

## Housing Report October 2018

The information below is taken from the West Lothian Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019-2024 and provided by Phyllis McFadden in an email response and verbally at the Linlithgow Local Area Committee (LAC) on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

### Council housing numbers

The priority areas for affordable housing investment are:

Area	Priority	% affordable housing required in private developments	Threshold for commuted sums	Latest round of council house allocation 250 nr	Housing Association contribution
<b>Linlithgow</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>Less than 25</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>
Broxburn, Uphall & Winchburgh	1	25%	Less than 25	14 **	Figures not readily available
East Livingston and East Calder	1	25%	Less than 25	**	Figures not readily available
Livingston South	1	25%	Less than 25	63	Figures not readily available
Livingston North	1	25%	Less than 25	0	Figures not readily available
Bathgate	2	15%	Less than 40	104	Figures not readily available
Armadale and Blackridge	2	15%	Less than 40	**	Figures not readily available
Whitburn and Blackburn	2	15%	Less than 40	**	Figures not readily available
Fauldhouse and Breich Valley	3	10%	Less than 60	69	Figures not readily available

\*\* Core development area

- Over the ten-year period 2012 to 2022 WLC aims to deliver 3000 affordable homes with the majority being council houses. Areas identified as a priority are; Livingston, Winchburgh, Calderwood, Mossend and Armadale. Future sites have been identified in Broxburn, Bathgate, Livingston, East Calder and West Calder as table above.
- Over the period 2012/13 to 2017/18, 1260 affordable homes were provided in West Lothian. In addition, there is commitment to provide 796 affordable homes during 2018/19. This

leaves a shortfall of 944 affordable homes to be planned for over the next 3 years to meet the 3,000 affordable homes target. RSLs will play a role in addressing the 944 shortfall and have identified 51 projects to provide 1611 homes.

- Scottish Government has confirmed funding of £11.397 million for 2018/19, £12.894 million for 2019/20 and £13.757 million for 2020/21. Prudential Borrowing of £17.446 million has been secured to support the new build council housing programme for 2018/19.
- West Lothian Council assumes only one form of tenancy for affordable housing namely social rented. Other forms of tenancy such as co-ownership, co-operatives, golden share, tenant-owned schemes, etc are not available.
- The Scottish Government Housing Infrastructure Fund is supporting housing projects that have stalled or have not started due to infrastructure constraints. The fund will support the delivery of housing through financial assistance. Priority will be given to those projects delivering affordable housing over the next 5 years. The council has consulted with housing associations and private sector developers in drawing up a list of potential bids for infrastructure funding. This includes Heartlands, Deans South, and Bathgate. The CDA at Winchburgh will benefit from funding from the City Region Deal for infrastructure namely the proposed motorway junction and rail station.

## **Linlithgow**

- Linlithgow ward is a priority 1 area for social housing investment. However, as reported at the LAC, no future council housing is planned for Linlithgow. The new build phase has reached completion within the Linlithgow ward. Sites continue to progress which is providing movement within the waiting list through resultant lets. (This is assumed to mean that Linlithgow tenants with a good record are moving to new dwellings outside Linlithgow but this is a question to be asked)
- 14 affordable houses by Dunedin Canmore Housing Association is planned for Springfield in the period 20/21. This is based upon a Cala planning application which has not yet been submitted. There is no mention of the Vennel.
- The number of council dwellings in Linlithgow Ward are:

Bridgend	222
Linlithgow	343
Linlithgow Bridge	85
Newton	12
Philipstoun	25
Threemiletown	6
Total	693
- The Council say that they do not hold information on the number of dwellings rented by other RSL's, or the number of private rented housing.
- There is currently no way of accessing the number of people who have given Linlithgow as their first choice.

- The number of lets in 16/17 – total of 37 lets, 19 lets in Linlithgow Bridge and 18 lets in Linlithgow . YTD 2017/18 (As of 27.11.17) – total of 15 lets, 2 in Linlithgow Bridge and 13 in Linlithgow.

### **Perceptions arising from the CC meeting in 2016**

- It appears that housing in Linlithgow is offered to the next most needy household on the West Lothian list whether or not they had a wish to live in LLB.

Answer: West Lothian Council's allocation policy is based on a system of Groups plus points. Applicants are assessed and awarded points based on their housing need, in accordance with the allocation policy points framework, they are then categorised as per their circumstances and placed in one of five groups e.g, Homeless Group, Transfer Group, Unsatisfactory Housing Group, General Needs Group and Outwith West Lothian Group.

An applicant will only be offered permanent housing within an area of their choice in accordance with the Allocations Policy.

Homeless applicants may be placed in a temporary tenancy in Linlithgow and this may not be one of their choices. West Lothian Council will aim to ensure that homeless applicants are temporarily housed as close to social networks as possible, based on availability of temporary accommodation at time of need.

- Family support groups were ignored in allocating housing; particularly parents supporting children and children supporting parents. i.e. children could be offered housing in a town remote from the parents they are supporting.

Answer: As above an applicant will not be offered permanent housing in an area that they have not chosen in accordance with the allocations policy.

- Households were very unlikely to be offered a council house in situations of more than one household in overcrowded private accommodation in LLB.

Answer: Applicants residing in private rented accommodation who are overcrowded will be assessed in accordance with the policy points framework and awarded the appropriate points that meets their circumstances.

- In allocating housing in LLB, no account was taken of the needs of the household being offered accommodation; for example, need for access to a social work centre, drug and alcohol service, jobcentre plus office, etc. We are not aware of a Linlithgow social work centre? A local venue for drug and alcohol service? A local jobcentre plus office. If households in need of such services are housed in LLB then what provisions are made for transportation to centres in other towns?

Answer: Allocation of housing as advised is made based on an applicants' choice and areas they have selected for consideration for permanent offer.

- Two bedroom housing in LLB is being allocated to one person households ahead of a family requiring 2 bedroom accommodation.

Answer: A single applicant, a couple or a family with one or two children may apply for a 2-bed property in accordance with policy. Offers are then made to the applicant with the highest need points. There is no scope to prioritise within the priority e.g prioritise families above single people.

- There appears to be no forum/advice for private tenants.

Answer: The Private Sector Leasing Team work closely with Private Landlords and as part of their remit are able to provide advice and assistance to private tenants. In addition the Council's advice shop provides advice and assistance to private tenants on a range of matters. There is no tenants forum for private tenants in West Lothian.

- What is the process for transitioning young people into accommodation?

Answer: Young People transitioning into accommodation are offered and provided with support when moving into permanent or temporary accommodation. This support may be provided by the Housing Need Team support officers, Through Care/ Aftercare support for young people previously looked after, voluntary sector or by their local housing officer. Young people as with any tenant are supported with a range of things such as benefit take up/ advice, resettlement, energy advice etc

- At the November 2016 Community Council meeting it was stated that there are a number of "homeless units" in Linlithgow with transitory tenants who tend not to respect the property. How many "homeless units" are there in Linlithgow?

Answer; 9 in Linlithgow, 1 in Linlithgow Bridge and 6 in Bridgend.

### **Proposed Action**

Phyllis McFadden has agreed to attend a Community Council meeting to answer our questions, but we need to develop these. Some obvious questions concern:

- The absence of statistics – how many have given Linlithgow as their preferred town?
- Why is there no anticipated housing resulting from the Vennel development?
- Are Linlithgow tenants with a good record moving to new housing outside Linlithgow?
- Why is there no infrastructure improvement planned?
- Why is there no policy on residential boats?
- Why is there a restriction on the forms of tenancy?
- Why is there no tenant's forum for private tenants?