

Herdmanflat Consultation

Common Questions and Answers

Q. This is the first time I've heard of the proposals for a masterplan and I'm concerned the Council has made its mind up without discussing it with us before now?

A. No new development will take place on the site until after a thorough consultation has taken place with local people. The consultation events will provide you with an update on why and how the Council would like to move forward with redevelopment of Herdmanflat and provide you with the opportunity to have your say.

Q. What work has the Council completed to date to get to this stage?

A. Architects, engineers, landscape consultants and ecologists have been appointed to help increase the Council's knowledge and understanding of the site. The work they have completed has allowed the Council to develop high level principles for development that form the basis of this first round of consultation.

Q. I'm concerned that you'll be taking away trees and damaging the landscape and environment?

A. The landscape and environment is what makes Herdmanflat the special place that it is. The Council is being advised by leading ecologists, landscape architects and tree experts and the approach to safeguarding the future environment presented during the consultation has been developed with them.

Q. How many houses are you proposing to build?

A. The proposals are still at a very early stage and much more work is required with partners like East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership to understand the need and specific types and sizes of housing. What we do know is that because of the unique nature of the site and the type of housing for older people proposed, the density is likely to be much lower than would normally be expected on a site of this size. Initial indications show the site could accommodate around 140 dwellings including the conversion of the remaining listed buildings.

Q. How many of the houses will be affordable?

A. The development will be promoted by the Council's Housing Service as part of its future affordable housing programme. Any proposed mix of affordable housing might include social rented, mid-market rented, shared-ownership, shared-equity or housing sold at a discount. The final mix will be dependent on national funding, legislation, and viability, but the Council always seeks to maximise the number of affordable dwellings on new developments.

Q. Why can't we see what the houses will look like now?

A. We are still at a very early stage and are only looking to agree the principles of development for now. Much more thought needs to be put towards the size and type of housing required and this will be dealt with through more detailed planning applications in the future. You will get a chance to comment again on the more detailed proposals when they are available. Any future detailed application will have to conform with the principles established by the masterplan on access, height, heritage approach and environmental considerations – which is the focus of this consultation.

Q. Will there be any opportunities for businesses or community uses in any future development?

A. The Council will always seek to ensure that local businesses can benefit from its developments, and there may be a limited opportunity for small business and the third sector to get involved, but this is still to be thought through. An example of this might include an alternative use of the former Garleton building which has been highlighted as being unsuitable for residential conversion. The Council would be keen to hear ideas you might have on alternative uses for Garleton through the consultation process.

Q. Would the council consider providing a community garden?

A. At this stage we would welcome all views on how the wider grounds could be utilised to enhance community use, but initiatives like community gardens and growing spaces are recognised in the masterplan as being beneficial to future development.

Q. Will there be an increase in car journeys?

A. Given the likely low density of housing and the proposed target age group (over 55's) it is proposed to provide at least 100% car parking provision – one space per dwelling. It is anticipated that future development will see fewer trips to and from the site than when it was a hospital.

The masterplan identifies opportunities that may distribute access in and out of the site more evenly to reduce pressure on the existing road network. Providing one space per dwelling will support efforts to maintain or reduce current levels of on street parking outside of the site.

Q. How much of the site will be dedicated to open space?

A. The site is 14.7 acres in total. Approximately 50% to 60% of this is likely to remain undeveloped and be retained as public open space, with walking and cycling provision. The site slopes down significantly from North to South and accessibility has been considered from the outset, given the proposal to build fully accessible homes for older people. These approximate figures reflect early thinking and the detail will be developed and subject to further community consultation.

Q. How tall will the new buildings be?

A. It is a requirement to respect the height, as well as the views from the remaining buildings on site. This means that heights are likely to range between 2 and a maximum of 4 storeys. To put this in context the existing mature trees on site are the equivalent of 4.5 to 5 storeys in height. Much more detailed work on this will be carried out after the masterplan principles have been accepted.

Q. How will Construction traffic access the site?

A. Thought has been put to how construction traffic can be minimised. It is proposed to maintain the Aberlady Road entrance as the only construction access during the building works. This would mean that as houses are completed, new residents could access the site from the existing Lydgait entrance and/or a proposed new entrance through the Council owned Garages site at Herdmanflatt. Once construction is complete the Aberlady Road entrance would be reinstated as the main vehicle access for the development.

Before any construction can begin, the Housing Service will have to formally agree a construction management plan with the Council that covers the detail of construction access and hours of working etc.

Q. Why can't you take an access from the A199 into the site?

A. The Council has been advised by its traffic consultants that the difference in height between the A199 and the site, proximity to the existing roundabout at the Aberlady Road junction, and requirement for extensive tree loss would make it very difficult to get a direct and safe access into the site.

A safe cycle and pedestrian route from the A199 through the site is proposed, offering safer and quicker access to the town centre.

Before any future detailed proposals are approved by the Council's Planning Department a detailed traffic impact assessment and green travel plan will need to be provided. This must demonstrate no detrimental impact to surrounding roads, and show how the development will provide a benefit for active travel (walking, cycling, connectivity to wider Haddington and public transport etc)

Q. How long will development take?

A. Given the sensitive nature of the site, the need to manage safe access and egress and to meet public engagement, planning and building control requirements, it is unlikely that work could begin before the end of 2023. The construction may take up to four years including the refurbishment of the listed buildings.

Q. Will there be further consultation on your future detailed proposals?

A. Yes. This is only the first stage in consultation and it is about establishing the principles of future development only. The first stage is to listen to what you have to say about our initial proposals for a masterplan. The second stage will be to come back to you again to summarise your views and comments made during stage 1 and explain how they have been considered by the Council.

Before any work starts on site, further consultations will be required regarding any housing and care services that might be required, and the more detailed house types, roads, and parking proposals the Council would like to build.