

# **Creating a 20 Minute Neighbourhood in West Lothian**

**Livingston was hailed as the town of tomorrow as it developed in the 1960s – and now West Lothian is making another innovative move with new ways to cut back on car use.**

Winchburgh, as it grows, will be home to one of Scotland's pioneering new town concepts – the 20-Minute Neighbourhood.

The concept in community development is being rolled out in West Lothian, and also at Blindwells near Prestonpans, and promoted in national planning guidance as a means of achieving more sustainable and better connected places.

A 20-minute Neighbourhood is all about living well locally, giving people the ability to meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable walk, wheel or cycle of their home. That is approximately 800 metres, or half a mile.

They are presented as an opportunity to rethink how housing, service provision, city, town or village centres could be re-configured to support new ways of living and working in line with broader local objectives.

According to local planning officers who contributed to a regional planning blueprint looking at development in the next decades, the new neighbourhoods offer the prospect of achieving significant reductions in car use by promoting car free streets, and developments that are less dependent on the need for private vehicles because of their proximity to local

services and transport hubs.

Housing would be planned together with local infrastructure including schools, community centres, local shops, greenspaces, health, social care, play and leisure facilities in order to significantly reduce the need to use unsustainable modes of travel like the family car, to prioritise quality of life, reduce inequalities, increase levels of health and wellbeing and respond to the climate emergency.

According to the planners, the extent to which people interact is heavily determined by their lived environment and there are considered to be multiple environmental, social, physical and health benefits of creating compact 20-minute neighbourhoods.

For example, people become more active, improving their mental and physical health and wellbeing; motorized traffic is reduced, air quality is improved and local shops and businesses are given opportunities to thrive.

It has been acknowledged that one of the genuinely few positives of the Covid-19 pandemic has been that it has served to highlight the importance of the “liveability” of where people reside.

A spokesman for the council said: “The 20-minute Neighbourhood it is an initiative that sits comfortably with other council and national policies outcomes to create better places to live and work and which help support our health and well-being and reduce inequalities and has the potential to play a key role in helping the council achieve a more virtuous and resilient spatial strategy as it starts to prepare the next iteration of the West Lothian Local Development Plan.”

by Stuart Somerville Local Democracy Reporter

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