

# East Lothian's Local Housing Strategy 2024-2029



2024-29

## LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

Enabling access to high quality homes of different tenures which meet resident's needs and enables them to live in communities with the support and services they require.



East Lothian Council has published the draft version of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2024-2029.

The draft LHS 2024-2029 was accepted by cabinet on the 12th of September and we have now commenced an 8 week consultation period.

All Local Authorities in Scotland are required to have a LHS. They provide direction for the investment in housing and housing related services, across all tenures over a 5 year period.

The LHS contains an action plan which shows what steps will be taken in the next 5 years to meet our strategic vision ('big picture' goal) for housing and housing services. Progress on the action plan is reported on yearly.

The LHS has five main chapters:

1. Vibrant & Connected Communities

2. Housing Supply & Affordability

3. Preventing & Responding to Homelessness

4. Suitable Housing & Support

5. High Quality & Sustainable Homes

The LHS was shaped by consultations conducted between February and December 2022. We spoke to over 1,000 people across East Lothian about their priorities for Housing. This helped create the Vision, Priorities and the contents of the LHS.

The LHS and its actions were also guided by national legislation and policy, such as 'Housing to 2040', Heat in Buildings Strategy and National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

**Strategic Vision:** People in East Lothian have access to warm, high quality, affordable homes which meet their needs and enables them to live in communities with the support and services they require.

## Priority Outcomes

**Communities are supported to flourish, be distinctive and well connected.**

**Housing supply is accessible, affordable and provides a range of choices to meet the needs of households.**

**Homelessness is prevented as far as possible, where unavoidable a rapid response with the appropriate support is provided.**

**Housing and support services are effective, accessible to, and will meet the needs of those most vulnerable in the community.**

**All homes are maintained to a high standard, are energy efficient and contribute to meeting climate change targets.**

# National Challenges

This LHS has been developed against a backdrop of unprecedented economic, political and environmental challenges, such as the COVID-19 global pandemic and the UK's exit from the European Union (EU), changing legislation and increased ambitions from National Government and more recently, the cost of living crisis.

This has all come at a time when Local Authority finance is facing acute financial pressures.

This influences the demand for housing and services. These challenges also make delivering the actions in the LHS more difficult.

## UK withdrawal from the European Union

2020-2021 Transition period

- Labour shortage and supply issues.

## Covid-19 Pandemic

March 2020 - September 2022  
UK Coronavirus Act

- Public health emergency, social isolation and economic restrictions.

## War in Ukraine

February 2022 - ongoing

- Supply shortages particularly in terms of oil, gas and wheat.
- Refugee crisis.

## Cost of Living Crisis

Mid-2022 – ongoing

- Fall in 'real' disposable income.
- Energy and food prices increasing fastest.
- Inflation peaked in October 2022 at 11.1%.

# The impact of East Lothian's population on housing

East Lothian has the second fastest growing population in Scotland.

Smaller households are expected to increase considerably (14.3% from 2018 to 2028).

The population of over 60s is expected to grow year on year. An ageing population will require more accessible homes so they can live at home for longer while receiving adequate social care.

High Homelessness pressures in East Lothian. It is expected that the demand for homelessness services will increase as the Cost of Living crisis continues.

Global events such as the pandemic and war have led to material shortages and increases in the cost of living, making house building more expensive and household finances increasingly pressurised.

Cost of living crisis has increased financial pressure on households generally, increasing their reliance on services and in turn putting pressure on the Local Authority.

The SIMD in East Lothian may show the population which is severely affected by poverty, however it is likely many households on higher incomes will also suffer.



# Vibrant and Connected Communities

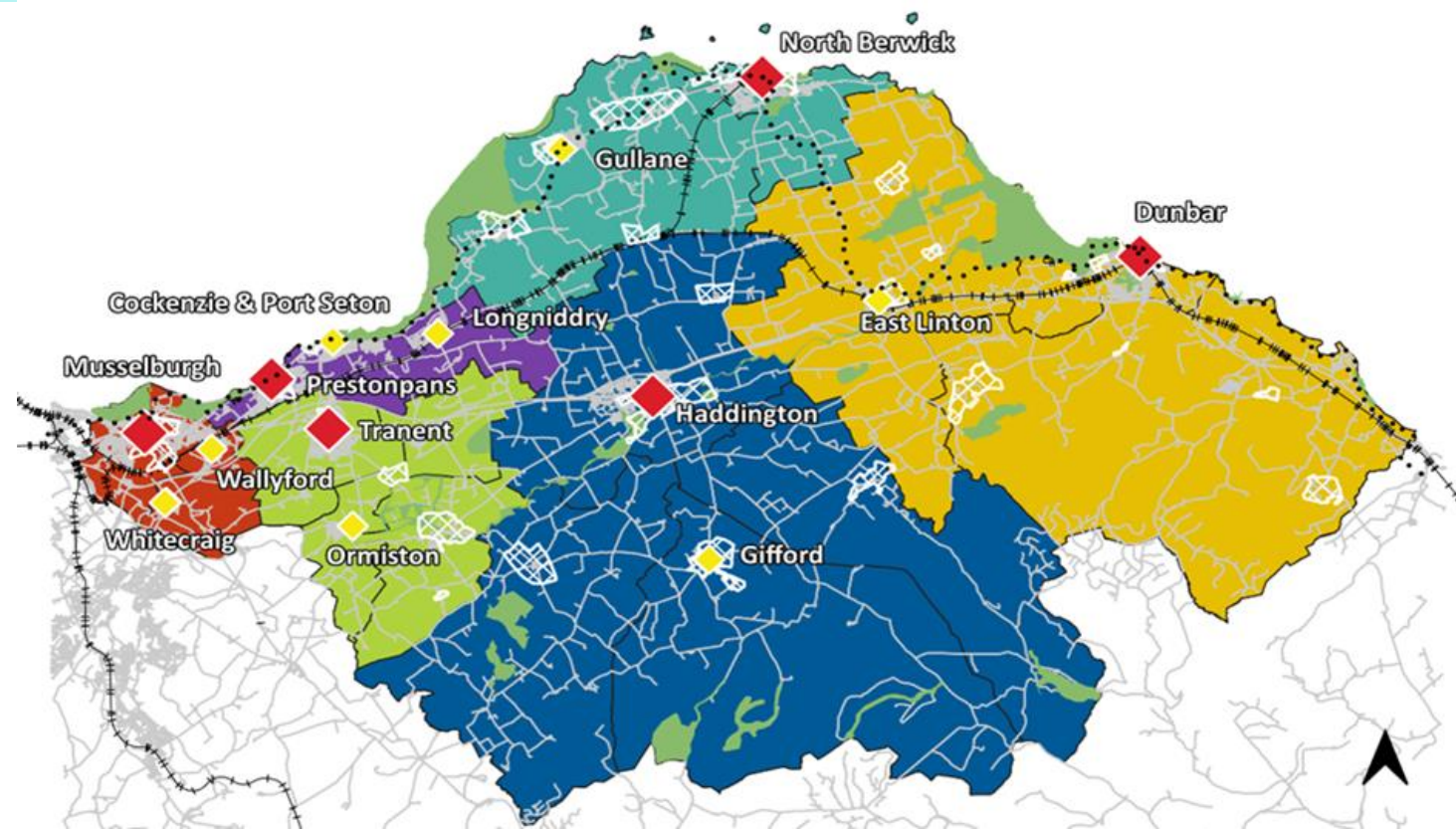
The LHS is committed to creating diverse and vibrant communities; enabling a sense of belonging, being safe and economically secure, access local services, and opportunities and to enhance their life chances while remaining resilient in the face of difficulties.

Sustainable communities are created by:

- Establishing opportunities for community engagement and digital inclusion;
- Understanding our existing communities and town centre investment opportunities; and
- Recognising the importance of maintaining open spaces and neighbourhoods.

As part of sustainable living, local residents need to have choice and opportunities to find affordable homes where they would like to live. The LHS recognises that a mixture of different tenures; i.e. homeownership, private and social rented homes; is crucial to widen such opportunities.

The LHS highlights that housing is more than just bricks and mortar, the external environment is critical to creating a sense of place, belonging and brings a range of benefits.



# Vibrant and Connected Communities

## Key challenges are:

The need to expand and diversify community engagement whilst managing capacity constraints.

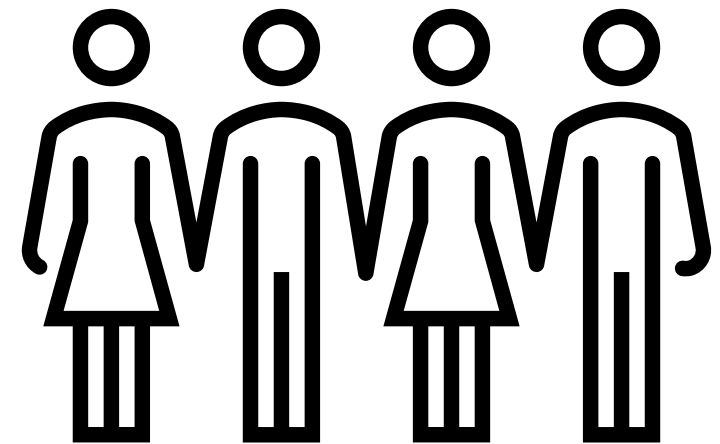
Risk of a decreasing private rented sector and identified need to improve engagement with landlords and their tenants.

Financial constraints on communities and public services as a result of the pandemic and cost of living crisis. Increased need to work alongside communities and other partners to deliver services.

Improving digital access to services.

Funding opportunities for Town Centres are limited due to eligibility criteria and limited knowledge of housing stock quality.

Rise in perceived Anti-Social Behaviour.



# Housing Supply & Affordability

The LHS looks at the supply and affordability across all tenures within East Lothian.

Ensuring the county has the right housing in the right places to meet the needs of the local population will be key to delivering the aims of the LHS.



- East Lothian is the second fastest growing Local Authority area within Scotland and this creates supply pressure across all tenures.
- The speed of growth also creates additional pressures on the local authority, particularly on revenue budgets through increasing demands for services combined with increasing expectations.
- The demand for affordable housing continues to outstrip supply.
- Between 2021/22 and 2022/23 the Council's housing list increased by 700 households.
- Property sizes for affordable homes vary, with lower numbers of 4+ bed homes resulting in overcrowding.

# Housing Supply & Affordability



## Challenges

House prices are generally higher in rural areas and smaller communities. This makes it difficult for young people, for example, to remain in the areas.

57% of residents are unable to afford to rent within the private rented sector. This means more households are looking for social housing and leads to increased housing lists.

Lack of land in Council ownership restricts housing provision.

Not owning land makes provision more difficult, increasing reliance on developers to provide affordable housing as part of larger developments.

House prices in East Lothian are 38% higher than the national average.

The supply of affordable housing isn't equal across areas in East Lothian. The majority of affordable housing stock is in the west of the county. This makes it more difficult for families in need of affordable accommodation in the east to remain in their chosen location.

60.2% of lower quartile income households are unable to afford home ownership. The number of households on lower incomes unable to afford to purchase means an increased number looking for accommodation in both the social and private rented sector where demand is already high.



# Preventing and Responding to Homelessness

## Homelessness in East Lothian is a largely structural issue.

This means there is a much higher demand for affordable homes than homes available.

East Lothian Council homes remain the most affordable option for many. This places a high demand on council social rented housing stock.

Tenancy sustainment is one of the highest in Scotland. This means people in East Lothian keep their Council homes for a long time.

Void turnover is low. Whilst this is a positive, this reduces the number of voids that flow through the system resulting in people having to wait longer for permanent accommodation.

In 2021/2022, there were **339** prevention (threat to homelessness is more than 56 days) recorded.

- 'Action from landlord' is the top reason for seeking support from the prevention team.
- Just under 50% of cases were from households in a private rented property.
- 62% of cases were headed by women.

In 2021/2022 there were **646** homeless applications made to East Lothian Council. Not all those who are homeless will seek support from the Council, meaning this figure may be higher.

Asked to leave is the most common reason for making a homeless application.



It is anticipated that the cost of living crisis and increase in inflation will drive up the number of prevention cases and homeless applications, particularly from the private sector

# Preventing and Responding to Homelessness: Challenges

## **The lack of flow through the housing system**

- This means that individuals spend a long time in emergency and temporary accommodation, awaiting a permanent home.
- Time spent in temporary accommodation in East Lothian is much higher than the Scottish average.
- Time spent in temporary accommodation can be traumatic and unsettling households and impact physical and mental health.

## **Limited stock of temporary accommodation**

- Pre-pandemic, the Council had been reducing temporary stock, in line with Scottish Government recommendations. Stock was reduced by turning temporary homes into permanent.
- The number of temporary accommodation properties is not enough to meet demand as more people are having to stay longer in temporary homes.

## **Increase in Unsuitable Accommodation Orders (UAO)**

- In 2020, legislation changed which extended the ban on the use of unsuitable accommodation for longer than 7 days from pregnant women and children to all homeless households.
- As of 2023, The Council had 124 live breaches of the UAO, which largely impacts single households. Breaches of UAO terms mean the Council is unable to meet its statutory duty to provide suitable temporary accommodation.

## **Limited choice in supported accommodation for adults with complex needs**

- The majority of homeless applicants have no support needs. However, those who do have a limited choice in accommodation which provides support.
- There is only one residence of supported accommodation for adults.

# Suitable Housing & Support

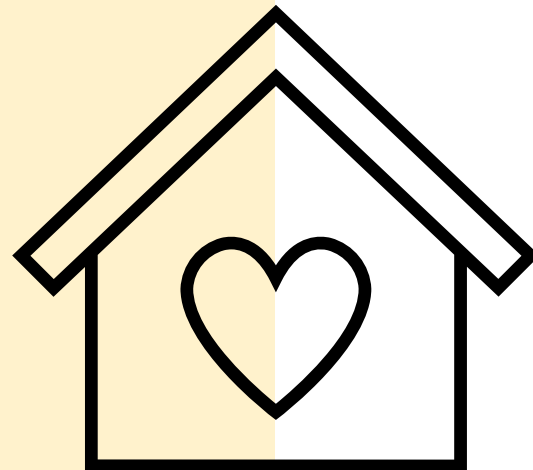
The LHS considers specialist provision and housing related services. Specialist Provision is housing and services that may be appropriate when mainstream housing does not meet an individual's needs.

The following client groups are considered:

- Children & young people
- Older People
- Social Care Users (Learning Disability, Physical Disability, Mental Health)
- Long Term health conditions
- People involved in the justice system
- Women and girls
- Ethnic minorities
- Asylum Seekers and refugees
- Gypsy/Travellers
- Travelling Showpeople
- Armed forces communities
- LGBTQIA+

Having homes and services which best reflect East Lothian's diverse population is essential. This means having a variety of services and housing types, including specialist housing, which is available and proportionate to the current and future population.

Demand for housing and services will increase and change with the population. East Lothian has the second fastest growing population in Scotland.



# Suitable Housing & Support

## The main challenges are:

Increased need for youth specific approaches to housing and support.

Rising ageing population in East Lothian.

East Lothian had an estimate of **2,104** people with dementia, with a projected 65% increase by 2040.

An estimated **430** households have an unmet need for a wheelchair accessible home.

Increased demand for Care & Repair requires new sources of funding to be established to meet local need.

Limited knowledge on how sensory impairment affects housing provision in East Lothian.

People continue to leave custody without sustainable housing secured for release, meaning higher risks for them and the community.

Limited knowledge of the needs of ethnic minority groups in East Lothian.

Limited engagement with Gypsy/Traveller communities in East Lothian.



# High Quality & Sustainable Homes

Enabling households to live in high quality and sustainable homes within East Lothian is a key strategic aim of this LHS.

The LHS can contribute to a reduction in fuel poverty, encourage better health outcomes and drive progression towards Net Zero.

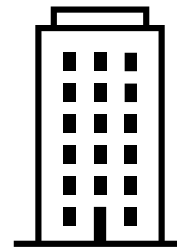
By improving property condition and energy efficiency across all tenures, homes will become more resilient and adaptable to climate change.

An energy efficient home brings a range of benefits , improving health outcomes such as respiratory illnesses and joint pain.

## Key Facts



**24%** of households within East Lothian are in fuel poverty. Those in rented accommodation more likely to be in fuel poverty.



**30%** of properties within East Lothian were built prior to 1945. These homes are harder to heat.



**5%** of homes within East Lothian have extensive levels of disrepair.

# High Quality & Sustainable Homes

Difficulty in obtaining and analysing data to identify the energy efficiency of buildings on a large scale.

Compliance with Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) and Energy Efficiency for Social Housing (EESH) standards and the prospect of implementing EESSH2 and Passivhaus in the context of rising costs.

Improving the energy efficiency standards of older buildings, buildings in rural areas and private rented sector homes. A lack of a skilled workforce trained in maintaining and adapting homes with green technology.

Risk of an increasing number of households falling into fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty.

Ensuring a just and fair transition to net zero that leaves nobody behind.

