

Haddington Sustainable Transport Hub - Frequently Asked Questions

Lots of people have been providing feedback and asking questions about the council's proposals to improve parking in and around Haddington town centre. We have compiled this list of the frequently asked question to help inform people about our proposals.

WHITTINGEHAME DRIVE SITE

Why are you proposing to build a new car park at Whittingehame Drive?

We recognise there's a need to increase car parking spaces in and around Haddington town centre and make improvements to the town centre to improve accessibility. To do this, we want to change the status of some existing parking in the town centre from long stay to short stay. This means more short stay spaces would be available in the town centre than compared to at present. We would then have to accommodate long stay car parking – mainly for commuters requiring a space for the duration of the working day – elsewhere. Whittingehame Drive has been identified as the most appropriate site for new long stay car parking, as an edge of centre transport hub. The proposed hub would allow people who need long stay parking to take advantage of a facility within a 10 minute walk of the town centre. It would also incorporate options for 'park and ride', 'park and stride', electric vehicle fast chargers, cycle parking and cycle hire.

Is Whittingehame Drive the best site for this facility?

We have carried out very detailed work to establish the best location. Unlike most of the other locations considered, Whittingehame Drive is owned by the council and available to us. It is accessible and within a 10-minute walk of the town centre, which is suitable for many commuters. Issues with other sites include not having ownership, the land being earmarked for other uses, inaccessible or unsafe access, being technically unfeasible, or other restrictions. Of the available and feasible sites, this is closest to the town centre.

Is Aldi store and car park an option?

This is a commercial site which is not available to the council. The best option for the Aldi site is commercial use which will provide jobs for the local community.

Do you believe shoppers/people using the town centre will use Whittingehame Drive?

The new facility is mainly aimed at people requiring a space for the duration of the working day. By moving vehicles out of existing long stay car parking in the town centre, there will be more short stay spaces available for shoppers to access shops, cafes, and other services. Overall, this will mean that it becomes easier for people to park near their destination.

Why are you taking away greenspace?

The new car park will only use a small proportion of the available open space at Whittingehame Drive. In order to minimise its impact, the proposal replaces a current informal parking area and incorporates an existing access road. Landscaping and tree planting will reduce the environmental impact.

How will this impact on funerals and sports activities at the location?

Spaces could be set aside for those attending funerals. At present, many people park on the street. The car park will also assist the football club in hosting bigger events, as they will have significantly improved parking facilities for weekend matches.

Will there be parking charges?

We have no current plans to introduce car parking charges in Haddington.

Where will those requiring a disabled space park?

We'll ensure that there are improved options for people requiring a disabled parking space – both in the existing town centre parking areas which would be designated as short stay, on street, and at the Whittingehame Drive transport hub.

You've declared a climate emergency – so why are you building a new car park?

We recognise that private cars, car clubs and car sharing will remain an important element of the transport mix in East Lothian, and that not all journeys can be completed on foot, by bicycle, or public transport. Amongst other measures, the climate emergency means we must transition away from petrol and diesel powered vehicles and become more efficient car users.

By making parking choices in the town more straightforward and by providing more electric charging points, we will reduce unnecessary vehicle movement and support the transition to electric vehicles. This will mean less congestion and emissions in the town. We will continue to support and encourage people to take positive action to reduce emissions, and the new transport hub would be linked to greater provision for sustainable and active travel choices, in support of our ambitions.

The new car park will be fitted out with electric vehicle charging points so is being future proofed to get ready for 2032, when the vast majority of cars are expected to be electric.

CHANGES IN THE TOWN CENTRE

What current long stay parking would become short stay?

This would include the potential re-designation of the existing 'Tesco long stay' car park for short stay use. This could free up an additional 225 spaces in the town centre for short stay, public parking. The status of the car park at John Muir House, East Lothian Council's head office, will be reviewed to consider the potential for an area to be available for wider public, short stay use.

Will spaces be removed from the High Street and Market Street?

Overall, there will be more short stay spaces in the town centre as a result of this project. The council is committed to supporting local businesses and improving Haddington town centre.

Separately, the council and Haddington community groups have been looking at proposals to enhance the street scape and public realm of the town centre, to support local businesses and bring benefit to everyone who uses the town, including those with restricted or reduced mobility. Various

proposals are being considered but no decisions have been made. Further public consultation will take place on the favoured option or options, before any decisions are made to proceed.

Some of the proposals being considered would result in the removal of a small number of existing on street parking spaces. However, as a result of the Whittingehame Drive project and the re-designation of long stay car parks as short stay car parks, there would be significantly more short stay spaces available in the town centre than at present for people to easily access shops and other services.

Where will those requiring a disabled space park?

We'll ensure that there are improved options for people requiring a disabled parking space – both in the existing town centre parking areas which would be designated as short stay, on street, and at the Whittingehame Drive transport hub. There will be promotion of disabled car parking spaces.

How will this affect local businesses?

One of our main objectives is to support local businesses to enhance the local economy. That's why we want to improve accessibility to and within the town centre, making it an even more attractive place for people to visit. We want to make it easier for people to access the town centre on foot or by public transport, as well as by providing more spaces for short stay use. The new car park is a long stay car park – we will be increasing the number of short stay car park spaces in the town for shoppers.

CHANGES AT JOHN MUIR HOUSE

I'm a council employee – will I still be able to park at John Muir House?

Parking for employees will continue to be required and maintained at John Muir House. However, given the wider parking pressures within the town and results of public consultation, we recognise there is a need to review the car park's status to consider the potential for some of the car park to be available for both staff and wider public short stay use.

It's important to stress that no decisions have been taken at this time and there will be a consultation on any proposed changes at John Muir House. This will give all employees an opportunity to find out more and have their say. Look out for more detail in due course.

It's equally important to note that the current provision at John Muir House does not accommodate staff needs and expanding to provide additional long stay parking at Whittingehame Drive would address this need.

How many spaces will be given to the public?

No decisions have been made at this stage – we'll be carrying out a review and this will consider how many spaces could potentially be made available for wider public use.

PROCESS

What has happened since the previous consultation event in December 2019?

We have listened and continue to do so. We're very grateful to everyone who attended the consultation events in December and understand the importance of this issue to local communities. We received a mixture of supportive feedback and comments where people expressed their concerns, had questions, or put forward other ideas. We recognise the need to take this feedback on board and ensure we clearly explain the rationale and benefits of this project. That's why we committed to holding further public engagement events with further information about what we're trying to achieve, how the proposals are developing, and to ensuring that members of the public – including businesses, town centre residents and all its users - have sufficient opportunity to provide their comments.

How will a decision be made on whether to go ahead with the new transport hub?

We expect that this matter will come before East Lothian Council's Planning Committee in the Spring. Elected Members will then be asked to take a decision on whether or not to give the plans for the new transport hub planning consent.

Why is the council investing in a car park at a time of significant budget pressures?

The cost of the transport hub/new long stay car park is entirely met from the Town Centre Fund administered through the Scottish Government. There is no cost to East Lothian Council.

If the project receives planning permission, what are the next steps and how long will it take to implement the changes?

Subject to planning approval, it is expected construction of the hub at Whittingehame Drive would commence in the Autumn, taking approximately five months to complete. The process necessary to initiate changes to the Haddington town centre Traffic Regulation Orders will start in June 2020, taking approximately 12 months to complete.

No decision has been made on the wider improvement to the town centre – options and proposals are still to be considered, costed and evaluated. If proposals are approved then it is likely that work to upgrade and enhance the town centre will be undertaken in phases, potentially starting in 2021 over a four year period.