

Herdmanflat Masterplan

Planning Application in Principle Common Questions and Answers

(Updated December 2023)

Q. We were expecting a planning application to be submitted during the summer of 2023, why has it taken so long?

A. Following the consultation carried out earlier in the year there were a number of legitimate concerns raised by the community which we felt needed further investigation, changes made or further justification required. The delay in submitting the planning application arose because of the time associated with this.

Q. What have you done to limit the impact on existing trees and make sure the environment, biodiversity and wildlife habitat can be improved?

A. There are currently over 369 trees on the site. Trees of less than 10cm diameter are not classified in accordance with British Standards classification guidance.

Of the 369 classified trees identified within the tree survey, a maximum of 26 have been highlighted as possibly requiring removal by the need to provide drainage connections and disabled access to the site (7% of the total), and a further 10 trees identified “off site” adjacent to the A199, identified as possibly requiring removal by the Council Road Department’s requirement to provide an Active Travel connection between the site and the A199. This indicates a total of 36 trees potentially being impacted by the development. No other trees will be affected, and protection measures will be required to be put in place to ensure this.

As part of our planning application, our Landscape team have provided recommendations for compensatory planting, woodland restocking, and new garden and open space tree planting as follows:

Extra Heavy Standard Trees - 50 new
Woodland tree planting/ restocking - 485 new
Standard native trees to public spaces – 116 new
Trees to proposed garden areas – 72 New

So our proposals allow for **723** new trees to be planted at Herdmanflat, resulting in the number of trees on site after development increasing to over 1000.

The proposed tree planting has been designed to assist in improving biodiversity and wildlife habitat from where it sits today, and to provide additional screening to address concerns raised by neighbours about overlooking.

Q. What have you done to make sure the community and surrounding roads will not be impacted by increased traffic?

A. The application is supported by a transport assessment based on a development of 160 houses. This is higher than the 140 – 145 flats proposed in the application. The assessment assumed a car parking standard of 150% of dwellings would be applied as per the Council’s parking standards for a

development of this size. (240 spaces).

The transport assessment was supported by video monitoring of the surrounding junctions outwith the school holidays to determine existing usage and trips throughout the day.

Based on 160 new houses, the conclusions of the modelling indicated that **“the vehicular traffic from the proposed development can be comfortably accommodated on the surrounding road network with minimal impact”**

To improve this even more, the Housing team has negotiated a reduction in the Council’s car parking standards for the proposed development from 150% of dwellings to 75% of dwellings. This means that our application for 145 dwellings will only have to provide spaces for 109 cars. This is 131 spaces less than the number modelled in the transport assessment.

Some of the reasons we put forward for reducing car parking included the site’s proximity to the town centre, ability to access public transport, the type of housing proposed and the benefits provided by the expanded 20 minute neighbourhood.

Our updated proposals will reduce the impact of traffic and cars on surrounding roads substantially from the minimal impact indicated previously.

Q. What have you done to address concerns on building heights?

A. In January we told you that we were proposing to build no higher than 4 storeys. Following consultation, we looked at this again to address concerns raised that this was too high.

The application submitted now commits to being no more than 3 storeys in height. To put this in perspective, the trees surrounding the site are five storeys in height, so we hope this amendment to our plans provides reassurance that the buildings will sit more comfortably within the landscape and that the reduction, coupled with increased tree screening, will address concerns about existing houses being overlooking.

Q. I am concerned you are building too many houses at the bottom of the site, can you clarify how many houses the application will provide in that area?

A. The masterplan shows 51 new flats being developed at the bottom of the site, 6 within the footprint of the now demolished nurses’ accommodation at the bottom of Hopetoun Mews, and 45 within the area where the now demolished former Hopetoun Unit stood.

Q. How do your proposals address future Health and Wellbeing?

A. Besides the need for more affordable housing, Health and Wellbeing is the main reason for putting forward these proposals. Much thought and planning has been put towards developing proposals that provide health and wellbeing outcomes that will ensure a lasting legacy for the local community, Haddington and East Lothian as a whole.

The proposals have been developed to deliver specific local and national policy requirements on housing, and Health and Social Care, and to provide accommodation that meets very real existing need and is desperately required.

The application proposals consider and deliver on stated policy objectives set out in the following:

1. The East Lothian Local Housing Strategy objectives to build more specialist housing and accommodation for the 650+ over 65's currently on the housing waiting list.
2. The Integration Joint Board strategic objectives to support ageing in place, and provide more care in a community setting.
3. Scottish Government's "Coming Home" agenda, providing accommodation for East Lothian residents with a learning disability or complex needs that are currently forced to live outwith the County.
4. Scotland's National Dementia Strategy which pushes for an increase in new housing that supports families living with Dementia.
5. The East Lothian Dementia Strategy which highlights the need to provide better housing options, care and support within communities.
6. National Planning Framework 4, which seeks to deliver development that supports the aims and objectives set out in the policies mentioned above, whilst also advocating increased community access to greenspace and increased health and safety within communities.

The above represents only some of the policies and strategies that the Herdmanflat development proposals have had to consider. It has been challenging to try and deliver everything, but we believe that the proposals go significantly beyond what would normally be expected, delivering benefits that will meet the needs of the many not just those of the few. We feel this is very important given the challenges we have in East Lothian with a rising and ageing population.

No single policy has or can be treated in isolation, and the result is a masterplan that will deliver a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits to a much larger proportion of Haddington's population whether that be for continued use for walking and exercise, or as a safe and secure well connected place to live in older age.

As previously stated, the Council has agreed that it will carry out a specific Health and Wellbeing consultation in advance of future detailed applications being submitted.

Q. Apart from providing new housing and Health and Wellbeing benefits, what other community benefits have the Council considered in their plans?

A. Our proposals have tried to incorporate lots of opportunities for the Community to be involved in Herdmanflat's future success. Our proposals are all about creating a successful and vibrant place that becomes a valued community asset and where people will want to visit for all manner of purposes, and not for any one reason. We have lots of ideas and many of these have been outlined in the application. Some of these include:

1. Opportunities for employment and training in construction, that support modern and traditional skills development, and in health and social care. We have workforce shortages in both of these vocations and the development over the four to five years envisaged is long enough to generate continuity in training and increases the likelihood of successful outcomes.
2. There will be a huge amount of safe, well managed open space and woodland which could be utilised by local schools for learning, and by community groups for art projects. The pétanque courts have also been introduced to encourage people to visit the site.
3. A lot of interest has been expressed in the future use of the Garleton Building over the past 2 or 3

years, and given it is not suitable for housing, we hope it can be re-utilised for community uses in the future.

4. We have incorporated plans for Community Growing to try and encourage a means of socialising between those living on site and the wider community.
5. We are aspiring to deliver a dementia friendly community and the above will contribute to our ambition to promote activities that provide a stimulating environment that encourages people of all ages to interact with one another.

(Questions & Answers provided previously in January 2023)

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.