

INDICATIVE SITE SELECTION METHODOLOGY FOR MLDP2 EVIDENCE REPORT

(FOR SUBMISSION TO GATE CHECK)

Overview

1. In line with the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and Local Development Planning Guidance (May 2023) the Council is taking a proactive approach to identifying the most appropriate locations Midlothian Local Development Plan 2's (MLDP2) development strategy. This includes for economic development sites and also housing sites needed to meet the Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) Scottish Government National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) identifies for Midlothian. The Scottish Government's Local Development Planning Guidance (May 2023, paragraph 108) states: "*Detailed policies and site proposals should not be included in the Evidence Report. Detailed site appraisal will not be appropriate at the Evidence Report stage, but the authority could usefully establish a site appraisal methodology that will be used to appraise sites and inform allocations for the Proposed Plan. This could also be linked or ideally integrated with the approach to SEA assessment*".
2. This methodology for site location and site assessment is based on NPF4 policies and embeds Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) requirements. It is designed to identify the locations and sites that would be preferable in land use planning and SEA terms for development. This assessment process will help inform the decision making for creating the spatial strategy of Midlothian Local Development Plan 2 (MLDP2). As it emerged in production, this methodology document has been subject to engagement at Evidence Report stage.
3. Alongside the 'Gate Check' process of the MLDP2 Evidence Report, Midlothian Council intends to carry out a 'Call for Ideas' exercise and invite parties to submit ideas for the development strategy of MLDP2. Parts 1-3 of this methodology outline a proactive approach that the Council will be taking to help identifying potential development areas. These will be the areas which appear to have the most potential, but the Council will consider proposals submitted. The Council will expect sites submitted to it for consideration to demonstrate how they conform with this whole site assessment methodology document. In addition to this methodology, the Council will also apply professional judgement on site selection for the MLDP2 development strategy.
4. The MATHLR for Midlothian is very challenging, and in applying the selection methodology, Midlothian Council will need to exercise judgement in assessing competing factors and selection criteria that will inform housing site selection and identification of any new sites. This will be needed in order to ensure that sufficient land is allocated to meet the housing requirements for MLDP2.

5. Existing housing allocations: The Scottish Government Guidance for development plans (May 2023) states that sites should not be rolled forward from one plan to the next. A review allows for new policies and information to be taken into account. Midlothian Council will apply the site selection methodology to allocated sites, or sites identified in the housing land audit, which do not have an extant planning permission at the time of assessment. Sites that have a planning consent, or are at minded to grant planning permission stage, will not be reassessed. The Council does not consider it appropriate to reassess such sites.
6. Rural Areas: Some small scale, rural housing opportunities may be appropriate in areas that perform less well from a local living or access to public transport perspective.
7. Local living/ 20 Minute Neighbourhoods: This concept forms part of the site assessment process.

METHODOLOGY

8. Below is the summary of approach (steps 1-4) to be taken by the Council in the site assessment process:
 - (1) Identify areas to be excluded from development
 - (2) Apply infrastructure assessment to identify areas of constraint and capacity
 - (3) Identify potential development areas (incorporating 20 Minute Neighbourhoods/ Local Living)
 - (4) Apply detailed site assessment

Note: Through the above step 4, a range of matters will be applied in the detailed assessment. It will include consideration of factors and locations identified in steps 1-3 and sites highlighted to the Council from a “Call for Ideas” exercise. This “Call for Ideas” will be an invitation to all parties to submit ideas for the development strategy of MLDP2. Details of the timing for this “Call for Ideas” are provided in Development Plan Scheme No 16 (DPS16) on Midlothian Council’s website. Where parties through the ‘Call for Ideas’ exercise wish to submit sites for consideration to contribute to MLDP2’s development strategy, the Council will expect the sites to demonstrate how they conform with this whole site assessment methodology document. The Council will not be committed to taking forward and including in MLDP2 sites put forward to it through the “Call for Ideas” exercise. Contributors are free to submit to the MLDP2 “Call for ideas” across different locations in Midlothian. However, they should be aware of the process in this methodology document through which the Council is seeking to identify potential development areas.

Step 1 - Identify areas to be excluded from development

- Areas designated as SSSIs, SPAs, SCAs, Local Nature Reserves, Local Biodiversity Sites and Local Geodiversity Sites
- Areas of peatland and carbon rich soils*
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland
- Wetland Habitat
- Areas of prime agricultural land**
- Country Parks, Regional Park, and Newbattle Strategic Greenspace Safeguard
- Public parks and functional open space identified in Midlothian Council's Open Space Strategy
- Land in Flood Risk Area (NPF4 definition)***
- Areas where the threat of gas ingress is not compatible with built development****
- Land within existing areas of search for aggregate minerals
- Land in the Midlothian Science Zone*****

* Such areas will be determined by reference to NatureScot mapping of peatland and carbon rich soil resources.

** Midlothian Council acknowledges the very often close and immediate proximity of prime agricultural land to Midlothian settlements. While professional judgement will need to be applied to this matter, the loss of prime agricultural land is a significant concern to Midlothian Council.

*** At this initial sieving stage The Council will use 0.5% annual exceedance probability (AEP) with climate change (2080) information to exclude areas, further information and assessment may be required at Step 4.

****This is likely to include areas such as former landfill workings, further discussion with Environmental Health will be necessary to identify such areas

*****Note proposed to exclude for consideration for housing only to preserve economic function of site

Step 2 – Apply infrastructure assessment to identify areas of constraint and capacity

9. The infrastructure considerations at this stage are:
- Education*
 - Health*
 - Transport
 - Water and drainage
- 10 For each of these infrastructure classes, assessment is based on understanding the quantity of available capacity, the impact of committed development, identification of any investment programmes, identification of constraints and the options for overcoming these constraints. The information will be sourced from discussions with, and evidence submitted by the infrastructure providers. The results of the assessment will identify levels of constraint using a traffic light system (RAG rating):
- Red = constrained with no deliverable solution identified
 - Amber = constrained but with potential solutions depending on feasibility and funding
 - Green = not constrained under current programming

*These criteria will not apply to economic development sites but will apply where there may be a housing element.

Step 3 - Identify potential development areas (incorporating 20 Minute Neighbourhoods/ Local Living)

11. At Step 3 the remaining areas of Midlothian not excluded from development at Step 1 will be considered alongside the results of the Step 2 infrastructure assessment. Identified areas avoiding the Step 1 criteria that coincide with Step 2 'Green' locations (where there is no infrastructure constraint) will be considered potential development areas - subject to the Step 4 detailed site assessment. Where the infrastructure is rated 'amber' there may also be potential, but the Council will be concerned to ensure that any sites are deliverable in the timeframe of MLDP2. In such locations site promoters will have to establish a clear pathway to delivery within the MLDP2 timescale (2026-2036).
12. 20 Minute Neighbourhoods/ Local Living: The Council itself is seeking to identify indicative 20 minute neighbourhood zones in Midlothian. As part of the Step 3 analysis, the Council will compare the outcome of Step 2 with identified 20 Minute Neighbourhood zones. Where proposals lie outwith an identified 20 Minute Neighbourhood zone, the Council will take a judgement on the likelihood of new facilities

being delivered in that location and a new 20 minute neighbourhood being formed. Some small scale development may be appropriate beyond 20 minute neighbourhood zone in rural areas.

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Step 4 – Apply detailed site assessment

13. A range of matters will be applied in the detailed individual site assessment process. This is adapted the Joint LDP Site Assessment and SEA Checklist produced by the Key Agencies. The assessment matrix below will be used to assess individual sites and record effects.
14. Sites highlighted to the Council from a “Call for Ideas” exercise will be considered. This “Call for Ideas” will be an invitation to all parties to submit ideas for the development strategy of MLDP2. Details of the timing for the “Call for Ideas” are provided in Development Plan Scheme No 16 (DPS16) on Midlothian Council’s website. Where parties through the “Call for Ideas” exercise wish to submit sites for consideration to contribute to MLDP2’s development strategy, the Council will expect the sites to demonstrate how they conform with this whole site assessment methodology document. The Council will not be committed to taking forward and including in MLDP2 sites put forward to it through the “Call for Ideas” exercise.
15. Contributors are free to submit to the MLDP2 “Call for ideas” across different locations in Midlothian. However, they should be aware of the process in this methodology document through which the Council is identifying potential development areas and sites.
16. The detailed individual site assessment criteria developed by the Key Agencies and adapted by the Council is closely related to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) site assessment process. While there is some repetition and overlap with matters already considered under Step 1, the Council considers this necessary to embed SEA principles in the individual site assessment process. The individual site assessment adds additional criteria on deliverability and marketability of sites. Post submission of this methodology document to Gate Check there is potential to further develop and define this criterion. Midlothian Council expects site promoters to consider these site assessment factors in submissions, and to provide evidence for possible mitigation measures where adverse effects are found. Midlothian Council has added additional criteria to reflect coalescence and green belt matters, which were not in the original Key Agency methodology.
17. The scoring system allows for a range of effects to be recorded, from significantly positive to significantly negative. It includes a comments section to help clarify the assessment and a mitigation/enhancement column to indicate any potential to minimise, restore or offset adverse effects, and maximise beneficial effects.
18. Following a site assessment process, the Council will apply professional judgement on site selection for the MLDP2 development strategy.

Individual Site Assessment Matrix (part of Step 4 – Apply detailed site assessment)

Scoring – two columns have been added in the event that it is useful for planning authorities to quickly identify environmental effects from a proposal on a site. Where adverse effects have been identified, it may then also be useful to consider any obvious mitigation measures that might reduce these adverse effects. The second scoring column then allows at a quick glance to see what residual effects might remain following mitigation. There are many scoring techniques currently in use and an example of one option could be:

++	+	0	-	--
Significantly positive	positive	neutral	adverse	Significantly adverse

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: SITE ASSESSMENT AND SEA CHECKLIST

Site Name:	Source of site suggestion: All landowners/interested parties identified/aware?	Current site reference	Site History/Previous planning applications, existing local plan policies and proposals, historic reference numbers:
Settlement:	GIS Site Ref: Previous ref:	Outside settlement boundary?	
OS Grid Ref:	Site Size (ha):	Is the site an allocation in the adopted LDP; sites proposed through call for ideas or any other sites with potential? No Yes ref. Yes but different boundary	Summary Description (topography, features, boundaries, neighbouring issues, access, exposure, aspect etc. Site visit/GIS observations:

Current Use e.g. is the site brownfield, vacant and derelict land, greenfield, agricultural?	Proposed Use:	Relevant policies/proposals from LDP or NPF4:	
Insert Location Plan:		Insert Photographs if available:	

Topic – Water Related SEA topics – population and human health, material assets, climatic factors.	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
Could the proposal affect the condition of the water environment (water quality, physical condition, water resources, and the migration of wild fish)?	Flood risk and water management Blue and green infrastructure					
Could the proposal have a direct impact on the water environment (for example, result in the need for watercourse crossings or a large-scale abstraction or allow the de-culverting of a watercourse)?	Flood risk and water management Blue and green infrastructure					

Can the proposal connect to the public foul sewer?	Infrastructure first					
Can the proposal connect to the public water mains? If not, is there a sustainable water source that is resilient to the periods of water scarcity?	Flood risk and water management Infrastructure first					
Are there wetlands or boggy areas on the site?	Flood risk and water management					
For large scale developments, are there any private or public water supplies within 250m of the site which may be affected?	Infrastructure first					

<p>Flood Risk Could the proposal be at risk of flooding (from any source) or result in additional flood risk elsewhere?</p> <p>If flood risk is not fully understood, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) should be undertaken. Specify which of the following flood sources are applicable: fluvial, pluvial, sewer, or groundwater.</p>	<p>Flood Risk and Water Management</p>					
<p>Could the development of the site help alleviate any existing flooding problems in the area?</p>	<p>Flood risk and Water management</p>					

Topic – Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna Related SEA topics – soils, water, climatic factors.	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
To what extent will the proposal conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity?	Biodiversity Natural Places					
To what extent will the proposal facilitate the creation of nature networks and improve ecological connectivity?	Natural places Biodiversity					
International Designations - SAC/SPA, Ramsar, World Heritage Sites. To what extent will the proposal affect these sites including via connectivity?	Natural places Biodiversity					
National Designations To what extent will the proposal affect national designations?	Natural places biodiversity					

Topic – Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna Related SEA topics – soils, water, climatic factors.	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
To what extent will the proposal affect other designations including locally important designations?	Natural places Biodiversity					
To what extent will the proposal affect Non designated – e.g. trees, TPOs, hedges, woodland, (including woodlands in the Ancient , Semi Natural and Long Established Plantation Woodlands inventory), and species rich grasslands?	Natural places Biodiversity					
Protected Species– e.g. bats, otters, etc - can it be ascertained if protected species will be affected and will a site survey be required?	Natural places Biodiversity					
To what extent will local geodiversity	Soils					

Topic – Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna Related SEA topics – soils, water, climatic factors.	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
sites or wider geodiversity interests that could be affected by the proposal?	Natural places Biodiversity					
How will habitat connectivity or wildlife corridors be affected by the proposal – will it result in habitat fragmentation or greater connectivity?	Biodiversity Tackling the climate and nature crisis Forestry, trees and woodland.					

Topic – Climatic Factors Related SEA topics – population, human health, water, biodiversity, material assets, soils, air, cultural heritage, landscape	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
To what extent will the proposal promote and enable adaptation to climate change?	Climate mitigation and adaptation					
To what extent does the proposal use nature based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation?	Climate mitigation and adaptation Infrastructure First Blue and Green infrastructure					

<p>To what extent does the proposal maintain and enhance resilience of existing and planned grey and green infrastructure?</p>	<p>Climate mitigation and adaptation</p> <p>Infrastructure first</p> <p>Blue and Green infrastructure</p>					
<p>To what extent does the proposal have good proximity to services and good access to existing or proposed public transport and active travel network?</p>	<p>Climate mitigation and adaptation</p> <p>Infrastructure First.</p>					

Topic – Air Quality Related SEA topics – climatic factors, soils, population and human health	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
Could the proposal lead to Local Air Quality Management thresholds being breached in an existing Air Quality Management Area?	Climate mitigation and adaptation Health and Safety					
Could the proposal lead to the designation of a new Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)?	Health and safety					
Does the proposal introduce a new potentially significant air emission to the area (e.g. combined heat and power, an industrial process, large scale quarry etc.)?	Health and safety					

Will the proposal lead to a sensitive use being located close to a site with noise/odour issues or a site regulated for emissions to air by SEPA (e.g. new housing adjacent to a large manufacturing factory)?	Health and safety					
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Topic – population and human health Related SEA topics – climatic factors, air, water, soils, material assets	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
Is the proposal within the vicinity of a major accident hazard site or major accident hazard pipeline?	Health and safety					
Will the proposal affect service infrastructure: Education capacity - Secondary School Catchment Area/ Primary school catchment area Health provision/GP capacity	Infrastructure First					

<p>To what extent will the proposal affect the quality and quantity of open space and connectivity and accessibility to open space or result in a loss of open space?</p>	<p>Design, Quality and place</p> <p>Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods</p> <p>Blue and green infrastructure</p> <p>Play, recreation and sport</p>					
<p>To what extent will the proposal affect core path links or other key access networks such as cycle paths, coastal paths and rights of way?</p>	<p>Sustainable Transport</p> <p>Design, quality and place</p> <p>Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods</p> <p>Infrastructure First</p>					

Will the proposal have the opportunity to incorporate new or enhance existing blue and/or green infrastructure providing multiple benefits such as enhanced biodiversity, management of surface water?	Blue and Green infrastructure Infrastructure First					
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Topic – Soils Related SEA topics – landscape, cultural heritage, water, biodiversity, flora and fauna, material assets.	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
<p>Does the proposal make use of a brownfield site or contaminated and vacant and derelict land?</p> <p>If on a brownfield site, is the site naturalised?</p>	Soils Brownfield, vacant and derelict land					
<p>Are there any contaminated soils issues on the site and if so, will the option employ remedial actions to ensure the site is suitable for use (as defined in PAN 33)?</p>	Soils					

<p>Is the proposal on peat or carbon rich soils and could the development of the site lead to a loss of peat or carbon rich soils?</p>	<p>Soils Climate mitigation and adaptation</p>					
<p>Does the proposal result in the loss of prime agricultural land or land that is culturally or locally important for primary use as identified by the LDP?</p>	<p>Soils</p>					

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Topic – Landscape Related SEA topics – climatic factors, air, water, soils, material assets, biodiversity, population and human health	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
To what extent will any designated landscape areas be affected, including local landscape designations?	Natural Places					
Does the site avoid loss of Green Belt or other land important to avoidance of coalescence / preservation of settlement identity?	Green Belts					

<p>Non designated landscape features and key landscape interests</p> <p>Does the proposal ensure that development does not exceed the capacity of the landscape to accommodate it (such as current settlement boundaries, existing townscape and character of surrounding area and its visual qualities)?</p>	<p>Natural Places</p>					
<p>To what extent will the proposal affect features of landscape interest including distinctive character of the landscape and the qualities of wild land?</p>	<p>Natural Places</p>					

Topic – Cultural Heritage Related SEA topics – Climatic factors, air, water, soils, material assets, biodiversity, landscape	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
Does the proposal protect or enhance the site or setting of: Scheduled Monuments, Listed buildings, Inventory battlefields, Inventory gardens and designed landscapes, Conservation Areas, Undesignated historic environment assets, Streetscapes and settlement patterns.	Historic assets and places Natural Places					

<p>Does the proposal promote or enable the retention, maintenance and sustainable use or re-use of historic buildings and infrastructure?</p>	<p>Historic assets and places</p> <p>Zero waste</p> <p>Infrastructure first</p> <p>Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings</p> <p>City, town, local and commercial centres</p> <p>Rural development</p>					
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<p>Does the proposal:</p> <p>Support the repair and appropriate retrofit of historic buildings?</p> <p>Support the transition to green energy supply in historic buildings?</p> <p>Include adaptation measures to make the historic environment assets and places more resilient to the effects of climate change?</p>	<p>Historic assets and places</p> <p>Tackling the climate and nature crises</p> <p>Climate mitigation and adaptation</p> <p>Design, quality and place</p> <p>Infrastructure first</p> <p>Quality homes</p> <p>Flood risk and water management</p> <p>Rural homes</p>					
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<p>Does the proposal:</p> <p>Enable the historic environment to support creation of high-quality places and spaces?</p> <p>Promote sustainable, responsible tourism, recreation and cultural activity?</p>	<p>Tourism</p> <p>Culture and creativity</p> <p>Design, quality and place</p> <p>Play, recreation and sport</p> <p>Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods</p>					
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Topic – Material Assets – Deliverability/ sustainability constraints Related SEA topics – climatic factors, air, water, soils, population and human health.	NPF4 Policy Topic	Scoring pre-mitigation	Mitigation	Enhancement	Scoring post-mitigation	Comments/conclusions
Is the proposal likely to be deliverable within the period covered by MLDP2?§ (by reference to site servicing constraints, and any other factors such as ownership, control of the site and marketability).						
Site aspect – does the site make best use of solar gain? Is the site protected from prevailing winds?	Design Quality and place Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Heat and Cooling					

<p>Is the site in an area of heat network potential or a designated Heat Network Zone (HNZ)?</p>	<p>Climate Mitigation and adaptation</p> <p>Heat and cooling</p>					
<p>Could the lead to the sterilisation of aggregate mineral resources?</p>	<p>Minerals</p>					
<p>Vehicular Access constraints or opportunities - Is the network capable of accommodating active travel, public transport, other shared modes, and private vehicle traffic generated?</p>	<p>Local living and 20 min neighbourhoods</p> <p>Sustainable transport</p>					
<p>Is the site close to a range of facilities? Can these be accessed by public transport or active travel?</p>	<p>Local living and 20 min neighbourhoods</p> <p>Sustainable transport</p> <p>City, town, local and commercial centres</p>					

Does the proposal minimise demand for primary resources by reusing an existing building?	Zero waste					
For waste infrastructure and facilities (except landfill and EFW) does the proposal comply with the criteria listed in NPF4 policy 12 d)?	Zero waste					

Other Considerations

Please note any other issues which may be relevant to the assessment of the candidate site. For example:

- Any restrictive covenants relating to the use of the land/ buildings contained within the proposed candidate site?
- Is the candidate site on Common Good Land?
- Is there a requirement to prepare place-based development briefs or masterplans?

§Note: Midlothian Council will seek to develop this indicator further in advance of a “Call for Ideas” exercise to help identify the elements that constitute deliverability.