



Annex 7 - Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods

January 2024

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Summary

What are Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods?

The Scottish Government [Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods Draft Planning Guidance \(2023\)](#) includes the following definitions:

Local Living

Local living provides people with the opportunity to meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home.

20 minute neighbourhoods

The 20 minute neighbourhood concept is one method of supporting local living. The 20 minute neighbourhoods concept aims to provide access to the majority of daily needs within a 20 minute walk, wheel or cycle.

These are not new concepts for planning as the approach is already reflected in many of Fife's plans and policies.

Why are we looking at this approach?

Scottish Government committed to the 20 minute neighbourhood concept in its [2020-21 Programme for Government](#) as a way of revitalising communities; improving local services and infrastructure; reducing car kilometres travelled; and achieving their ambition for people to be able to 'live well locally'. The concept of local living was identified as one of the overarching spatial principles in [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#).



Fig 1: Diagram of the outcomes of a 20 Minute Neighbourhood - taken from ClimateXChange - 20 Minute Neighbourhoods in a Scottish Context.

NPF4 Policy 15: Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods establishes that there is no standardised approach for applying the local living/20 minute neighbourhood concept; it is left to individual Local Authorities to determine how the approach will be applied in their areas to reflect local context. NPF4 also allows for flexibility in the application of the concept by promoting local living in rural areas and, where feasible, 20 minute neighbourhoods in more urban areas.

Scottish Government published [draft guidance on local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods](#) for consultation to support the implementation of NPF4. The guidance stresses the need for qualitative assessment alongside quantitative analysis; and sets out a Local Living Framework based on the 14 themes of the place standard tool. The framework is intended to provide a consistent structure for considering the key characteristics of local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods in development planning, decision-making and in design proposals.



Local living Framework diagram

Background

Applying 20 minute neighbourhoods in Scotland

Research carried out by Ramboll UK for [ClimateXChange](#) for the Scottish Government considered [how the 20 minute neighbourhood approach could be applied in Scotland](#). This research included some baseline assessment work which looked at a number quantitative and qualitative indicators across Scotland.

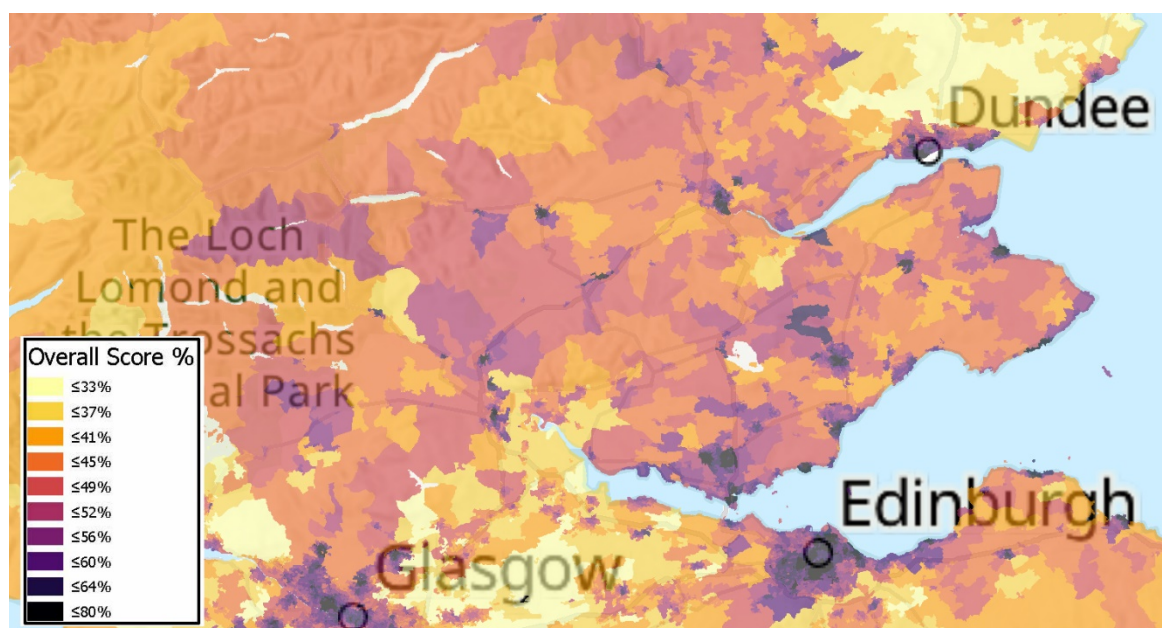


Figure 1. Extract from the Ramboll UK quantitative and qualitative baseline assessment work – showing Fife. Note: a higher percentage indicates greater access to services and facilities.

The Ramboll UK assessment work provides a very high-level indication of areas which appear to be working as 20 minute neighbourhoods based on their methodology. This work shows that many of the towns (all or part of them) and some of the rural areas in Fife score highly in terms of access to services and facilities; there are also no areas with very low scores. However it should be noted that, the mapping data is based on postcode sectors so the classification may reflect the situation in part of the postcode area but not all of it. This has the biggest impact in rural areas where the postcode sectors cover the widest area.

The Ramboll UK baseline assessment work concluded that many communities across Scotland already have the required services and infrastructure that would allow them to be 20 minute neighbourhoods in both rural and urban areas. However, they concluded that *'...the assessment does not allow for the conclusion that the required quality of services or infrastructure is in place. Nor does it conclude that these places are performing as 20 minute neighbourhoods.'* - 20 Minute Neighbourhoods in a Scottish Context, Ramboll February, 2021.

Health outcomes and areas of deprivation.

The University of Glasgow has produced a [model to map 20 minute neighbourhoods across Scotland](#) ([Scottish Living Locally Data Portal](#)). In a [paper outlining the findings from the modelling](#) they concluded that *'in Scotland, more deprived areas have better access to services and facilities that may promote or support healthy living. However, these areas are also more likely to have a greater density of retail outlets that can adversely affect health'*.

This work indicates that the provision of additional services and facilities is not in itself be enough to reverse economic decline and health outcomes for deprived areas. However, focusing on providing services and facilities to areas which currently have poorer access *'has the potential to increase health inequalities by making improvements for populations who already have better health outcomes'*. It needs to be recognised that a more nuanced and detailed look at communities and the places they live in is required to help address these issues - one that goes beyond the physical environment and the simple provision of services and facilities.

Quotes from: [Nationwide equity assessment of the 20-min neighbourhood in the Scottish context: A socio-spatial proximity analysis of residential locations](#) – article in Social Science and Medicine Dec 2022.



Woodside Way, Glenrothes

Local Living and 20 Minute neighbourhoods in Rural areas

There have been concerns that the 20 minute neighbourhood approach could have unintended negative impacts for rural communities; leading to the centralisation of services as they need a critical mass of population to be viable. It was argued in [responses to the draft NPF4 \(see page 177\)](#) that it was unrealistic to expect that 20 minute neighbourhoods could be applied meaningfully in rural areas. Transport poverty is a key issue in rural areas where small communities cannot support all the services they need within a walkable distance. Sustaining public transport and demand response transport is challenging and costly and often leads to a dependency on private cars as the only realistic option for people moving around rural areas.

Alternative approaches for rural areas have been promoted; sometimes called 'Living Well Locally' or '20 Minute Communities'. These approaches retain the desired outcomes of the 20 minute neighbourhood approach but are more flexible regarding the 20 minute timescale and 800 metres distance constraints. They also place a greater emphasis on the importance of sustainable travel for accessing services and facilities. The Approved NPF4 reflects this position and has expanded the proposed 20 minute neighbourhood approach to include local living, allowing the concept to be tailored to the local context.

A paper considering [20 minute neighbourhoods in Rural and Island Scotland \(Jan 2022\)](#) identified the following activities as key to the success of the 20 minute neighbourhood concept in rural areas and the islands:

1. Bringing facilities and services into neighbourhoods, either physically or online;
2. Connecting neighbourhoods between each other through accessible and affordable public transport/active transport networks and;
3. Incentivising behaviour change, for example home working and public transport use, in part through encouraging public participation in designing 20 Minute Neighbourhoods.

The paper highlighted that it is important to understand the community aspect of service delivery rather than just the provision of the service itself if we want our rural communities to flourish, for instance:

The replacement, for example, of mobile library services with electric vehicle (EV) door to door book deliveries might make sense from a convenience point of view but it also removes a shared space from communities, a lifeline for those who are socially isolated.



Mobile Library Service in Fife - Image Courtesy of On Fife

Applying the local living approach in rural areas needs to capitalise on rural assets and strengths such as the sense of community; culture and history; the capacity to produce food and energy; and small and social enterprises, as part of the solution to delivering the agenda.

We also need to consider how rural places relate to one another in order to ensure that appropriate approaches are taken in each place.

A report by [Nick Wright Planning for Highland Council](#) looked at the services that rural communities need and how the 20 minute neighbourhood approach could be applied in different rural areas.

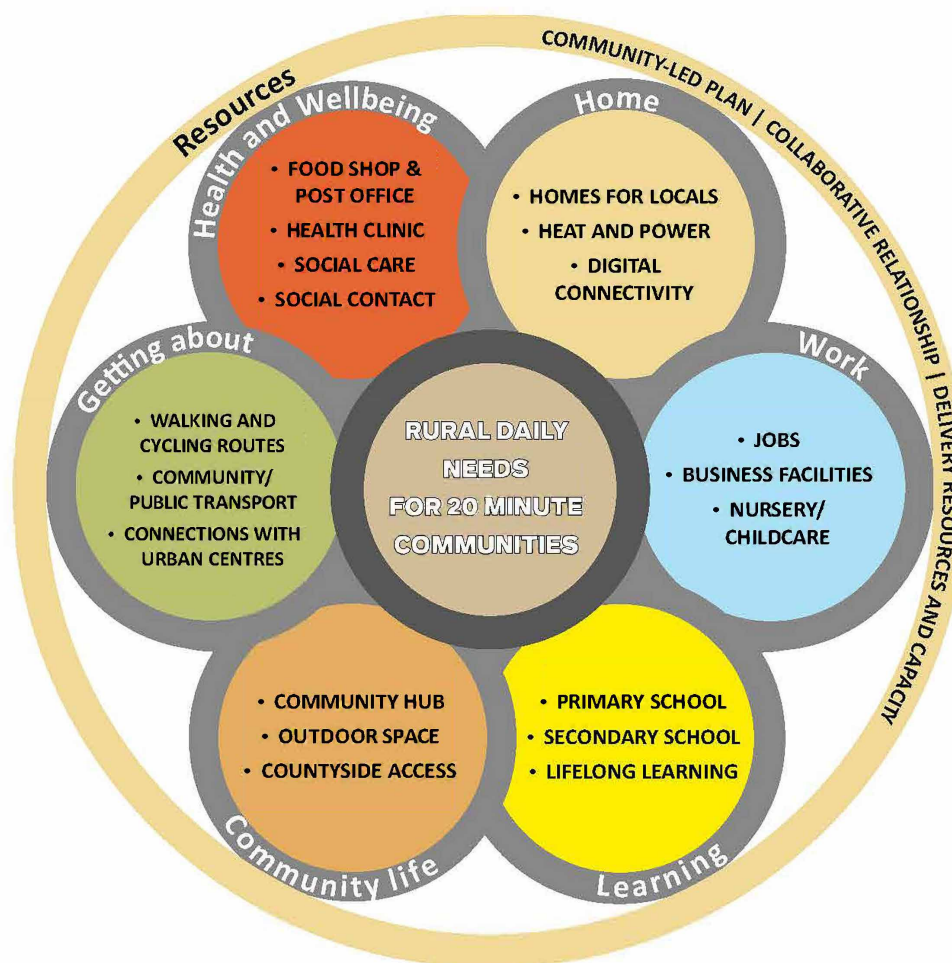


Diagram of rural daily needs in the highlands and Islands

Settlements in rural areas work together in different ways. In some areas a cluster of similarly sized settlements linked through proximity, with physical, historic and cultural links and often share services between them. Villages such as Auchtermuchty, Falkland, Freuchie and Strathmiglo are an example of this in Fife. In other areas a larger settlement provides the services and facilities for settlements around it on a hub and spoke model such as the villages around Cupar. The idea of 'smart clachans' has also been discussed which takes a traditional rural model of sharing facilities such as barns and growing areas and updates it to include shared heating, electric vehicles and work spaces, this is a model that is being considered in some community led plans in North East Fife.

Research and Classification

What has been done elsewhere?

As part of research work on the Local Living/20 minute neighbourhood concept we looked at international examples such as [Plan Melbourne](#) , and the [15 minute city concept in Paris](#) , to understand how the 20 minute neighbourhood or similar concepts have been applied elsewhere.

This research identified that while the approaches being taken in different areas are not consistent there is often considerable correlation between the aims:

- creating attractive, connected neighbourhoods where people can access most of their daily needs within a 15/20 minute return walk or cycle;
- encouraging modal shift;
- reducing carbon emissions and
- creating places where community and social interaction thrives.

There is also a correlation in the key services and facilities which were identified in different areas and we have used this to identify common features of 20 minute neighbourhoods as the basis for the approach to be taken in Fife.

Scottish Government	Sustrans	Scottish Community Alliance	Plan Melbourne	City of Edinburgh Council	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shopping, • leisure activities, • access to schools, • local services such as a GP practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shops esp food retailers, • Entertainment facilities • Education, • Health services • Financial services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and destinations to support local living, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local shops access to Fresh food • Local schools • Local health facilities and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to daily needs • Co-location of services 	Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving local economies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for local economies • Local working 	Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to green space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality public realm and open spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks, sports, playgrounds, community gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality placemaking with accessible green and open spaces 	Open space
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local environment that encourages active travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and cycling infrastructure • Walkable access to a local centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well connected to optimise active transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to safe cycling and cycle networks • Walkability and safe streets 		Active travel connections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to wider connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to regular public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to quality public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to local transport options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable onward travel 	Public transport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing • Mix of diverse housing types 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing at a density which makes services and transport viable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing options • Housing diversity • Ability to age in place 		Diverse and affordable housing
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to services online – digital strategy 	Digital services

Comparison of services and facilities identified as important for 20 minute neighbourhoods in different locations and by different organisations.

We classified different services and facilities into essential, important and desirable categories based on how large a part of the community would use these features and/or frequency of use:

- **Essential** - Features which are necessary for anyone of any age on a daily basis;

- **Important** – Features which are used regularly by certain parts of the community or used slightly less frequently by all members of the community;
- **Desirable** - Features which are used regularly by a smaller proportion of the community or used on less frequent basis by the whole community.

A range of walking and cycling buffers were applied to these features depending on the nature of the feature, some of these reflect standards established in Fife Council strategies, others are based on a consideration of what we felt was an acceptable distance for accessing these facilities on a day to day basis (400-800m, 5-10 minute walking). For some facilities such as bus stops and convenience stores we have applied a 400m or 5 minute walking buffer as the distance most people would be willing to walk on a day to day basis. For other services and facilities such as employment, schools, and community facilities we have applied a slightly further 800m or 10 minute walking buffer. The outcomes of this categorisation is presented in table 1.

Interactive Mapping and analysis

Service/facility	Category	20 minute neighbourhoods		reasoning
		Walking buffer	Cycling buffer	
Greenspace/accessible green networks	essential	250m		250m access standard from Fife's greenspace strategy
Active travel connections	essential	n/a		No buffer – needs to be accessible from people's houses
public transport (bus stops)	essential	400m		400m = around a 5-minute walk
Hi Speed Broadband	essential	n/a		No buffer – needs to be accessible from people's houses
Convenience shop and supermarkets	essential	400m	1.3 miles	1.3 miles = around a 10-minute cycle
Play Park	Important	500m		500m access standard set in Making Fife's Places
Community hall facility	Important	800m	1.3 miles	
Primary school	important	800m	1 mile	over 1 mile the council provides transport
Nursery	important	800m	1.3 miles	
Recycling facilities	Important	400m	1.3 miles	
Affordable housing	Important	n/a		
employment opportunities	Important	800m	1.3 miles	
Formal or informal sports facilities	Important	800m	1.3 miles	800m = 10 minute walk
High School	Important	800m	2 miles	over 2 miles the council provides transport
Health and social care facilities	Important	800m	1.3 miles	
Financial services (inc post offices)	Important	800m	1.3 miles	
Local centre with wider range of shops and services such as hairdressers	desirable	800m	1.3 miles	
Cultural and Recreation facilities (inc pubs, cafes, libraries)	desirable	800m	1.3 miles	
Further education facilities	desirable	800m	1.3 miles	
Community growing opportunities	desirable	800m	1.3 miles	
EV charging	desirable			
Rail station	desirable	800m	1.3 miles	
Public toilets	desirable	400m		Expected to mainly be located in local centres

Table 1. Breakdown of features identified for Fife's 20-minute neighbourhoods approach

Data on the features listed above have been located from various sources and put onto an [interactive map](#). The associated buffers have been coloured to reflect the category of the feature: blue for essential, red for important and yellow for desirable.

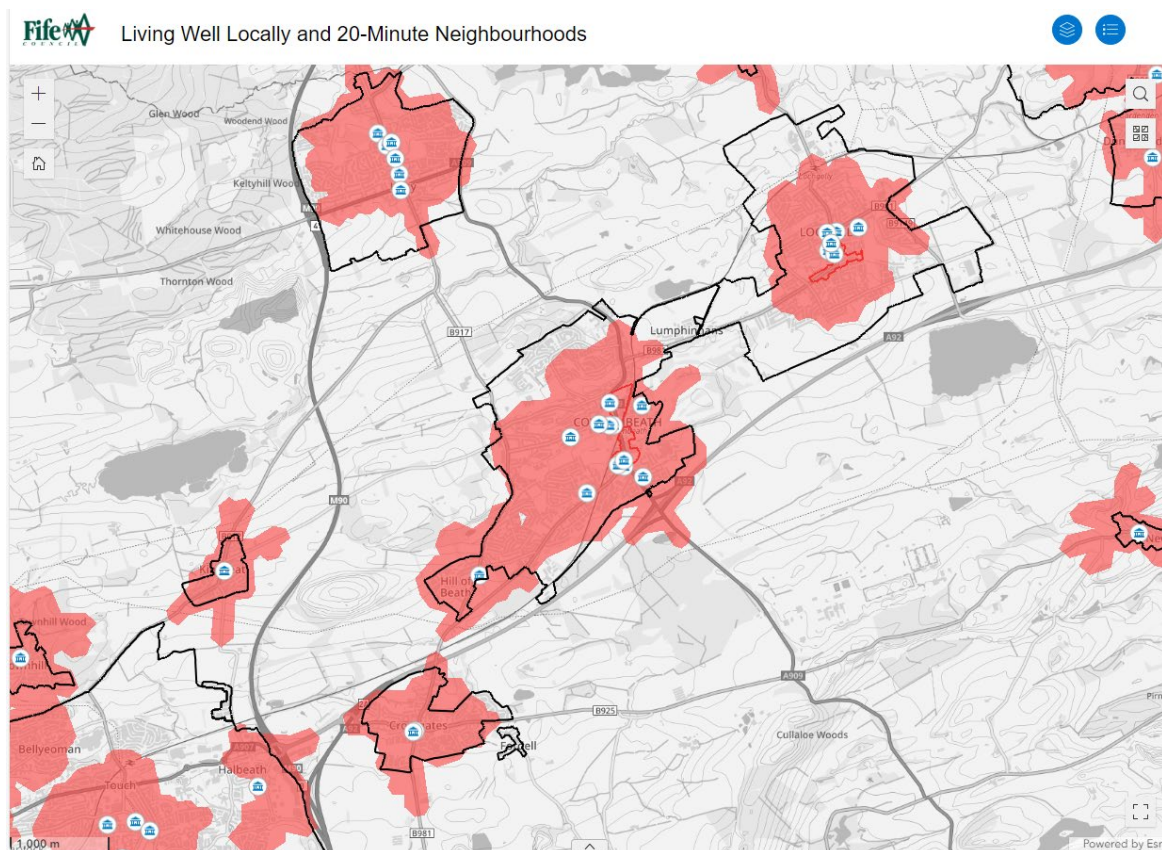
This mapping can be used to give an indication of areas which have the features of a 20 minute neighbourhoods and areas which do not have the features of 20 minute neighbourhoods locally.

This information can be used as a starting point for more detailed analysis of the quality of the services and facilities and how accessible they are to the people in their communities.

The interactive map shows the locations of key services and facilities* across Fife with 5 or 10 minute walking distances plotted around them. We have also plotted 10 minute cycling distances around them. All these layers can be switched on and off using the round blue layers button located on the top right corner.

*This information is as up to date as we can make it but will necessarily be subject to change over time.

[20-Minute Neighbourhoods \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)



Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods interactive map

Detailed consideration (case studies)

It has not been possible to carry out in depth qualitative analysis work for all settlements in Fife. Instead we identified three areas to use as case studies for the more detailed analysis work:

- [Cowdenbeath](#);

- [West Howe](#) (Auchtermuchty, Falkland, Freuchie, Strathmiglo, Gateside, Newton of Falkland and Dunshalt); and
- [Saline and Steelend](#).

These represent some of the different types of areas found in Fife; an urban area, a cluster of villages and a more remote rural area.



Dunshalt Community Shop

We ran a survey (titled Living Well Locally) to gather information from people living in the case study areas about where they live and how they access services and facilities. Questions focussed on gathering both quantitative and qualitative data in order to understand where and how people access services and facilities, the quality and how easy it is for them to access them. And we asked for any improvements they would like to see. We also asked some basic biographic questions including age, gender, and postcode. [Link to copy of questionnaire.](#)

The survey was promoted online via social media and the council's webpage and through direct email promotion to local organisations. Posters were put up in the relevant settlements to raise awareness of the survey and leaflets were handed out. Paper copies of the survey were made available in key locations in the settlements. We also carried out in person consultations in the various settlements through October 2022 asking people a series of open-ended questions which aligned with the themes of the survey.

At the same time we ran a children's survey to gain their perspective of where they live and we held a number of workshops in Primary Schools across Fife to discuss the places they lived with the pupils.



North Queensferry Primary School Workshop

Background research was carried out to look at the availability of services and facilities in the area using a variety of locally and nationally available data and we visited each settlement to carry out on the ground assessments. This involved examining not only the presence of local services, groups, and clubs, but their quality in terms of hours of operation, capacity, costs of goods and services, as well as the availability of mobile services. We also conducted an assessment of the quality of key paths and active travel routes through the area.

Links to case study documents:

[Saline and Steelend](#)

[West Howe of Fife](#)

[Cowdenbeath](#)

Challenges to delivering local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods

The approved NPF4 (2023) sets out that planning processes should help to achieve the following policy outcomes in order to support the local living and 20 minute neighbourhood approach:

- *Places are planned to improve local living in a way that reflects local circumstances.*
- *A network of high-quality, accessible, mixed-use neighbourhoods which support health and wellbeing, reduce inequalities and are resilient to the effects of climate change.*
- *New and existing communities are planned together with homes and the key local infrastructure including schools, community centres, local shops, greenspaces, health and social care, digital and sustainable transport links.*
-

Planning can support delivery of the 20 minute neighbourhood approach. However, the successful delivery of local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods will need input from many public agencies and private business. This is reflected in the Living Well Locally 20 minute neighbourhoods in the Highlands and Islands report (2022), which concluded that:

Delivering 20 Minute Communities across rural Scotland will need to be a collaborative effort. To achieve success, it will involve rethinking the delivery of public services from education and healthcare to economic development, realigning public sector investment, empowering communities and local authorities to plan and deliver, and rethinking planning policy and development delivery.



High Street, Cowdenbeath

Our mapping shows that there are many areas in Fife which appear to provide the everyday services and facilities required for local living within walking distances. Understanding the quality and accessibility of these services and facilities would need more detailed qualitative consideration similar to that done in our case studies. In some cases where services and facilities are no longer being provided by public agencies and businesses community groups have stepped in to continue to provide these for their communities.

Through our consideration of local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods we have identified some key challenges to their delivery in Fife such as:

- The centralisation of key services;
- Infrequent, slow and expensive public transport;
- The size of settlements and distance between them in some very rural areas; and
- Lack of good quality, safe and direct active travel links between key destinations.

The LDP will need to take into account these challenges.