance
- Variable factoring standards and arrangements in private developments for parks and landscaping maintenance and improvements
- External funding opportunities for enhancements at scale are very competitive
- Inconsistent delivery of quality, useable open spaces in new housing developments through the planning process

### **Threats**

- Climate Change impacts, including more extreme weather events, storms, more unpredictable weather
- Heavy rainfall and flooding events impacting urban areas
- Increased likelihood of heatwaves and droughts due to climate change
- Coastal erosion, sea level rise, storm surges impacting coastal areas and exacerbated by climate change
- Threats from invasive non-native species (INNS), pests and diseases likely to increase due to climate change
- Impacts on nature of a changing climate, including species distribution, threats from INNS, diseases etc.
- The need to adapt our parks and greenspaces for the future climate and the potential costs of this
- Escalating costs of infrastructure delivery including through the supply chain
- The Growth Agenda in the county and the need to meet demand and ensure that existing communities benefit equally

### **Opportunities**

- Explore new Funding opportunities, including external 'Green Finance' opportunities and set up a new mechanism to draw down external funding including private finance opportunities, working closely in partnership with local communities and other key stakeholders and ensuring Community Wealth Building benefits to local communities
- The Growth Agenda also leads to opportunities for enhancement and connectivity of green networks and green spaces across the county including through Section 75 developer contributions, and to ensure that new communities have access to appropriate and sufficient green spaces
- Increasing collaboration with community groups and organisations, agencies, public sector partners e.g. VCEL, NHS Lothian Partnership and Place team, to deliver enhancements and improvements on the ground in collaboration with our communities
- Community involvement in decision making – linking to the new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (currently in development)

## 5.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE EAST LOTHIAN OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2026

### 5.1 Previous Open Space Audits 2009 and 2016

In 2009 East Lothian Council completed a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) based Open Space Audit of all significant open space assets within the local authority area of the Council. The Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was produced in 2000 and a Sports Pitch Strategy in 2007.

An Open Space Audit was prepared in 2016 to inform the production of the Open Space Strategy 2018 for East Lothian that focused primarily on the regeneration, connectivity and enhancement of urban parks, open spaces, linear green corridor spaces, civic spaces together with Regional Parks, Country Parks and other open space sites.

The Open Space Audit 2009 included the audit of 303 open space sites. A further 44 open spaces were audited in 2016 to inform the 2018 Open Space Strategy. A number of the open spaces audited in 2009 were revisited in 2016 and the quality scores revised, to reflect facilities upgrades since the last audit. A GIS database was prepared, which formed the basis of the Open Space Strategy 2018 analysis along with other open space databases. A number of sites (134 sites) were included in the 2016 audit, despite being between 0.1 hectares and 0.4 hectares in size. They were considered strategically important due to their function (e.g. as playspace) and location in the heart of a residential area, for example.

### 5.2 Progress Since 2018: Open Space Improvements 2018–2026

East Lothian Council has continued to deliver enhancements to parks, open spaces, civic spaces, play areas and sports pitches. A summary of the key enhancements and progress that have been delivered in Council owned/managed parks and greenspaces since the previous Open Space Strategy 2018 include:

- Nature Network enhancements delivered in parks and greenspaces across every Cluster Area of East Lothian.
- Tree planting delivered in parks and greenspaces across the county, through
  - the Queen's Green Canopy tree planting initiative and TreeTime East Lothian, a partnership project between the Council and Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust,
  - trees planted at scale by East Lothian Countryside Rangers, Countryside Volunteers and Friends of Parks groups.
- Play Area renewals and new play areas delivered across East Lothian.
- New sports infrastructure delivered, including pump tracks, new sports pitches, and floodlighting of tennis courts.
- A community skatepark and a pump track delivered by community groups with Council support.
- New community food growing / allotment sites created.
- Community gardens, community woodlands and an orchard created on Council land in partnership with community groups.
- Paths and active travel improvements, including new cycle racks.
- Other parks infrastructure improvements including installation of seating, picnic tables and bins; drainage improvements to parks.
- Supporting national award-winning 'In Bloom' groups delivering high quality horticultural achievements and enhancing civic pride in our communities.

"Neilson Park is lovely, well maintained, playpark, sports and gardens."  
- Respondent to public consultation on the Local Development Plan Evidence Report, 2024

Some key parks and open space enhancements that have taken place since 2018 include the following:

### Nature Networks in East Lothian Parks and Greenspaces

'Nature Networks East Lothian'<sup>57</sup> is a project developed by East Lothian Council in 2023 to identify, explore, provide advice on and deliver nature network opportunities supported by our communities, in suitable areas of Council owned and managed parks and greenspaces across East Lothian's towns and villages.



Wildflower planting in Ormiston Park with  
'Nature Networks East Lothian' signage

"A Nature Network is effectively just a network that connects nature-rich sites, restoration areas, and other environmental projects through a series of areas of suitable habitat, habitat corridors and stepping-stones. As well as supporting regional and national approaches to protect and restore nature, they provide local benefits to wildlife and people."

NatureScot, [Nature Networks Explained](#)

The objective was to identify areas which have the potential for development of enhanced and connected nature networks and biodiversity enhancements with community support. An Action Plan has been produced and is guiding the delivery of ongoing actions underway since 2023 to develop, deliver and enhance Nature Networks across East Lothian parks and greenspaces. This will bring a wide range of benefits to nature and people.



Connected nature networks will support and enhance biodiversity within our towns and villages, linking to wider green networks across the county, will increase access to nature for our communities, and enhance climate resilience. By incorporating and preserving natural habitats within our urban and semi urban spaces, we can create more liveable and sustainable communities.

<sup>57</sup>[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside\\_and\\_wildlife/12104/biodiversity\\_and\\_nature\\_networks/2](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside_and_wildlife/12104/biodiversity_and_nature_networks/2)

## **Case Study: Nature Network Enhancements for Nature and People at Edenhall Park, Musselburgh**



In 2023/24, East Lothian Council's Amenity Services team used Nature Restoration Funding to transform the park at Edenhall Road, Musselburgh, from a closely mown area of grass into a nature haven enjoyed by local people. Wildflower planting, to enhance the space for pollinators, combined with tree planting, created a beautiful and colourful space. Mown pathways enable people to walk among the wildflowers and enjoy the space. The park now forms part of East Lothian's Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces, which are transforming our parks and greenspaces across the county, and has received positive feedback from local people.

The project has been an ongoing learning experience as Amenity Services develop and perfect their nature enhancement techniques. The plan for Edenhall Park going forward is to continue to enhance and develop wildflower planting and explore other suitable nature enhancements. A 'bee hotel' to attract solitary bees will be added to the park.

"The change in the last year to create a bulb/ wild flower area in the park off Edenhall Road has been very good. It has changed a plain piece of grass which never appeared to be used to an attractive ever changing place to walk through."

*- Respondent to public consultation on the Local Development Plan Evidence Report, 2024*



## Play Area Renewals

Since the previous Open Space Strategy 2018, East Lothian Council has undertaken major investment in improving and renewing children's **equipped Play Areas**<sup>58</sup> across the county, funded by a combination of Council capital funding, Scottish Government Play Parks Renewal funding, and Section 75 developer contributions.

The Council has recently undertaken play area renewals and enhancements in Musselburgh, Whitecraig, Tranent, New Winton, Pencaitland, Aberlady, Gullane, Haddington and Dunbar, as well as a new play area in Wallyford funded by the developer, and a renewed play area in woodland at Yellowcraig coastal destination site. Plans are currently underway for further play area renewals in Prestonpans, Tranent and North Berwick. These play area renewals include enhancements aimed at a range of ages and abilities, including play equipment aimed particularly at disabled children, more challenging items aimed at older children, and areas of accessible wetpour rubber pathways and surfacing to enable access for all abilities, following the recommendations set out in the Council's Play Sufficiency Assessment<sup>59</sup> (2024) and from engagement with East Lothian Play Association (ELPA) to improve our consultation and engagement processes.

The play area renewal in Lewisvale Park, Musselburgh, was aimed particularly at play provision for older children and teenagers and included outdoor gym equipment and a sociable 'circular swing', following principles set out by 'Make Space for Girls'<sup>60</sup>.

Ongoing management and maintenance of the Council's 121 play areas across the county is undertaken by Amenity Services' Play Squad's RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) certified play installers and inspectors.

"New Pencaitland Park is brilliant - covers a good range of ages and plenty seats for those that need them."

- Respondent to public consultation on the Local Development Plan Evidence Report, 2024

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/play-areas>

<sup>59</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play\\_sufficiency\\_assessment\\_report\\_-\\_march\\_2024](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play_sufficiency_assessment_report_-_march_2024)

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.makespaceforgirls.co.uk/>

### **Case Study: Play Area Renewal, Lauderdale Park Play Area, Dunbar**

Lauderdale Park is a popular 'destination' park in Dunbar within a walled garden, with high visitor numbers and a café. The park incorporates a pétanque site popular with a range of ages, and hosts events including monthly market stalls and an annual music festival. In 2024/25 the ageing play area within the park was completely replaced and renewed, using Scottish Government Play Parks Renewal Funding.

The design for the play area renewal was prepared following input from local people, including local children and young people, through a public consultation. A total of 321 people responded to offer their feedback on what they wanted to see in the play area, including families of children with special needs, along with Dunbar Community Council. The new play area is an exciting and inclusive space, which incorporates references to local landmarks such as the John Muir Way, the Bass Rock and Dunbar Castle, and has play equipment suitable for a range of ages and abilities from toddlers to teenagers. Older children and teens in particular can enjoy the more challenging 'Flying Fox' cableway, climbing frame and rope bridge inspired by the nearby 'Bridge to Nowhere', and also benefit from new social seating to hang out. There is also a range of inclusive play equipment, including a wheelchair-accessible roundabout, an inclusive seesaw, and a 'nest' swing, all located on rubber wetpour surfacing.

A sensory trail through the adjacent trees and shrubs within the walled garden, developed with Dunbar Community Council, complements the new play area and provides natural and creative play opportunities. A 'book barn' hut, also developed with the Community Council, enables children to borrow and exchange books to read in the park. The park and play area are managed and maintained by the Council's Amenity Services.



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## Community Involvement: Working in Partnership with Community Groups

The Council's Amenity Services, Biodiversity and Sports Development teams work closely in partnership with local community groups across the county to enhance parks, greenspaces and play spaces.

Examples include the Nature Networks and tree planting in Winterfield Park in Dunbar by 'Friends of Winterfield', the Forest Garden and Pollinator Parklet in the Lindores Drive area of Tranent by 'Tranent Wombles' community group, and the 'Men's Sheds' allotment and community growing site within St Ninians Park in the Pinkie area of Musselburgh, which have significantly enhanced these greenspaces to benefit people and wildlife.

Friends of Ormiston Park have worked for many years to improve the facilities in Ormiston Park, raising substantial external funding and making significant enhancements to Ormiston Park and play area, which include outdoor gym equipment, tree planting and other nature enhancements. The Friends group also worked with the Council and local community to develop and implement East Lothian's first pump track in Ormiston Park, funded by a range of external funders, which has proved to be a popular attraction as a social and active space benefitting a range of ages and abilities.

## Case Study: East Lothian's national award-winning 'In Bloom' groups



East Lothian has a range of 'In Bloom' groups operating in several of our communities, working closely with East Lothian Council's Amenity Services teams. In Bloom groups are community groups who participate in community gardening and enter annual national In Bloom competitions, which recognise achievements in horticulture, environmental improvement and community action.

East Lothian is proud home to national award-winning In Bloom groups, who enhance our communities with their outstanding and beautiful horticultural displays, and whose efforts help to connect people with a healthier and more resilient environment. In Bloom groups have been delivering high quality horticultural achievements and enhancing civic pride in our communities for many years.

North Berwick in Bloom has represented Scotland in the 'Britain in Bloom' Finals, and has received gold medals at the annual 'Beautiful Scotland' Awards organised by Keep Scotland Beautiful, most recently in 2025.



In 2025 North Berwick in Bloom won three accolades at the Beautiful Scotland awards, including the prestigious Rosebowl Trophy, which is given to the overall winner across all categories - North Berwick in Bloom also scooped the Coastal Town Award and the VisitScotland Award for Tourism.

Blooming Haddington won the Medium Town Award, the Horticultural Heritage Award and the David Welch Memorial Award for Something Special for their wheelbarrow and yarn bombing trail. Dunbar in Bloom received a Certificate of Recognition. Glorious Gullane Bloomers received an 'Outstanding' accolade for It's Your Neighbourhood category.

East Lothian Council was given the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Award for their support for Blooming Haddington and North Berwick in Bloom.

### 5.3 Consultation and Engagement to inform the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026

Public consultation and engagement, including six facilitated workshops across the county, informed the development of the Open Space Audit and previous Open Space Strategy 2018 and laid the foundations for the Open Space Strategy 2026.

The East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 was informed by public consultation and engagement. This included views and feedback on parks, greenspaces and open spaces gathered through recent consultations on the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment, draft Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian, consultations to inform the Evidence Report for the next Local Development Plan, and consultations and engagement to inform the next East Lothian Partnership 'Local Outcomes Improvement Plan' (LOIP) for East Lothian. Engagement to inform the new LOIP<sup>61</sup> included the voices of over 9,000 children, young people and families and over 15,000 community voices.

During the development of the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment<sup>62</sup> (PSA), East Lothian Council commissioned Play Scotland, the national representative body for play, to undertake extensive consultation and engagement with children and young people, which has informed both the PSA and this Open Space Strategy 2026 through feedback obtained from children and young people. This ensured we met the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

The East Lothian PSA by Play Scotland also provided the transparency and shared understanding necessary for meaningful engagement with disabled children and families. East Lothian was the first authority in Scotland to undertake a full and transparent assessment of accessible and inclusive play provision in formal outdoor play spaces. This new form of assessment aims to inform the development of inclusive formal outdoor play spaces as required by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and NPF4. The findings also included views on wider parks and greenspace settings and their accessibility and inclusion, from the perspectives of disabled children and their families. This has also helped inform this Open Space Strategy 2026 and ensure that the views of children and young people are included.

The Open Space Audit 2024/25 was developed with input from East Lothian Council's Amenity Services Depot Managers. Internal consultations with Council Officers to inform the development of the strategy included Housing, Active Travel, Countryside Service, Sports Development, Connected Communities and Flood Protection. The Council's 'Climate and Nature Emergency Group' of officers from across Council Service Areas were kept informed of progress.

Targeted direct engagement was undertaken with representatives of groups/organisations including 'Thrive East Lothian' CIC and Women's Aid East and Midlothian, to ensure the views of specific groups, including people from ethnic minorities and women and girls<sup>63</sup> could be heard, particularly in relation to issues such as safety in parks.

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<sup>61</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community\\_planning/12445/east\\_lothian\\_partnership/5](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210592/community_planning/12445/east_lothian_partnership/5)

<sup>62</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210694/play\\_areas/12838/play\\_provision/2](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210694/play_areas/12838/play_provision/2)

<sup>63</sup> In this strategy the term "women and girls" includes those who have identified as female and have responded to our consultation; where feedback has been provided by representatives of organisations, they have communicated information on behalf of the individuals from the demographic they represent.

A public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026, to inform the development of the final Open Space Strategy, was undertaken for 6 weeks in June-July 2025 via the Council's online Consultation Hub<sup>64</sup>. Respondents were able to provide comments on the draft proposals and provide details of what they think of our parks and greenspaces and what would make them better, to help formulate the proposals for the final Open Space Strategy 2026. The consultation information was also sent to all East Lothian Community Councils, to East Lothian Local Access Forum, and to other relevant groups and organisations including 'In Bloom' groups, 'Friends Of' parks groups, and the East Lothian Council Countryside Rangers' volunteer networks, 'Friends' groups and conservation volunteers. The consultation was publicised extensively via the Council's communication channels.

67 responses were received to the online consultation. The demographics of the consultation respondents (age group; gender; ethnicity; whether they have a disability) are set out in Appendix 5. The feedback informed the development, structure, key priority areas and outcomes of the final Open Space Strategy 2026. From the feedback received through the consultation, some of the designations (categories / sub-categories) of open space in the Open Space Audit were revised, and 7 additional open space sites were added to the Audit, as members of the public identified these as important spaces in their local communities. Respondents broadly supported the initial analyses of Quantity, Quality and Accessibility of open spaces, however additional information was also highlighted through the consultation. The feedback received is set out throughout this strategy. The Outcomes of the strategy were also revised following the public consultation, to better reflect the community's views.

## **5.4 Impact Assessments**

### **5.4.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment**

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Pre-screening Notification was undertaken and submitted to the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway. No response was received within the prescribed timescale therefore no SEA was required.

### **5.4.2 Integrated Impact Assessment**

An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) was undertaken and is published on East Lothian Council's IIA webpage, link here:

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/35550/east\\_lothian\\_open\\_space\\_strategy\\_2025\\_integrated\\_impact\\_assessment\\_iaa](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/35550/east_lothian_open_space_strategy_2025_integrated_impact_assessment_iaa)

### **5.4.3 Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment Screening**

A Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) Screening was undertaken and the CRWIA Screening report and a Child Friendly version are published on East Lothian Council's website, link here:

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/14065/amenity\\_services\\_integrated\\_impact\\_assessments\\_iias](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/14065/amenity_services_integrated_impact_assessments_iias)

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<sup>64</sup> <https://eastlothianconsultations.co.uk/policy-partnerships/consultation-on-east-lothian-open-space-strategy-r/>

## 6.0 EAST Lothian OPEN SPACES

### 6.1 History of East Lothian's Open Spaces

East Lothian contains numerous settlements of small to medium size, several are historically important and contain areas of significant conservation merit, with buildings and layout dating back to the medieval period when East Lothian was an important administrative and commercial area of Scotland. Later settlements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed as a result of agricultural improvements and/or industrial development (particularly coal mining).

The manner in which East Lothian's settlements have developed has determined, to a large extent, the distribution and nature of open spaces/ parkland. The historic core of certain settlements (such as Dirleton and Haddington) reflect medieval urban patterns and retain open spaces which formerly served as market places, for livestock gathering, drying greens and for a range of community gatherings. The expansion of existing settlements and the development of new settlements during the eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries, resulted from urban planning which incorporated parks as integral parts of development. These were generally formal in nature tailored to accommodate more passive forms of recreation, events and social interaction, in coastal settlements, formal parkland was sometimes developed along the shoreline as seafront promenades as at Musselburgh, Cockenzie and Port Seton. These became important places for visitors as well as community activity.

Coastal recreation has long been a popular activity in East Lothian with the majority of the beaches, dune areas and rocky coastline being managed by the Council and protected as public open space, taking account of sensitivities along the highly designated coast for nature conservation, e.g. Gullane Bents, Yellowcraig and John Muir Country Park. Golf is thought to date from the sixteenth century and early games are chronicled on the links areas of East Lothian. Nowadays, significant areas have been developed as private and public golf courses, the most prestigious occupying the coastal 'links' e.g. courses at North Berwick and Gullane.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, early twentieth century, increased demands (and time) for sport and leisure saw the development of areas dedicated to sports both separate and associated to more formal parklands. School grounds also contained sizeable areas of recreational open space.



*Memorial Park, Haddington*

In the mid twentieth century, the development of significant urban parks was rare and new open space provision was generally in the form of small parks within housing areas, amenity open space (including sports areas) and the establishment of formerly unmanaged areas as parkland or green corridors. An important exception is the establishment of the John Muir Country Park, East Lothian's only Country Park, which is an important resource for environmental education and rural recreation.

Public open spaces are principally managed and maintained by East Lothian Council's Amenity Services. Open space within private housing developments, housing associations developments and associated with historic buildings/ ancient monuments have separate management/ maintenance arrangements.

## 6.2 The East Lothian Open Space Audit 2024/25

### 6.2.1 Type, Size and Number of Open Spaces

The Open Space Audit 2024/25 included the audit of **462 open space sites**.

**The audited open space sites are all shown on the [interactive ArcGIS Online Map](#) (in 'Map Viewer').**

**Maps of all the audited open space sites within each Cluster Area of East Lothian** are also shown in Maps 2a to 2f of the Open Space Strategy Mapping. Cluster Area Boundaries are shown in Map 1.

This included revisiting all the sites audited in 2009 and 2016 to undertake updated audits, to reflect changes, enhancements and facilities upgrades since the 2016 audit. Some sites had deteriorated in quality or infrastructure had been removed since 2016, but the majority of sites had been improved or enhanced. In addition, a total of **135 new open space sites** were added in 2024/25. These were new open spaces developed since 2018, particularly in new housing developments, areas highlighted by the public during the community consultation as being important to them but which had been missed off the audit, cemeteries and churchyards which had not been audited previously, and other sites which had not been included in previous audits. A small number of open space sites (27 sites) were removed from the Open Space Audit mainly due to mapping improvements, or due to changes in land use at the site (e.g. no longer publicly accessible open space).

The 2016 Open Space Audit database was updated with the new 2024/25 audit data, which forms the basis of the Open Space Strategy analysis along with the GIS mapping of individual sites (as shown in Maps 2a to 2f). A number of sites (111 sites) were included in the audit despite being smaller than 0.2 hectares in size. These were considered strategically important due to their function (e.g. civic spaces, playspaces, bowling greens) and location in the town or village.

Each open space was assigned a type, based on the modified PAN 65 typology set out in the Open Space Strategy 2018 (refer to Appendices 1 and 4 for further details). PAN 65: Planning and Open Space recommends that Local Authorities should adopt a typology of greenspace using the typology set out in PAN 65, to allow data to be collected and compared at a regional and national level. PAN 65 defines open space as ***"any vegetated land or structure, water or geological feature in an urban area and civic space consisting of squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function."*** Each site was assigned a 'primary purpose' (category) according to PAN 65 and a 'secondary purpose' (sub-category) which reflects the multi-functional nature of open spaces.

The focus of the Open Space Audit was all East Lothian Council owned and managed open space. However, best practice recommends that all "publicly accessible open space" should be considered in the open space

provision and therefore the privately owned open space, as part of new housing developments and managed privately, has been included in the study. These spaces have also been included in the open space mapping and the open space calculations as access is not limited to residents. This approach will better reflect the open space supply in the wider settlement area, as existing parks must cater with increased population numbers and therefore increased use / management implications.

The GIS mapping of individual Open Space and Sports Pitch sites was updated, to add the new audited sites, and update the boundaries of existing sites where these had changed. The GIS mapping enabled the measurement of the area (in hectares) of each open space site in the audit.



*Civic Square, Tranent*

### 6.2.2 Open Spaces in Audit including Typology

The East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2024/25 focuses on the 462 parks, open spaces and sports pitches in the East Lothian Council urban and urban fringe areas that were included in the Audit and the Sports Pitch analysis 2024/25. The geographic area covered includes all of the East Lothian Council area, in particular the six geographic cluster areas of Musselburgh, Tranent, Prestonpans, Haddington, North Berwick and Dunbar (shown in Map 1: Cluster Location Plan). The Strategy focuses primarily on the following core areas of open space provision as detailed within Scottish Government's PAN 65 typology and the 2018 Open Space Strategy, together with locally agreed sub-categories.

Table 1 sets out the East Lothian Open Space Typology 2026:

**Table 1: East Lothian Open Space Typology**

PAN 65 Category	Sub-category	Description
<b>Public Parks and Gardens</b>	<b>Country Park</b>	Relatively small areas of countryside near to towns that are managed for public enjoyment. They are established in accordance with Section 48 of the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967.
	<b>Town Park*</b>	These parks are often larger areas of urban or formal parks of neighbourhood importance, usually in a central location and designed and managed as a public park. They can provide some or all of the following: active and passive recreation opportunities, social and community purposes, such as sports activities, walking, cycling, children's play, jogging and limited events.
	<b>Local Park*</b>	These parks are often small areas of open space, often providing opportunities for children's play, seating etc. and possibly limited conservation areas or informal sport. They are often well used parks with a distinct local catchment area, within walking distance of the immediate residential population.
<b>Private Gardens or Grounds</b>	-	Areas of land normally enclosed and associated with a house or institution, that are privately owned but accessible to the public.
<b>Amenity Greenspace</b>	<b>Residential*</b> <b>Business &amp; Commercial</b> <b>Institutional</b> <b>Residential with Equipped Play*</b>	Landsaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons i.e. road verges or greenspace in business parks, and used for a variety of informal or social activities such as sunbathing, picnics or kickabouts. Including areas of residential amenity greenspace with small areas of equipped play.
<b>Play Space for Children &amp; Teenagers</b>	<b>Equipped Playspaces*</b>	Areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play, usually linked to housing areas.
<b>Sports Areas</b>	<b>Playing Fields</b> <b>Bowling Greens</b> <b>Tennis Courts</b>	Large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces, used primarily for designated sports i.e. playing fields, tennis courts and bowling greens.
<b>Green Corridors</b>	<b>River Valley Greenspace</b> <b>Core Path Corridors*</b>	Routes including canals, river corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town or city as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces.
<b>Natural / Semi-natural Greenspaces</b>	<b>Coastal / Beach Woodlands*</b> <b>Bings / Vacant &amp; Derelict Land</b>	Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas.
<b>Allotments &amp; Community Growing Spaces</b>	-	Areas of land for growing fruit, vegetables and other plants, either in individual allotments or as a community activity.
<b>Civic Space</b>	<b>Harbours</b> <b>Town Squares</b>	Squares, streets and waterfront promenades, predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity and make connections for people and for wildlife, where trees and planting are included.
<b>Burial Grounds</b>	<b>Cemeteries and Churchyards</b>	Cemeteries and churchyards with public access.
<b>Other Functional Greenspaces</b>	<b>Institutional/ School Grounds</b> <b>Golf Courses</b>	Greenspaces associated with institutions such as schools and hospitals. This category also includes golf courses.

\* Including privately owned open spaces (refer to Appendix 1 for further information)

## 7.0 EAST LoTHIAN OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

### 7.1 Background and Context

The East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018 established open space standards to integrate the Open Space Audit and Strategy into the development and community planning processes. This reflects Scottish Planning Policy Guidance and was intended to deliver a wider range of benefits to the Council including:

- Securing a consistent and transparent approach to open space provision within the development planning process;
- Allowing development planners to better evaluate local needs and to identify whether developer contributions to open space provision should focus on quality, accessibility or quantity and whether this is provided on-site or off-site;
- Supporting the development sector by ensuring that guidance is clear on open space requirements when developing plans, development frameworks and masterplans and major applications;
- Bringing greater clarity to the development management process relative to planning gains/ developer contributions; and
- Bringing greater clarity to inter-departmental working on the priorities for open space (typology/ quality/ quantity/ accessibility) within settlements and the connections to other policies (Sports Strategy/ Core path/ LBAP-Biodiversity/ Urban Design/ Active Travel).

Setting standards allows a better understanding of the current status of open space assets across a Local Authority area. As noted in 'Greenspace Quality: A Guide to Assessment, Planning and Strategic Development'<sup>65</sup>, open space standards are intended to provide a tool to support better quality open spaces and to:

- Provide a structure basis for assessing quality of sites against a consistent methodology;
- Enable open space quality of sites to be assessed in relation to one another to enable detailed analysis of inequalities;
- Enable an overview of open space quality to be considered across settlement, Local Authority area and wider regional areas;
- Allow priorities to be reviewed, alongside other initiatives and strategies for open space improvements, through planning, design or management; and
- Provide for ongoing monitoring and review.

Open space standards will allow appropriate connections to be made to Community Planning and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and may be framed within future Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), if appropriate.

### 7.2 Objective: Setting Standards for East Lothian

The East Lothian Open Space Standard sets standards for quantity, quality and accessibility across a range of PAN 65 typologies that will ensure the standard offers clarity of application and can be monitored and evaluated over the life of the Open Space Strategy and Local Development Plan. It is intended to be a progressive standard, with improvements to open spaces undertaken over time and standards reviewed on a regular basis.

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<sup>65</sup> <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Category/resources>

A number of recommendations have been drawn from the research and benchmarking with other authority standards and national standards. These include:

- Need to keep the standard simple so that the standard can offer a wide applicability across settlements (urban and rural/ large and small)
- Need to recognise that certain open space types (functional spaces e.g. some types of sports pitches/ cemeteries) are demand driven and do not require / little value is secured in defining more prescriptive standards
- Need to create a standard for the three key aspects of open space assets, namely: quality, quantity and accessibility
- Need to recognise that an important role of the standard is addressing the planning gain / deficit created by new build development (housing / leisure / employment based development) exerting new demand on open space provision
- Value exists in developing a progressive approach to standards that allows standards to be updated and revisited at each Open Space Strategy review. This will help to ensure standards are realistic and deliverable.

Accordingly, the 2018 Open Space Standards were reviewed during the preparation of the 2026 Open Space Strategy to ensure they are still fit for purpose.

Setting Open Space standards requires a differing approach to each of the three key qualities of open space, Quality, Quantity and Accessibility, that ensures open space is fit for purpose and meets the needs of communities.

### 7.3 East Lothian Open Space Standards: Quantity, Quality and Accessibility

PAN 65, which provides supplementary guidance for Scottish Planning Policy, sets out how local authorities should prepare open space strategies and audits and advocates a 'standards based approach' for the assessment of open space provision and need. PAN 65 suggests that standards should contain three elements:

- **Quantity** – an amount of space per house unit or head of population
- **Quality** – a benchmark against which quality can be measured
- **Accessibility** – an amount of particular types of open space within a specified distance i.e. a distance threshold

PAN 65 states that different types of open space require to be considered separately. This can be thought of most simply as 'supply-led', 'demand-led' and 'standards based' approaches.

Spaces most suited to a supply-led approach are urban parks and gardens, civic spaces, woodlands and other natural greenspaces. This should assess the existing size and distribution of spaces against their current and future role and allow for the formulation of a strategy that protects and enhances these spaces, extending and linking them where feasible.

A demand-led approach is suited to those spaces for which a quantifiable demand can be identified, for example, sports facilities and functional spaces such as cemeteries and allotments. This should allow the local authority to consult with relevant user groups or carry out necessary survey work in order to establish the demand for facilities.

## 7.4 QUANTITY OF OPEN SPACE

### 7.4.1 Quantity: Is there enough open space and is it equitably distributed?

Quantity is a consideration in ensuring appropriate provision of open space albeit that it has perhaps been over-emphasised historically relative to the importance of good quality and accessibility.

Establishing a quantifiable amount of open space provision can provide a useful guideline on provision within individual settlement areas and is important in establishing a broad equity across settlements and local neighbourhoods. Where open space quantity exceeds minimum thresholds the quality and accessibility issues take greater importance and this is of particular importance relative to planning gains / developer contributions and open space investment programmes. Equally if quantity is below the minimum threshold, then quality and accessibility are of even greater importance and quantity should be increased where possible.

Assessment of how provision is allocated across the open space typologies is often based on the amount of space per house unit or per head of population. Quantity standards are referenced to and benchmarked against 'Fields in Trust Standards: Creating Great Spaces for All' extended to allow for general amenity space.

### 7.4.2 Quantity Standard for Open Space

East Lothian Council sets a **quantity standard** for open space that requires all settlements to seek to secure, as a minimum, provision of 60m<sup>2</sup> of useable, public open space (including public parks, amenity greenspace, playspace) per household as follows:

#### East Lothian Open Space Quantity Standard:

The East Lothian Open Space Quantity Standard is provision of a minimum of 60m<sup>2</sup> of publicly accessible open space per dwelling.

Provision of formal and informal open space is expected, and should include large, consolidated areas of useable open space. Open spaces should be multifunctional and can include town and local parks, sports pitches, civic space, play provision and community growing space. Informal amenity open space should also be provided. Open Space provision will form a key part of the wider strategic Green Network.

In addition to the open space provision, there is a requirement for connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks, avoiding fragmentation. This should include active travel routes, green corridors linking open spaces, woodlands and meadowlands, areas with biodiversity value and areas for seating and rest, sufficient, diverse landscaping and tree planting to support green network connectivity.

Further details of the Standards for New Developments are set out in section 11.

#### The quantity standard requires:

- All new open space to address or contribute within the settlement to the quantity standards whether this be by on-site or off-site provision
- Identification of all settlements that fall below the defined quantity standard and address in the LDP the mechanisms to achieve the quantity standard

- Establishment of mechanisms to consult with local stakeholders / community on local needs and issues impacting on open space quantity
- Quantity of sports pitch provision should be referenced to the Sports Pitch Provision Standards

## 7.5 QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE

### 7.5.1 Quality: Is open space ‘fit for purpose’?

Quality is a key component of open space. High-quality greenspaces are linked to better physical and mental health outcomes. Open spaces need to be ‘fit for purpose’ and serve local communities by providing a level of service and functional provision to meet informal leisure and recreational needs, and to address the high-level themes of **Climate** resilience, **Nature** enhancement and **Health and Wellbeing** benefits. There is a commitment to increasing multi-functionality of spaces to maximise their contribution to quality of place and the benefits that they provide to local communities, and to incorporating green infrastructure functions, such as water management, green networks, active travel routes into new and existing open spaces. These aspirations are also included in Scottish Planning Policy and emphasised through NPF4.

**Quality is important in terms of the offering the following:**

- Linked green networks of open space, providing routes to work, school and other community facilities
- Well designed, attractive and managed spaces of all types and sizes, close to where people live
- Providing a range of habitats for biodiversity, that can host or act as functional stepping stones / wildlife corridors for wildlife
- Places that provide opportunities to participate in formal sports, informal recreation (including walking, cycling, play and growing food), promoting health and wellbeing
- Places which are inclusive, safe and welcoming, and serve local needs

### What is quality greenspace?

“Quality greenspace is defined as greenspace which is ‘fit for purpose’ - meaning it is in the right place, readily accessible, safe, inclusive, welcoming, well maintained, well managed and performing an identified function. ‘Fitness for purpose’, by definition, requires the assessment of greenspace quality to reflect the intended purpose or need. Greenspace is often multi-functional in nature, which is one of its great strengths and quality attributes.”

*From: Greenspace Scotland’s ‘Greenspace Quality: A Guide to Assessment, Planning and Strategic Development’*

<https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Category/resources>

### 7.5.2 Quality Standard and Requirement for Open Space

**Expectation set out in current Local Development Plan:**

Paragraphs 3.126 and 3.127 of the East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018<sup>66</sup> set out an open space quality expectation for new developments in East Lothian, which includes the following:

Provision of formal and informal open space is expected. Open spaces should be multifunctional and can include district, town and local parks, sports pitches, civic space and community growing space. Civic spaces will have quality hard and soft landscaping of clear amenity value, providing public space to complement adjoining land uses and movement through them. Informal amenity open space should be part of parks and

<sup>66</sup> [East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018](#)

also include active travel routes, green corridors linking open spaces, woodlands and meadowlands, and areas with biodiversity value and areas for seating and rest.

When assessed against Greenspace Scotland's Quality Criteria the Council expects district, town and local parks to achieve a minimum score of 70% and amenity green space to achieve a minimum score of 60%.

New open spaces should complement, extend and connect existing open spaces wherever possible, and links to the countryside and between habitats should be created so they also form part of the wider multifunctional Green Network. Local and town parks and civic spaces will be focal points for public access and they should be most easily accessible from higher density development.

Where required by the Council, provision of open space for equipped play areas and allotments will be included within the overall open space requirement. SUDs areas may form part of informal open spaces subject to their design and provided they contribute to and do not harm the amenity value of the wider open space. Hard and soft landscaped areas must be provided. Incidental landscaped areas or areas of planting, footways, roads, private gardens, and allotments, will not contribute to open space requirements. Housing developments will normally be expected to provide open space on-site simultaneously with homes. The Council has set out its minimum open space requirement in LDP (2018) Policy OS3 to be met through the provision of multifunctional open space networks.

### 7.5.3 Methodology: East Lothian Open Space Quality Assessment

The quality assessment part of the audit process is probably the most complex area to secure consistent evaluation. Setting quality criteria to assess the standard of an open space is made more difficult by the diversity of spaces (character, scale, function) and the difficulties involved in establishing a common set of criteria against which to evaluate quality. This problem can be addressed by recognising that **quality criteria are not absolute measures but rather provide an informed, common sense approach on which a consistent judgment of the quality of a space can be determined**. All 462 open spaces in the 2024/25 East Lothian Open Space Audit were audited consistently to ensure repeatability and comparability of quality scoring.

Quality analysis can review the levels of quality achieved within a settlement area or neighbourhood (e.g. a village); within differing types of open space (e.g. parks); within specific qualitative areas (e.g. biodiversity) or on an individual and comparative site analysis. The indicators are based on the recommendations included in the 'Greenspace Quality: A Guide to Assessment, Planning and Strategic Development'<sup>67</sup> (2008). Table 2 sets out the scoring criteria for each of the indicators and identifier the indicators that have been applied for each category of open space.

To reflect the updated themes of the 2026 Open Space Strategy of Climate, Nature and Health & Wellbeing, a new Quality category of '**Tackling Climate Change**' was added to the Open Space Audit in 2024/25, along with **new sub-categories** under other categories to fully assess the open spaces to reflect the 2026 priorities.

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<sup>67</sup> <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Category/resources>

**Table 2: Scoring criteria for each of the quality indicators used in the East Lothian Open Space Audit 2024/25 (\* denotes new category added in 2024/25)**

<b>Access &amp; Community</b>	<b>Attractiveness / Place Appeal</b>	<b>Biodiversity</b>	<b>Functionality</b>	<b>Community Benefits</b>	<b>Tackling Climate Change*</b>
Well located & close to community	Attractive and offers a positive image	Contributes to enhancing Biodiversity / Nature Networks*	Offers a range functions / flexibility of use	Safe and welcoming	Presence of mature trees*
Meets Disability requirements & needs	Provides an attractive setting	Large enough to sustain wildlife populations	Diverse play / sport / recreational opportunity	Good levels of natural surveillance	New trees / hedgerow planted in last 8 years*
Provides Quality Paths Fit-for-Purpose	Quality materials / equipment / furniture	Offers diversity of habitats	Offers good places for social interaction	Low levels / Absence of anti-social behaviour	Climate resilient planting*
Connects to other transport nodes / active travel connectivity	Attractive planting / landscape elements	Part of wider landscape structure	Seating - sufficient seating in the right place(s)*	Appropriate lighting levels	Contributes to reducing air pollution including screening from traffic*
Allows movement in & between places	Welcoming boundaries / entrances	Connects to wider green networks	High quality facilities meeting user needs	Sense of local identity & place	Community food growing / allotments / orchard present*
Has accessible entrances in right places	Facilities in clean / safe / usable condition	Balances habitat protection & access	Appropriate facilities for location / size / use	Provides routes to wider community facilities	Provides role in water management / flood risk reduction, e.g. SuDS, marshland area, culverts*
Offers connected path network and signage	Low levels of litter & adequate bins	Rewilded area / wildflower area / tree planting*	Facilities for all ages	Contains distinctive / memorable places	Contributes to blue network including stream / river / water feature*
	Well maintained		Facilities for a range of abilities including disabilities*	Community involvement in management (where known)	Active travel infrastructure e.g. cycle racks*
			Adaptable to changing needs / use		Resource efficient (grass cutting / peat compost)

For the Open Space Audit, each open space site is given a Quality score between 0 and 5 (where 0 = 'not present' / lowest quality to 5 = highest quality) for each of the assessment indicators in the audit, which are then sub totalled for each theme. All of the criteria are relevant for the larger multifunctional sites. However, there are some types of sites (e.g. amenity greenspace) where some criteria (e.g. 'balance habitat protection & access') are not considered relevant due to the size and type of the site. A 'not applicable' (N/A) symbol is entered into the database against the non-relevant criteria. Then each of the site scores are totalled and a percentage score generated based on the number of criteria assessed. In this way, a particular site is not marked down because it does not possess a feature that is not relevant to the quality of the space.

The scores for each indicator are totalled and an overall percentage score given. The total percentage scores have been separated into five bands, as set out in the 2018 Open Space Strategy. This banding provides a useful starting point to review the quality of the overall open space resource.

**Table 3: Fitness for purpose quality scoring**

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E
Score of 75% or more	Score of 65 - 74%	Score of 55 - 64%	Score of 45 – 54%	Score of less than 45%
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Failing

*Fit for purpose* | *Not fit for purpose*

At this stage, it should be noted that, as with any database, there are limitations regarding the use and function of the dataset. The open spaces in the East Lothian area include open spaces of all types and sizes, with a diverse range of functions and greenspace elements. Therefore, the study recommends that the total value score should not be viewed in isolation of the other parts of the audit, but rather seen as an indicator to highlight issues and patterns.

The aim of a quality threshold approach is to ensure the Strategy targets sites of poorest quality and provide an identifiable measure of progress as audits/ quality re-assessments are undertaken. The standard will also enable the identification of sites where investment in open spaces is essential to maintain open spaces that are fit for purpose.

Although quality scores of 55% are currently considered to be 'fit for purpose', the Council's aspiration is for town parks and local parks to achieve a minimum quality score of 70% and amenity greenspace to achieve a minimum quality score of 60%, over the duration of this Open Space Strategy.

#### 7.5.4 East Lothian Open Space Quality Standard

The open space quality standard is as follows:

##### **East Lothian Open Space Quality Standard:**

East Lothian Council sets a **quality standard** for open space that seeks to ensure all communities and settlements have access to high quality open space. All outdoor open space will score "fair", "good" or "excellent" quality (band A, B or C). Any open space sites in either band D or E do not meet quality standards and are therefore not considered to be fit for purpose.

The Quality Standard aspiration is for all town and local parks to achieve a minimum quality score of 70% and amenity greenspace to achieve a minimum quality score of 60%, over the duration of this Open Space Strategy.

The quality standard is intended to be a progressive standard, with minimum standards with an ambition to continuously improve the quality of open space. Improvements will be prioritised according to the quality score achieved in the Open Space Audit, communities' aspirations, the extent to which the site meets the quality requirements and Outcomes set out in this Open Space Strategy, and subject to funding availability.

The new aspirational 60% minimum quality standard for East Lothian is proposed through this 2026 Open Space Strategy to ensure our open spaces and greenspaces are 'fit for purpose' for the current time, with the higher aspirational 70% minimum quality score proposed for Public Parks & Gardens. This provides a benchmark and aspiration for the management of open spaces and quality standard for future open spaces.

**The quality standard requires:**

- All town and local parks should achieve a minimum quality score of 70% and amenity green space should achieve a minimum score of 60%
- The aspiration is for all existing Council owned/managed town and local parks to achieve a minimum quality score of 70% and amenity greenspace to achieve a minimum quality score of 60%, over the duration of this Open Space Strategy
- Explore how best to work with key stakeholders, including developers, Housing Associations, Factors and residents, and develop mechanisms to improve the quality standards of privately owned open spaces where needed/appropriate, focusing on priority sites
- Identification of all open spaces below the defined quality threshold
- Establishment of mechanisms to consult with local stakeholders / community, including tenants of social housing, on local needs and issues impacting on open space quality to identify required improvements
- Partner/ developer/ stakeholder and community support to improve quality in the identified spaces as a priority
- Ensuring that all open space below the quality threshold shall be addressed and improved and brought up to standard

The aim of a quality threshold approach would be to ensure the Strategy targets sites of poorest quality and provide an identifiable measure of progress as audits/quality re-assessments are undertaken. The standard will also enable the identification of sites where investment in open spaces is essential to maintain open spaces that are fit for purpose.

These standards must be seen as 'minimum' standards, and the aspiration should be to maintain existing high quality open spaces, and aspire to higher quality open spaces in sites with lower current scores. The quality standards should be kept under review to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

## **7.6 ACCESSIBILITY OF OPEN SPACE**

### **7.6.1 Accessibility: Is open space accessible to communities?**

Access is a key component of open space. Open spaces need to serve local communities and deliver locally accessible open space providing a local resource that addresses daily needs, supports access by walking, cycling and public transport, supports unsupervised use with safe accessibility and promotes informal recreation and exercise (dog walking, health walking or general passive use, etc). Access to greenspace is a social determinant of health. Unequal distribution exacerbates existing health disparities.

Accessibility requires assessment using distance thresholds (straight line distances or walk distances isochrones) for particular types of open space. Distance thresholds are a useful planning tool, especially when used in association with a GIS mapping system. It is possible to measure the number of households within a distance threshold comparison of sites, neighbourhoods and community settlements. Distance thresholds set the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision.

The method for identifying effective catchment areas often involves projecting a straight line catchment radii from the boundary of an open space. This is the easiest and quickest way to plot approximate catchment areas to identify areas without ready access to particular facilities.

In keeping with Scottish Government draft proposals set out in their Consultation on Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments Regulations, the East Lothian open space Accessibility audit covered a range of aspects, including whether the space is well located within the neighbourhood, details of entry points, paths and their quality, transport links (where appropriate), and any barriers that could prevent ease of access and movement whether generally, or by specific groups including people with disabilities.

### 7.6.2 East Lothian Open Space Accessibility Standard

The open space accessibility standard is as follows:

#### East Lothian Open Space Accessibility Standard:

East Lothian Council sets an **accessibility standard** for open space that seeks to ensure all communities and settlements have access to:

- Green Networks (semi-natural greenspaces, green corridors, other green space, countryside) within 300m
- Country Park (incl. non-designated country parks) within 10km
- A Town Park within 1.2km
- Local Park within 400m
- Regional Athletics facility within 36km
- Full Size Sports Pitch within 1.2km or within the Cluster Area as appropriate
- Either a Local Area of Play (LAP) within 240 metres, a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) within 400 metres, or a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) within 800 metres

#### The accessibility standard requires:

- All new open space to address or contribute to improved access for all and safe connectivity within the settlement whether this be by on-site or off-site provision or a combination
- Identification of all settlements where open space provision falls below the defined accessibility standard and address in the LDP the mechanisms to address improvements or compensate for restricted accessibility
- Establishment of mechanisms to consult with local stakeholders / community on local needs and issues impacting on open space accessibility.

### 7.6.3 Accessibility Standard for Sports Pitch Provision

The accessibility standard for full size sports pitches remains 1.2km where appropriate. However, going forward this will be assessed on a Cluster basis, based on Local Development Plan future housing land

allocations and subsequent demand assessment of cumulative impact within a Cluster Area. This new provision means that developers must contribute to sports provision within the Cluster Area.

**The East Lothian Accessibility Standard for Sports Provision for Full Size Sports Pitches** is 1.2km or provision within the Cluster Area as appropriate.

The Council will require developer contributions toward off-site full size sports pitch provision within the Cluster Area as a direct consequence of new housing development.

#### 7.6.4 Accessibility Assessment: Distance Thresholds Mapping

The following accessibility standards for each settlement, as set out in the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018, were used to map current open space accessibility (see Maps 3 to 7 of the Open Space Strategy Mapping) to enable comparison with the previous strategy:

- Green Networks (semi-natural greenspaces/ countryside) within 300m
- Country Park within 10km
- Town Park within 1.2km
- Local Park within 400m
- Regional Athletics facility within 36km
- Full Size Sports Pitch within 1.2km or within the Cluster Area as appropriate
- Play areas: either a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP – a larger play area aimed at children and young people of a range of ages up to more challenging play equipment) within 800 metres, or a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP – open space with a range of equipped play opportunities in local areas) within 400 metres. Smaller Local Areas of Play (LAPs – small local play spaces mainly aimed at young children/toddlers) have also been mapped, within a distance threshold of 240 metres.\*

\* Play spaces: A detailed [Play Sufficiency Assessment](#) (PSA) for East Lothian was also recently undertaken of all Council-owned or managed formal public outdoor play spaces in East Lothian, with particular focus on inclusion and accessibility, which included extensive consultation with children and young people including disabled and Additional Support Needs (ASN) children and families. These PSA findings also informed our overall Accessibility assessment in the final East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026.

#### 7.6.5 Accessibility Assessment: 'Isochrone' Mapping

In addition to the distance threshold mapping, 'isochrone' accessibility mapping of town parks and local parks was also undertaken (see section 10.3). This maps more realistically the times it takes people to walk the threshold distances to their nearest park and takes into account 'real-world' factors such as transport routes, paths and 'barriers' such as railway lines. The isochrone maps show distance thresholds that equate to a 15-minute walking time one-way to reach Town Parks, and equating to a 5-minute walking time one-way to reach a Local Park, to provide a more realistic representation of real-world accessibility.

#### 7.6.6 Open Space Hierarchy

An appreciation of the hierarchy of open spaces can help councils to understand the different functions they perform and distinguish between spaces of strategic, local and neighbourhood importance. Some types of open space, for example athletics tracks and country parks serve the council wide area. Other types of open spaces have catchments that serve a neighbourhood or a local area, for example town parks and play areas.

Table 4 below sets out the East Lothian Open Space Hierarchy.

**Table 4: East Lothian Open Space Hierarchy**

Accessibility distance thresholds are based on the standards published in the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018 and Fields in Trust Standards.

Hierarchy	Core Assets	Standards
<b>STRATEGIC</b> (ELC wide)	Green Networks/ Core Paths/ Semi-natural greenspace/ Green Corridors etc.  Access to the Countryside <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Country Parks (designated and other)</li> <li>Regional Semi-natural Space</li> </ul> Strategic Sports Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Athletics Track</li> </ul>	Policy & Aspirational = 300m accessibility  = 10km accessibility  = 10km accessibility  = 36km accessibility
<b>NEIGHBOURHOOD</b> (Cluster wide)	Parks Hierarchy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town Park</li> <li>Local Park</li> </ul> Sports Pitches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full Size Sports Pitch</li> <li>Small Size Sports Pitch</li> </ul>	= 1.2km accessibility  = 400m accessibility  = 1.2km or within the wider Cluster as appropriate *  = 400m accessibility
<b>LOCAL</b> (Settlement/ community level)	Playspace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)</li> <li>Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)</li> <li>Local Areas of Play (LAPs)</li> </ul> Amenity Greenspace	= 800m accessibility  = 400m accessibility  = 240m accessibility

\* 1.2km is the accessibility standard for full size sports pitches (based on the Fields in Trust Standard<sup>68</sup>); the new East Lothian standard for Growth is provision within the Cluster Area: see section 7.6.3.

<sup>68</sup> 'Fields in Trust Standards: Creating Great Spaces for All' (2024) <https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/standards>

## **7.7 East Lothian Standards Table**

Whilst bespoke to the needs of East Lothian and its policy framework, the standards were identified by benchmarking relative to other standards, Local Authorities and current open space guidance. A number of Scottish Local Authorities have developed open space standards and the East Lothian standards sit within a broad range of the best practice standards.

Table 5 below sets out the East Lothian standards:

**Table 5: East Lothian Open Space Standards**

PAN 65 Typology	Strategic Level	Demand-led Provision	Standard Assessment		
			Quantity	Quality	Accessibility
<b>Green Networks</b>	Strategic Network	-	Included in the Policy & Aspirational Framework		Green Networks = 300m <sup>69</sup>
<b>Public Parks and Gardens</b>	Neighbourhood / Community Facilities	-	Open Space and Play Provision = minimum 60m <sup>2</sup> per household (including public parks, amenity greenspace, playspace), plus connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks are required to be provided on-site.	Quality Bands A or B (minimum score of 65% with an aspiration of 70%)	Regional Park = 25km Country Park* = 10km Town Park = 1.2km Local Park = 400m *Including non-designated country parks
<b>Amenity Greenspace</b>	Local / Community Facilities	-		Quality Bands A, B or C (minimum score of 55% with an aspiration of 60%)	-
<b>Playspace</b> for children and teenagers Including amenity residential with equipped play	Local / Community Facilities	-		Play areas are inspected annually for quality and condition in a separate audit	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play = 800m Local Equipped Area for Play = 400m Local Area for Play = 240m
<b>Sports Areas</b> Hockey, Rugby, Shinty, football, cricket, bowls, athletics, tennis	Neighbourhood / Community Facilities	✓ See section 10.6	-	-	Regional Athletics <sup>70</sup> = 36km Full Size Sports Pitches = 1.2km or within the wider Cluster as appropriate Small Size Sports Pitches = 400m
<b>Green Corridors</b>	Local / Community Facilities	-	-	-	(See Green Networks)
<b>Natural/ Semi-natural Greenspaces</b>	Local / Community Facilities	-	-	-	(See Green Networks)
<b>Allotments/ Community Growing Spaces</b>	Neighbourhood / Community Facilities	✓ See section 10.8	-	-	-
<b>Civic Space/ Public Realm</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Burial Grounds</b>	-	✓	-	-	-
<b>Other Functional Greenspace</b>	-	✓	-	-	-

<sup>69</sup> CSGN Goal “To ensure that every home in central Scotland is within 300m of an attractive, safe and well-maintained green space or accessible countryside”.

<sup>70</sup> Fields in Trust Standards (based on drive time of 45 minutes in rural areas, average drive rate of 48km/hour)

## 8.0 APPLICATION OF QUANTITY, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR OPEN SPACE ACROSS EAST LoTHIAN

### 8.1 FINDINGS: QUANTITY OF OPEN SPACE ACROSS EAST LoTHIAN

#### 8.1.1 Quantity of Open Space across East Lothian's Settlements

The total amount of open space included in the previous Open Space Audits (2009 + 2016) was 1,453.11 hectares. The amount of open space included in the 2024/25 Open Space Audit, which includes new open spaces in recently developed housing sites, is **1,816.33 hectares**. This is divided between the following types of open space shown in Table 6:

**Table 6: Type of Open Space across East Lothian**

**Total amounts of each Open Space Type included in the audit across East Lothian in 2024/25:**

Type of Open Space		Amount (area in hectares)
Public Parks	Country Parks	116.92
	Town Parks*	79.53
	Local Parks*	86.10
Private Gardens or Grounds <sup>1</sup>		13.45
Amenity Greenspace*		167.97
Civic Space		13.33
Playspace*		2.22 <sup>2</sup>
Sports Areas		75.69
Green Corridors*		13.56
Natural / Semi-Natural Greenspace*		427.94
Functional Greenspace / Other *		819.62
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,816.33 hectares</b>

\* Including privately owned open spaces.

<sup>1</sup> Private Gardens or Grounds are privately owned but accessible to the public.

<sup>2</sup> This is the area of Playspaces assessed in the Open Space Audit 2024/25. Please note that additional play areas were also assessed in the [East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment](#) (PSA) or are incorporated within wider parks – please refer to the PSA for further details of Play Areas.

The **462 Open Space sites** included in the Open Space Audit 2024/25 are distributed across East Lothian throughout the major settlements, as set out below in Table 7. Whilst a large number are owned and/or managed by East Lothian Council, a significant number of sites are privately owned and managed. These have been included in the audit to meet the Scottish Government's draft regulations setting out requirements of an Open Space Strategy to include all publicly accessible open spaces and green spaces over 0.2 hectares in size, plus other smaller urban open spaces that have important functions locally, such as civic squares in town centres and neighbourhood playspaces, within and on the edge of settlements.

**Table 7: Open Space Summary Figures for each Settlement**

**Total number of sites included in Open Space Audit 2024/25 for each main town and village, and the total amount of all open space in and around each settlement** (these are all the open space sites shown on the Open Space Type Maps 2a to 2f, and include all types of audited open spaces in and around each settlement, including golf courses, cemeteries, sports areas, woodlands):

Settlement	No. of Sites	Amount of Open Space (hectares)	Settlement	No. of Sites	Amount of Open Space (hectares)
Aberlady	13	100.24	Innerwick	2	0.97
Athelstaneford	3	1.90	Longniddry	15	69.54
Blindwells	1	0.72	Macmerry	12	6.62
Bolton	2	0.33	Musselburgh	47	254.33
Cockenzie & Port Seton	21	16.73	New Winton	3	8.87
Dirleton	13	21.01	North Berwick	37	231.18
Drem	1	0.15	Oldhamstocks	2	0.85
Dunbar	50	229.98	Ormiston	11	8.73
East Linton	16	17.26	Pencaitland	16	40.53
East Saltoun	4	6.51	Prestonpans	39	126.54
Elphinstone	5	1.95	Spott	1	0.29
Garvald	3	1.20	Stenton	4	1.41
Gifford	8	48.63	Tranent	43	40.65
Gladsmuir	1	0.83	Wallyford	14	16.26
Gullane	16	426.39	Whitecraig	5	4.82
Haddington	50	124.54	Whitekirk	1	0.43
Humbie	3	5.91	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>462 sites</b>	<b>1,816.3 ha</b>

**Across the totality of East Lothian, there is a good range and overall quantity of open spaces** accessible to local residents, within and on the edge of the towns and larger villages. Towns with the largest amounts of open space within and on the edge of their settlement boundaries (Gullane, Dunbar, Musselburgh and North Berwick) all have golf courses on their perimeters, accessible from the towns. These large quantities are also due to natural/semi-natural areas such as North Berwick Law or Lochend Woods in Dunbar and various beaches that are not present in Tranent, for example. Dunbar also has John Muir Country Park within the proximity of the town.

The smaller villages (e.g. Gladsmuir, Whitekirk) have smaller amounts of public open space; and some of the small hamlets have no public open spaces of significant size (e.g. Ballencrieff), as was noted in feedback received through the public consultation. The lack of community greenspaces for public use in some of the smaller rural villages and hamlets is an issue to address going forward.

### 8.1.2 Quantity of all Open Space by Cluster Area

The Cluster Areas of East Lothian correspond to Area Partnership areas. These are the defined 'localities' for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy, as proposed in the Scottish Government's draft regulations on Open

Space Strategies, having the meaning given under Section 9(2) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The Cluster Area boundaries are shown in Map 1: Cluster Location Plan.

The quantities of all types of open space for each Cluster Area of East Lothian, identified and mapped through the **2024/25 Open Space Audit**, are set out in Table 8.

**Table 8: Open Space Quantity Summary Figures for each Cluster Area of East Lothian**

**Total number of sites included in Open Space Audit 2024/25 for each Cluster Area of East Lothian** (these are all the open space sites shown on the Open Space Type Maps 2a to 2f, and includes all types of audited open spaces in and around each settlement, including golf courses, cemeteries, sports areas, woodlands):

Cluster Area	No. of Sites	Amount of Open Space (hectares)
Dunbar Cluster	75	250.76
Haddington Cluster	74	189.17
Musselburgh Cluster	66	275.41
North Berwick Cluster	80	779.25
Prestonpans Cluster	76	213.53
Tranent Cluster	91	108.18
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>462 sites</b>	<b>1,816.3 ha</b>

**For each Cluster Area of East Lothian, there is a good overall quantity and total area of open spaces accessible to the public.**

Tranent Cluster has the most individual open space sites (91) although the smallest total overall area of open space (108 hectares). This is largely due to the other Cluster Areas having golf courses within the Cluster, which are included in the overall quantity calculation and have skewed these results. The presence of several large golf courses around the town boundaries of North Berwick and Gullane has contributed towards North Berwick Cluster having the largest overall area of open space (779.25 hectares).

In order to assess the quantity of multi-use, amenity open spaces within and on the edge of settlements it is more meaningful to assess the quantity of **Public Parks & Gardens, Amenity Greenspace and Playspaces only**; this was the approach taken in the 2018 Open Space Strategy, so for comparison this has been undertaken again for the 2026 Open Space Strategy.

### **8.1.3 Cluster Analysis: Quantity of Parks & Gardens, Amenity Greenspace and Playspaces**

The quantities of open space for each Cluster Area of East Lothian, identified and mapped through the **2024/25 Open Space Audit**, are set out in Table 9 and illustrated in Figure 3.

It should be noted that across all Cluster Areas, in addition to the formal open spaces included and measured in the Open Space Audit 2024/25, there are also additional extensive areas of **landscaping, green connectivity between sites, and smaller pockets of amenity greenspaces within housing areas**, which form important aspects of the amenity, health and wellbeing, nature network, climate resilience and place-making benefits of an urban area.

**Table 9: Quantity of Open Space (public parks & gardens, amenity greenspaces and playspaces) for each Cluster Area, audited in the 2024/25 Open Space Audit**

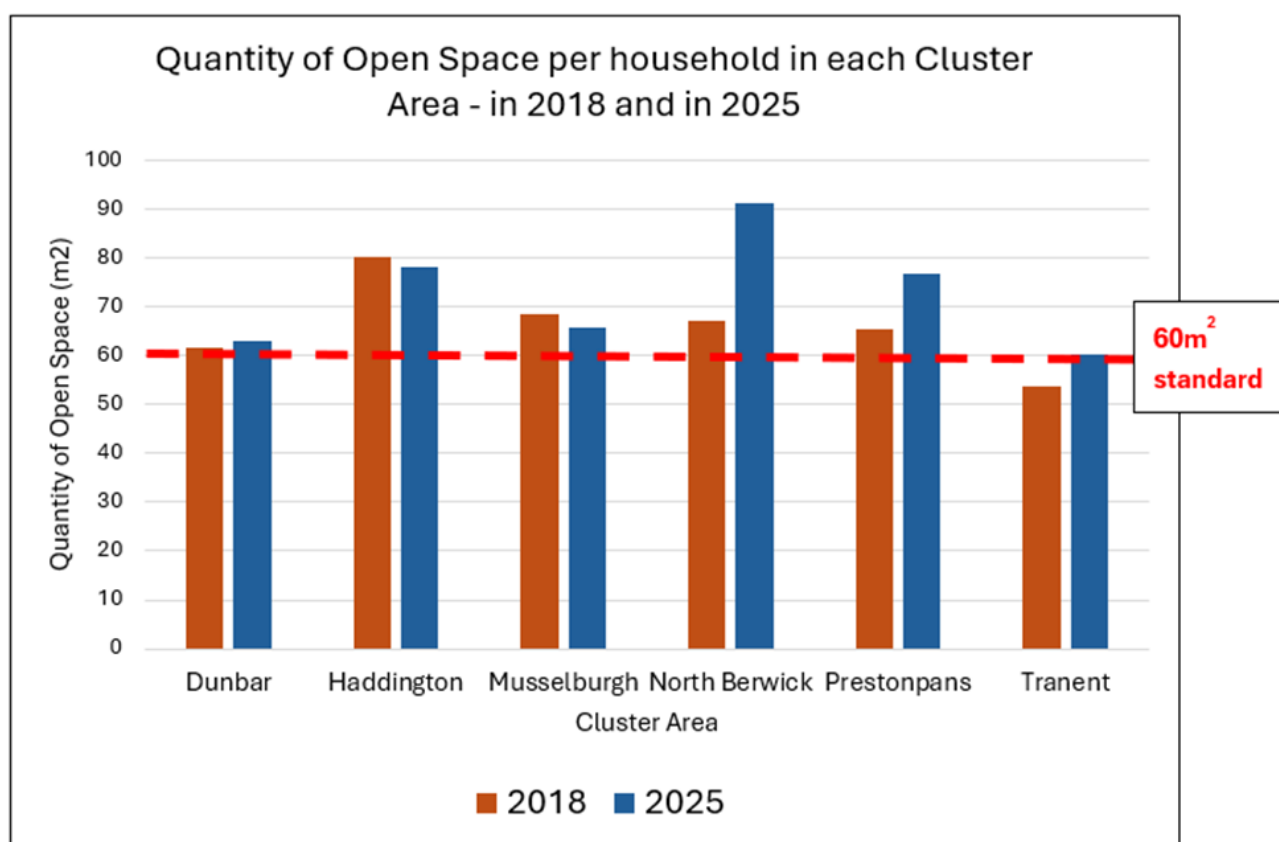
Cluster	No. of Households (2022 census)	Public Parks and Greenspaces* Quantity	
		Cluster Total	m <sup>2</sup> per household
<b>Dunbar</b>	Dunbar 4489, East Linton 867, West Barns 261	354,773m <sup>2</sup> **	<b>63.16m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Haddington</b>	Haddington 4990, Gifford 358	417,266m <sup>2</sup>	<b>78.02m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Musselburgh</b>	Musselburgh 9687, Wallyford 1757, Whitecraig 544	787,667m <sup>2</sup>	<b>65.70m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>North Berwick</b>	North Berwick 3666, Gullane 1320, Aberlady 571	507,538m <sup>2</sup>	<b>91.33m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Prestonpans</b>	Prestonpans 4562, Longniddry 1187, Cockenzie 2393	623,892m <sup>2</sup>	<b>76.63m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Tranent</b>	Tranent 5063, Elphinstone 258, Macmerry 647, Ormiston 1146, Pencaitland 666	468,078m <sup>2</sup>	<b>60.16m<sup>2</sup></b>

\*Includes the audited “public parks and gardens”, “amenity greenspaces” (including “amenity residential space with equipped play”) and “equipped playspaces” within the settlement boundaries of the towns and villages identified in the 2022 census in each Cluster.

\*\* Dunbar Cluster figure excludes John Muir Country Park, to enable direct comparison with the 2018 Strategy.

As shown in Table 9 and Figure 3, the quantity of open space (public parks and gardens, amenity greenspaces and equipped playspaces included in the Open Space Audit 2024/25) across the settlements in each of East Lothian’s Cluster Areas **meets the Open Space Strategy quantity standard of 60m<sup>2</sup> per household**.

**Figure 3: Quantity of Open Space per household for each Cluster Area: a comparison of 2018 and 2025 audit data.** The Open Space Standard of 60m<sup>2</sup> per household is shown as a red dashed line.



This is an improvement from the 2018 Open Space Strategy, when it was shown that **Tranent Cluster** had less open space per household than the 60m<sup>2</sup> threshold in 2018. New open spaces created in the southern Windygoul development of Tranent, and in the new housing developments in Pencaitland and Ormiston, as well as a more accurate audit of the existing open spaces in Tranent and Macmerry, have contributed to the increase in open space in Tranent to meet the Standard in 2025. However it should be noted that Tranent Cluster only just meets the 60m<sup>2</sup> Standard in 2025, at 60.16m<sup>2</sup> per household.

All other Cluster Areas also exceed the threshold, although **Dunbar Cluster** only achieves 63.16m<sup>2</sup> of open space per household, despite significant growth expansion of new housing in Dunbar and East Linton, which includes the construction of a new large public park at Hallhill South-West in Dunbar. Locations of the new open spaces do not appear to be equitably distributed among the new housing sites in this Cluster, to date.

**Haddington and Musselburgh Clusters** both exceed the 60m<sup>2</sup> threshold, although both Clusters show slightly decreased amounts of public open space compared to the 2018 Open Space Audit. There has been significant growth expansion in Haddington Cluster, particularly at Letham Mains in Haddington, and extensive growth expansion in the Musselburgh Cluster around Musselburgh and Craighall, Wallyford and Whitecraig. However, some of these new housing areas were still under construction at the time of the Audit, with some open spaces not yet completed and therefore not audited, which may have impacted these results.

Positive increases in parks and greenspace provision per household were seen in both **Prestonpans and North Berwick Clusters**, both of which have new housing developments with large areas of greenspace and local

parks situated within them. In regard to North Berwick Cluster, the total overall amount of open space was of a similar magnitude to other Cluster Areas; however when divided by the relatively lower number of households this resulted in a large amount of open space per household ( $91.33\text{m}^2$ ) – this could be explained by the relatively lower density of generally larger houses built in this Cluster Area.

For all Cluster Areas there is the additional caveat that the number of households is based on the 2022 Census data (the most recent available). In the 2018 Open Space Strategy the household data was taken from the 2011 Census, which was the most up to date information available at that time. The data shown in Figure 3 are therefore relative and indicative.

**This analysis shows that quantity of open space for each Cluster Area of East Lothian meets the quantity standard of  $60\text{m}^2$  per household, although some areas only just surpass the threshold, and there are differences in the relative amounts of open space across Cluster Areas.**

Some Cluster Areas have relatively considerably more open space per household than the  $60\text{m}^2$  standard, and this is the aspiration to aim for across East Lothian.

**Target: Ensure that the East Lothian Open Space Quantity Standard of provision of a minimum of  $60\text{m}^2$  per dwelling continues to be met and exceeded.**

Ensure that, in addition to the open space provision, there is provision of connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks, avoiding fragmentation.

## 8.2 FINDINGS: QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE ACROSS EAST LoTHIAN

### 8.2.1 Findings of Quality Assessment for all Open Space across East Lothian's Settlements

Table 10 shows the **quality assessment findings** from across all of East Lothian's open space sites that were audited in the 2024/25 Open Space Audit. This includes public parks and gardens, amenity greenspaces, natural / semi-natural areas, woodlands, green corridors, civic spaces, playspaces, sports areas and other functional greenspaces including golf courses (see full list of all Open Space Typologies in Table 1).

**TABLE 10: Quality Assessment Findings (average scores) from the Open Space Audit 2024/25 for all Open Space Sites across East Lothian, for all Audit Categories and Sub-categories**

\*Includes both Council owned/managed and privately owned/managed sites.

Open Space Audit Categories & sub-categories (2024/25 Open Space Audit)	Average Score across all open space sites*	Average Score across all public parks & greenspace sites only*
<b>Access &amp; Community</b>		
Well located & close to community	4.0	4.1
Meets Disability requirements & needs	3.0	3.1
Provides Quality Paths Fit-for-Purpose	3.3	3.3
Connects to other transport nodes / active travel connectivity	3.3	3.3
Allows movement in & between places	3.6	3.7
Has accessible entrances in right places	3.6	3.7
Offers connected path network and signage	3.5	3.3
<b>Average Percentage Score across this Category</b>	<b>69.0%</b>	<b>69.9%</b>
<b>Attractiveness / Place Appeal</b>		
Attractive and offers a positive image	3.9	3.8
Provides an attractive setting	4.0	3.9
Quality materials / equipment / furniture	3.7	3.7
Attractive planting / landscape elements	3.9	3.8
Welcoming boundaries / entrances	3.7	3.8
Facilities in clean / safe / usable condition	3.9	3.9
Low levels of litter & adequate bins	4.3	4.2
Well maintained	4.2	4.2
<b>Average Percentage Score across this Category</b>	<b>79.2%</b>	<b>78.2%</b>
<b>Biodiversity</b>		
Contributes to enhancing Biodiversity / Nature Networks	3.6	3.5
Large enough to sustain wildlife populations	3.4	3.1
Offers diversity of habitats	3.2	2.9
Part of wider landscape structure	3.6	3.4
Connects to wider green networks	3.5	3.3
Balances habitat protection & access	3.6	3.3
Rewilded area / wildflower area / tree planting	3.0	2.9
<b>Average Percentage Score across this Category</b>	<b>65.5%</b>	<b>62.3%</b>

Functionality		
Offers a range of functions / flexibility of use	3.1	3.2
Diverse play / sport / recreational opportunity	3.2	3.2
Offers good places for social interaction	3.2	3.2
Seating - sufficient seating in the right place(s)	2.4	2.3
High quality facilities meeting user needs	3.5	3.4
Appropriate facilities for location / size / use	3.8	3.6
Facilities for all ages	3.2	3.1
Facilities for a range of abilities including disabilities	2.7	2.6
Adaptable to changing needs / use	3.2	3.3
<b>Average Percentage Score across this Category</b>	<b>62.5%</b>	<b>61.8%</b>
Community Benefits		
Safe and welcoming	3.8	3.8
Good levels of natural surveillance	3.5	3.8
Low levels / Absence of anti-social behaviour	4.2	4.2
Appropriate lighting levels	3.8	3.8
Sense of local identity & place	3.5	3.3
Provides routes to wider community facilities	3.2	3.2
Contains distinctive / memorable places	3.4	3.1
<b>Average Percentage Score across this Category</b>	<b>72.9%</b>	<b>72.6%</b>
Tackling Climate Change		
Presence of mature trees	3.7	3.6
New trees / hedgerow planted in last 8 years	3.0	2.9
Climate resilient planting	3.4	3.3
Contributes to reducing air pollution including screening from traffic	3.6	3.4
Community food growing / allotments / orchard present	4.2	4.1
Provides role in water management / flood risk reduction, e.g. SuDS, marshland area, culverts	4.0	4.0
Contributes to blue network including stream / river / water feature	4.5	4.3
Active travel infrastructure e.g. cycle racks	2.1	2.0
Resource efficient (grass cutting / peat compost/)	3.3	3.3
<b>Average Percentage Score across this Category</b>	<b>66.0%</b>	<b>63.3%</b>
<b>Total Overall Percentage (across all categories)</b>	<b>69.9%</b>	<b>68.7%</b>

Across East Lothian as a whole, there are good quality open spaces of all types within and on the edge of settlements, and on average all areas of East Lothian meet the Open Space Quality Standard of 60% and above and therefore are 'fit for purpose' across the county as a whole. The high standards of open spaces across all of the quality indicator categories show that the range of open space provision across East Lothian as a whole meets a range of purposes and needs, including across the key areas of climate, nature and health and wellbeing.

Aspects showing the highest average scores (4.0 and above) and therefore the best quality in open spaces across the county were: 'Well located & close to community' (average score 4.0), 'Provides an attractive

setting' (av. score 4.0), 'Low levels of litter & adequate bins' (av. score 4.3), 'Well maintained' (av. score 4.2), 'Low levels / Absence of anti-social behaviour' (av. score 4.2), 'Community food growing / allotments / orchard present' (av. score 4.2), 'Provides role in water management / flood risk reduction, e.g. SuDS, marshland area, culverts' (av. score 4.0), and 'Contributes to blue network including stream/river/water feature' (av. score 4.5).

Overall, the quality category '**Attractiveness / Place Appeal**' scored the highest average percentage score across all of East Lothian (79.2%), followed by '**Community Benefits**' (average 72.9% across the county), emphasising the uniqueness, importance and place-making enhancements that these open spaces make to the places and community life of East Lothian. Feedback from the public consultation emphasised and highlighted this key point around the importance of local parks and greenspaces to our communities and how much these spaces are valued.

In regard to the quality assessment across all public parks, amenity greenspaces and playspace sites only (see Table 10), a very similar pattern was identified, with 'Attractiveness / Place Appeal' and 'Community Benefits' again scoring highest for these very local managed greenspaces closest to where people live.

The lowest scoring quality categories (scoring below average 3.0) were for:

- Various sub-categories of 'Biodiversity' in parks and greenspaces. Biodiversity and Nature Network enhancements in parks and greenspaces are relatively recent developments which take time to establish
- Seating - sufficient seating in the right place(s)
- Facilities for a range of abilities including disabilities, and
- The presence of active travel infrastructure e.g. cycle racks, which was the lowest-scoring sub-category

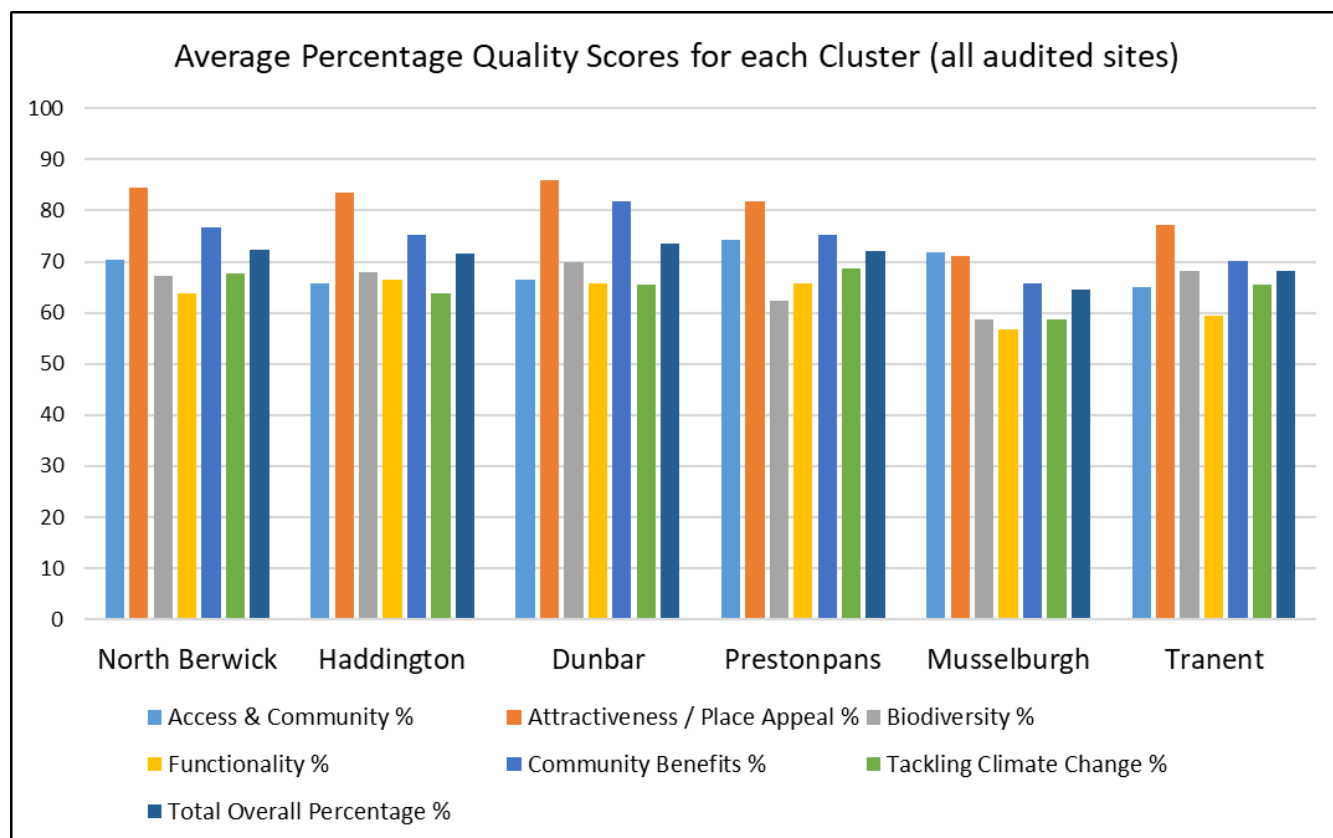
These aspects are priorities for improvements.

## 8.2.2 Quality of all Open Space by Cluster Area

Analysis was also undertaken of the Quality Scores for open spaces by Cluster Area. Summaries of the percentage quality scores for all audited open spaces within and on the edge of all the settlements in each Cluster of East Lothian are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Figure 4 below illustrates all average percentage Quality Score findings for each Cluster Area for comparison.

**Figure 4: Cluster Area Comparison of Quality Analysis Findings: all average percentage Quality Score findings for each Cluster Area (for all open space sites – both Council owned and privately owned)**



The open spaces in all Cluster Areas of East Lothian meet the 2018 Open Space Quality Standard of 55% and above. The majority of Cluster Areas also meet the new aspirational 60% Quality Standard and therefore are 'fit for purpose', although Musselburgh Cluster falls just short of the aspirational 60% standard for 3 categories and Tranent Cluster is just under 60% for one category, as shown in Table 11 below. The majority of Public Parks and Gardens (89%) meet the higher 'parks quality score standard' of 65%, with a large proportion (82%) also meeting the new aspirational 70% quality score for Public Parks and Gardens (see section 10.3, with detailed analysis in **Appendix 3**).

**Table 11: All average percentage Quality Score findings for each Cluster Area (for all types of open space sites – both Council owned and privately owned)**

CLUSTER	Access & Community %	Attractive-ness / Place Appeal %	Biodiversity %	Function-ality %	Community Benefits %	Tackling Climate Change %	Total Overall Percentage %
North Berwick	70.3	84.5	67.1	63.9	76.7	67.7	72.3
Haddington	65.7	83.6	68	66.4	75.2	63.8	71.6
Dunbar	66.6	85.9	70	65.7	81.7	65.4	73.6
Prestonpans	74.3	81.7	62.3	65.8	75.2	68.7	72.1
Musselburgh	71.8	71.1	58.7	56.8	65.7	58.8	64.5
Tranent	65	77.3	68.1	59.4	70.2	65.5	68.1

**Target: Ensure that the East Lothian Open Space Quality Standard is met and exceeded.**

The Quality Standard aspiration is for all town and local parks to achieve a minimum quality score of 70% and amenity greenspace to achieve a minimum quality score of 60%, over the duration of this Open Space Strategy.

**Ensure that all open spaces currently not meeting the standard are prioritised for enhancement, working with local communities and other key stakeholders.**

Continue to maintain and enhance the current standards of management and maintenance to ensure our precious and valuable open spaces and greenspaces continue to benefit people across East Lothian, and to ensure that Quality Standards across East Lothian remain high in future.

### 8.2.3 Future Management Priorities to enhance Quality of open spaces, identified through the Open Space Audit

**Future Management Priorities to enhance Quality of Open Spaces:**

Open spaces need to be 'fit for purpose' and serve local communities by providing a level of service and functional provision to meet informal leisure and recreational needs, and to address the high-level themes of **Climate** resilience, **Nature** enhancement and **Health and Wellbeing** benefits.

**There is a commitment to increasing multi-functionality of spaces to maximise their contribution to quality of place and the benefits that they provide to local communities, and to incorporating green infrastructure functions, such as water management, green networks, active travel routes into new and existing open spaces.**

Quality is important in terms of the offering the following:

- Linked green networks of open space, providing routes to work, school and other community facilities
- Well designed, attractive and managed spaces of all types and sizes, close to where people live
- Providing a range of habitats for biodiversity, that can host or act as functional stepping stones / wildlife corridors for wildlife
- Places that provide opportunities to participate in formal sports, informal recreation (including walking, cycling, play and growing food), promoting health and wellbeing
- Places which are inclusive and serve local needs

Analysis of the qualitative data from the comprehensive Open Space Audit 2024/25 has identified some aspects of the overall open space provision across the county that require to be enhanced and strengthened.

**Management Priorities:**

Across the county the lowest scoring overall Quality indicators were '**Biodiversity**' (average 65.5% across the county) and '**Functionality**' (average 62.5%). These are focus areas that should be enhanced and improved through future management priorities.

The average Audit scores highlight categories with lowest scores on which to focus future management improvements in parks and amenity greenspaces, particularly the following categories:

***Priority Focus Areas from Quality Audit:***

- Seating – sufficient seating in the right place(s)
- Facilities for a range of abilities including disabilities
- Active travel infrastructure e.g. cycle racks

***Additional Focus Areas from Quality Audit that require to be enhanced and strengthened:***

- 'Rewilded area / wildflower area / tree planting'
- 'Offers diversity of habitats [for biodiversity]'
- 'New trees / hedgerow planted in last 8 years'
- 'Offers connected path network and signage'

These accord well with the findings from the public consultation of local people's views on what makes a park or greenspace a good place to visit or use (see section 9.2) and should form a future management focus and requirement.

Further discussion of these specific aspects, with potential management solutions, is set out in section 9.



*Memorial Garden, Aberlady*

## **8.3 FINDINGS: ACCESSIBILITY OF OPEN SPACE ACROSS EAST LOTHIAN**

### **8.3.1 Findings of Accessibility Assessment: Distance Thresholds Mapping**

The mapping of East Lothian's open spaces enabled analysis of the accessibility of East Lothian's public parks, playspaces and sports pitch provision by calculating the distances people have to travel actively from their homes, by walking / cycling / wheeling, to reach their nearest town park, local park, playspace or sports area.

**Please refer to the Open Space Strategy Accessibility Mapping:**

Maps 3a to 3f: Public Parks Provision by Cluster Area

Map 4.1: Accessibility of Regional Open Space

Map 4.2: Country Park 10km Catchment

Maps 5a to 5f: Sports Pitch Provision by Cluster Area

Maps 6a to 6f: Equipped Play Areas Provision by Cluster Area

Map 7: Strategic Green Networks

**Accessibility of open spaces within and on the edge of East Lothian's settlements meet the accessibility standards across the majority of areas of East Lothian, based on the distance threshold mapping exercise.**

There is good accessibility of Public Parks close to where people live, however there are some gaps in provision in areas of Dunbar, North Berwick and Wallyford which do not meet the standards. Accessibility of Playspaces is generally good, however areas of North Berwick, Longniddry and Tranent do not meet the distance threshold criteria, and in general terms accessibility to play areas for disabled people is an area for improvement. All Sports Areas meet the accessibility standards across East Lothian. Further details are set out in Appendix 3 (Cluster Area accessibility assessment).

### **8.3.2 Findings of Accessibility Assessment: 'Isochrone' Mapping**

The 'isochrone' accessibility mapping of Town Parks and Local Parks, which was undertaken in addition to the distance threshold mapping, is shown for each of East Lothian's main towns in Figure 8. This maps catchment distances more realistically, based on walking times to the nearest park and taking into account 'real-world' factors such as transport routes, paths and 'barriers' such as railway lines.

### **8.3.3 Accessibility Assessment: Quality of Accessibility of Open Spaces across East Lothian**

The Quality scores from the Open Space Audit 2024/25 relating specifically to '**Access & Community**' also provide information on overall accessibility of open spaces across East Lothian (see Table 12). This shows that the majority of open spaces are close to communities, however, the quality of paths, connectivity and disability access had lower average scores. Signage and accessible entrances could also be improved. This accords with feedback from the public consultation (see section 8.3.4).

In addition, it should be noted that the presence of active travel infrastructure e.g. cycle racks was the lowest scoring sub-category in the Quality assessment, with a large proportion of open space sites identified where cycle racks or other cycling infrastructure was absent or not fit for purpose. This is also an area for improvement, which has already been identified by the Council with new cycle rack installations currently underway as funding allows.

**Table 12: Average Quality scores from the Open Space Audit for 'Access & Community' for open spaces across the totality of East Lothian, which provides a further assessment of Accessibility:**

Open Space Audit Categories & sub-categories (2024/25 Open Space Audit)	Average Score across all open space sites*	Average Score across all public parks & greenspace sites only*
<b>Access &amp; Community</b>		
Well located & close to community	4.0	4.1
Meets Disability requirements & needs	3.0	3.1
Provides Quality Paths Fit-for-Purpose	3.3	3.3
Connects to other transport nodes / active travel connectivity	3.3	3.3
Allows movement in & between places	3.6	3.7
Has accessible entrances in right places	3.6	3.7
Offers connected path network and signage	3.5	3.3
<b>Average Percentage Score across this Category</b>	<b>69.0%</b>	<b>69.9%</b>

### 8.3.4 Findings on Accessibility from the public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy 2026

In the public consultation on the initial findings of the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026, respondents were asked for their views and comments on the accessibility of open spaces, both across East Lothian as a whole and in local communities, for each of the following categories of open space:

#### Accessibility of:

- **Public Parks and Gardens**
- **Sports Pitches and outdoor sports facilities**
- **Equipped Play Areas**

A majority of respondents did not have any comments on the Accessibility findings for East Lothian or their community, for Public Parks, Sports Pitches and Play Areas. However, other comments and feedback that were received through the public consultation, including from those who do not currently find parks and other open spaces accessible, included the following:

#### Comments about accessibility that were received through the public consultation can be categorised under the following headings:

- Need for better routes / paths / active travel links to reach parks
- Safety in parks impacts access by particular groups, particularly women and girls
- Parking and parking charges reduce access to open spaces for certain groups
- Accessibility for disabled people, particularly into play areas with woodchip surfacing and lacking a disabled toilet (this accords with findings from the PSA)
- Issues around dogs, litter, dog fouling, air pollution impacting access
- Lack of provision in rural areas and lack of safe routes or sufficient buses to reach facilities

"Accessibility is not just about distance. Play parks are inaccessible if wood chip base. Also inaccessible if not fenced and if not suitable parking or toilet for disabled people."

- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy

**Comments received about accessibility of parks and sports areas relating to specific towns and villages:**

- Dunbar: *"In theory, Winterfield is accessible to most of Dunbar. In practice, the railway line is a significant barrier to those living to the south of it and affects access to a number of things... The recent reintroduction of rugby to the park, and its use by Dunbar Grammar School, should help increase awareness of Winterfield, but the railway line remains as a barrier to access."*
- Dunbar and West Barns: *"There is too much provision at non Council Hallhill Sports centre. Improvements could be made at other places e.g. Winterfield, West Barns. Play equipment could be improved at sites in West Barns."*
- Haddington: *"Regarding Haddington, intuition with some support from the mapping exercise suggests the new development on the west side of the town is underpowered as far as public parks and sports facilities. More attention needs to be given to these open spaces strategies which I wholeheartedly support, to ensure this is not a repeating pattern as the town grows."*
- Musselburgh: *"Musselburgh appears to have very few sports pitches and outdoor sports facilities given the size of its population. There are very few free accessible sports facilities for secondary school children. I would particularly note that Musselburgh would benefit from a proper pump track, skateboard and climbing wall facility."*
- Garvald: *"Garvald community provides and maintain their park and should be supported financially if they need to make it more accessible for all."*

**Feedback received about Safety in Parks and its impact on access to parks and other public spaces:**

One consultation respondent on behalf of an organisation submitted the following information about their own survey on the use of and access to parks and other public spaces by women and girls. Their response in relation to safety in parks is quoted verbatim in the Case Study below:

**Case Study: Safety in parks and other public spaces: response received to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy 2026:**

**“We recently undertook a survey about women and girls’ use and access to public space and some of the feedback we received included:**

- *“I don’t use Polson Park as route isn’t safe. There’s a steep slope at the main gate leading to a busy road.*
- *“I don’t jog in Longniddry Park because street lighting is awful.*
- *“Won’t go near Rigley Terr at night there’s no lighting it’s a wasted space in the winter.*
- *“It’s very quiet, no lighting and off the main road (Polson Park).*
- *“I’m scared to go alone to parks or public places.*

“From our survey 30% of those who completed it told us they didn’t feel the park/open space was for them, while only 21% felt the park/open space had good lighting.

“Only 5% said they felt very safe in park/open space after dark compared to 65% during the day.

“Comments we received include:

- *“After dark there is no lighting.*
- *“Knives and needles have been found in the park.*
- *“The Muirpark park and walkways around especially down towards the allotments have no lighting which makes it impossible to see when the sun sets and you need to use flash light from phone just to see the pathway.*
- *“I naturally scan as I walk..if it’s dark and I know the area is poorly lit I speed up. Always have my phone with me..me and my daughter are able to track each other on our phone. I don’t go into wooded area during dark hours-my husband does.”*

Barriers to accessing greenspace, including non-physical barriers, are explored in more detail in section 9.2.2.

### 8.3.5 Disability access and inclusion

*“Accessible and inclusive environments and facilities must be made available to children with disabilities to enable them to enjoy their rights under Article 31.”<sup>71</sup>*

The East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment<sup>72</sup> (PSA) included a detailed assessment of the accessibility of formal play spaces across the county through an Accessibility and Inclusion Play Space Assessment, which was used to assess all formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian for opportunities and barriers to play for disabled children and families. Feedback received through consultations included information about, and lived experience of, disabled access to parks and greenspaces more generally.

East Lothian Council commissioned Play Scotland, the representative body for play in Scotland, to undertake the East Lothian PSA. Play Scotland developed a new Accessibility and Inclusion Play Space Assessment to

<sup>71</sup> [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 17](#)

<sup>72</sup> From East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment (2024)

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play\\_sufficiency\\_assessment\\_report\\_-\\_march\\_2024](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play_sufficiency_assessment_report_-_march_2024)

assess East Lothian's formal outdoor play spaces. East Lothian was the first authority in Scotland to undertake a full and transparent assessment of accessible and inclusive play provision in formal outdoor play spaces. This new form of assessment aims to inform the development of inclusive formal outdoor play spaces as required by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the NPF4. There is no expectation that all formal outdoor play spaces be fully inclusive. The assessment is designed to be used to inform meaningful community engagement and strategic decisions regarding investment in play space renewal. Details of the Accessibility and Inclusion Play Space Assessment are in the PSA report.

The aim of the Accessibility and Inclusion Play Space Assessment is to promote transparency through identifying the key barriers disabled children experience when accessing play and to inform strategic decisions about where to target future investment.

**The findings of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (2024) in relation to accessibility of formal outdoor play spaces were:**

- There are minimal play opportunities for disabled children, young people and families in formal outdoor play spaces across East Lothian. This includes children with Additional Support Needs (ASN).
- No play spaces are fully accessible or inclusive, and where accessible equipment is included within the play space this offers a limited play experience and is often located on the periphery of the main play space.
- There is minimal inclusive infrastructure to support access into and around play spaces.

The PSA also provided recommendations for improvements to Play Areas. These are set out in section 10.7 'Play Spaces and Equipped Play Areas'.

### **8.3.6 Priorities for enhancing Accessibility of open spaces, identified through the Accessibility assessment**

The data analysis has identified some aspects of **Accessibility** to open spaces that require to be enhanced and strengthened.

The Open Space Audit 2024/25 distance threshold mapping assessment (refer to Open Space Strategy Maps 3 to 7) identified locations around the county which do not meet accessibility distance standards and these areas should be a focus for future provision in line with the 2026 Accessibility Standards.

"Accessibility is poor unless you live next door, no bus routes, car parking is available, but there could be more, pavements aren't good enough for people on foot who aren't terribly mobile. Taxi is very expensive"

- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy

In addition, the analysis of the quality of access, the public consultation, and the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment identified important aspects of accessibility to public parks, sports areas and equipped playspaces to be addressed in the ongoing management of existing open spaces across the county, and for new open spaces in future housing development sites.

The following **Key Priority Areas for accessibility** have been identified through the Accessibility assessments combined with feedback from public consultations:

- **Improve paths and active travel links to reach parks, sports pitches and playspaces**
- **Improve active travel infrastructure, e.g. cycle racks**
- **Improve lighting, signage and promotion of parks, and entrances to parks**
- **Improve accessibility for disabled people and those with mobility issues**
- **Investigate opportunities in smaller rural communities to improve and deliver accessible parks and greenspaces**

## 8.4 FINDINGS: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PARKS & GREENSPACES

During the Open Space Audit 2024/25 and from input from ELC Amenity Services Depot Managers, it was noted whether there was involvement of local community groups in any of the audited parks and greenspaces.

Many of the parks and greenspaces across the county, as well as Countryside Sites, have 'Friends Of', 'In Bloom' groups or other community voluntary organisations associated with them, whose members make a huge difference to enhancing these greenspaces. The health, wellbeing and social benefits of being active and involved in local greenspaces are well documented, and these spaces and indeed local communities benefit hugely from community engagement and input into their local management and amenity value.

"We see our role as champions for our local park. It's an important asset but at risk from budget cuts and climate change. We feel open spaces play a vital role in community health and wellbeing."  
- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy

Respondents to the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy were asked whether they have any involvement with any East Lothian parks or greenspaces, for example as part of a 'Friends Of' group or 'In Bloom' group.

**A third of respondents (33%) said that they do have involvement with parks/greenspaces** (61% responded that they have no involvement; and 6% responded either 'Don't know or 'Prefer not to say'). Whilst this may not be a representative figure of the wider population, as these local groups were very proactive in circulating the public consultation details and getting involved, it does indicate the level of interest, engagement and importance placed on this aspect of our parks and greenspaces.

Examples of the range of East Lothian community groups and volunteer roles that respondents to the public consultation said they were involved in include:

- Friends of Winterfield
- Friends of Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve
- Work with ELC on accessibility in play parks as part of Dunbar ASN Community Collective
- Belhaven Community Garden
- East Lothian Conservation Volunteers (ELCV)
- Volunteer at Amisfield Walled Garden
- Litter Pickers
- Via community council, accessibility aid group and local growers club
- Port Seton beach clean group
- Friends of the River Tyne
- I am an Ageing Well walk leader and regularly walk through the parks with the Ageing Well groups
- Dunbar Community Woodland Group
- I've done some volunteering with local conservation groups
- EL Climate Change Hub Hedgerow Project

"The Haddington in Bloom group makes a real difference to the town and offers roles for the newly retired (among others) to make a contribution and feel part of the civic life of the town. The work they have done is very impressive and adds to visitors and residents alike pleasure in the town."  
- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy

Many partnership projects with local community groups are already underway in Council-owned parks and greenspaces across the county, and have significantly enhanced these greenspaces for people and wildlife (see section 5.2).

Information about how people can become involved in their local park or greenspace can be found on the Council's website<sup>73</sup>.



*Community Garden at Prestonpans Community Centre*

<sup>73</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210694/play\\_areas/12838/play\\_provision/3](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210694/play_areas/12838/play_provision/3)

## 9.0 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS FOR OPEN SPACES AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

### 9.1 Introduction

The Open Space Audit 2024/25 quantity, quality and accessibility assessments and the findings from the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026 have identified important aspects to be addressed in the ongoing management of existing open spaces, green networks and green infrastructure across the county, and for new open spaces in future housing development sites, to ensure they meet the **Outcomes** set out in this Open Space Strategy 2026.

This section of the Open Space Strategy sets out a summary of these findings, in particular the public's views, on what is needed to further improve and enhance East Lothian's open spaces, ensuring that the key overarching, interconnected themes of **Climate**, **Nature** and **Health and Wellbeing** are addressed.

**Key Priority Areas** for management actions and for future open spaces, set out below, have been identified through rigorous quality assessment combined with feedback from public consultations and these form the basis of proposals and an Action Plan. The aim is to ensure the protection, enhancement and creation of open space and greenspace that is fit for purpose to ensure it delivers these functions.

The 'golden thread' running through all of these strategic proposals is

#### ❖ Community Engagement & Involvement

##### **Target: Community Engagement and Involvement in Open Spaces:**

- Future management of open spaces should be undertaken in partnership with local people, community groups and user groups, taking into account their views and the overall priorities identified through the public consultation on the Open Space Strategy, to ensure open spaces are fit for purpose to address a range of needs.
- Enhancing greenspaces in collaboration with the community increases community use and benefit and also supports the pillars of East Lothian Community Wealth Building, including Land/Assets and Climate Change.

### 9.2 Findings from the Public Consultation with Communities: What would make our parks and greenspaces better?

Through the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026, people's views were gathered to understand barriers to use and enjoyment of their local parks and greenspaces in order to inform future requirements and future management of urban parks and greenspaces. Direct engagement with representatives of specific groups (in particular organisations representing people from ethnic minority backgrounds and women and girls) enhanced the feedback received and ensured their views were heard.

#### 9.2.1 Issues preventing people's use or enjoyment of parks and greenspaces

In the public consultation respondents were asked:

***"If you don't use these parks or open spaces, can you tell us why not?"***

Responses were received under the following categories and are quoted verbatim:

Category of response	Feedback and example quotes from respondents to consultation
<b>Issues/concerns about access paths / active travel routes to reach the park</b>	"The path to this in the evening is scary" "Poor quality paths, some "active travel" improvements have really opened up options for our family but these are concerning being watered down or stalling from following proposal updates"
<b>Lack of safe cycling infrastructure</b>	"Would use more of them if there were safe cycling routes and cycle parking."
<b>Anti-social behaviour</b>	"Knives and needles have been found in the park". Feedback from a representative of an organisation working particularly with women from ethnic minority groups highlighted verbal intimidation and racist comments causing the women to avoid parks and civic spaces.
<b>Poorly located</b>	"Some of them are farther away" "The park at Briery Bank by the play area is pretty but not well located."
<b>Dogs not under control</b>	"I find unleashed dogs intimidating"
<b>Golf course access restrictions / intimidation by golfers</b>	"Golfing restricts access. Shouted/scowled at and afraid of being hit by golf ball. Unable to tarry on golf course edges."
<b>Lack of amenities / facilities</b>	"The park in Longniddry only has equipment for fairly young kids. It's all quite old and basic." "I don't use them as destination because there is not really anything to do there."
<b>Lack of information about parks</b>	"When we first came to Haddington with a small child we had to ask where all the parks were. One day we drove round trying to find parks."
<b>Lack of lighting</b>	"After dark there is no lighting." One consultation respondent on behalf of an organisation highlighted women feeling unable to access some parks after dark due to lack of lighting and safety concerns (refer to Case Study on page 77).
<b>Lack of nature value</b>	"I do not use areas with children's playparks very often as many have very little biodiversity and are uninteresting."
<b>Lack of seating / social seating</b>	"I cannot access these areas easily with my grandchildren when I take them out for nature walks because there is nowhere for us to rest." "Lack of social seating."
<b>Lack of shelter</b>	"Neither park has any shelter spaces."
<b>Lack of toilets</b>	"There are no toilets anywhere."
<b>Minimal public events in parks</b>	"Minimal use such as spring fayre only."

Some of these issues identified are wider societal issues, which are beyond the scope of this strategy to address, including addressing anti-social behaviours in communities. However, local management interventions can potentially help to reduce the impact of these in parks and greenspaces, for example, appropriate siting of seating; lighting improvements; path/access improvements, leading to these spaces being busier and accessed by more people for 'passive oversight'.

Other comments and feedback, particularly around issues such as paths/access routes, lighting, seating and shelter, can form the basis of potential management solutions to improve parks and greenspaces more generally.

### 9.2.2 Public feedback on improvements needed to parks and greenspaces

The importance of engaging with local people, wider stakeholders, and particularly specific groups who may be impacted, including those who have protected characteristics, was highlighted in the public consultation.

### Equality of access to parks and greenspaces

Equality in access to parks was mentioned by several respondents, particularly the need to consider difference in preference, needs and safety. One respondent suggested the need for: *“Safe space designed for both sexes, noting that large open areas of grass tend to be used more by boys, whereas multiple smaller areas encourage greater use by girls”*.

The consultation identified barriers to accessing greenspace beyond physical access. Feedback identified that women from ethnic minority groups had experienced verbal intimidation and racist comments causing them to avoid parks and civic spaces. There is a need to identify and address non-physical barriers, such as racism, cultural exclusion and gendered safety concerns when improving parks and greenspaces.

*“Talking about and actively trying to create Destination Parks and Social Hubs (In Partnership with Community Groups!!!) where the whole community and every demographic is encouraged to engage and spend time in a place they feel safe in and connected to would be amazing.”*

*- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy*

The recent East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment showed that the needs of teenagers, particularly teenage girls, and the needs of families with disabled children are not being fully met and are priorities for improvements.

This Open Space Strategy engagement has also identified that the needs of older people and those with mobility issues need to be addressed.

In many open spaces there is a lack of good seating areas which can impact on their use by those with mobility issues or with very young children. Hang-out spaces with varied seating areas not just benches, including spaces aimed at older children and teenagers, and shelter areas were also mentioned by respondents to the public consultation.

Public toilet infrastructure was mentioned as an important consideration.

### Key points from public feedback:

Respondents to the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy told us that in order to improve their use of parks/open space there is a need for:

- **Better lighting and spaces that feel safe to be in when it is dark or getting dark**
- **Better paths and access routes to reach the park/open space**
- **More varied spaces that can be used by a wider variety of people from a range of ages, abilities and backgrounds**
- **Public activities and events taking place that encourage people of all ages into the space**
- **Dog access management / better enforcement / dog control / dog free areas**
- **Cycling / active travel infrastructure including cycle racks**
- **Better seating, including seating for groups and shelter, hang-out spaces**
- **Hedges and landscaping around park/open space**
- **Public toilet access**

Comments received were less about current maintenance and more about lack of infrastructure (particularly active travel routes/infrastructure, lighting, seating and provision to address the needs of specific groups including teenagers, older people, and people with disabilities / mobility issues), and public activities, events and behaviour such as irresponsible dog walking, addressing issues for specific parks and greenspaces on a case-by-case basis to ensure appropriate improvements that meet local needs.

*"I do not think one size fits all. Each village should have at least one good play park with lighting, seats and play park equipment. In other areas you might just want decent access (footpaths, lighting) and trees and nature areas."*

*- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy*

### 9.3 Public Priorities for Public Parks & Greenspace Improvements and Enhancements

In order to prioritise views and feedback from members of the public to inform potential improvements and enhancements to parks and greenspaces in East Lothian, respondents to the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026 were asked:

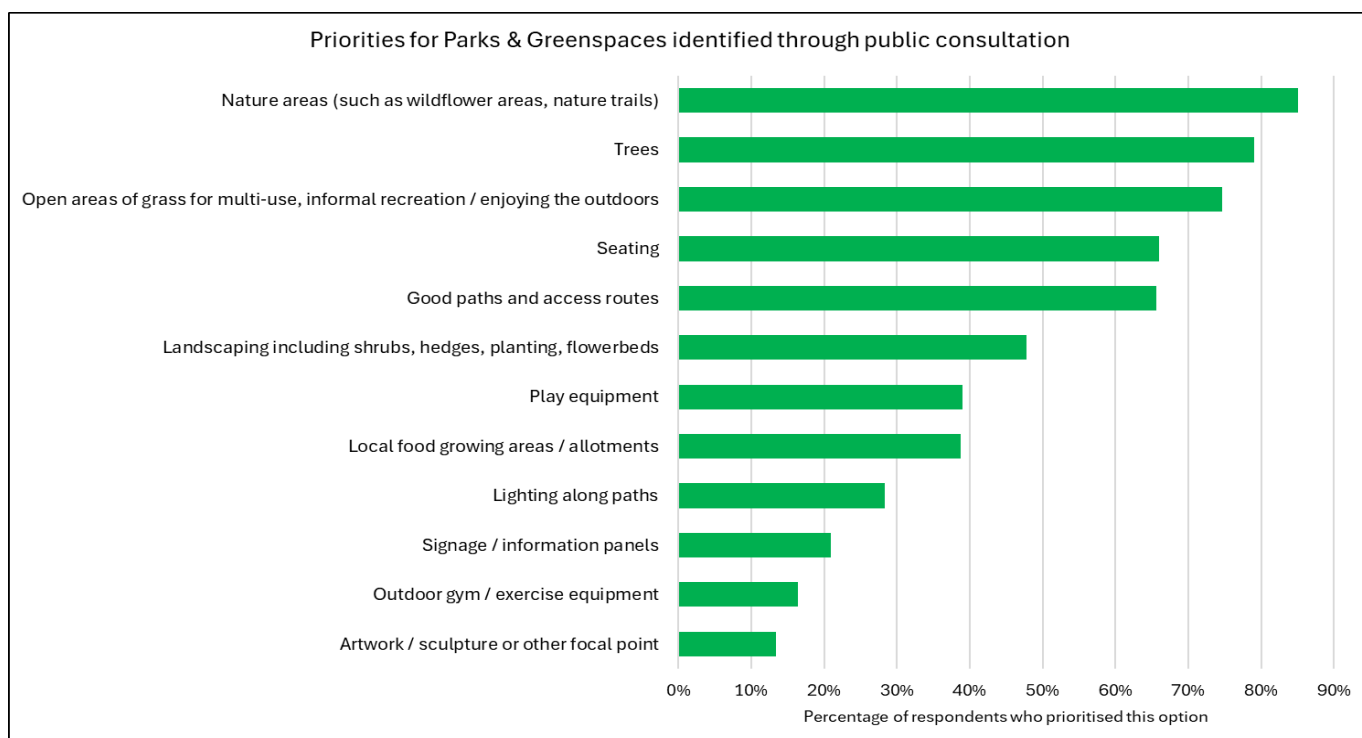
***"In your view, what is most important to you in making a public park or greenspace a good place to visit and use?"***

Respondents were asked to prioritise their preferred options of potential parks and greenspace management and enhancement options from a selected list. There were 67 responses to this consultation question. The options which were prioritised by respondents are shown in Table 13 and Figure 5.

**Table 13: Priorities for East Lothian Public Parks and Greenspace enhancements and improvements identified through public consultation, in priority order:**

Priority	Parks & Greenspace Enhancement Option	Percentage of respondents who prioritised this option
1	Nature areas (such as wildflower areas, nature trails)	85%
2	Trees	79%
3	Open areas of grass for multi-use, informal recreation / enjoying the outdoors	75%
4=	Seating	66%
4=	Good paths and access routes	66%
6	Landscaping including shrubs, hedges, planting, flowerbeds	48%
7=	Play equipment	39%
7=	Local food growing areas / allotments	39%
9	Lighting along paths	28%
10	Signage / information panels	21%
11	Outdoor gym / exercise equipment	16%
12	Artwork / sculpture or other focal point	13%

**Figure 5: Priorities for East Lothian Public Parks and Greenspace enhancements and improvements identified through public consultation:**



These priorities, identified by members of the public for parks and greenspaces in East Lothian, should form a high-level 'checklist' of priorities for the management of existing public open spaces and for the delivery of new open spaces in new housing developments.

The public have given a clear steer that they wish to see nature and landscaping enhancements, useable multi-use open spaces, and public realm infrastructure enhancements prioritised, but that there must be a balance of nature areas/trees with open areas of grass for multi-use, informal recreation and enjoying the outdoors.

Additional comments received through the public consultation strongly identified Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation as a key priority for East Lothian's parks and greenspaces, with several respondents stating they think this is the most important outcome that our parks and greenspaces should deliver.

Seating, paths and access routes, play equipment, local food growing areas/allotments, lighting and signage/information panels have all been identified as priorities for parks and greenspaces, with a proportion of respondents also highlighting outdoor gym/exercise equipment and artwork/sculpture or other focal point as also of importance to them.

Some differences were noted in consultation responses between genders. A slightly higher proportion of women selected 'Lighting along paths' as a priority (27%) compared to men (23%); additionally 50% of those who stated their gender as 'Prefer not to say' selected 'Lighting along paths' as a priority<sup>74</sup>.

Some groups face additional barriers beyond physical access to parks and greenspaces. Social and cultural barriers can prevent people including minority ethnic communities and other marginalised groups from using greenspaces, even when physically accessible. There is a need to consider access holistically, not only in terms of infrastructure.

<sup>74</sup> The demographics of respondents to the public consultation are set out in Appendix 5.

## 9.4 Principles for the Development, Maintenance and Use of Parks, Greenspaces and other Open Spaces in East Lothian

The development, maintenance and use of parks, greenspaces and other open spaces should be guided by the following good-practice principles:

### **Principles for the development, maintenance and use of parks, greenspaces and other open spaces in East Lothian should include:**

- Ensuring that local communities are involved in making decisions about improvements to their local parks and greenspaces;
- Enabling more people to visit, use and feel welcome in our parks and open spaces;
- Ensuring that our parks and greenspaces are accessible to all, taking particular note of requirements for specific groups including people with disabilities or other mobility issues, women and girls, older people, those with protected characteristics, and ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard;
- Encouraging and supporting the involvement of local people, groups and organisations in the management of their local parks and greenspaces;
- Ensuring that management of parks and greenspaces delivers the Outcomes of this strategy, based in particular around the key themes of Climate, Nature and Health and Wellbeing;
- Ensuring that development proposals will meet with environmental, biodiversity and sustainability requirements and obligations.

## 9.5 Key Priorities for Improvements and Enhancements to Existing Parks & Greenspaces and to Incorporate in New Parks & Greenspaces

Feedback obtained through the range of public consultations used as sources for this Open Space Strategy has strongly highlighted the importance and value that the public place on parks, greenspaces and open spaces in their communities, the important roles these spaces play in climate change resilience, protecting and enhancing nature, ensuring better places to live in, and a particular emphasis on the health and wellbeing aspects of open spaces to them as individuals and to society. The need to protect our existing parks and open spaces was a key aspect highlighted by respondents.

Furthermore, the public feedback on priorities for enhancement of parks and greenspaces, combined with the outcomes of the Open Space Audit and the Quantity, Quality and Accessibility assessments, can be used to set Key Priorities for new parks and open spaces, to ensure they meet the Outcomes and themes of Climate, Nature and Health and Wellbeing.

The following key management priorities aim to ensure the protection and enhancement of parks and open spaces, to ensure their quality and accessibility to all, and to ensure that future parks and open spaces meet the standards and deliver multiple benefits to our communities and society whilst enabling us to tackle the climate and nature emergencies, utilising nature-based solutions to create better places that are climate adapted, resilient and nature-rich:

**Key management priorities identified through the Open Space Strategy Audit and Public Consultation for the development, maintenance and use of parks, open spaces and other green infrastructure:**

**Key Priorities identified through the Open Space Strategy Audit and Public Consultation for the management, development, maintenance and use of parks, open spaces and other green infrastructure:**

- **Enhanced Nature Network biodiversity enhancement projects**, with a particular focus on increasing diversity of habitats, re-wilding, tree planting and hedgerow planting, improving nature connectivity (delivering ‘stepping stones’ for nature) to improve resilience of green networks, and to enhance climate adaptation & resilience, biodiversity, place-making and community benefits, as well as meet targets in the Tree & Woodland Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and emerging Local Biodiversity Action Plan;
- **Enhancing climate resilience, developing and delivering nature-based solutions including green and blue infrastructure enhancements**, to harness the power of nature and deliver ecosystem services with multiple, cost-effective benefits to people and society;
- **Ensuring we protect and deliver open areas of grass for multi-use, informal recreation and enjoying the outdoors**, close to where people live, which are important for health, wellbeing and physical activity;
- **Improve and enhance facilities to ensure everyone can benefit, including facilities for people with a range of protected characteristics, and a range of ages and abilities including disabilities**, by engaging with particular groups to ensure their needs can be met in specific parks, greenspaces and playspaces, which accords with findings in the Play Sufficiency Assessment, Local Development Plan Evidence Report consultation and Local Area Plans;
- **Improve seating – ensure sufficient seating of the right types in the right places**, including hang-out spaces and shelter, which came across strongly in feedback from community consultation, engaging with local communities and other key stakeholders to find the best solutions;
- **Improve paths and access**, particularly for people with a range of abilities including disabilities, ensuring connectivity, signage / promotion and lighting, as appropriate, which accords with the Core Paths Plan, Local Area Plans, Active Travel Improvement Plan and Local Transport Strategy, to ensure everyone can access and enjoy our parks and greenspaces;
- **Increased active travel infrastructure including cycle racks**, which was also identified through community consultation and through the Active Travel Improvement Plan and Local Transport Strategy;
- **Supporting community events in local parks** that encourage social gathering and social cohesion, encouraging people into these spaces who are otherwise less likely to visit, and assisting ‘passive oversight’, making parks feel safer;
- **Implementing suitable play area enhancements, outdoor gym/exercise equipment, allotments / community food growing spaces** as appropriate, with community input and engagement, to meet local needs and demand and as funding permits;
- **Addressing management of dogs in public open spaces** and encouraging responsible dog ownership;
- **Putting in place sustainable funding mechanisms to ensure deliverability of proposals & projects and ongoing maintenance.**

## 9.6 Key Management Issues, Actions and Solutions

Key management issues to improve and enhance parks, greenspaces and other open spaces, and to target action and prioritise funding, have been identified through the public consultation, Open Space Audit, and research to inform this strategy. This section of the strategy identifies these management issues and sets out actions, proposals and potential management solutions.

The key management issues that are addressed in this section of the strategy are:

- Safety: aiming for safer, more welcoming and more inclusive parks and greenspaces
- Access routes / paths / active travel improvements
- Provision of seating and other facilities in parks and greenspaces
- Expand nature network enhancements for biodiversity and climate resilience
- Dogs in parks and greenspaces
- Climate change adaptation and resilience, including flooding and coastal change impacts

### ❖ Community Engagement & Involvement

It is recommended that local management priorities for specific parks and greenspaces, which are site-specific, and which aim to address specific issues highlighted by involving local people and those with lived experience, are prepared through community collaboration to ensure they meet needs and deliver local benefits.



*Seating and Picnic Site at Shore Road, Belhaven, Dunbar*

### 9.6.1 Safety: Aiming for safer, more welcoming and more inclusive parks and greenspaces

Safety in parks was raised as issue during the public consultation and from feedback received during the development of this strategy, particularly for specific groups including women and girls, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds. In some cases, safety issues, or the perception of a lack of safety, prevented people (particularly women and girls) from accessing and enjoying parks and greenspaces.

Perceived and actual safety are critical for encouraging physical activity, mental wellbeing, and social cohesion in open spaces.

Safety concerns received through the public consultation and engagement during the strategy development were most often related to **lighting** in parks, and particularly a lack of street lighting at night. This extended to insufficient lighting on paths and access routes leading to parks.

A significant proportion of comments related to a lack of **safe active travel / cycling routes** to enable people to access parks and greenspaces. Responses that were received included:

- “Would use more of them if there were safe cycling routes and cycle parking”;
- “Links to active transport routes - important to ensure children can travel safely to open spaces”.

Other comments about safety concerns in parks related to **anti-social behaviour**, including experience of verbal abuse related to racism.

Intimidation by **uncontrolled/unleashed dogs** was also raised as a safety concern.

### Management options:

Safety concerns about parks and greenspaces often relate to very specific parks, and many are related to infrastructure, in particular (lack of) lighting and the quality and accessibility of paths and routes. Non-physical barriers to access, social issues including anti-social behaviour, and irresponsible dog ownership were also highlighted through consultation.

### Best practice

Good practice guidance to improve safety in parks is a valuable reference point for addressing safety issues. One good example is ‘**Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls**’<sup>75</sup> guidance, prepared by Keep Britain Tidy, Make Space for Girls, the University of Leeds and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, published in 2023 by ‘Green Flag Award’ and based on research by the University of Leeds in 2022. The Safer Parks guidance states:

*“Parks are essential for all of us, but are less used by women and girls due primarily to concerns about safety, with health and wellbeing impacts.....Better design and management can’t solve all the problems which keep women and girls out of parks, but with the right planning, funding and support, the benefits of parks and green spaces can be enjoyed more equally by everyone”.*

The ‘Safer Parks: Improving access for women and girls’ guidance<sup>76</sup> sets out ten core principles under three themes:

- ‘Eyes on the Park’: with the core principles of Busyness and Staffing;
- ‘Awareness’: with the core principles of Visibility; Escape; Lighting; Wayfinding;
- ‘Inclusion’: with the core principles of Belonging; Image; Access; Engagement.

Another good source of advice for inclusive improvements to parks and greenspaces is ‘**Make Space for Girls**’<sup>76</sup>, which campaigns for facilities and public spaces for teenage girls, and has produced good-practice guidance on what might be found in spaces designed with girls in mind.

The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces<sup>77</sup>, which supports Friends of Parks groups across the UK, has published research and good practice guidance to encourage and support more people from ethnic minority backgrounds to participate in their local parks and greenspaces: ‘**Ethnic Minority Inclusion and**

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.greenflagaward.org/resources/safer-parks-for-women-and-girls/safer-parks-for-women-and-girls/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.makespaceforgirls.co.uk/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://natfedparks.org.uk/>

**Participation in Urban Greenspace: Good Practices of UK Friends Groups**<sup>78</sup>. Their guidance is based around the key recommendations of:

- 'Representation' of ethnic minorities (in activities and in local Friends of Parks groups, for example),
- 'Gaining Access' and insight into the needs of ethnic minority groups through trusted community members and representatives, including removing language barriers,
- 'Diverse Activities' provided in greenspaces, such as gardening groups, wellbeing walks, mother and toddler groups,
- 'Youth', encouraging young people from ethnic minority backgrounds into greenspaces, whether through organised activities, or partnerships with schools or universities, and
- 'Facilitation', by identifying and removing barriers to participation and inclusion.

### Management Proposal

The Open Space Strategy is an overarching, high-level strategic framework for parks, greenspaces and open spaces in East Lothian. Safety in parks, especially for particular groups, is recognised as a determinant of health and a key aspect to address, to improve access to parks and greenspaces for all. However, it would not be possible to identify each individual safety improvement for specific parks through this strategy.

**The recommendation is therefore that Park Management Plans, to address issues such as safety, for specific key parks are co-produced with input from different user groups**, including those with protected characteristics, community representatives and other key stakeholders including housing associations and social rented tenants. These should take into consideration the range of park management priorities including the need to balance access and lighting with areas for nature and wildlife (e.g. bats and other nocturnal species). This should include an audit on priority areas for lighting improvement and an options appraisal.

Safety is a key aspect that has been highlighted by communities through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) development work. It will be essential to link with the Community Safety Group and other key groups and stakeholders to ensure connectivity between these emerging plans and strategies.

**ACTION:** **Park Management Plans, to address issues such as safety, for specific key parks** should be co-produced with input from different user groups, including those with protected characteristics, community representatives and other key stakeholders including the Community Safety Group, and taking into consideration the range of park management priorities including the need to balance access and lighting with areas for nature and wildlife.

## 9.6.2 Access Routes / Paths / Active Travel Improvements

The need for improvements to paths and active travel routes within and connecting to parks and greenspaces was highlighted across the findings of the Open Space Audit, accessibility assessments and public consultation feedback. Particular aspects for improvement that were identified were:

- The need to improve access routes to reach parks, sports pitches and playspaces safely
- Improving the existing paths and active travel routes within parks and greenspaces, particularly to enable access for people of all abilities including disabled people and those with mobility issues
- Improving active travel infrastructure including cycle racks
- Improving signage and promotion of parks, and entrances to parks

<sup>78</sup> <https://natfedparks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/NFPGS-Ethnic-Diversity-and-Friends-Groups-Research-Report-9.2022.pdf>

## Management Proposals

Where funding permits, East Lothian Council is making path and active travel improvements across the county, in line with the 'Active Travel Improvement Plan'<sup>79</sup>. Section 75 developer contributions contribute towards active travel enhancements, including delivery of the 'East Lothian Active Freeway'<sup>80</sup> (segregated active travel corridor route from Dunbar to Musselburgh).

Funding opportunities are also enabling delivery of path improvements to priority routes through parks and greenspaces. Projects are currently underway that will benefit greenspaces in Tranent and Prestonpans. The Case Study below of proposed improvements to Cemetery Park in Prestonpans is an example of a collaborative project that will result in multiple enhancements to the park, including path improvements, nature / wildflower areas and seating.

Additional cycling infrastructure including cycle racks and signage has also been identified as an area for improvement. For Council-owned sites, ongoing engagement is taking place with the Council's Active Travel team to identify specific gaps in provision and secure funding to install more cycle racks and other active travel infrastructure, in consultation with communities. Cycle racks have recently been installed adjacent to some play areas around the county, including the Pleasance play area in Aberlady and Fisherrow Park in Musselburgh, as well as at various sports areas and recreation grounds. The roll-out of cycle racks, in appropriate locations and informed by community views, will continue subject to funding.

Where there are opportunities for parks to be co-located with a 'Journey Hub'<sup>81</sup> (locations which integrate active and sustainable transport modes), and there is also access to toilets and indoor space, this will be beneficial to all.

Parks and amenity greenspaces are often places on routes as part of onward journeys, as components of active travel and greenspace connectivity in our urban areas. Cognisance needs to be taken of this, ensuring adequate lighting and surfacing of through-routes in parks and greenspaces as appropriate.

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<sup>79</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/28974/its\\_active\\_travel\\_improvement\\_plan](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/28974/its_active_travel_improvement_plan)

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210566/roads\\_and\\_transport/12809/cross\\_east\\_lothian\\_active\\_freeway](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210566/roads_and_transport/12809/cross_east_lothian_active_freeway)

<sup>81</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210566/roads\\_and\\_transport/12480/east\\_lothian\\_on\\_the\\_move/6](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210566/roads_and_transport/12480/east_lothian_on_the_move/6)

### Case Study: Cemetery Park, Prestonpans: enhancement proposals

The Council is underway with a range of active and sustainable travel projects around the county, which incorporate green network and biodiversity enhancements, including a project to improve paths and accessibility at [Cemetery Park in Prestonpans](#). This project is a collaboration between ELC Active Travel, Amenity Services, Sports Development, Landscape and Connected Communities teams, to improve path connections whilst also undertaking biodiversity enhancement and landscape improvements. Designs are complete and works are scheduled to take place over the next few years. The proposals include introducing wildflower meadow, allowing some areas of grass to grow long, and planting a variety of trees, including fruit trees, to provide both varied amenity spaces and support wildlife. Rain gardens will help manage surface water while enhancing planting variety and biodiversity.



#### KEY

1. Widen existing footpaths to 2ms wide
2. New 2m wide footpaths
3. New 2.5m wide footpath
4. New bollards
5. Existing footpaths
6. Grass allowed to grow long & new tree planting
7. New habitat areas with wildflower meadow with mown paths through, and tree planting including fruit trees
8. Seating areas & informal play: benches and picnic tables, boulders and logs
9. Information boards

Community views will be sought to help identify path/active travel improvement projects and as funding is identified for delivery.

**ACTION:** Continue to implement active travel routes, increase the path network and undertake path improvements where funding permits, in consultation with communities and other stakeholders, to improve accessibility of parks, greenspaces and other open space areas as appropriate.

### 9.6.3 Provision of Seating and Other Facilities in Parks and Greenspaces

**Seating, particularly sufficient seating in the right places**, was strongly identified through the Open Space Audit and in feedback from community consultation and engagement. Many open space sites (particularly many amenity greenspaces in housing areas) did not have any seating/benches; and where seating was present the majority were within children's play areas rather than in the wider park or greenspace. This accords with the findings in the public consultation.

A lack of good seating areas in parks, greenspaces and other open spaces can impact on their use by various groups including those with mobility issues or with very young children. Hang-out spaces with varied seating areas not just benches, including spaces aimed at older children and teenagers, and shelter areas were also identified by respondents to the public consultation.

**Facilities for a range of abilities including disabilities** was also identified in the Open Space Audit as a priority for improvement. The audit identified a lack of provision in amenities for people with a range of abilities including disabilities. Further investigation of this is necessary to identify improvements for people with disabilities in specific greenspaces, particularly through local community consultation and engagement with user groups. This accords with the findings in our Play Sufficiency Assessment and Local Development Plan Evidence Report consultations.



*Dr Black's Garden, Port Seton*

### Management Proposals

Working with local communities, key focus groups with particular needs, and other key stakeholders, suitable locations for additional seating can be identified, to help fill the gaps in seating provision. This will help facilitate accessibility and enjoyment of parks and greenspaces by people with a greater range of ages and abilities, providing 'rest points' and social gathering spaces. 'Make Space for Girls'<sup>82</sup> has identified 'social seating' and hang-out spaces such as 'circular swings' and 'hammock-style' seating as being particularly favourable to meet the needs of teenage girls. More 'park benches' along key paths and access routes will enable people to stay in and enjoy these spaces for longer. There should be an aim for seating, or at least perches, in all parks and playspaces.

**ACTION: Work with local communities, key focus groups with particular needs and other key stakeholders to identify suitable locations for additional seating and other specific improvements that will enable people with a range of abilities, including those with disabilities and mobility issues, to use and enjoy our parks and greenspaces.**

**Specific audits with key user groups and stakeholders should be undertaken for specific parks and greenspaces to identify facilities to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, and should form part of Park Management Plans, as a basis to seek and obtain funding for improvements.**

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.makespaceforgirls.co.uk/what-does-better-look-like>

### 9.6.4 Expand Nature Network Enhancements for Biodiversity and Climate Resilience

The **Nature Network enhancements** that are underway across East Lothian's parks and greenspaces, creating new areas of natural habitats and delivering nature and climate resilience benefits, were identified through public consultation in 2023<sup>83</sup>. The East Lothian '**Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces**' project identified priority nature enhancements for numerous Council-owned parks and larger greenspaces across each Cluster Area of East Lothian.

However, the Open Space Audit 2024/25 and the public consultation identified that biodiversity enhancements are not evenly spread across open spaces, with some sites identified as having low levels of biodiversity enhancements. These sites should be a priority for focusing future Nature Network enhancements, in conjunction with community input, to ensure equitable access to biodiversity and the nature-based benefits that are delivered, as well as creating 'stepping stones' connectivity for nature.

This should also include street trees, hedgerows, raingardens and other green and blue infrastructure in suitable locations in our urban areas, including further 'Greening the Grey' projects, to increase nature connectivity and provide climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience benefits in the heart of our urban areas.



*Nature Networks, Lodge Grounds, North Berwick*

#### Management Proposals

Identify priority open space sites for expanding appropriate nature network enhancements, taking advice from the Biodiversity Officer, and with community input and feedback, to increase coverage of Nature Network enhancements and create connected 'stepping stones' for nature, as funding becomes available. Incorporate this into Park Management Plans.

Nature networks in parks and greenspaces can include the following examples:

- Nature rich gardens,
- Wildflower and grassland meadow patches,
- Hedgerows,
- 'Wee forests' and tree planting,
- Wetlands, ponds, bog gardens,
- Green roofs,
- Green walls,
- Raingardens.

**ACTION:** Continue to expand Nature Networks in suitable locations in parks and greenspaces across East Lothian, with advice from the Biodiversity Officer and community input and feedback, to increase coverage of Nature Network enhancements and create connected 'stepping stones' for nature, as funding becomes available. Incorporate this into Park Management Plans.

<sup>83</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside\\_and\\_wildlife/12104/biodiversity\\_and\\_nature\\_networks/2](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside_and_wildlife/12104/biodiversity_and_nature_networks/2)

### 9.6.5 Dogs in Parks and Greenspaces

Dogs in parks, greenspaces and natural spaces was one of the most mentioned aspects of parks through the public consultation and a very emotive issue for many respondents.

A majority of responses about dogs were negative, with feedback around irresponsible dog ownership, including dogs not under control, uncontrolled dogs causing fear or intimidation in adults and children, and dogs disturbing (and in some cases attacking) nature and wildlife. Several respondents mentioned that the number of dogs has increased, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic when many more people became dog owners, and that dog owners are not always aware of their responsibilities.

*“Too many poorly controlled dogs in all Dunbar's large green spaces”  
- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy*

*“I used the areas to walk my dog and get from place to place in as open an area as possible. If it has trees and flowers that helps mentally.”*

*- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy*

Other responses mentioned the benefits of dog walking to them, as it encourages them to get out and about in parks and greenspaces and be active. One respondent noted that: *“Dogs are one of the main reasons older people use open space...”*

There were an estimated 10.6 million pet dogs in the UK in 2024, and an estimated 28% of UK adults owned a dog, with an increase in UK dog ownership in particular during the Covid-19

pandemic period<sup>84</sup>. Anecdotally in East Lothian there has been an increase in dogs, including on countryside and coastal sites.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003<sup>85</sup> gives people a right of responsible access to most land and inland water in Scotland, and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code sets out what ‘responsible behaviour’ means for dog owners<sup>86</sup>. Whilst the majority of dog owners are responsible, there is a minority of irresponsible dog owners, and the feedback from the public consultation revealed that intimidation from dogs not under proper control is preventing some people from accessing our parks and greenspaces. This aligns with feedback on play areas received during our East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment process.

#### Management options for consideration:

It is proposed to set up a Working Group, involving local community representatives and other key stakeholders, to investigate the issue of irresponsible dog ownership impacting on parks and greenspaces and potential management solutions. The following could inform considerations by a Working Group:

- Signage is used in many parks, greenspaces and civic spaces across East Lothian.
- East Lothian Council, in exercise of the powers conferred on them by Section 112 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, has introduced Land Management Rules for Countryside Sites, Parks, Nature Reserves and Greenspaces<sup>87</sup>, which include the following:

*“No persons with control of a dog or dogs shall allow said dog to enter any area in any Countryside Site, Park, Nature Reserve or Greenspace that has been designated as a dog free area, whether that designation is temporary, seasonal or permanent.”*

<sup>84</sup> Reference: <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/what-we-do/pdsa-animal-wellbeing-report/paw-report-2024/pet-populations>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/contents>

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/practical-guide-all/dog-walkers>

<sup>87</sup>

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside\\_and\\_wildlife/12684/land\\_management\\_rules\\_east\\_lothian\\_council\\_rules\\_for\\_countryside\\_sites\\_parks\\_nature\\_reserves\\_and\\_greenpace](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside_and_wildlife/12684/land_management_rules_east_lothian_council_rules_for_countryside_sites_parks_nature_reserves_and_greenpace)

- City of Edinburgh Council recently carried out a consultation on draft management rules for parks, beaches and greenspace, which included proposals for ‘dog free areas’<sup>88</sup>.

**ACTION:** Set up a Working Group, involving local community representatives and other key stakeholders, to investigate the issue of irresponsible dog ownership impacting on parks and greenspaces and potential management solutions.

### 9.6.6 Climate change adaptation and resilience, including flooding and coastal change impacts

Climate change is already impacting on us, and it is imperative that we adapt our towns and urban areas to increase resilience to its impacts. It is recognised that the effects of climate change will not be felt equally across society, with those most vulnerable anticipated to be more greatly impacted; this is the underlying principle of ‘Climate Justice’, to ensure that we deliver climate resilience measures equitably across our communities.

We are already seeing sea level rise, increased storm events and coastal storm surges on our coastline impacting coastal open space sites through coastal erosion, and flooding of parks and play areas caused by heavy rainfall events.

#### Management Proposals

Management solutions, particularly focused on nature-based solutions wherever possible, are being considered, where funding is available. Taking advice from and working with the Council’s Flood Protection team, longer term solutions will have to be found to increase resilience of Council owned parks and greenspaces, including re-locating play areas outwith flood risk zones where feasible, and establishing adaptation measures such as wetland areas in parks and greenspaces as nature-based solutions to flood risk impacts.

Open space sites across East Lothian’s towns and villages that were identified as having lower quality scores for attributes to tackle climate change, and that had less tree planting and other nature-based solutions to climate impacts, should be prioritised for nature-based climate resilience measures and enhancements. As set out in the Council’s Climate Change Strategy 2025–2030, it is essential to work with communities to improve their resilience to climate change, and deliver services accounting for extreme weather and climatic shifts.

**ACTION:** Our parks and greenspaces are important for the climate resilience of our urban areas. Work with Flood Protection officers and other key stakeholders to identify nature-based solutions where possible, supported by our communities, where funding will make this possible.

Adaptation of our parks and greenspaces to reduce impacts of flooding and coastal erosion, is necessary to protect our open spaces for the future.

<sup>88</sup> <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/management-rules-parks/>

## 9.7 Funding

This is a challenging time for public finances. The cost-of-living crisis, inflation and escalating costs of delivering infrastructure enhancements are impacting the Council and our communities. At the same time, funding opportunities are highly competitive and often over-subscribed; and funding grants are generally for capital project delivery rather than revenue costs, reducing the capacity and resources for long term projects and ongoing maintenance.

However it is recognised that the cost of inaction will be far greater if we do not take urgent action to tackle the climate and nature emergencies, with the multi-functional benefits that this will bring.

### Management Opportunities and Proposals

#### 9.7.1 Proposal: Explore alternative funding mechanisms for Council parks and open space

Continue to explore and implement alternative and blended funding mechanisms to deliver actions in the Council's parks, greenspaces and other open spaces that will benefit climate, nature and health and wellbeing, including collaborative working with key partners such as NHS Lothian Partnership and Place team, NatureScot and Volunteer Centre East Lothian (VCEL) to develop projects with transformative funding mechanisms.

Explore alternative and blended funding mechanisms, combining public, private, philanthropic and community sources, to support parks and greenspace projects, developed in collaboration with our communities, that deliver multi-functional benefits, and aim to attract future investment to ensure sustainable delivery of nature-based projects. This could include:

- Positioning 'shovel-ready' projects to access external investment;
- Working with local businesses and anchor institutions to secure corporate sponsorship, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) / Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions and natural capital investment;
- Exploring further the opportunities for Community Benefits arising through the Council's procurement process, to deliver community-identified actions locally in the areas where they are most needed;
- Ensuring developer contributions through Section 75 agreements are fully aligned with open space standards and long-term management; and
- Embedding Community Wealth Building principles so that local enterprises, social enterprises and community organisations can benefit directly from contracts, skills pathways and stewardship roles.

Future focus should be on projects which:

- Create collaborative, place-wide plans for green infrastructure and nature enhancement.
- Empower our communities through embedding meaningful engagement in greenspace planning and design.
- Create a portfolio of community-designed, 'shovel-ready' project proposals.
- Aim to attract future investment to ensure sustainable delivery of nature-based projects.
- Test ways of working which can be scaled up across East Lothian.
- Enable equitable access to parks and greenspace, improve health outcomes, increase biodiversity and build climate resilience.

### **9.7.2 Proposal: Work with partners to identify and deliver actions in privately owned open spaces**

Work with partners to identify and deliver actions in privately owned open spaces, and explore opportunities for funding including Community Benefits and Community Wealth Building in privately owned spaces.

Explore how best to work with key stakeholders, including developers, Housing Associations, Factors and residents, and develop mechanisms to improve the quality standards of privately owned open spaces where needed/appropriate, focusing on priority sites.

### **9.7.3 Proposal: Strengthen Developer Contributions for Open Space**

The Council will ensure that all new developments deliver high-quality, accessible open space and green networks, proportional to the scale of the development, in line with Council standards (see section 11).

Off-site enhancement, through the use of developer contributions (Section 75 agreements), may be considered on a case-by-case basis. This may include contributions towards allotments and cemetery sites as appropriate. A 'Developer Contribution Protocol', incorporated in the next Local Development Plan and associated documentation, will be prepared, providing guidance on how developer contributions can be secured to enhance existing parks in the vicinity, the types of new development this applies to and the number of houses / units that will trigger the requirement. The guidance will also provide details of how developer contributions would be spent to provide clarity and certainty for developers and communities.

Contributions will also include maintenance, where the costs are additional to existing Council maintenance due to the enhancements. Moving beyond capital provision to sustainable management models, including opportunities for community trusts, social enterprises and local contractors, in line with Community Wealth Building principles, will be considered.

This approach will safeguard quality, usability and equity of provision across East Lothian's growth areas, ensuring that open space investment contributes to place-making, health, climate resilience, and the wider economic attractiveness of the county.

### **9.7.4 Proposal: Embedding Community Wealth Building in Open Space Delivery**

Open space investment and management will be used as a practical driver of Community Wealth Building<sup>89</sup> across East Lothian. This will include:

- Designing maintenance, landscaping and tree-planting contracts in ways that maximise opportunities for local SMEs, social enterprises and third sector organisations.
- Supporting local employment and skills development by linking open space projects to training, apprenticeships and volunteering pathways in land management, biodiversity, horticulture, outdoor learning and visitor services.
- Exploring new stewardship models (e.g. community trusts, co-operatives or social enterprises) to manage parks and greenspaces, keeping value circulating locally.
- Promoting local food growing and allotments as part of short supply chains, supporting healthy eating and sustainable local economies.

This approach will ensure that every pound invested in parks and greenspaces delivers wider economic, social and environmental value for East Lothian's communities.

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<sup>89</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210699/community\\_wealth\\_building/12853/community\\_wealth\\_building](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210699/community_wealth_building/12853/community_wealth_building)

### 9.7.5 **Proposal:** Open Spaces as Drivers of Tourism and Place Economy

East Lothian's parks, coastlines, and open spaces are vital to the visitor economy, supporting sport, cultural events, heritage activity and outdoor recreation. Investment in open spaces will be planned to maximise their contribution to the local economy, by:

- Enhancing open spaces that serve as visitor destinations (e.g. John Muir Way, beaches, civic squares, harbours, parks, 'destination' play areas and other greenspaces).
- Designing spaces that are adaptable for cultural events, festivals and markets, boosting local spend and civic pride.
- Improving signage, accessibility and links between open spaces and town centres to strengthen place identity and visitor flow.



*The John Muir Way at Dunbar*

## 10.0 APPLICATION OF QUANTITY, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR EACH TYPE OF OPEN SPACE

### 10.1 Introduction

The open space standards set out in section 7 have been applied to the East Lothian open spaces and provision of open spaces and sports pitches analysed as follows:

- Analysis by type – refer to section 7 for methodology
- Analysis by cluster – refer to Appendix 3 for details
- Sports Pitch Summary Table – refer to section 10.6 for details

Feedback from the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026 has also been incorporated into the findings for each type of open space, where applicable.

The themes of the Open Space Strategy 2026 are highlighted throughout, together with the ‘golden thread’ of Community Engagement and Involvement, with the following symbol:

- ❖ **Climate**
- ❖ **Nature**
- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing**
- ❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement**

### 10.2 Green Networks

The Green Network integrates biodiversity, landscaping, active travel, flood mitigation, open space and climate change adaptation and other relevant interests. It is made up of green spaces (parks, public spaces, trees and woodlands, designated sites, etc.) and blue spaces (rivers, streams wetlands and SuDS, etc.). Although the Green Network will not compensate for the loss of flood plains, it can provide some mitigation for flooding and some adaptation for climate change. The Green Network maintains and improves quality of place, including in relation to the setting and identity of settlements, provides essential ecosystem services, addresses environmental inequalities, promotes active travel and enhances health and wellbeing. The development of the Green Network over time will help improve the quality of life in the area and connections for people and biodiversity.

The Green Network in East Lothian is strategic and long term aiming to expand from the strong existing base of green assets. It extends and connects across the whole of East Lothian within and between settlements, into the countryside and along the coast. Existing green network assets include protected natural heritage sites, active travel routes, core paths, beaches, parks and woodlands. Pockets of urban green space, school grounds and private gardens can also be valuable. Even buildings can be part of green infrastructure, for example ivy on the side of a building can be a roost for bats, while the use of natural materials can give bees or lichens a home. It links with Green Networks in the neighbouring areas of Edinburgh, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders.

“We are lucky enough to have a fantastic coastline with multiple greenspaces...”

*- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy*

The East Lothian Green Network Strategy<sup>90</sup> is published as Supplementary Planning Guidance (2019), and identifies, describes and illustrates where and how to deliver new or improved green infrastructure across East Lothian, including as part of new development. The Council has regard to its Green Network Strategy when assessing planning applications.

*“The Green Network in East Lothian aims to build a connected environment for people and nature, helping East Lothian become more prosperous and sustainable and reducing the impact of inequalities between people in East Lothian”*

*- From East Lothian Council Green Network Strategy Supplementary Planning Guidance (2019)*

### **Definitions – Green Network within the Open Space Strategy**

**“Green Networks”** means connected areas of green infrastructure and open space.

**Green Corridors** include river corridors, core path corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces together. The area of Green Corridors included in the Open Space Audit 2024/25 was 13.56 hectares (an increase from 10.63 hectares in the 2018 Open Space Audit).



*Green Network: View from River Tyne Path, Haddington*

<sup>90</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30113/green\\_network\\_strategy\\_spg](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30113/green_network_strategy_spg)

**Natural / Semi-Natural Greenspaces** include areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with greenspaces, residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas, within and on the edge of settlements. The area of Natural / Semi-Natural Greenspace included in the Open Space Audit was 427.94 hectares (an increase from 392.83 hectares in the 2018 Open Space Audit).

#### East Lothian Standard

Green Networks		
Quantity	Quality	Accessibility
-	-	Semi-natural greenspaces, green corridors, other green space, countryside = 300m

#### Accessibility

The Strategic Green Networks Map (Map 7) illustrates a 300m zone of access to the natural / semi-natural greenspaces, green corridors, other green spaces and the countryside according to the Central Scotland Green Network goal: *“To ensure that every home in central Scotland is within 300m of an attractive, safe and well-maintained green space or accessible countryside.”*

**All areas of East Lothian meet the standard for accessibility to Green Networks across East Lothian.**

The value of the wider Green Network in East Lothian was emphasised by respondents to the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026. Green Corridors for wildlife and for enjoying walks and cycling, such as the greenspace and core path along the River Tyne in Haddington, were mentioned by several respondents.

The right of responsible access into the wider countryside, and the value of our coastline, were highlighted by respondents who enjoy and value these natural assets of East Lothian.

*“The fields and the beaches and coastal rock areas are super important as spaces to use too by our community. Alongside everything identified.”*

*- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy*

#### Future Development Recommendations for Green Networks

Continue to ensure that the Green Network is protected and enhanced, through management, enforcement of legislation for protected species and habitats, and through the planning process.

The Council will ensure that all new developments contribute to the provision of Green Networks, as part of on-site provision and through the use of Section 75 agreements, where appropriate and in line with planning policy. For sites allocated for development in the Local Development Plan 2018, the Council adopted Development Briefs that identified Green Network measures that must be delivered or provided for as part site development. Where new development is permitted that would adversely affect any existing element of the Green Network, alternative provision must be made and will be secured, if necessary, through S75 agreement. There may also be opportunities to introduce temporary greening of brownfield sites to contribute to the green network prior to development.

- ❖ **Climate:** Connected Green Networks and Blue Networks are fundamental in tackling the climate emergency, absorbing greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon, providing flood management and shade during hot summers, and active travel corridors. Focus on nature-based solutions and green infrastructure for climate resilience wherever possible, supported by policy in the next Local Development Plan and linking these networks with our open spaces.
- ❖ **Nature:** Green Networks are also fundamental to tackling the nature emergency as connected nature networks of natural habitat, enabling species movement, protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Continue to identify and enhance green spaces in built-up areas so there are fewer barriers between ourselves and the natural environment, expanding and connecting our nature networks and improving resilience to climate change.
- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing:** These outdoor spaces are valued by our communities and visitors. They provide spaces to enjoy nature, paths and active travel routes and informal play spaces. Access to nature and green spaces has multiple benefits to physical and mental health, wellbeing and physical activity.
- ❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement:** Community collaboration, including through the Local Area Plan process, is important to ensure delivery of appropriate local solutions and enhancements to the Green Network that will impact upon and benefit local people.



*Green Network: River Tyne Path, Haddington*

### 10.3 Public Parks & Gardens

#### Definition

Areas of land designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden, which may be enclosed. East Lothian's public parks and gardens are highly valued by residents and visitors alike, and include some of our most beautiful and historic 'destination parks' including Lewisvale Park in Musselburgh, The Lodge Grounds in North Berwick, Polson Park in Tranent and Lauderdale Park in Dunbar. The total land area included in the Open Space Audit covered 1,816.33 hectares of open space including 116.92 hectares of Country Parks (John Muir Country Park near Dunbar), 79.53 hectares of Town Parks and 86.10 hectares of Local Parks.

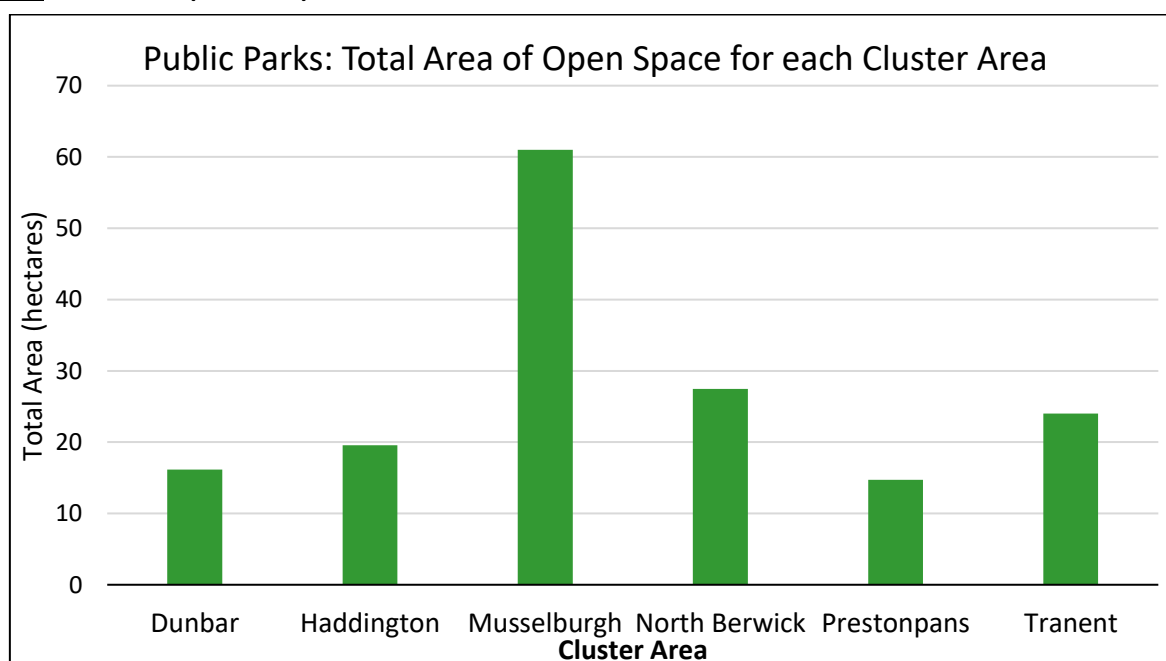
#### East Lothian Standard

Public Parks and Gardens		
Quantity	Quality	Accessibility
Open Space and Play Provision = minimum 60m <sup>2</sup> per household, plus connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks are required to be provided on-site.	Quality Bands A or B (minimum score of 65% with an aspiration of 70%)	Regional Park = 25km Country Park* = 10km Town Park = 1.2km Local Park = 400m *Including non-designated country parks

#### Quantity

The total area (hectares) of Public Parks in each Cluster Area of East Lothian is shown in Figure 6. Musselburgh, being the largest town, has the largest quantity of Public Parks & Gardens. John Muir Country Park, as a Regional Park, was excluded from the graph below; however including the area of John Muir Country Park (116.9 hectares) takes the total quantity for Dunbar Cluster to 133.1 hectares.

**Figure 6: Total area (hectares) of Public Parks and Gardens in each Cluster Area of East Lothian**





*Neilson Park, Haddington*

The application of the East Lothian quantity standard for Public Parks and Gardens concludes that all Cluster Areas of East Lothian meet the quantity standard. **Details are provided in Appendix 3.**

### ***Quality***

In terms of quality of Public Parks and Gardens all Cluster Areas reasonably meet the East Lothian Standard, with the majority of parks (89%) scoring over 65% (see Table 14 and Appendix 3). A large proportion (82%) also meet the new aspirational 70% quality score for Public Parks and Gardens. The settlements of Musselburgh, Old Craighall, Wallyford, Whitecraig, Prestonpans, Elphinstone and Tranent each have one park that does not meet the 65% quality standard. Four of these sites are located within the Musselburgh Cluster and two within Tranent Cluster (see Table 14 and Appendix 3); these parks will be a priority for targeting improvements and enhancements, as funding opportunities allow (see section 12, Action Plan). However, as these parks are each located in different settlements it has been concluded that each Cluster reasonably meets the quality standard.

**Table 14: Quality of Public Parks and Gardens**

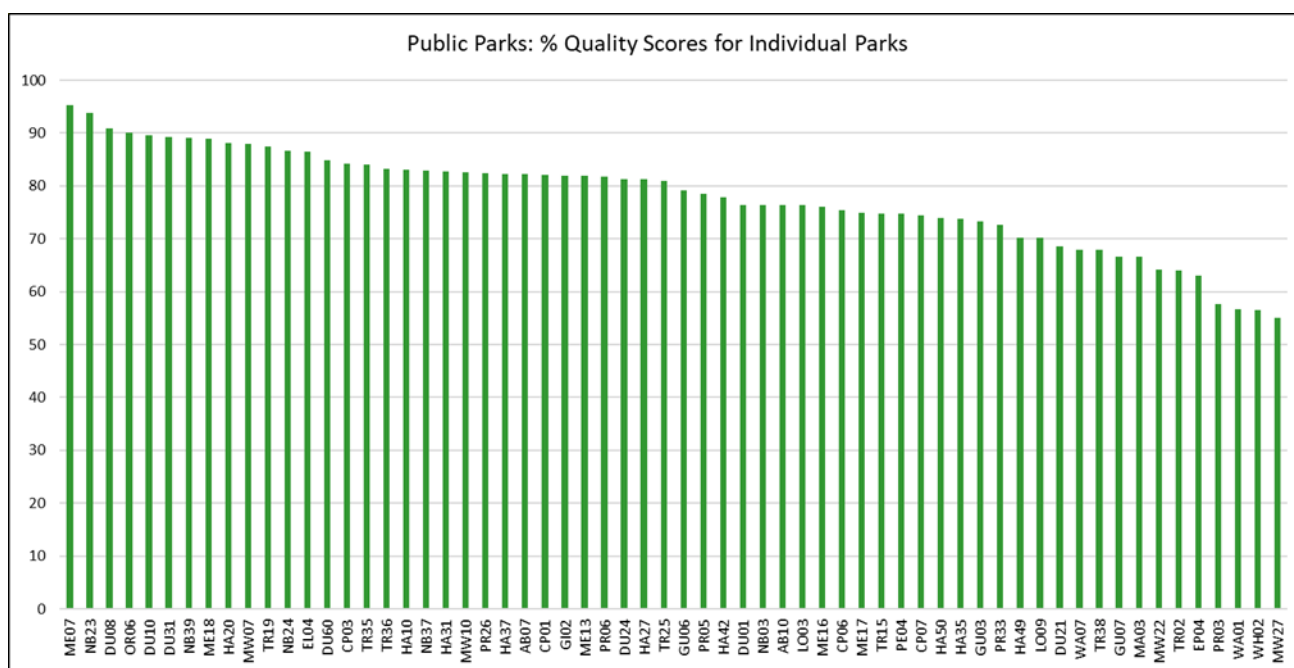
Cluster	Parks not meeting Quality Standard	Public Parks Quality	
		No. that meet standard (65%)	% Meeting the Standard
<b>Dunbar</b>	-	9 out of 9	<b>100%</b>
<b>Haddington</b>	-	12 out of 12	<b>100%</b>
<b>Musselburgh</b>	Musselburgh (MW22) Old Craighall (MW27) Wallyford (WA01) Whitecraig (WH02)	8 out of 12	<b>67%</b>
<b>North Berwick</b>	-	10 out of 10	<b>100%</b>
<b>Prestonpans</b>	Prestonpans (PR03)	10 out of 11	<b>91%</b>
<b>Tranent</b>	Tranent (TR02) Elphinstone (EP04)	9 out of 11	<b>82%</b>

The Council owned/managed parks below the quality standard should be a **management focus for future improvement**, as funding opportunities allow. An improvement project is already currently underway for Cemetery Park in Prestonpans<sup>91</sup>, for example.

The quality scores for all of the parks included in the audit ranged from 55% to 95%, with the majority of sites scoring in the 70's and 80's. There were 58 out of 65 (i.e. 89%) high quality parks that meet the standard (scoring above 65%).

Figure 7 shows the percentage quality scores for all Public Parks and Gardens across all Cluster Areas of East Lothian (including both Council owned/managed and privately owned/managed). In general, the quality scores are very high, showing the high standards for the majority of public parks across East Lothian.

<sup>91</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210566/roads\\_and\\_transport/12642/projects/10](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210566/roads_and_transport/12642/projects/10)

**Figure 7: Total Percentage Quality Score for each Public Park in East Lothian, identified by its Site Reference**

This accords with feedback received through the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026, as well as other recent previous consultations including on the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and Evidence Report for the next LDP. The public, including residents and visitors, value their local parks and greenspaces, with 'Parks and open spaces' ranking as one of the most highly rated aspects of East Lothian local communities in the Place Standard Tool analysis for the new LOIP.

Table 15 below sets out a range of features that might be provided by each of the parks in the hierarchy and set a minimum aspirational standard. Open spaces vary enormously in terms of their size, history, use, location and often meet very specific local needs. Therefore, some of the features listed below (e.g. lighting or car parks) might not be appropriate for individual parks and open spaces. Where appropriate to the core function of each site, the following characteristics are recommended for the various types of parks:

"We are very lucky to have so many public open spaces which are so well looked after. They are vital to our communities' health and wellbeing."

- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy

**Table 15: Parks and Gardens Quality Parameters: examples of aspirational standards**

Sub-Category	Aspirational Minimum Quality Standard	Examples
<b>Country Park</b> (*or equivalent non-designated sites with similar provision)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countryside Ranger Service</li> <li>• Unique facilities/ attractions/ visitor centre/ events</li> <li>• Offer diverse recreational use</li> <li>• Offer diversity of natural habitat/ landscape</li> <li>• Offer signage/ interpretation</li> <li>• Provision of paths/ access routes</li> <li>• Public transport connections</li> <li>• Toilets, car park, café provision if appropriate</li> <li>• Appropriate high quality maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Muir Country Park</li> <li>• Gullane Bents*</li> <li>• Longniddry Bents*</li> <li>• Yellowcraig*</li> <li>• Levenhall Links*</li> </ul>
<b>Town Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide diverse recreational use</li> <li>• Provide equipped Play Facilities (NEAP)</li> <li>• Provide seating/ gathering space/ litter bins</li> <li>• Provide paths/ access routes</li> <li>• Community event space</li> <li>• Receives regular maintenance</li> <li>• Formal landscape features</li> <li>• Tree planting, nature enhancements</li> <li>• Community growing space/ orchard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lewisvale Park</li> <li>• Cemetery Park</li> <li>• Cuthill Park</li> <li>• King George V Park</li> <li>• Polson Park</li> <li>• Macmerry Park</li> <li>• Neilson Park</li> <li>• Lauderdale Park</li> <li>• The Lodge Grounds</li> <li>• Pinkie Park</li> </ul>
<b>Local Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide local recreation use</li> <li>• Provide equipped Play Facilities (LEAP)</li> <li>• Provide paths/ access routes</li> <li>• Provide seating/ litter bins</li> <li>• Landscape features</li> <li>• Tree planting, nature enhancements</li> <li>• Receives regular maintenance</li> <li>• Community growing space/ orchard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fisherrow Links</li> <li>• Haugh Park</li> <li>• Whitecraig Park</li> <li>• St Ninians Park</li> <li>• Wallyford Park</li> <li>• Coronation Gardens</li> <li>• Goolwa Park</li> <li>• Gifford Park</li> <li>• Goose Green</li> <li>• Monks Meadow Park</li> </ul>

### **Accessibility**

Across East Lothian there is generally good provision of public parks and gardens, with the majority of larger towns and villages meeting accessibility standards.

The Public Parks & Gardens Provision Maps (Maps 3a to 3f) illustrate the application of the accessibility standards for the Public Parks and Gardens in the settlements of East Lothian. All the major settlements of East Lothian are located within 10km of a Country Park (including the formally designated John Muir Country Park, Dunbar, but also the coastal 'destination' sites of Gullane Bents, Yellowcraig, Longniddry Bents and Levenhall Links), apart from the inland villages of Gifford and Humbie, located near the Lammermuir Hills, which are within the catchment of Vogrie Country Park in Midlothian.

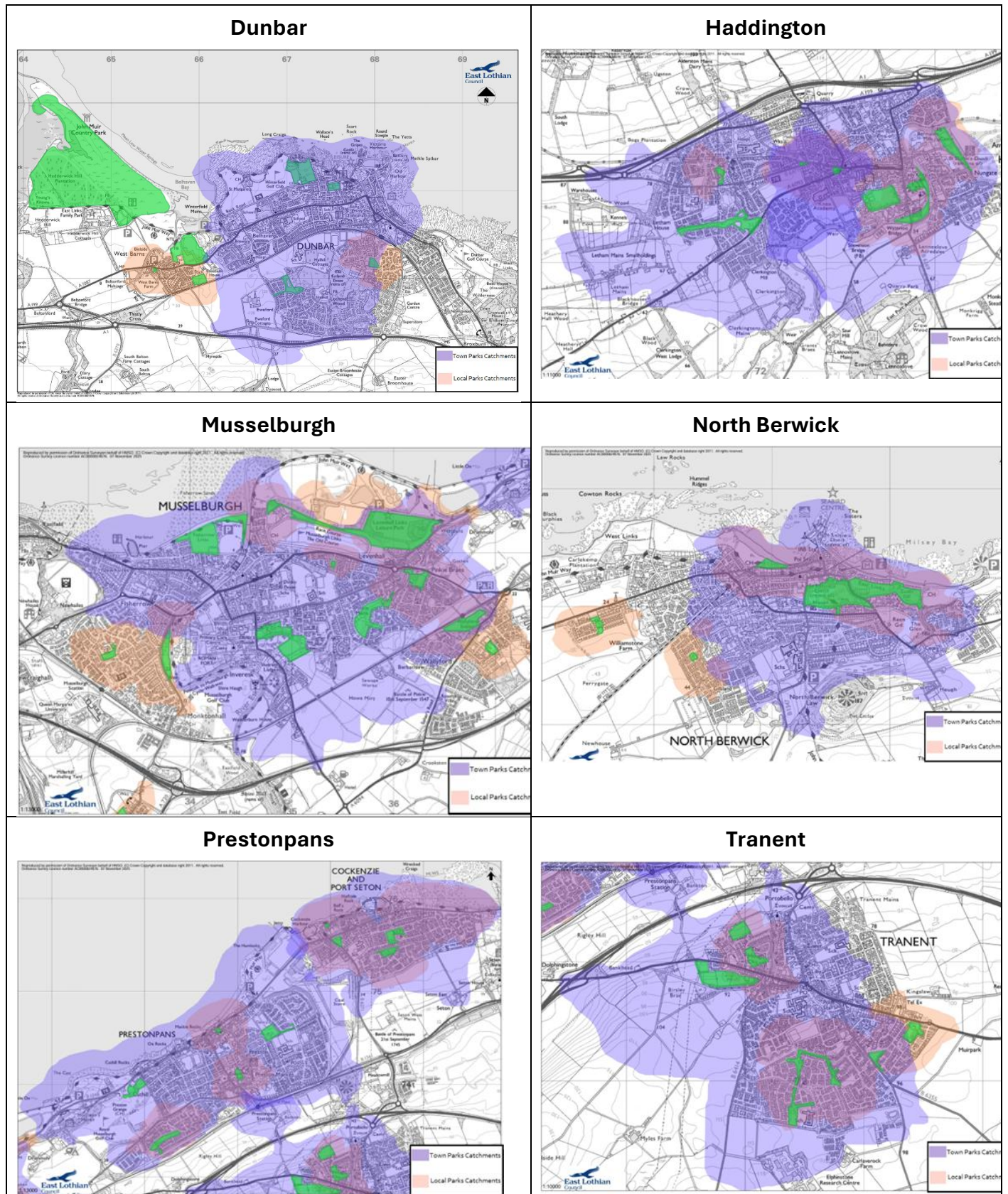
In terms of provision of Town Parks East Lothian is well provided for in the larger settlements, with the majority of residents living within 1.2km of a park. The combination of Town Parks and Local Parks across the county ensures that most residential areas in East Lothian's towns and villages are within the catchment of a park.

The residential areas outwith these catchments, which do not fully meet parks accessibility standards, include: the north-west of North Berwick, the south-eastern area of Dunbar, and the eastern and south-eastern area of Wallyford. Further details including Cluster Area accessibility assessment are set out in Appendix 3.

The 'isochrone' accessibility mapping of Town Parks and Local Parks, which was undertaken in addition to the distance threshold mapping, is shown for each of East Lothian's main towns in Figure 8. This maps catchment distances more realistically, based on walking times to the nearest park and taking into account 'real-world' factors such as transport routes, paths and 'barriers' such as railway lines.

The isochrone maps show a similar pattern to the distance threshold mapping, with most areas of the main towns having good accessibility to Town Parks and Local Parks. The exceptions are the south-eastern area of Dunbar, where new housing development is currently under construction, north-west North Berwick, a historic area of older housing with large gardens, and north-eastern Tranent, where improvements are proposed to the park/greenspace off Lindores Drive, including construction of a new play area, which will enhance the facilities and amenity value of this greenspace.

**Figure 8: Accessibility of Town Parks and Local Parks: 'Isochrone' Distance Mapping for each of East Lothian's Main Towns, showing Town Parks catchments (purple) and Local Parks catchments (orange).**



**Positive progress since 2018 Open Space Strategy:**

- In the 2018 Open Space Strategy the western extremities of **Haddington** did not meet the accessibility standard for Public Parks, however, the new Town Park in the Letham Mains area of Haddington, constructed through the consented Letham Mains development of the current Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP 2018), ensures that the western side of Haddington now meets the Parks accessibility standard, improving provision for residents of Haddington.
- Provision of a new Town Park in the Hallhill area of **Dunbar**, constructed through the current LDP 2018 consented Hallhill housing developments and still currently under development with further enhancements proposed, has enhanced park provision for south-western Dunbar.
- Pinkie Park in **Musselburgh** was not completed at the time of the previous Open Space Audit in 2018, but is now completed and in use. This is a privately owned/managed town park with high quality provision, which includes accessible paths, nature areas, new hedgerows, equipped play area, sculpture/focal point and seating of various types around the park.
- In **Gullane**, S75 developer contributions from consented housing developments arising through the LDP 2018 are currently delivering enhancements to the main Recreation Park (Gullane Memorial Park), including play area and sports pitch enhancements, with other amenity and facility enhancements underway and proposed.
- In the new housing in the south-western area of **Prestonpans**, a large linear local park, Monks Meadow Park, was created providing recreational amenity open space, landscaping and lit paths which benefit local residents.

**Summary**

Table 16 below summarises the findings of the standards review for Public Parks for each Cluster.

**Table 16: Summary of Quantity, Quality and Accessibility of Public Parks and Gardens by Cluster Area**

Cluster	Does the Cluster meet the standard?		
	Quantity	Quality	Accessibility
<b>Dunbar</b>	YES	YES	NO*
<b>Haddington</b>	YES	YES	YES
<b>Musselburgh</b>	YES	YES	NO**
<b>North Berwick</b>	YES	YES	NO
<b>Prestonpans</b>	YES	YES	YES
<b>Tranent</b>	YES	YES	YES

\* Dunbar Cluster: areas of south-east Dunbar do not currently meet Accessibility catchments, however these areas of new development are still under construction.

\*\* Musselburgh Cluster: only small areas of south and south-east Wallyford are outwith Accessibility catchments, however, this area of new development is still under construction.

The application of the Quantity, Quality and Accessibility standards to East Lothian settlements has concluded that Haddington, Prestonpans and Tranent Clusters have a good supply of high quality parks, within easy reach of residents living within its settlements therefore meeting all three standards.

The three other Cluster Areas (Dunbar, Musselburgh and North Berwick) meet two out of the three standards. All three generally meet the Quantity and Quality standards but do not meet the Accessibility standards. In Dunbar and Musselburgh Clusters this is due to current under-provision of public parks in new housing areas – specifically under-provision in the south-eastern area of Dunbar, and the eastern and south-eastern area of Wallyford, however both of these new developments are still currently under construction. In North Berwick an older, historic residential area of the town in the north-west has an under-provision of public parks, however it should be noted that this area is within close proximity to the coast, beaches and North Berwick West Links golf course.

These findings accord with the feedback received during the public consultation.

Appendix 3 contains a more detailed Cluster Assessment, highlighting the differences in provision in each of the towns within a Cluster and giving a more accurate picture of provision. Further detail on the application of the standards is provided, along with recommendations for addressing the gaps in provision.

### ***Future Development Recommendations***

The Council will ensure that new developments contribute to the provision of parks on-site, appropriate to the scale of the development. Off-site enhancement, through the use of Section 75 agreements, may be considered on a case-by-case basis. A 'Developer Contribution Protocol', incorporated in the next LDP and associated documentation, will be prepared, providing guidance on how developer contributions can be secured to enhance existing parks in the close vicinity, the types of new development this applies to and the number of houses / units that will trigger the requirement. The guidance will also provide details of how developer contributions would be spent. For further details see section 11.

- ❖ **Climate:** Our parks are fundamentally important green spaces in the heart of our communities, absorbing greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon, providing climate resilience by providing flood management and shade during hot summers, and reducing the urban 'heat island' effect. Focus on nature-based solutions and green infrastructure for climate resilience wherever possible, supported by policy in the next Local Development Plan and linking these spaces with wider Green Networks.
- ❖ **Nature:** Parks are also fundamental to tackling the nature emergency as areas of trees, landscaping and natural habitats protecting and enhancing nature in our urban areas, providing 'stepping stones' for nature, and home to our developing 'Nature Networks East Lothian' in our parks and greenspaces close to where people live. Continue to expand Nature Networks and undertake further tree planting, with a view to enhancing connectivity and quality of natural spaces for biodiversity.
- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing:** Parks are fundamental to health and wellbeing. They provide green spaces to relax, enjoy the outdoors, socialise, take part in formal and informal sport, play and recreation, and enjoy nature. Access to nature and green spaces has multiple benefits to physical and mental health, wellbeing and physical activity. Take cognisance of public feedback to improve accessibility to, and quality of, parks and greenspaces to encourage people to visit, use and benefit from them.
- ❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement:** Community engagement and collaboration, including involvement of groups with special needs and protected characteristics, is vital to ensure individual parks and greenspaces meet local needs and benefit everyone in our communities.

## 10.4 Amenity Greenspace

### ***Definition***

Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons and used for a variety of informal or social activities such as kickabouts, informal play, picnics, dog walking, social gathering, sunbathing in summer, sledging in winter.

These green spaces are predominantly located in and around housing areas, and are of huge importance to the settings, amenity value, nature value and climate adaptation of urban areas. As outdoor spaces close to where people live, they are accessed on a daily basis by many people, and have important health, wellbeing and physical activity benefits. Where these spaces have trees, they provide shade, urban cooling and nature benefits; areas of amenity grass soften the hard urban landscape, help reduce surface water run-off, and sequester carbon, helping us to tackle climate change. Amenity Greenspaces are also found in institutional public grounds, around commercial and industrial areas, and surrounding heritage sites open to the public.



*Amenity greenspace in Tranent*

The total land area included in the Open Space Audit 2024/25 covered 1,816.33 hectares of open space including 167.97 hectares of Amenity Greenspace (an increase from 121.92 hectares in the 2018 Open Space Strategy).

**East Lothian Standard**

<b>Amenity Greenspace</b>		
<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>
Open Space and Play Provision = minimum 60m <sup>2</sup> per household, plus connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks are required to be provided on-site.	Quality Bands A, B or C (minimum score of 55% with an aspiration of 60%)	-

**Quality**

A detailed analysis of all Amenity Greenspaces by Cluster Area, including the average Quality score for each Cluster, is set out in Appendix 3.

In terms of quality of Amenity Greenspace, all Clusters meet the East Lothian Standard with regard to the average quality standard of minimum 55% and above, although the aspiration is for all sites to reach 60%. The majority of sites meet the quality standard. However, quality scores for individual sites ranged from 89% to 35%. Within Musselburgh Cluster, for example, scores ranged from 88% to 35%.

**Table 17: Quality of Amenity Greenspace (includes both Council owned/managed and privately owned/managed Amenity Greenspaces)**

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Areas not meeting Quality Standard</b>	<b>Amenity Greenspace Quality</b>	
		<b>No. that meet Standard (55%)*</b>	<b>% Meeting the Standard</b>
<b>Dunbar</b>	East Linton (EL09)	37 out of 39	<b>95%</b>
<b>Haddington</b>	Haddington (HA06, HA16, HA47) Drem (DR01)	35 out of 39	<b>90%</b>
<b>Musselburgh</b>	Musselburgh East (ME10, ME12) Musselburgh West (MW21, MW25) Wallyford (WA05, WA08, WA11)	24 out of 31	<b>77%</b>
<b>North Berwick</b>	N. Berwick (NB27) Gullane (GU08)	30 out of 32	<b>94%</b>
<b>Prestonpans</b>	Prestonpans (PR01, PR08, PR25, PR31) Cockenzie & Port Seton (CP17)	37 out of 42	<b>88%</b>
<b>Tranent</b>	Tranent (TR04, TR11, TR18, TR28, TR29) Pencaitland (PE06, PE07) Ormiston (OR07, OR08)	48 out of 57	<b>84%</b>

\* all Clusters meet the East Lothian Standard with regard to the average quality standard of minimum 55% and above, although the aspiration is for all sites to reach 60%.

Amenity Greenspaces close to where people live, particularly in and around residential areas, are very valuable for health, wellbeing, physical activity and socialising, and perform important functions in surface water management, carbon sequestration and place-making.

This is emphasised by the findings of the public consultation, with several respondents mentioning the value and importance of their local greenspaces, particularly to health and wellbeing. Examples of feedback received include:

"I use quite a few of the outdoor spaces to walk and be in nature as it really helps my mental health issues. These spaces are vital for our communities."

*- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy*

"East Lothian is blessed with lots of green space. Musselburgh riverside has seen less planting in recent years but still a beautiful green space appreciated by many."

*- Respondent to public consultation on Draft Open Space Strategy*

The quality of some of these amenity spaces needs to be improved, and this should be a focus of any potential future funding and management priorities, for example including 'Greening the Grey' projects (see Case Study below).

### **Management Focus and Development Proposals**

High quality Amenity Greenspaces in urban areas, particularly in and around residential areas, are fundamental to tackling the climate and nature emergencies and to people's health and wellbeing. Continue to ensure that Amenity Greenspaces are protected and enhanced, through management and through the planning process, with a focus on greenspaces that are currently failing the Quality standard, particularly those in more deprived areas to help ensure equality. Residents can live in areas with high population density, a lack of quality greenspace, and housing areas with few natural features. These should be prioritised for improvement, as funding allows, in collaboration with local communities to ensure they meet local needs. In areas where there is social housing it is important to ensure tenants are involved in this process.

The Case Study example below, of the Council's 'Greening the Grey' project, greening areas of hard-standing in ELC Housing areas is an example of retrofitting enhancements that are already underway in East Lothian to increase amenity green spaces and enhance our urban areas for people, nature and climate resilience. Retrofitting projects to create new green spaces, such as the 'Greening the Grey' project, are supported.

### **Case Study: 'Greening the Grey' projects in ELC Housing areas:**

This project, involving Amenity Services, Housing and Roads Services, creates new green amenity greenspaces from formerly 'grey' areas of hard-standing slabs and concrete within ELC Housing areas in various locations across East Lothian. To date, Greening the Grey projects have been delivered in ELC Housing areas in North Berwick and West Barns with more to follow. The outcomes of the project are multi-functional, enhancing our communities by providing improved amenity value and place-making, nature network benefits for biodiversity, and reducing water run-off during periods of heavy rainfall.

The Greening the Grey example illustrated below is from Forth View in West Barns:

**BEFORE:**



**AFTER:**



### **New Development**

Ensure that all new developments enhance green connectivity and accessibility by ensuring on-site provision of sufficient, good quality Amenity Greenspaces within housing areas, and ensuring equity of greenspace provision across all housing types/tenures. Where new development is permitted that would adversely affect any existing element of the amenity greenspace / open space network, alternative provision must be made. For further details see section 11.

- ❖ **Climate:** Local greenspaces close to where people live are important in tackling the climate emergency locally and creating better, more resilience places. They absorb greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon, help reduce surface water run-off, and trees in greenspaces provide shade and reduce the urban 'heat island' effect. Focus on nature-based solutions and green infrastructure for climate resilience wherever possible, including tree planting in suitable locations.
- ❖ **Nature:** Local greenspaces are important in tackling the nature emergency as 'stepping stones' and pockets of natural habitat in our urban areas, and bring people closer to nature. Continue to enhance green spaces in built-up areas so there are fewer barriers between ourselves and the natural environment, expanding and connecting our Nature Networks, planting trees and wildflowers and improving connectivity and quality of green spaces for biodiversity.

- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing:** Local greenspaces are fundamental to health and wellbeing. They provide green spaces close to where people live, to relax, enjoy the outdoors, socialise, take part in outdoor play and recreation, and enjoy nature. Access to nature and green spaces has multiple benefits to physical and mental health, wellbeing and physical activity. Take cognisance of public feedback to improve accessibility to, and quality of, local greenspaces to encourage people to visit, use and benefit from them.
- ❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement:** Community engagement and collaboration, including involvement of groups with special needs and protected characteristics, and engagement with housing associations and social rented tenants, is vital to ensure local greenspaces meet local needs and benefit everyone in our communities.



*Amenity greenspace in Haddington*

## 10.5 Civic Spaces

Civic spaces were included in the 2024/25 Open Space Audit, although they were not analysed or assessed separately in the previous 2018 Open Space Strategy. Civic Spaces (Town Squares, Waterfront Promenades and Harbours) combined to a total area of 13.33 hectares across East Lothian, including 'green', 'blue' and 'grey' spaces.

As part of the landscape and place-making value, civic function, historic significance, green and blue network connectivity of a town or village, they are fundamental urban open spaces. Often centrally located, civic spaces may be 'grey' spaces or 'green' spaces, generally small in area (those analysed in the Open Space Audit 2024/25 had an average size of 0.95 hectares), but they are important to the civic life of a settlement.



*Court Street, Haddington*

Examples include town squares such as Civic Square in the centre of Tranent or Court Street in Haddington, war memorials with associated landscaping in town centres such as on Quality Street in North Berwick, or places of historic significance to civic life, such as the Robert Noble memorial with landscaping and seating in East Linton. They generally have seating, tree planting, flowers, and often planters or hanging baskets, and many have war memorials, civil memorials or other civic focal points such as fountains or statues of historic figures. They can have important functions in civic life, including the locations for town Christmas Trees, or host events such as Farmers' Markets, for example Court Street in Haddington. Town Squares and Waterfront Promenades across the county were high-quality urban open spaces, scoring an average of 82% in the Quality assessment.

During the Open Space Audit 2024/25 it was noted anecdotally that these civic spaces were some of the busiest open spaces, at all times of day, with people using them as social spaces or rest spaces to sit on

benches, particularly older people. Civic spaces are of considerable significance to the civic life and local identity of a town.

Harbours are also included under a separate sub-category of 'blue' Civic Space, having functions in the commercial and economic life of East Lothian as well as recreational functions, as important aspects of civic life of coastal towns, and as part of the blue-green network.

### ***Management Focus and Development Proposals***

Civic spaces should be a focus for community collaboration and priority for enhancement for civic pride, social cohesion and as community gathering spaces and focal points. New developments should consider the incorporation of centrally located civic spaces as part of the wider open space / parks and greenspace provision of a development.

- ❖ **Climate:** Appropriate tree planting in civic spaces can provide shade and help prevent surface water flooding, as well as sequestering carbon and enhancing civic spaces.
- ❖ **Nature:** Although generally more limited in nature value, where trees and other landscaping can be incorporated in civic spaces this can form part of local nature network 'stepping stones'.
- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing:** Civic spaces are important to local communities as social and gathering spaces and sites for civic functions, which bring people together in the outdoors, enhancing wellbeing.
- ❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement:** Civic spaces are fundamental to communities. Continue to support, encourage and involve community organisations with development and enhancement of their civic spaces.

## 10.6 Sports Areas / Sports Pitches

The Council continues to maintain and develop facilities for sport, ensuring an appropriate distribution of sports pitches across East Lothian to meet local need. The Council's Open Space and Sports Pitch Strategy (2012) was updated in the Open Space Strategy Refresh 2018 and assesses the supply of recreational facilities and open space against existing and anticipated demand. This informed the Council's site-specific development requirements for such facilities (e.g. sports pitches and changing facilities) in the Local Development Plan 2018. The Sports Pitch Action Table has been updated in this current Open Space Strategy 2026 (see Table 18: Sports Area Summary table below).

### **Definition of Sports Areas**

Large and generally flat areas of grass or specially designed surfaces, used primarily for designated sports (including playing fields, tennis courts and bowling greens) and which are generally bookable. The total land area included in the Open Space Audit 2024/25 covered 1,816.33 hectares of open space including **75.69 hectares of Sports Areas** (including tennis courts, bowling greens and playing fields) – an increase from 61.54 hectares at the time of the previous OSS 2018. Golf courses are not included in the analysis of Sports Areas but are categorised separately in the Open Space Audit.

### **East Lothian Standard for Sports Areas**

Following the methodology set out in the Open Space Strategy Refresh 2018, an assessment was undertaken of the provision of sports pitches and anticipated future demand using a demand-led assessment approach. This was informed through ongoing liaison and consultation with relevant user groups and survey work to establish the demand for facilities. The Open Space Strategy process has included an update of the Sports Area Summary table to include an assessment of the sports pitch provision currently delivered through the Local Development Plan 2018, and the future provision still to be delivered through LDP 2018.

An assessment of future need will be undertaken to assess the requirements for sports provision based on the anticipated housing allocations and locations identified in the emerging Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2). The review will be based on a robust demand-led model, which will identify where new sports pitches are required or upgrading of existing pitches / associated facilities is required as part of any future proposed development through the LDP2 process.

The delivery of sports pitch provision will be monitored, reviewed and updated every 2 years through the LDP Delivery Programme.

#### **East Lothian Standard 2026 for Sports Pitches / Sports Areas**

<b>Sports Areas</b>		
<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>
Based on LDP future land allocations and subsequent demand assessment of cumulative impact within a Cluster Area	Aim to improve the Quality of sports pitches through enhancement, based on 'hierarchy of need'	Regional Athletics = 36km Full size sports pitches = 1.2km or within the Cluster Area as appropriate Small size sports pitches = 400m

Based on the Fields in Trust Standards (Athletics provision is based on drive time of 45 minutes in rural areas, average drive rate of 48km/hour)

## Quality

East Lothian Council has been and will continue working towards the rationalisation of the current pitch provision to create multi-pitch sites associated with a number of different sports to help reduce maintenance costs, whilst increasing the quality of the sports facilities. In some cases this has resulted in an increase of the usability of the existing pitches, therefore increasing the season available for a particular sport.

Previously quality enhancements included provision of 3G sports pitches, however new technology '**Hybrid Pitches**' are now available. Hybrid pitches involve porous rubber matting for strength and durability, but grass is planted through the pores in the artificial surfacing. This technology enables movement of soil organisms and grass growth, helping meet the Council's commitments to tackling the climate and nature emergencies. Enhanced lighting for sports pitches using **LED lighting** also extends usability, increases available hours and seasons of use, and helps meet energy efficiency climate targets.

Fields in Trust, who set national standards for open spaces and sports areas, state in their document 'Fields in Trust Standards: Creating Great Spaces for All' (2024) <sup>92</sup>:

*"Where artificial pitches with floodlighting support a higher intensity of use, this could support a reduction in the quantity of provision, subject to negotiation with the Local Planning Authority. It should form part of a clear open space strategy for the site and have long-term management plans in place."*

Provision of high quality facilities is essential in encouraging people to participate in sports. Poor quality facilities not only impacts on the quality of play but also has an impact on the potential playing capacity of a pitch. The Council will ensure that pitch provision in the Council area is sufficient to meet the needs of local residents now and in the future through a '**Hierarchy of Need**' by:

- Ensuring that all **playing pitches are afforded protection** within the emerging Local Development Plan 2, unless it can be demonstrated that the pitch is surplus to requirement and that a future need can be met on an alternative site to an equal or higher standard.
- **Meeting existing deficiencies** through the re-designation of existing pitches and the creation of new facilities where appropriate.
- **Enhancing the existing provision** by enhancing pitch quality, particularly through the delivery of hybrid pitches and LED lighting.
- Focusing activities and resources on **multi-pitch sites**, where appropriate, provided sites meet the accessibility criteria. However, the provision of single pitches for informal football use should be maintained in the outlying smaller settlements.
- Ensuring that all **new developments** contribute to the provision of outdoor sports facilities (including changing facilities) and land to develop recreational facilities to meet the needs of residents, through the use of Section 75 agreements – see below.

## Accessibility

An accessibility standard has been applied to the Regional Athletics Facility at Meadowmill Sports Centre and the provision of full size sports pitches in the major towns and villages of East Lothian.

The Sports Pitch Provision Maps (Maps 5a to 5f) illustrate the application of the accessibility standards for the Sports Areas in the settlements of East Lothian. All the settlements of East Lothian are located within 36km of the Regional All Weather Athletics Facility at Meadowmill Sports Centre. With the largest number of outdoor football, rugby and hockey pitches in East Lothian, Meadowmill is home to a number of sporting clubs and often plays host to regional and national sporting events throughout the year.

<sup>92</sup> 'Fields in Trust Standards: Creating Great Spaces for All' (2024) <https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/standards>

All the major settlements have good provision of football pitches, with almost all residential areas being within 1.2km of an operational full size sports pitch or pitch cluster (the sports pitch standard from the 2018 OSS).

The new Accessibility standard (2026) for Full Size Sports Pitches is '**1.2km or provision within the Cluster Area**', as appropriate.

Assessment of Sports Provision across East Lothian using the new Accessibility standards indicates that all settlements of East Lothian meet the Sports Pitch Provision Standards.

### ***New Sports Pitch Provision delivered through the Local Development Plan 2018 since the previous Open Space Strategy Refresh 2018***

A range of sports pitches and sports infrastructure has been developed across East Lothian since 2018 through the Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP 2018). This include the following:

- **Hallhill South West and Hallhill North, Dunbar:** Development of these housing sites is still underway. The Hallhill South West site is nearing completion, and the Hallhill North site is currently under construction. New sports pitch provision (1 x full size grass sports pitch) is currently being delivered on site and in due course will be managed by Hallhill Trust. In addition, a new pump track has been delivered on site (funded by multiple partners, led by sportscotland and East Lothian Council) and has recently opened to serve this growing community.
- **Letham, Haddington:** A new mixed use development of around 750 houses, social and community facilities and associated infrastructure has been developed. This included provision of a new full sized sports pitch for public use, with two team changing accommodation. A small-sided grassy area for informal use was also delivered near to Letham Mains Primary School.
- **Mains Farm, North Berwick:** A new mixed use development of approximately 400 houses, community facilities, open space and associated infrastructure. One full sized sports pitch including two team changing facilities has been delivered.
- **Land to the south east and south west of Wallyford:** Development is currently underway at Wallyford of a mixed use development of 1450 houses, social, educational and community facilities, open space, and associated infrastructure, including floodlit 2G and 3G synthetic pitches, 100m polymeric running track and 2 grass pitches.
- **Craighall, Musselburgh:** New community sports provision resulting from the new development site comprises 3 grass football pitches, which have recently been completed on site. An associated changing pavilion is to be delivered.

### ***Future Pitch Provision associated with LDP 2018 development sites***

Delivery of the housing developments proposed in the current Local Development Plan (LDP 2018) is continuing. The following sports pitch provision is due to be delivered upon development of these new housing areas:

- **Blindwells:** Approximately 130 hectares of land at Blindwells, near Tranent, is currently under construction for the development of a new settlement comprising land capable of accommodating 1600 houses, commercial, social, educational and community facilities, open space, employment and associated infrastructure. The sports provision requirement is 3 full size community sports pitches, 4 full size tennis courts, 1 cricket wicket, and a changing pavilion.

- **Hallhill, Dunbar:** As described above, new sports pitch provision (1 x full size grass sports pitch) is currently being delivered on site and in due course will be managed by Hallhill Trust. Provision of 2 x team changing extension to Hallhill Healthy Living Centre is still to be delivered.
- **Gullane:** Enhanced sports provision resulting from the new Saltcoats and Fenton Gait housing development sites comprises improving the quality of the existing 11 a side grass pitch in Recreation Park (levelling/drainage) to take account of increased usage, and construction of a new open grass space which can be used recreationally for a number of activities.
- **Craighall, Musselburgh:** Further to the above community sports pitch provision, a team changing pavilion will also be delivered as part of this new outdoor sports facility.
- **Whitecraig South and Whitecraig North:** A new 1 x full size grass sports pitch and 2 team changing pavilion linked to new full sized sports pitch due to be provided resulting from these housing developments.
- **Tranent Cluster:** New sports provision of a grass sports pitch linked to developments at Windygoul South, and enhanced provision within Polson Park, Tranent. Further enhancement of sporting infrastructure at Macmerry and Elphinstone to be developed.
- **Longniddry South:** 1 x full size grass sports pitch to be provided.
- **Aberlady:** Developer contributions arising from the Aberlady West housing development will comprise improved drainage to increase capacity and usage of existing 11 a side grass pitch in Aberlady.

### ***Future sports pitch provision: Cluster Based Sports Provision***

Table 18 summarises the sports provision for each of the Clusters.

The current Local Development Plan (LDP 2018) Developer Contributions Framework Supplementary Guidance (Technical Note 14)<sup>93</sup> sets out that 160 – 499 dwellings require the provision of sports facilities and 500 upwards will require the provision of formal sports facilities e.g. 1 full size pitch and associated changing facilities. The land needed to deliver sport pitches and associated facilities will form part of the open space requirement for a site. Where the pitch is to serve a wider area than the site on which it is to be located, then the capital cost for the creation of the pitch shall be shared between the developments that generate a need for the facilities.

### **New Developments**

Ensure that all **new developments** contribute to the provision of outdoor sports facilities to meet the needs of residents, on-site or through the use of Section 75 agreements to secure financial contributions.

Where anticipated demand can be met by existing sports facilities a contribution will still be required for qualitative improvements to existing facilities within the Cluster Area. A 'Developer Contribution Protocol', incorporated in the next LDP and associated documentation, will be prepared, providing guidance on how developer contributions can be secured to enhance existing sports facilities within the Cluster Area, the types of new development this applies to and the number of houses / units that will trigger the requirement. The sports contribution zone is the Cluster Area. The guidance will also provide details of how developer contributions would be spent.

<sup>93</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/28189/technical\\_note\\_14\\_-\\_ldp\\_2018](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/28189/technical_note_14_-_ldp_2018)

**Table 18: Sports Pitch Summary Table**

Cluster	Current Demand including progress made since LDP 2018	Future Demand to achieve aims/goals of LDP 2018 (i.e. still to be delivered through LDP 2018)	Future Anticipated Demand for next LDP
<b>Dunbar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current demand met for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis and bowls.</li> <li>• Floodlights at Winterfield Tennis Courts delivered.</li> <li>• 2G Pitch at Dunbar Grammar School delivered.</li> <li>• Extension of sports pitches at Hallhill linked to Local Development Plan housing growth delivered.</li> <li>• Pump track at Hallhill delivered.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of sports facilities in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth.</li> <li>• Consideration to enhancement or creation of floodlight hybrid pitches to meet future demand.</li> <li>• Resurfacing of Hallhill 3G Astro pitch to be delivered.</li> </ul>
<b>Haddington</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current demand met for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis and bowls.</li> <li>• Sports pitch &amp; 2 x Team Changing pavilion delivered at Letham Mains.</li> <li>• A small-sided grassy area for informal use delivered near to Letham Mains Primary School.</li> <li>• Resurfacing of Whittinghame Drive 3G Astro pitch delivered.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of sports facilities in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth.</li> <li>• Consider delivery of pétanque at Neilson Park.</li> <li>• Consider delivery of floodlights at Neilson Park.</li> <li>• Extension of sports facilities in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration to enhancement or creation of floodlight hybrid pitches to meet future demand.</li> </ul>
<b>Musselburgh</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current demand met for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis and bowls.</li> <li>• 3 x grass pitches at Craighall delivered.</li> <li>• 2 x grass pitches at Wallyford delivered.</li> <li>• Resurfacing of Pinkie 3G Astro delivered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 x grass pitches at Wallyford LC to be adopted.</li> <li>• Enhancement of pitch provision at Pinkie Playing Fields to be delivered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of sports facilities in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth.</li> <li>• Consideration to enhancement or creation of floodlight hybrid pitches to meet future demand.</li> </ul>
<b>North Berwick</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current demand met for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis and bowls.</li> <li>• Extension of NB HS sports pitches delivered.</li> <li>• Sports pitch &amp; 2 x Team Changing pavilion delivered at Letham Mains delivered.</li> <li>• Pump track delivered.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of sports facilities in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth.</li> <li>• Consideration to enhancement or creation of floodlight hybrid pitches to meet future demand.</li> <li>• Resurfacing of Recreation Park 3G Astro pitch to be delivered.</li> <li>• Recreation Park, Gullane enhancement to be delivered.</li> </ul>
<b>Prestonpans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current demand met for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis and bowls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension / enhancement of sports pitches in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth at Longniddry housing developments to be delivered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of sports facilities in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth.</li> <li>• Consideration to enhancement or creation of floodlight hybrid pitches to meet future demand. Strategic reserve of additional land west of Meadowmill can be formalised when required</li> <li>• Resurfacing of Middleshot 3G Astro pitch to be delivered.</li> </ul>

<b>Blindwells</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 x Tennis Courts to be delivered</li> <li>• 3 x Grass pitches to be delivered</li> <li>• 1 x Cricket wicket to be delivered</li> <li>• Town Park to be delivered</li> </ul>	
<b>Tranent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current demand met for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis and bowls.</li> <li>• Resurfacing of Forrester 3G Astro pitch delivered.</li> <li>• Resurfacing of Forrester 2 x 2G Astro pitch delivered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of sports pitches in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth at Windygoul South housing development site to be delivered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of sports facilities in Cluster linked to LDP housing growth.</li> <li>• Consideration to enhancement or creation of floodlight hybrid pitches to meet future demand.</li> </ul>

## 10.7 Playspaces and Equipped Play Areas

### **Definition**

Areas providing local and accessible opportunities for outdoor play for children and teenagers, usually linked to housing areas, and including play equipment aimed at children and young people of a range of ages and abilities, constructed from a range of materials and with suitable surfacing. Many of these play areas are located within parks and greenspaces, or other smaller landscaped ‘playspaces’.

### **Range of Play Areas across the county**

Since the previous Open Space Strategy 2018, East Lothian Council has undertaken major investment in improving and renewing children’s **equipped Play Areas**<sup>94</sup> across the county, funded by a combination of Council capital funding, Scottish Government Play Parks Renewal funding, and Section 75 developer contributions.

Section 5.2 provides details of play area renewals and enhancements recently undertaken by the Council.

Ongoing management and maintenance of the Council’s 121 play areas across the county is undertaken by Amenity Services’ Play Squad’s RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) certified play installers and inspectors.

In addition, North Berwick Community Skatepark Group raised funding for and delivered a new community **Skate Park** in North Berwick Recreation Park, working with the Council.

Council investment in **Pump Tracks**<sup>95</sup>, together with external funding from various sources including sportscotland, enabled the delivery of new Pump Tracks in Ormiston and Dunbar, with further plans in progress for Pump Tracks in Haddington, Prestonpans, Tranent and Musselburgh. A community-led Pump Track has been delivered in North Berwick. The new Pump Tracks are proving very popular, for physical activity and fun as well as social gathering spaces for a wide range of ages.

In addition, outdoor play provision was enhanced by new play areas in new housing development sites across the county through the Local Development Plan 2018. This has been successful in providing a good number of play areas across residential areas, providing play equipment aimed at a range of ages and abilities, including ‘play on the way’ play items of more natural play opportunities (such as wooden ‘balance beams’, play boulders and ‘log-stack’ play items) and landscaped play spaces.

The East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment mapping shows the locations of all Council owned/managed and privately owned/managed play areas across East Lothian.

### **The Play Sufficiency Assessment: Quantity, Quality and Accessibility Assessment**

The **East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA)**<sup>96</sup>, approved by the Council in 2024, is intended to provide an overall picture as to the provision and distribution of outdoor play opportunities for children across the totality of East Lothian. The PSA sets out the detailed assessment of the quality, quantity and accessibility of East Lothian Play Areas (both privately owned/managed and Council owned/managed).

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/play-areas>

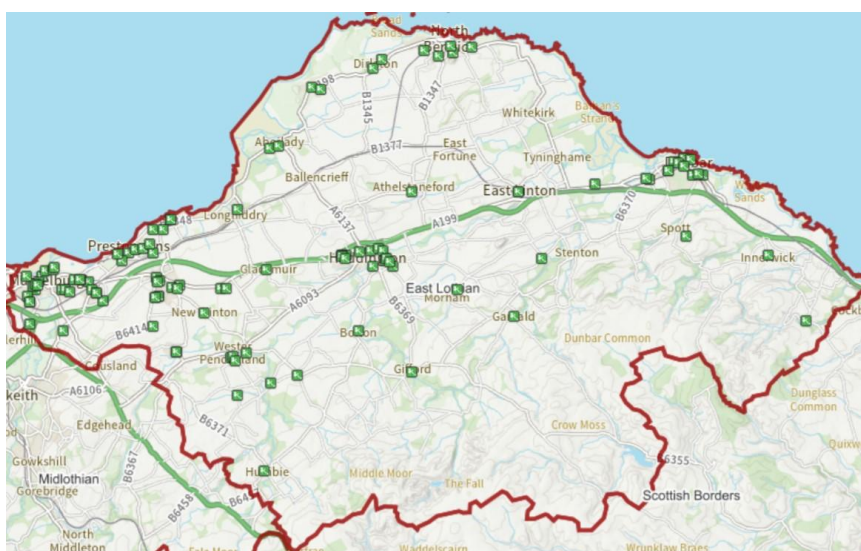
<sup>95</sup> <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/pump-tracks>

<sup>96</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play\\_sufficiency\\_assessment\\_report\\_-\\_march\\_2024](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play_sufficiency_assessment_report_-_march_2024)

East Lothian Council commissioned Play Scotland, the national representative organisation for play, to assess the quantity, quality and accessibility of their play spaces to inform their baseline PSA. In addition, Play Scotland undertook a detailed assessment of all formal public outdoor play spaces in East Lothian, with particular focus on inclusion and accessibility.

East Lothian has 121 Council owned or managed formal outdoor play spaces. Figure 9 illustrates the location of all these formal outdoor play spaces across the East Lothian authority area. The East Lothian PSA identified that there is a good distribution of formal outdoor play spaces across the local authority relative to the size of the settlements.

**Figure 9: East Lothian Authority Area Map Identifying All Council Managed Formal Outdoor Play Spaces<sup>97</sup>**



**Table 19: Number of Formal Outdoor Play Spaces in each Main Settlement (from PSA)**

Settlement	Number of Formal Outdoor Play Spaces
Dunbar	10
Haddington	16
Musselburgh	20
North Berwick	6
Prestonpans	7
Tranent	10

### ***Key recommendations of the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment:***

The following recommendations identified through the PSA process are intended to provide focus for future investment in play provision, where funding and resources would make this possible.

- **The quality and range of play opportunities in East Lothian could be improved through:**
  - Increasing opportunities for sensory, creative and nature-based play
  - Increasing all play opportunities for the 12-17 year old groups
  - Increasing opportunities for calm, quiet play
  - Increasing opportunities for social play

<sup>97</sup> From East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment (2024)

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play\\_sufficiency\\_assessment\\_report\\_-\\_march\\_2024](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13879/play_sufficiency_assessment_report_-_march_2024)

- Increasing ‘hang out’ spaces for the 12-17 year old age groups
- **Accessibility and inclusion of play opportunities in East Lothian could be improved through:**
  - Increasing the variety of play space surfaces
  - Including a wider variety of inclusive fixed equipment
  - Increasing opportunities for social, sensory, creative, and natural play
  - Integrating inclusive play opportunities into the main play space
  - Including features to support play for children with a wider variety of disabilities
  - Improving safe, accessible routes into play spaces
  - Embedding lived experience into play space design

The PSA notes that there is no expectation that all formal outdoor play spaces be fully inclusive. The assessment is designed to be used to inform meaningful community engagement and strategic decisions regarding investment in play space renewal.

### ***Accessibility of Equipped Play Areas across East Lothian: Distance thresholds***

The Equipped Play Areas Provision Maps (Maps 6a to 6f) illustrate the application of the Fields in Trust Standards<sup>98</sup> for the hierarchy of play areas, LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs, with the buffer zones showing the distance thresholds accessibility standards for each type.

Fields in Trust Standards for play area distance thresholds are:

- **Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)** – a larger play area aimed at children and young people of a range of ages [East Lothian standards also include ‘and for all abilities’] up to more challenging play equipment within 800 metres.
- **Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)** – open space with a range of equipped play opportunities in local areas within 400 metres.
- **Local Areas of Play (LAPs)** – smaller local play spaces mainly aimed at young children/toddlers, within a distance threshold of 240 metres.

**Overall, Play Areas are well distributed across East Lothian, with most settlements meeting the LAP, LEAP and NEAP playspaces accessibility standards.**

Most areas of East Lothian have good provision of Play Areas, as set out in the PSA, with the exception of the following:

- Prestonpans Cluster does not meet the accessibility standard as western areas of Longniddry do not currently meet play area provision. New play provision is proposed in the new Longniddry South housing development, currently under construction, which was consented through LDP 2018; this should help to address this issue.
- North-eastern Tranent does not currently meet the accessibility standard. Proposals are currently underway for provision of a new Council play area in this area of north-east Tranent to meet demand and provision standards.
- The northern area of North Berwick does not meet the standard.

All other Cluster Areas of East Lothian meet the accessibility standards for playspaces.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Fields in Trust Standards: Creating Great Spaces for All’ (2024) <https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/standards>

Provision of Play Areas is very good across smaller villages, with small rural villages including Bolton, Morham, Glenkinchie and Whittinghame all having play areas / play spaces.

During the Open Space Audit 2024/25, in addition to Equipped Play Areas, '**Playspaces**' were also audited. Playspaces are areas of greenspace with play facilities sited within them and often have landscaping such as hedging within the site. Play spaces and Natural Play opportunities enhance the range of play opportunities across the county.



*Lauderdale Park Play Area, Dunbar*

### ***Future Development Recommendations for Playspaces***

East Lothian Council will continue to deliver Equipped Play Areas and local playspaces that are fit for purpose, and meet local needs, in appropriate locations close to where people live. Future playspace developments must take into account the findings and recommendations of the **East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment**, as well as **Fields in Trust recommendations** for play area design. Provision of high quality and appropriate facilities is essential to encouraging people to visit open spaces. The Council will ensure that playspace provision in the Council area is sufficient to meet the needs of local residents now and in the future.

Play areas should:

- **Meet the recommendations in the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA)**
- Be designed with input and feedback from children and young people and the wider community through consultation wherever possible, including those with disabilities and other special needs, incorporating lived experience

Play areas should be:

- In a central location, accessible to all (accessible for all abilities)
- Sited in open, welcoming locations, separated from motorised vehicles, fitted with a range of high quality play equipment and seating, with appropriate safety surfacing and fencing

- Be well designed, attractive and appropriate for children, to meet the needs of a range of ages and abilities including those with special needs in line with PSA
- Provide a high quality play experience, catering for a range of age groups and abilities in line with PSA
- Landscaped to include natural play opportunities, landscaping, suitable planting and tree planting, as appropriate
- Have good levels of natural surveillance from roads/ footpaths and nearby housing but far enough away from houses to reduce the likelihood of noise and nuisance
- Accessible along a surfaced path, with accessible surfacing to reach items of inclusive play equipment, and connected to the wider open space and path network
- Cater for the needs of parents/carers with special needs such as disabilities, mobility issues or with buggies/pushchairs

Fields in Trust<sup>99</sup> recommend that play spaces should be located at the heart of a development, and that all projects should include a clear open space strategy explaining how the provision for play responds to local need, provides for all ages and is based on accessibility and current provision.

### New Developments

The Council will ensure that all new developments either provide suitable play areas / playspaces within their development sites, proportional to the scale of the development, and/or contribute to the provision of play spaces through legal agreements. For further details see section 11.

Play areas must: i. Meet the requirements of the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment; ii. Be easy and safe to reach on foot; iii. Be well overlooked by surrounding dwellings; iv. Be equipped and laid out to a design as agreed with the Council; v. Be provided by the developer; and vi. Have arrangements in place for inspection and maintenance to the satisfaction of the Council.

A 'Developer Contribution Protocol', incorporated in the next LDP and associated documentation, will be prepared, providing guidance on how developer contributions for Play can be secured, the types of new development this applies to and the number of houses / units that will trigger the requirement. This guidance will also provide details of how developer contributions would be spent.

The Council will require developer contributions toward off-site enhancement of existing play space in circumstances where: i. The play space to be enhanced is easily accessible from the development and is of a size that can accommodate increased use generated by the development; and ii. The play space requires enhancement as a direct consequence of the development.

- ❖ **Climate:** Climate Adaptation planning is necessary for Play Areas. In hotter summers, metal play equipment may become unsuitable as a play infrastructure material, and more provision of shade will be necessary. Wetter winters and heavy rainfall events can flood play areas so consideration needs to be given to re-locating play areas outwith flooding zones, should funding permit.
- ❖ **Nature:** Continue to expand Natural Play opportunities, including 'play on the way' wooden play items alongside paths. Trees near play areas provide shade. Continue to expand opportunities for nature areas and natural habitat enhancement (e.g. wildflower areas, tree planting, hedgerows)

<sup>99</sup> 'Fields in Trust Standards: Creating Great Spaces for All' (2024) <https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/standards>

close to play areas, as appropriate and with suitable species, to enable children and young people to get close to nature.

- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing:** By their very nature, play areas provide a range of outdoor play and physical activity opportunities for children and young people, aimed at a range of ages and abilities, close to where people live. They provide fun, active and social spaces in the heart of our communities, and they are a cost-effective way to enable large numbers of children & young people to get active locally, for free. Continue to improve and renew existing priority Play Areas and continue to expand Pump Tracks across our communities, as funding becomes available.
- ❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement:** Continue East Lothian Council's proven track record of consultation and engagement with children and young people, as well as wider communities, to help inform play area development, renewal and improvement plans and proposals.



*Ormiston Park Play Area*

## 10.8 Allotments and Community Growing Spaces

### ***Definition***

Areas of land for growing vegetables, fruit and other plants, either in individual plots within formal allotment sites or in communal community growing spaces, including community gardens and orchards.

### ***Benefits of Allotments and Community Food Growing***

Allotments can provide a number of wider benefits to the community as well as the primary use of growing fruit and vegetables. These benefits include social gathering spaces, bringing people together from different backgrounds, intergenerational learning and environmental education, improving physical activity, mental health and wellbeing. They provide a local source of fresh, local produce, benefitting healthy eating, and help tackle climate change by reducing 'food miles' and the carbon footprint of food transportation. Community growing spaces, such as Community Gardens, can help reduce inequalities, improve social isolation and tackle poverty. Allotments and growing spaces also form important parts of the Green Network, and can benefit wildlife and nature through nature network enhancements.

### ***Existing Provision***

Existing Council provision of allotment sites in East Lothian is by Ward Area. The Council currently owns 8 allotment sites across the county (including two new sites under development), with 124 allotment plots and more in development. The Council manages allotment sites in Dunbar and North Berwick; local Allotment Associations manage, run and administer the allotment sites in Musselburgh (Inveresk) and Tranent. All allotment sites currently have lengthy waiting lists.

The Council also holds waiting lists for future allotment provision in Prestonpans Ward and Haddington Ward, to gauge future demand and ensure provision through the next Local Development Plan.

More allotments are due to be delivered through the current Local Development Plan (LDP 2018), including a new allotment site at Blindwells through Section 75.

There are existing community food growing sites across East Lothian on public land, run by volunteers and with important functions locally as growing spaces, social gathering and community spaces. These include the 'Men's Sheds' community growing site in St Ninian's Park, Musselburgh, near Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre, Mucklets community growing space in a housing area of Musselburgh, Prestonpans Community Garden on a site between Prestonpans Community Centre and NHS Health Centre, and Belhaven Community Garden in Dunbar, on NHS owned land at the former Belhaven Hospital site.

### ***Legislative Context***

Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015<sup>100</sup> sets out duties on Local Authorities, including duty to provide allotments, to prepare a food growing strategy and to take reasonable steps to increase the provision in its area of allotments or other areas of land for use by a community for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers.

### ***East Lothian Council's Food Growing Strategy and Local Development Plan process***

An Allotments and Local Food Growing Strategy for East Lothian is currently in early stages of development by the Council and will be delivered through stakeholder and community engagement and consultation. The

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<sup>100</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/part/9>

Allotment and Local Food Growing Strategy will provide details and analysis of current demand and future provision of allotments.

While East Lothian is an area with many households who have their own garden, the Council recognises that changing trends in the way we live have led to an increase in demand for allotments and this will be addressed through preparation work of the next Local Development Plan.

The importance of, need and demand for community food growing spaces across the county has also been recognised, and this will also be addressed through preparation work of the next Local Development Plan.



*Community growing & allotment site, St Ninians Park, Musselburgh*

### ***Demand Led Assessment***

As mentioned above the Council currently owns 8 allotment sites across East Lothian (including two new sites under development), with 124 allotment plots and more in development. At present there are extensive historical waiting lists for allotments which are currently being updated to reflect present demand. The current demand for allotment space is mainly concentrated in the larger towns.

The current Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP 2018) states that the Council's allotment strategy will seek to prioritise provision of allotment space for each cluster area within each cluster area as deemed necessary. In the event cluster provision is not possible the Council will provide allotment space at local authority level.

### ***Future Development Requirements for Allotments and Community Food Growing Spaces***

With current demand for allotment and community garden / community growing sites in East Lothian, and interest in participating in allotment and community food growing steadily increasing as people become more aware of the climate and nature emergencies and the health, wellbeing and societal benefits of growing spaces, there is an urgent need for more allotment and community growing spaces across East Lothian's towns and villages.

New allotment provision and community growing space is required in all Cluster Areas, in each of the larger towns but also in the smaller towns and villages.

### **Potential re-purposing of existing open space for allotments / community growing space**

**Re-purposing of existing open space into community gardens / community growing space will be considered favourably where there is no conflicting or competing use.**

Future provision could include re-purposing of existing open space, including amenity greenspaces near to housing, into community gardens / community growing space or allotments according to community demand and where there is no conflicting or competing use. Examples of potential new allotment / community food growing sites which could be explored on existing open space, identified through consultation or by local communities through Local Place Plans, include greenspace land in Musselburgh, Prestonpans, Haddington, Dunbar and North Berwick. There is also a demand for community food growing space in smaller rural communities, where less public open space is available; therefore there is a need to consider options to support residents to work with private landowners to identify potentially suitable sites.

## **New Developments**

**Consideration will be given to the provision of future allotment sites and community growing spaces through development work of the next Local Development Plan.**

For new developments, there should be on-site provision of community garden / community growing space and/or allotments, proportional to the scale of the development. If the Local Planning Authority considers that on-site growing space provision is not preferable then appropriate planning contribution, including land costs, will be sought to help deliver a new off-site community garden / community growing space / allotments provision or enhance an existing community growing space / allotments safely accessible within the locality. For further details see section 11.

- ❖ **Climate:** Allotments and community food growing spaces help to tackle the climate emergency locally by providing a local source of fresh, in-season produce, helping to build climate resilience, and by reducing 'food miles' and the carbon footprint of food transportation. Additional allotments and community food growing spaces are needed across our communities. As water becomes a scarcer resource due to climate change, it must be at the heart of allotment design by incorporating sustainability measures such as communal rainwater harvesting and storage infrastructure.
- ❖ **Nature:** Allotments and growing spaces form important parts of the Green Network and Nature Networks, and can benefit wildlife. Encourage local allotment plot holders and community growers to incorporate Nature Network enhancements in suitable locations as appropriate.
- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing:** Allotments and local community food growing spaces have multiple benefits to health and wellbeing, including reducing isolation and improving social cohesion by bringing people together from different backgrounds, intergenerational learning and environmental education, improving physical activity, mental health and wellbeing in the outdoors, and provide a local source of fresh, healthy produce, benefitting healthy eating. Expand sites according to demand.
- ❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement:** Community growing spaces, such as Community Gardens, can help reduce inequalities and social isolation, tackle poverty and support healthy eating. Ensure that allotment sites and community growing sites are of a sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs and aspirations of local residents. Support existing community growing spaces run by community groups, particularly in our more deprived areas, and support and encourage the development of new sites, including in rural communities, in partnership with local community organisations, according to local demand.

## 10.9 Cemeteries and Churchyards

A comprehensive Open Space Audit of East Lothian's publicly accessible cemeteries and churchyards was undertaken for the first time as part of the Open Space Audit 2024/25.

Across East Lothian there is cemetery provision in each Cluster Area, with each main town having at least one active cemetery. In addition, across East Lothian as a whole, there are 32 cemeteries although not all of these are 'within or on the edge of settlements' (those outwith settlement boundaries were excluded from the Open Space Audit for consistency).

In addition there are a number of historic churchyards and cemeteries, which have important heritage value. Across East Lothian's smallest settlements in the rural areas, churchyards and cemeteries were often some of the only public amenity open spaces of significant size, for example, in Whitekirk, Gladsmuir, Spott and Bolton. Almost all churchyards had mature trees and contributed to the nature network benefits and place-making of a settlement. Those in the centre of towns and villages can be important community gathering spaces and places for quiet contemplation. For example, the amenity space outside Yester Parish Church in Gifford is a community space with seating, flowers and attractive planting.



*Yester Parish Church, Gifford*

In St Andrews historic churchyard in North Berwick, there were information panels aimed at visitors, and tourists were observed exploring the site during the Audit.

At Athelstaneford Church is the National Flag Heritage Centre, telling the story of the 'Birthplace of Scotland's Flag', which is believed to have originated at a battle fought in the vicinity in 832AD. Significant improvements have been undertaken to the heritage centre within the historic doocot including a new disabled access path to reach it across the cemetery.

## ***Burial Ground Strategy and Future Cemetery Provision***

East Lothian Council has a statutory duty to provide burial grounds and must plan for future provision. The Council has a **Burial Ground Strategy**<sup>101</sup> (2015) and Regulations for the Management of Burial Grounds in East Lothian<sup>102</sup> in place. The Burial Ground Strategy sets out the strategy for the provision and management of burial grounds across the county, including plans for future provision to ensure adequate supply of burial space in East Lothian.

### **New Burial Space Provision**

The Burial Ground Strategy states that the provision of burial space within each individual town and large village will be prioritised, and in the event such local provision is not possible the Council will provide burial space at Cluster level, i.e. the Council will make future provision by combining local and Cluster based provision, according to the discrete options and restrictions that apply to each area.

The Burial Ground Strategy states that a balance has to be sought between the community favouring local provision and the physical, legislative and historic restrictions, the level of investment required to facilitate expansion and the likely operating life of the expanded facility.

**The model set out in the Burial Ground Strategy and adopted by the Council determines current priorities for developing cemetery sites, and includes the following specific provisions:**

- A proposed cemetery location must be free from restriction to develop as a result of SEPA, Historic Scotland or Local Plan determination or the costs associated with complying with such restrictions must fall within the prescribed financial model.
- All proposed sites must comply with the associated regulations and guidelines operated by the Planning Authority or SEPA.
- A site will only be considered suitable for development if it is capable of serving either the immediate geographic community, ward or cluster for a minimum of 50 years.
- New build housing developments will be required to demonstrate how burial provision needs can be met within their respective masterplans for the defined 50 year period. **In all cases the required provision will allow for 38% of the additional households at a rate of 4.5 burial spaces per household.**
- Each housing development will be considered in relation to availability of land already secured by the Council and if such facility exists or can be provided, developers will require to contribute a capital sum equal to the investment required to provide serviced lair space on an existing site to the volume required to meet the projected burial space needs of that development. In cases where no opportunity exists to extend an existing facility, or the scale of the extension would have an adverse effect on the identity of the facility, the developer will be required to allocate land and set aside funding to develop this land within the housing development footprint.
- The Council will also explore opportunities to develop, either directly or with partnership arrangements, green burial options that can contribute to the aims of protecting and enhancing the natural environment and allow for appropriate recreational use of such land.

Demand for new lair spaces and cemetery sites requires to be addressed. Consideration will be given to the provision of future burial ground space through development work of the next Local Development Plan.

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5511/cabinet>

<sup>102</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5672/members\\_library\\_service](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5672/members_library_service)

- ❖ **Climate:** Mature trees provide shade, sequester carbon, and help manage surface water. Continue to expand fleet of EV maintenance vehicles to reduce emissions.
- ❖ **Nature:** Cemeteries and churchyards can be havens for wildlife. Continue to expand Nature Network enhancements in suitable sites within cemeteries and churchyards, as appropriate.
- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing:** These sites are generally peaceful green spaces, places for quiet contemplation often in the heart of our busy towns and villages. Appropriate seating and pathway enhancements can be considered, being mindful of sensitivities and community views.
- ❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement:** Ongoing engagement with stakeholders and local communities is essential in these most sensitive of sites if any maintenance regime changes or improvements are planned.

## 11.0 PROPOSALS AND GUIDANCE FOR OPEN SPACE IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

### 11.1 Context and Guiding Principles

The Open Space Audit 2024/25 included assessment of open spaces in new and recent housing development sites. The findings of the Audit, combined with the public feedback on the Draft Open Space Strategy, have enabled the development of **proposals / guiding principles and requirements** for the quantity, quality and accessibility of new open spaces in future developments.

This Open Space Strategy sets the strategic framework for open space in new developments that will guide and inform the preparation of detailed policies in the next **Local Development Plan (LDP2)**. The detailed policies and priorities for open space in new developments will be developed through the LDP2 iterative process.

#### The Open Space Strategy

- provides a strategic framework to inform LDP2
- contains proposals / guiding principles, including on
  - Minimum open space quantity and quality thresholds and requirements for new developments, for provision of high quality, useable, multi-functional open space across a development site, and including potentially allotments, community food growing spaces and cemetery space
  - Importance of green infrastructure connectivity / landscaping in addition to the 'useable open spaces'
  - Phasing the delivery of open space in new developments
  - Principles / conditions for accepting off-site contributions in lieu of on-site provision

#### The next Local Development Plan (LDP2)

- will contain the detailed policies for implementation
  - The policies in LDP2 will be informed by the Open Space Strategy
  - These will include policies on open space, but also on other matters, e.g. design, biodiversity etc.

### 11.2 Current Minimum Open Space Standard for New Housing Development in LDP 2018

The Minimum Open Space Standard for New General Needs Housing Development set out in the current **Local Development Plan (2018)** Policy OS3 is as follows:

## Current Open Space Standard in the Local Development Plan 2018:

### Policy OS3: Minimum Open Space Standard for New General Needs Housing Development

*“Developments of 20 and more dwellings must provide open space in line with Section 1. On-site provision of open space is encouraged for developments of less than 20 dwellings but is not required. The Council will require developer contributions in lieu of on-site provision of open space in line with Section 2. Developers must make provision for the future management and maintenance of open space to the satisfaction of the Council.*

#### ***“Section 1: On-site provision***

*“For developments of 20 and more dwellings the minimum requirement for on-site provision of open space is 60m<sup>2</sup> per dwelling. This will consist of provision of formal and informal open space as well as space for equipped play areas in accordance with Policy OS4. Proposal shall also make provision for natural green space, which will provide suitable recreational opportunities close to home, and where possible will link these areas to wider networks including core paths and recreational routes. Arrangements must be in place for management and maintenance of all types of open space to the satisfaction of the Council.*

*“Where a development forms part of an area for which there is a masterplan approved by the Council, open space must be provided in accordance with the approved masterplan; this may require greater provision than that described above.*

*“Where developers justify an exceptional circumstance that is acceptable to the Council it may reduce the minimum standard.*

#### ***“Section 2: Off-site enhancement***

*“The Council will require developer contributions toward off-site enhancement of existing open space in circumstances where:*

- i. The open space to be enhanced is easily accessible from the development and is of a size that can accommodate increased use generated by the development; and*
- ii. The fabric of the open space requires enhancement as a direct consequence of the development.*

*“Arrangements must be in place for management and maintenance to the satisfaction of the Council.”*

## 11.3 East Lothian Requirements and Principles for Open Space in New Developments

### 11.3.1 Requirements and Expectations for Open Space in New Developments:

This Open Space Strategy has identified the requirements and expectations for open space provision in new developments that are set out in this chapter (section 11.4), to ensure that future parks and open spaces meet the standards and deliver multiple benefits to our communities and society whilst enabling us to tackle the climate and nature emergencies, utilising nature-based solutions to create better places that are climate adapted, resilient and nature-rich.

### 11.3.2 East Lothian Council's Principles for Open Space in New Developments:

#### Principles for Open Space in New Developments:

##### Aims:

- To ensure access to high-quality, accessible open spaces for all within new housing development, to ensure fairness and equity across housing tenures and communities, to conserve and enhance the character of East Lothian and its settlements, and to deliver climate adapted, resilient and nature-rich places.
- To enable everyone, of all ages, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds and including those with protected characteristics, to benefit from having sufficient, high quality, accessible open space / greenspace close to where they live, and to deliver the Outcomes set out in this Open Space Strategy.

**Principles:** New housing developments must include provision of the required quantity (relative to the size of the development), high quality and accessibility of publicly accessible open space, which can support and benefit the health and wellbeing of all residents and members of the community across the life-course from pre-birth/early years into later life. Conversions, backland or infill urban sites will be considered differently on a case-by-case basis, as set out in section 11.4.1 below.

In addition, the development proposal must include suitable arrangements for the ongoing management and maintenance of the open space resource, that are adaptive to future climate change, to ensure these high standards of open space are maintained.

### 11.3.3 Quantity, Quality and Accessibility Standards for Open Space for New Developments

**Quantity:** As a minimum, East Lothian Council requires provision of 60m<sup>2</sup> of useable<sup>103</sup>, public open space per household for new developments, however there is an expectation that relevant developments will also provide additional green space in the form of landscaping and green infrastructure e.g. SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems).

#### East Lothian Council's open space quantity standard is as follows:

The East Lothian Open Space Quantity Standard is a minimum of 60m<sup>2</sup> of publicly accessible open space per dwelling. Provision of formal and informal open space is expected, and should include large, consolidated areas of useable open space. Open spaces should be multifunctional and can include town and local parks, sports pitches, civic space, play provision and community growing space. Informal amenity open space should also be provided. Open Space provision will form a key part of the provision of a wider strategic Green Network.

In addition to the open space provision requirement, connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks are required to be provided on-site in new developments to enhance the amenity value and biodiversity. This should include sufficient, diverse landscaping and tree planting to support Green Network connectivity within the site, and to the wider Green Network beyond the site boundaries. See further details in section 11.4.3 below.

<sup>103</sup> Refer to Quality Standards.



*Pinkie Park, Pinkie Braes, Musselburgh*

It is important to maintain, and increase wherever possible, the current levels of open space per settlement or development site of at least 60m<sup>2</sup> per household, to ensure that everyone benefits from open space close to their homes and ensure that Open Space in East Lothian meets the requirements in NPF4 Policy 20.

**Quality:** When assessed against the Open Space Quality Assessment Criteria (as set out in section 7.5) the Council expects Town Parks and Local Parks to achieve a minimum score of 70% and amenity green space to achieve a minimum score of 60%.

All new housing developments are expected to achieve these minimum quality scores for open space, ensuring provision of high quality publicly accessible open space, which can support and benefit the health and wellbeing of all residents and members of the community throughout a lifetime.

In addition, the development proposal must include suitable arrangements for the ongoing management and maintenance of the open space resource, that are adaptive to future climate change, to ensure these high standards of open space are maintained. This should be considered in balance within affordability of factoring fee for residents.

Section 11.4.2 below includes key priorities for open space in East Lothian, expected in new developments. Detailed guidance will be developed through the LDP2 process.

**Accessibility:** The Council has set maximum catchments for facilities, including 1.2km for Town Parks, 1.2km or provision within the Cluster Area for Sports Pitches, 400m for Local Parks, and 800m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) and 240m for Local Areas of Play (LAPs). New development will normally be expected to meet these standards. Each home should also normally be within 300m of the Green Network.

The accessibility needs of all members of the community, of all ages, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds and including those with protected characteristics, should be considered to ensure everyone can access open space / greenspace close to where they live. Appropriate access provision should address the needs of all open space user groups, including for walking, wheeling, cycling, recreational dog walking and active travel commuting. Detailed guidance will be developed through the LDP2 process.



*Meiklepark Road Greenspace, Dunbar*

## **11.4 Guidelines for Development: Open Space Requirements for New Development**

This section sets out guidelines and requirements for open space in new developments in East Lothian, which will guide and inform the preparation of detailed policies in the next Local Development Plan (LDP2). This section includes:

- Guidance on required open space provision for new developments of different scales and types;
- Key Priorities for open space expected in new developments in East Lothian;
- Green Infrastructure requirements and expectations for new developments; and
- Phasing the delivery of open space in new developments.

### **11.4.1 Open Space provision required for new developments in East Lothian:**

The following are the expectations for open space in new housing developments. These have arisen through the Open Space Audit work and feedback from the public consultation for this Open Space Strategy, to identify the needs and requirements for open space in our communities.

These expectations are aimed at ensuring the protection and enhancement of parks and open spaces, to ensure their quality and accessibility to all, and to ensure that future parks and open spaces meet the standards and deliver multiple benefits to our communities and society whilst enabling us to tackle the climate and nature emergencies, utilising nature-based solutions to create better places that are climate adapted, resilient and nature-rich.

The size and scale of future development sites will be identified through the development work for LDP2 as will the detailed requirements for each site.

The expectations set out below are therefore indicative for future housing developments of different scales, taking into account the outcomes of the development of this strategy and the current requirements and thresholds in the LDP (2018).

These expectations will guide and inform the preparation of detailed policies in LDP2. This will include detailed consideration of how best to implement these ambitions in balance with East Lothian housing needs and wider Council priorities, and will be developed through LDP2 and supporting guidance for implementation.



*College Way Greenspace with paths, seating and SuDS, Gullane*

**The following Open Space provision is required for new developments in East Lothian:**

**1. For smaller-scale new housing and flatted developments (e.g. 10 to 19 units developments; exact number to be defined in LDP2 policies):**

- a) As a minimum there must be an accessible area, ideally centrally located, of consolidated, useable, high-quality public open space for use by the residents and visitors to access the outdoors and as a social/community gathering space. Open space should be designed to respond to the character of the settlement and wider landscape, as set out in 'Appendix 1 – Landscape Character Areas' of the East Lothian Council (2018) Special Landscape Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance<sup>104</sup> (or any updates to this). This should be accessible for all and include suitable tree planting, grass open space for multi-use informal recreation, landscaping/planting, seating and may include play equipment items and community garden / community growing space.
- b) On-site play provision is expected to be provided, as set out in section 10.7 of this strategy. If the Local Planning Authority considers that on-site play provision is not preferable, then appropriate planning

<sup>104</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13103/supplementary\\_planning\\_guidance\\_spg](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13103/supplementary_planning_guidance_spg)

contribution will be sought and secured to help deliver a new off-site play provision or enhance an existing play area safely accessible within the locality. This does not preclude developers from considering, in addition, innovative ways to introduce opportunities for informal play / natural play / outdoor gym/exercise equipment / play on the way etc. in open space design, particularly on key routes to schools etc.

- c) In addition to the open space / play space provision, there is a requirement for connected, high-quality green infrastructure / landscaping / green networks to be provided on-site. It is expected that green infrastructure / landscaping / green networks will be seamlessly integrated into the landscape design of open space on site, to enhance the amenity value and biodiversity through green network connectivity. This should include sufficient landscaping and tree planting to support green network connectivity within and outwith the site.
- d) Although SuDS are not counted towards open space provision there is an expectation that they will be integrated across developments to form part of the high-quality landscape that enhances amenity and maximises biodiversity enhancement. East Lothian Council's 'Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Supplementary Planning Guidance'<sup>105</sup> should be referred to for further guidance.
- e) Where flatted residential housing is proposed there should be consolidated area(s) of high quality, attractive and diverse, useable public open space provision on-site in close proximity to the flats for informal and passive recreational use.
- f) As set out in the Council's 'Design Standards for New Housing Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance'<sup>106</sup>, within flatted developments each apartment must have access to private or communal open space. This can be provided in the form of private gardens for ground floor flats, balconies, roof gardens or terraces, or communal space. This should include the provision of drying greens. Provision of communal space could encourage social interaction and improve social cohesion / neighbour relations. Further guidance will be updated through LDP2.
- g) The Council will require developer contributions toward off-site enhancement of existing public open space in circumstances where: i. The developer has not been able to fulfil requirements (a), (b), (c), and ii. the open space to be enhanced is within 400 metres of the development site and is easily accessible for all abilities from the development, and is of a size that can accommodate increased use generated by the development. If the off-site open space is not accessible, then the developer will be expected to provide access connectivity such as via a path link, widened footways and road crossings (which may need to be signalled). If no existing open space is available that meets these criteria, then on-site provision of public open space is required.

## **2. For intermediate-scale housing developments (e.g. 20 to 49 units; exact number to be defined in LDP2 policies):**

In addition to the above (point 1),

- a) As a minimum there must be an accessible, ideally centrally located<sup>107</sup>, Local Park or similar large area of consolidated, high-quality, useable public open space for use by the residents and visitors to access the outdoors and as a social/community gathering space. This should include suitable tree planting, landscaping/planting, accessible paths and seating as set out above. Amenity greenspace provision, of suitable quality and accessibility for a range of ages and abilities, is also expected in close vicinity of residential housing areas.
- b) There should be on-site play provision, as set out in section 10.7 of this strategy. If the Local Planning Authority considers that either on-site play provision is not preferable or there is only limited on-site

<sup>105</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/28559/suds\\_spg](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/28559/suds_spg)

<sup>106</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30110/design\\_standards\\_for\\_new\\_housing\\_areas\\_spg\\_2020](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30110/design_standards_for_new_housing_areas_spg_2020)

<sup>107</sup> Detailed policies will be defined through LDP2.

provision, then appropriate planning contribution will be sought to help deliver a new off-site play provision or enhance an existing play area safely accessible within the locality.

- c) There should be on-site provision of community garden / community growing space and/or allotments, proportional to the scale of the development, as set out in section 10.8 of this strategy. If the Local Planning Authority considers that on-site growing space provision is not preferable then appropriate planning contribution, including land costs, will be sought to help deliver a new off-site community garden / community growing space / allotments provision or enhance an existing community growing space / allotments safely accessible within the locality.
- d) In addition, greenspace / green network connectivity must be provided on-site and connecting outwith the site as appropriate, as set out in point 1 (c) above.



*Hallhill South-West Park (Torry Wynd / Alexander Gardens), Dunbar*

### **3. For large-scale housing developments (e.g. 50 and over units; exact number to be defined in LDP2 policies):**

In addition to the above (point 1),

- a) As a minimum there must be at least an accessible, centrally located large Town Park or Local Park (depending on development size), as well as additional Local Park(s) (depending on development size) of consolidated, useable, high-quality, green public open space strategically located across the site (i.e. distributed in a manner that ensures equitable access for all residents, unless it can be demonstrated that this is not feasible) for use by the residents and visitors to access the outdoors and as a social/community gathering space. Parks should include suitable tree planting (i.e. diverse, climate resilient tree planting, and varied planting typologies within landscaped areas), landscaping/planting, nature network enhancements, accessible paths, seating including hang-out spaces, bins, social gathering space / civic space. Any parks included within large residential sites should, as far as practically possible, be connected with other areas of open space through landscaping/planting scheme (e.g. through the use of green wedges / corridors, which could include walking / cycling routes and roads within a high-quality landscape setting, with an appropriate planting scheme) in order to create a green network that provides environmental, social and health benefits

to local residents and the wider community. This should include amenity greenspace provision, of suitable quality and accessibility for a range of ages and abilities, in close vicinity of residential housing areas.

- b) Play provision is required on-site, as set out in section 10.7 of this strategy.
- c) Community gardens / community growing spaces and allotments provision on-site, based on scale of development, as set out in section 10.8 of this strategy. Under exceptional circumstances the Council may consider an off-site contribution to allotments or community gardens. This will be calculated on a case-by-case basis.
- d) Other smaller parks / open space areas with suitable tree planting, landscaping, paths and seating should also be provided as appropriate to the site.
- e) In addition, greenspace / green network connectivity must be provided on-site and connecting outwith the site as appropriate, as set out in point 1 (c) above.

#### **4. Conversions, backland or infill urban sites:**

- (a) There is an expectation that suitable public open space is provided on-site in all new developments, however, where buildings are being converted from commercial premises to residential use or small brownfield sites are being redeveloped but fail to meet the 60m<sup>2</sup> of public open space per household requirement due to limited external space then the Council may accept a lesser provision provided that the developer contribution towards open space provision and green networks within the locality and at settlement level to ensure the overall level of open space does not reduce.
- (b) Furthermore, new built development will be expected to demonstrate innovative ways to provide outdoor space for residents on-site within the development, for example through roof gardens/terraces and green spaces for biodiversity through vertical gardens and green roofs. As set out in the Council's 'Design Standards for New Housing Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance'<sup>108</sup>, within flatted developments each apartment must have access to private or communal open space. This can be provided in the form of private gardens for ground floor flats, balconies, roof gardens or terraces, or communal space. This should include the provision of drying greens. Provision of communal space could encourage social interaction and improve social cohesion / neighbour relations. Further guidance will be updated through LDP2.

#### **5. For other new developments (i.e. non-residential developments):**

- a) Connected, high-quality green infrastructure / landscaping / green networks are required to be provided on-site, appropriate to the type and scale of development. This should include areas of consolidated green open space to benefit climate resilience, nature and the health and wellbeing of staff and customers.
- b) Although SuDS basins are not counted towards open space provision there is an expectation that they will be integrated across developments to form part of the high quality landscape that enhances amenity and maximises biodiversity enhancement. East Lothian Council's 'Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Supplementary Planning Guidance'<sup>109</sup> should be referred to for further guidance

### **11.4.2 Key Priorities for Open Space expected in new developments in East Lothian:**

The following list of Key Priorities for Open Space, as identified through this Open Space Strategy, should guide provision for new developments as appropriate to the site. These priorities will help shape the detailed policies

<sup>108</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30110/design\\_standards\\_for\\_new\\_housing\\_areas\\_spg\\_2020](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30110/design_standards_for_new_housing_areas_spg_2020)

<sup>109</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/28559/suds\\_spg](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/28559/suds_spg)

to be developed through LDP2. LDP2 development work will include detailed consideration of the balance with feasibility and deliverability, and any potential impacts on ensuring the housing / affordable housing needs of East Lothian's population are best met.

#### **Key Priorities for Open Space in East Lothian, expected in New Developments:**

- Nature Network<sup>110</sup> areas and connectivity to enhance biodiversity, including wildflower areas such as areas of nature-rich grassland and tree planting;
- Green infrastructure and blue infrastructure connectivity and use of multi-functional and integrated nature-based solutions;
- Open areas of amenity grass for multi-use, informal recreation and enjoying the outdoors;
- Seating / benches – ensuring sufficient accessible (for a range of abilities including disabilities) seating of the right types, suitable for all potential user groups, in the right places, including hang-out spaces and shelter;
- Suitable paths and access, particularly for people with a range of abilities including disabilities, ensuring connectivity, signage / promotion and sensitively considered lighting, as appropriate (signage and lighting should be well-sited and, where possible, co-located to reduce clutter);
- Facilities to ensure everyone can benefit from and enjoy the open spaces, including facilities for people with a range of protected characteristics, and a range of ages;
- Active travel connectivity to surrounding area / local amenities, and active travel infrastructure on-site including cycle racks, signage, dropped kerbs, etc.;
- Appropriate play provision, which may include formal equipped play provision, 'play-on-the-way', natural play opportunities, or a combination of these; outdoor gym/exercise equipment;
- Community gardens, community food growing spaces and/or allotments;
- Community gathering spaces / community event space;
- Suitable arrangements for ongoing management and maintenance, that are adaptive to climate change.

#### **11.4.3 Green Infrastructure requirements and expectations for new developments:**

As set out in the current Local Development Plan (2018) and in the Council's 'Design Standards for New Housing Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance', incidental landscaped areas or areas of planting, footways, roads, private gardens, and allotments, will not contribute to open space quantity requirements.

In addition to the open space provision requirement, connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks are required to be provided on-site in new developments to enhance the amenity value and biodiversity, avoiding fragmentation. This should include active travel routes, green corridors linking open spaces, woodlands and meadowlands, areas with biodiversity value and areas for seating and rest, sufficient, diverse landscaping and tree planting to support green network connectivity within the site, and to the wider green network beyond the site boundaries. Green and blue infrastructure also forms part of the strategic Green Network.

<sup>110</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside\\_and\\_wildlife/12104/biodiversity\\_and\\_nature\\_networks/2](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210569/countryside_and_wildlife/12104/biodiversity_and_nature_networks/2)

Service strips, which are a separate infrastructure requirement, must be clearly planned in the design proposals for new developments and must not impact on the landscaped areas of green and blue infrastructure and green network connectivity, including trees.

Although SuDS are not counted towards open space provision there is an expectation that they will be integrated across developments to form part of the high-quality landscape that enhances amenity and maximises biodiversity enhancement. East Lothian Council's SuDS Supplementary Planning Guidance should be referred to for further guidance.



*Green infrastructure: SuDS basin at Millar Gardens, North Berwick*

#### **11.4.4 Phasing the delivery of open space in new developments:**

The delivery of open space, including play areas, within new housing developments must be phased to align with the initial occupancy of homes. It is expected that the phasing of open space provision will be agreed with the Council to ensure that accessible local open space is available in tandem with the progression of the housing development.

## 12.0 ACTION PLAN

The East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 will be implemented through the Action Plan which provides strategic objectives and associated tasks. The Plan has been created to be undertaken over a 10-year period but will require updating as changes occur.

**Delivery:** Delivery of actions in the Action Plan will involve a collaboration between East Lothian Council, NHS Lothian, Third Sector, community partners, other representative groups and other stakeholders.

**Outcomes:** The Outcomes of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 which each action helps to deliver are identified in the Action Plan table according to the following numbering:

Outcomes for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026:

1. Improving health, wellbeing and physical activity
2. Climate change mitigation and adaptation
3. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity
4. Improving access for all to green spaces, open spaces and green networks
5. Ensuring equality by meeting the needs of specific groups so everyone in society benefits
6. Creating successful, vibrant, liveable and sustainable places

**Timescales:** short (1 – 2 years), medium (3 – 5 years), long (6+ years).

## 12.1 Action Plan Table

Ref.	Action	Key Outcomes addressed	Timescale (short, med, long)	Priority (High, Med, Low)
<b>Community Engagement and Involvement</b>				
1.	<b><i>Working with Communities</i></b> Ensure that community engagement and involvement is embedded at every stage of the process to shape and deliver open space quality improvements to the existing open space resource in the Cluster areas. Achieve effective community involvement through consultation, encouraging a sense of public 'ownership' and stewardship, through involvement in the design and management of major open space developments, ongoing improvements and specific open space issues.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	Most Urgent / Highest Priority
2.	<b><i>Community Involvement</i></b> Encourage and support the formation of local volunteer groups, such as 'Friends Of' or 'In Bloom' groups, to support the enhancement of specific parks and open space. Support the development of community gardens / community woodlands / community growing spaces.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	High
3.	<b><i>Promotion and Marketing</i></b> Work with local groups and organisations to identify the best platforms for promoting and publicising events / activities and local management underway in parks & greenspaces, as appropriate. Continue to roll out 'information hubs' on the Council's website for parks and open spaces, as appropriate.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	Medium
<b>Equitable Access to Quality Green Spaces</b>				
4.	<b><i>Ensure Equality by Involving a Range of Groups</i></b> Involve specific groups, for example people with disabilities or other mobility issues, women and girls, older people, those with protected characteristics, and including children and young people, in proposals for open space improvement, to ensure proposals meet needs of a range of groups and to embed lived experience.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	High

Ref.	Action	Key Outcomes addressed	Timescale (short, med, long)	Priority (High, Med, Low)
5.	<b><i>Prioritise Greenspace Improvements in More Deprived Areas</i></b> Based on the Open Space Audit and Quality Assessment, prioritise open spaces and greenspaces for improvement, with a particular focus on more deprived areas of the county, working in partnership with key stakeholders including local communities and partner agencies.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Medium	Most Urgent / Highest Priority
6.	<b><i>Prioritise Investment to Reduce Health Inequalities</i></b> Work with partners, including NHS Lothian Partnership and Place team, to identify funding sources and target investment in parks and greenspaces where health inequalities are greatest.	1, 4, 5	Medium	Most Urgent / Highest Priority
7.	<b><i>Public Open Space Provision in Rural Areas</i></b> Support rural communities to identify suitable areas of land for community open space for public use, working with adjacent landowners and other relevant stakeholders.	5, 6	Long	Medium
<b>Effective Partnership Working</b>				
8.	<b><i>Working with Partners</i></b> Work in partnership with partner organisations / agencies, local community representatives and other key stakeholders to effectively deliver appropriate open space quality improvements to the existing open space resource in the Cluster areas.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	High
<b>Healthier Communities</b>				
9.	<b><i>Deliver Health, Wellbeing and Physical Activity Benefits</i></b> Work in partnership with key stakeholders including local communities, partner agencies and developers, to deliver local enhancements to benefit health & wellbeing, identified through this strategy and other emerging relevant strategies including the Physical Activity Strategy.	1, 4, 5, 6	Medium	High

Ref.	Action	Key Outcomes addressed	Timescale (short, med, long)	Priority (High, Med, Low)
10.	<b><i>Support and Encourage Healthy Lifestyles</i></b> Work with partner agencies to link the Open Space Strategy to the Health and Wellbeing agenda and promote open spaces as places to relax, exercise and play. Support the development of community gardening / growing projects. Explore links to schools projects, community events, health walks, Green Social Prescribing.	1, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	High
11.	<b><i>Community Events &amp; Education Programme</i></b> Continue to support the use of greenspaces by local groups and organisations for holding appropriate local events and activities. Encourage dialogue between community groups and ELC Officers to support and encourage community initiatives and events, where appropriate.	1, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	Medium
<b>Climate Resilient Places – Tackling the Climate Emergency</b>				
12.	<b><i>Develop and Enhance Nature-Based Solutions</i></b> Work in partnership with relevant stakeholders, including communities, to identify opportunities to enhance the climate resilience of our places through greenspace enhancements, green and blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions identified at strategic and local levels.	1, 2, 3, 6	Medium	High
13.	<b><i>Deliver Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Measures Locally</i></b> Work with relevant partners including communities to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation outcomes in parks and open spaces as identified through this strategy and other relevant strategies including the Climate Change Strategy and Area Plans.	1, 2, 3, 6	Ongoing	High
<b>Protect and Enhance Biodiversity – Tackling the Nature Emergency</b>				
14.	<b><i>Expand and Enhance Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces</i></b> Continue to roll out Nature Network enhancements in parks and greenspaces in line with the 'Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces' Action Plan to protect and enhance	1, 2, 3, 6	Ongoing	High

Ref.	Action	Key Outcomes addressed	Timescale (short, med, long)	Priority (High, Med, Low)
	biodiversity, working with community groups. Deliver the objectives of the forthcoming Local Biodiversity Action Plan.			
15.	<b>Tree Planting</b> Contribute to delivering the requirements of the Tree and Woodland Strategy to increase tree canopy cover in urban areas; continue and expand tree planting programmes such as 'TreeTime East Lothian' to support delivery of the East Lothian Climate Forest.	1, 2, 3, 6	Ongoing	High
16.	<b>Protect Natural Heritage</b> Protect the status of historic parks, Ancient Woodland, Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Local Biodiversity Sites, SSSIs and SPAs, and enhance the natural resource. Implement the recommendations of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) when setting management objectives for historic parks, wildlife sites, LNR and other sites. Ensure that any open space improvements adhere to the LBAP to safeguard target priority species and their habitats.	1, 2, 3, 6	Ongoing	High
17.	<b>Vacant or Derelict Sites</b> Work with local communities to identify vacant or derelict sites that could be enhanced and developed for nature network and/or community growing projects.	1, 2, 3, 6	Medium	Medium
<b>High Quality Network of Open Spaces</b>				
18.	<b>Quality Open Space – Council owned/managed sites</b> All amenity open space should be brought up to the 60% quality standard through a rolling programme of quality upgrades, focusing on the Priority sites identified in the Open Space Audit, as funding and resources allow. All parks should be brought up to the 70% quality standard through a rolling programme of quality upgrades, as funding and resources allow.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	High
19.	<b>Quality Open Space – Privately owned / Housing Association owned/managed sites</b> Explore how best to work with key stakeholders, including developers, Housing Associations, Factors and residents, and develop mechanisms to improve the quality standards of privately owned open spaces where needed/appropriate, focusing on priority sites. Planning	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Medium	Medium

Ref.	Action	Key Outcomes addressed	Timescale (short, med, long)	Priority (High, Med, Low)
	Enforcement where open space requirements are not being met by developers / private providers.			
20.	<b>Play Space</b> Provision of high quality play space and associated facilities, providing play opportunities for children and young people of a range of ages and abilities, in line with the Play Sufficiency Assessment recommendations. Ensure that all play areas operated and maintained by the Council are in good condition, well maintained and litter free.	1, 4, 5, 6	Ongoing	High
21.	<b>Allotments &amp; Local Food Growing Sites</b> Ensure that allotment sites and community growing sites in East Lothian are of a sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs and aspirations of local residents. Support the development of new sites as appropriate. Completion and delivery of the Allotments & Local Food Growing Strategy.	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	Medium	High
<b>Enhance Green Network Capacity and Connectivity</b>				
22.	<b>Green Networks</b> All residents should have access to networks of semi-natural greenspace / green networks, providing access to the countryside. Ensure that open spaces are “joined up” in coordinated, high-quality, multi-functional, green and blue networks that connect existing open spaces, provide wildlife corridors / nature networks in line with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, strengthen local identity and enhance our communities.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Medium	High
23.	<b>Access Networks</b> Ensure paths and active travel routes are fit for purpose for a range of ages and abilities. Integrate settlement open space network with ELC Core Path network, active travel network and wider path network, in line with Outdoor Access objectives and Active Travel Improvement Plan. Ensure that open space development optimises links with ELC Core Path,	1, 4, 5, 6	Medium	Medium

Ref.	Action	Key Outcomes addressed	Timescale (short, med, long)	Priority (High, Med, Low)
	active travel and wider path network. Ensure connectivity of parks and open spaces (recognising their role as 'destinations' for the wider communities) with local active and sustainable transport modes, including buses, to reduce reliance on the car to access parks and greenspaces.			
24.	<b><i>Access to the Countryside</i></b> Ensure that open spaces on the urban fringe maximise access to the countryside, providing links to the rural path network, Strategic Path Routes (e.g. John Muir Way and Core Path Network), seafront access, promenades and beaches.	1, 4, 5, 6	Medium	Low
<b>Sustainable Growth and Development</b>				
25.	<b><i>Open Space Requirements for New Developments</i></b> Use the LDP2 process to take into account all standards and requirements set out in sections 7 and 11 of this Open Space Strategy to develop policies which seek to deliver high-quality open space provision in all relevant new developments.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Short	High
26.	<b><i>Management and Maintenance Requirements for Open Space in New Developments</i></b> Use the LDP2 policy development process to ensure that suitable arrangements for the ongoing management and maintenance of open space in new developments are in place.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Short	High
27.	<b><i>Off-site Developer Contributions</i></b> Off-site enhancement, through the use of Section 75 agreements, may be considered on a case-by-case basis. A 'Developer Contribution Protocol', incorporated in the next LDP (LDP2) and associated documentation, will be prepared, providing guidance on how developer contributions can be secured to enhance existing parks in the close vicinity, the types of new development this applies to and the number of houses / units that will trigger the requirement.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Short	High

Ref.	Action	Key Outcomes addressed	Timescale (short, med, long)	Priority (High, Med, Low)
<b>Effective Management of Open Space including Infrastructure Improvements</b>				
28.	<p><b><i>Prepare Park Management Plans for Specific Sites</i></b></p> <p>Work collaboratively in partnership with key stakeholders and partners, including local communities and involving specific groups as appropriate, to develop Park Management Plans for specific parks and open space sites as required, to deliver improvements and enhancements to open space in line with the requirements, standards and outcomes of this Open Space Strategy. Park Management Plans may include reviewing Land Management Rules for Parks and Greenspaces, developing specific Infrastructure improvements, and should address the management issues identified in this Open Space Strategy, as appropriate, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety improvements</li> <li>• Seating, lighting and other facilities</li> <li>• Improving paths and active travel connections for all abilities</li> <li>• Nature network enhancements</li> <li>• Green infrastructure including nature-based solutions</li> <li>• Play spaces and community food growing/allotment spaces</li> <li>• Dog management</li> <li>• Climate impacts / climate change adaptation</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Medium	Most Urgent / Highest Priority
29.	<p><b><i>Funding Mechanisms</i></b></p> <p>Continue to explore alternative and blended funding mechanisms to deliver actions in parks and greenspaces, including collaborative working with key partners and community representatives to develop projects with transformative funding mechanisms; explore opportunities for new blended model of green finance (e.g. combination of public, private, philanthropic finance) and aim to attract future investment to ensure ongoing sustainable delivery of nature-based projects.</p>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Medium	Most Urgent / Highest Priority

Ref.	Action	Key Outcomes addressed	Timescale (short, med, long)	Priority (High, Med, Low)
30.	<b><i>Maintenance of Open Spaces</i></b> Review maintenance regimes and standards with a view to keeping open spaces maintained to a good standard and taking account of climate change adaptation as necessary.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Short	High
31.	<b><i>Open Space Audit</i></b> Review and update the baseline Open Space / Sports Pitch Audit information on at least a five yearly cycle. Review and update the Open Space Strategy on a ten yearly cycle in line with Local Development Plan. Monitor and reassess existing sites for improvements to achieve standards.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Medium	High
32.	<b><i>Monitoring Change</i></b> Ensure regular updating of the Open Space Audit database, adding new sites / recording improvements, carefully detailed on a change log.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Short	High

## **13.0 NEXT STEPS**

### **13.1 Delivery**

The Open Space Strategy is intended to provide the Council's Open Space managers with a 'tool' to focus and prioritise the management of open space, ensuring that the Council has a clear strategic direction to its open space investment and asset management, and as a basis to seek and obtain funding for delivery.

The Open Space Strategy aligns with key Council priorities. Working collaboratively with and involving our communities and other key partners and stakeholders, to prioritise equitable and inclusive open space improvements in Cluster Areas, will be a key delivery mechanism for the Open Space Strategy.

The Council is committed through the Council Plan to working alongside and building capacity and resilience across our communities and the involvement in and use of our open spaces has an important role in that. Recent works and improvements in delivery of open space projects in partnership with Friends Of and other community groups provide confidence in this empowering partnership approach for communities.

### **13.2 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Best practice recommends that a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should be set up to establish a formal and measurable process to record outputs and outcomes. It is vital that the Open Space Strategy becomes a part of the day-to-day management of the Council's open space resource.

The monitoring process should address the following issues:

- Open Space Audit
- Stakeholder and community engagement
- Capital and funding programme
- Prioritised open space quality improvements
- User satisfaction and feedback

Changes to the open space resource and updating of the Open Space Audit database will be monitored and recorded through the Change Log, adding new sites / recording improvements. A log of new and consented open space sites will be maintained (with accompanying mapping), that will inform the Open Space Strategy reviews.

The evaluation will inform the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan updates.

It is intended that updates on progress for key themes within the Strategy can and will be reported through the range of governance routes available, which will include but not be limited to the Members' Library and East Lothian Partnership Governance Group and respective sub-groups. It is intended that there will be a Strategy mid-point review in year 5.

### **13.3 GIS Mapping and Database Design**

An important element in planning for the Audit was to understand the need for information and securing all necessary agreements on how data was being managed, co-ordinated and accessed, together with appropriate protocols for GIS mapping and data capture. Care was taken in ensuring that change records were established for the database ensuring that any changes were properly logged and reported and to ensure consistent results along the process of data gathering and quality assessing.

It is important to note that the Audit is a dynamic piece of work and the sites included in the study should be considered to be part of an ongoing process. The information recorded in the GIS and Excel database should be reviewed on an annual basis and added to as work is undertaken, to ensure that the information remains current.

## **14.0 Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to the Chief Executive of Greenspace Scotland for kind permission to reproduce Greenspace Scotland's infographic on the benefits and impact of quality greenspace, 'What Can Greenspace Do?'.

We would like to thank NHS Lothian Partnership and Place team for additional input into this Strategy.

We are grateful to all those who participated in the public consultation, passed on views and feedback, and engaged with the development of this Strategy to help ensure it meets the needs of our communities.

## Report produced by

East Lothian Council's Amenity Services, with Planning Service and input from officers across Council Service Areas including the Climate and Nature Emergency Group.

December 2025

Open Space Strategy

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