



Homes
England

Lea Castle Village Wider Site

Consultation Document



Welcome to our consultation

Homes England welcomes you to this public consultation regarding the wider site at Lea Castle Village, Kidderminster.

Homes England secured outline planning permission in June 2019 for the development of 600 new affordable and market homes and small scale employment on the former Lea Castle Hospital site (known as the core site). The development is currently under construction by Vistry Homes.

This consultation explains our proposals for the next phase of mixed use development at Lea Castle on land surrounding the core site, which forms part of the overall proposals for a new Lea Castle Village as set out in the emerging Wyre Forest District Local Plan. The planning application for this next phase will not be determined until the Local Plan has been formally adopted by the Council (anticipated to be in Spring 2022).

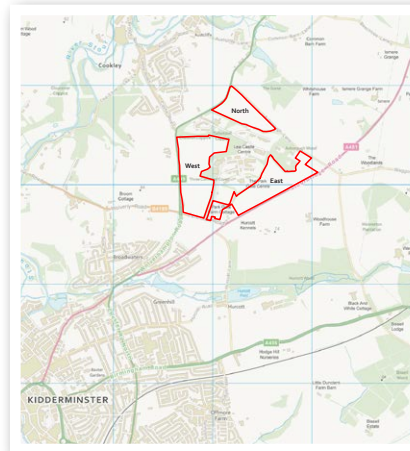
As a responsible landowner, Homes England has a positive role to play in assisting the Council in meeting its needs for new housing, employment land and community facilities which in this case include a new primary school, community facility and potential for a new GP surgery.

This consultation sets out how the wider site will be developed and integrated with the development; currently under construction on the core site, to deliver a sustainable new village that reflects the Council's aspirations for this development and provides new housing and facilities to benefit the local community.

Please take this opportunity to view our proposals and let us know your thoughts so that we can take these on board as we develop the design. Your feedback will be used to inform a future outline planning application which we hope to submit in late summer/early Autumn 2021.

The deadline for submitting responses is 11:59pm on 11 July 2021.

If you have any questions about the proposals or the consultation you can call 0800 4480416 or email leacastleconsultation@woodplc.com.



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About Homes England

Homes England is the government's housing accelerator developing public sector land and investing in communities. We're making possible the new homes England needs, helping to improve neighbourhoods and grow communities by working with others to build homes faster for local people.

High quality design is very important to Homes England as are the principles of ensuring that new communities are designed with healthy living and nature at their heart. Homes England does not build houses itself but retains involvement in sites to ensure that high standards are met by its selected Development Partners.

For further information on Homes England visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england>



Lea Castle Village Vision Statement

Our vision statement:

Lea Castle village represents a unique opportunity within Wyre Forest District Council to create a sustainable new community in an attractive landscape setting. It will offer new market and affordable homes to meet local need and it will include a local centre at the heart of the development, providing for essential retail needs, a new primary school, community facility and potential for a new GP surgery. Part of the site will provide employment opportunities for people to work locally.

The village is located partly within and partly against the backdrop of a mature woodland setting, with new play areas and improved playing pitches. A bus route will serve the site as will new pedestrian and cycle routes to nearby settlements, to encourage sustainable forms of travel and reduce car use. There are good links out to the open countryside. Lea Castle Village will be an exciting new community that enables people to live fulfilling lives with high quality housing in a well-designed environment that meets the needs of the whole community.

Our vision is to create a great new place for local people to live, whilst also delivering benefits for the whole community.



About the site

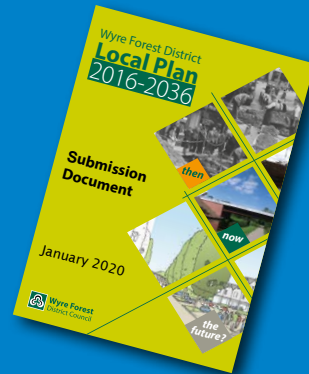
The need for new homes

The Wyre Forest District Council Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (adopted July 2013) allocates specific sites for development, including the former Lea Castle Hospital site for 600 dwellings.

The emerging Wyre Forest District Local Plan, that is currently going through public examination, sets out a requirement for a minimum target of 276 new homes each year up to 2036 to meet the housing needs of the District. The land surrounding the hospital site is included as a proposed allocation in the new Local Plan which will help the Council meet this need for new housing and employment. The Council has identified this site as a suitable location for new development. Along with the core site, the development will create a new village known as Lea Castle Village. It is anticipated that the Local Plan will be adopted in Spring 2022.

The focus of this consultation is the wider site which will deliver around 800 new affordable and private homes in addition to the 600 homes already under construction on the core site. It will also provide:

- land for employment uses.
- a new two form entry primary school.
- a local centre including small scale retail and community facilities.
- play areas.
- new footpath links and routes.
- allotments/orchard; and
- green infrastructure.



Click on this image to access the Wyre Forest District Local Plan Submission Version

The site and surrounding area

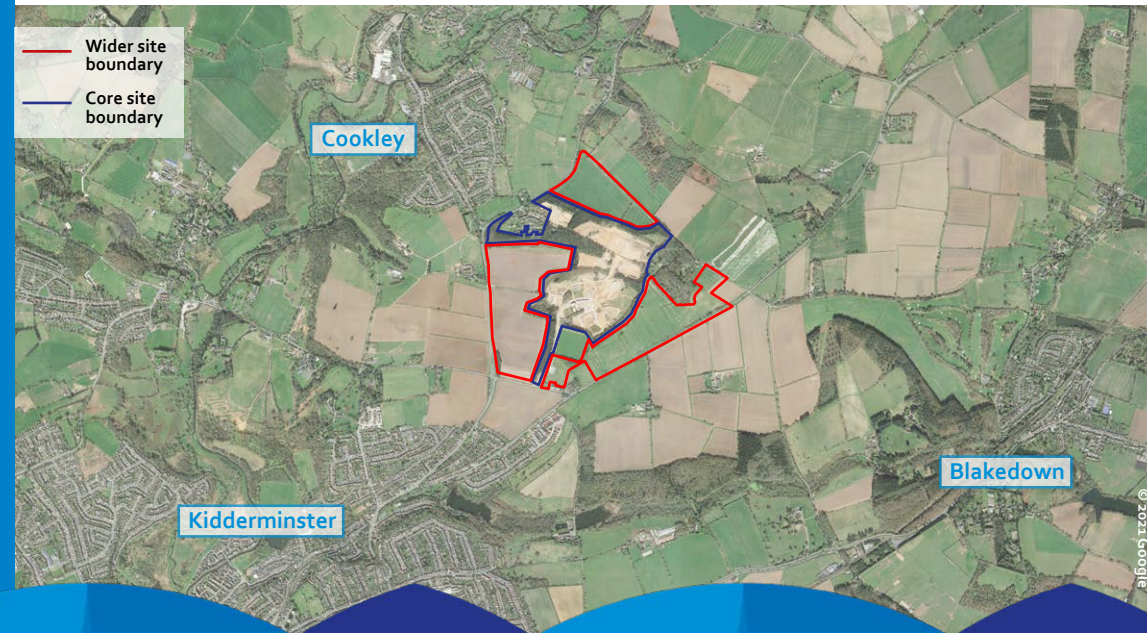
The site is currently located within the Green Belt, to the north-east of Kidderminster and south-east of Cookley.

The site is around 57ha in total and is made up of three parcels of land that surround the former Lea Castle Hospital that are primarily arable fields with dividing hedgerows and some mature trees. It is bound by Wolverhampton Road to the West, Park Gate Road to the South, Stourbridge Road to the east and Axborough Lane to the north.

Immediately to the north-west of the site there are existing houses at The Crescent. Further to the north are houses along Axborough Lane, and to the south is the Park Gate Inn Public House and some properties along Park Gate Road. Mature woodland separates the three land parcels and provides screening from nearby properties. The core site on the former hospital is currently under construction and is separated from the wider site by woodland

The nearest facilities are in Cookley and North Kidderminster at Broadwaters. However, **the new village will include facilities for the new residents and existing communities in the surrounding area.**

Bus services 9A/9C and 125 run close to the site and the closest railway stations are at Kidderminster, Blakedown and Stourbridge Junction.





Understanding the area: Site opportunities and constraints

In assessing the potential of the site to be redeveloped for new homes and employment, we have considered the opportunities and constraints that need to be addressed. These are summarised below.

Key opportunities

- To create a sustainable new village development with its own identity.
- To provide land for a mix of employment uses.
- To provide a new local centre to serve new and existing residents in the area and those working in the area.
- To deliver land for a primary school on-site to enhance education provision in the area and ensure sufficient capacity for the new school age children.
- To create pedestrian and cycle links through the site.
- To provide high quality market and affordable housing including an element of self / custom build.
- To enhance green infrastructure, wildlife habitats and recreational links in the area.
- To create new children's and youth play areas.
- To enhance leisure and sports provision in the area through the creation of a new sports pitch and associated facilities.
- To retain key views into and out of the site.
- To route a local bus service(s) through the site.
- To ensure that there is enough capacity within local community facilities in addition to those being provided at Lea Castle Village such as:
 - ▶ Local schools
 - ▶ Healthcare; and
 - ▶ Sports and recreation.



Key constraints

- Need to respect and retain the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- Ensure that the visual impact of the development is mitigated through the inclusion of appropriate landscaping and screening.
- Need to integrate the wider site with the core site, providing links to create a single integrated new development.
- Need to protect the adjacent Axborough Wood Ancient Woodland to the north-east of the site and the woodland/wildlife corridors surrounding the core site.
- Need to avoid disturbance to the bat houses and barns on the former hospital site.
- Need to maintain clear physical separation from Broadwaters and Cookley while creating pedestrian/cycle links between them.



Understanding the area: Supporting technical work

To help understand the implications of the development a wide range of technical and environmental work is being undertaken. This information is being used to help design the scheme, ensure that impacts are properly addressed and produce a high-quality masterplan with wider community benefits.

Landscape and trees

As part of the outline planning application we are undertaking a Landscape and Visual Assessment of the proposed development. This will assess the potential effects on:

- Landscape elements within the site that could be directly affected (the trees, hedgerows and arable fields)
- Landscape character as defined in the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment; and
- The views of people living in nearby communities (such as Cookley and Broadwaters), travelling though the landscape on local footpaths and cycle routes and travelling along the local highway network including the A449 Wolverhampton Road and A451 Stourbridge Road.

The scheme aims to retain and enhance existing vegetation where possible with new trees and hedgerows also proposed. The Masterplan will provide the creation of links to the wider green infrastructure network and suitable pedestrian and emergency accesses through the adjacent woodland into the core site. Landscape buffers will be provided around the external edges of the site to provide green corridors where tree planting will help to filter views of the proposed built development.

A tree survey of the site has been undertaken to ensure that important trees are identified, determine appropriate locations to create the accesses through the woodland, and to ensure that root protection areas of nearby trees can be protected from development.

A buffer is proposed to Axborough Wood to ensure protection of the Ancient Woodland.

Ecology

A preliminary ecological survey of the site has been undertaken along with specific species surveys relating to bats, badgers, dormice, reptiles, great crested newts and breeding birds. Much of the existing hedgerow on site will be retained and new habitat including grassland, woodland and scrub will be created. These new habitats will aim to provide enhanced foraging and nesting resources and movement corridors across the site for these species and species groups.

The species surveys have found the surrounding woodland and hedgerows are used by various bat species, including the lesser horseshoe bat known to roost on the adjacent hospital site which contains a number of purpose-built bat houses. Small numbers of grass snake and common lizard have been found alongside breeding birds such as dunnock, song thrush and yellowhammer.

The proposals will also retain habitat for badgers and dormice known to be present in the local area.

We are seeking to ensure that there is a net gain of biodiversity on the site. Around 40% of the site is Green Infrastructure and there will be considerable new habitat creation to increase the biodiversity value of the site.





Flood risk and drainage

The site is not in an area at risk of flooding.

The drainage strategy will manage water on site so runoff does not affect surrounding land or make flooding worse elsewhere. Water storage areas (above ground and underground) and landscaped areas will be incorporated into the site. These include both dry attenuation basins but also ponds and swales with a permanent water level.

In the northern area, surface water can soak away directly into the ground, while foul flows are likely to be discharged to the public system via a pumped connection. In the eastern and western areas, discussions with Severn Trent are progressing to identify suitable gravity connection points for both the surface and foul water drainage.

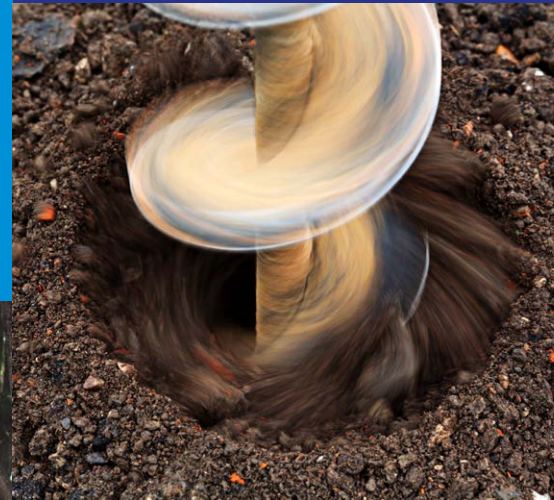
There are existing foul and surface water sewers located in the western and eastern land parcels respectively, which will either be accommodated within the development layout or be diverted. There are also foul and surface water sewers located in the area of green space in the northern part of the western land parcel, and as such these sewers can be accommodated by the development proposals.

All of these drainage solutions will form an attractive integral part of the development creating opportunities for new wildlife habitats as well as sustainability managing the surface water on site.



Land quality

Intrusive investigations will be undertaken across all three parcels to determine the presence of any contamination and mitigation that may be required to ensure that the site can safely be developed for housing.



Noise assessment

Noise assessments will be undertaken to ensure that new homes are located at an appropriate distance from the key roads surrounding the site and to ensure that they are designed to minimise any impact of noise on the amenity of residents. The noise assessment will also consider the appropriateness of adjoining uses, such as uses close to the playing pitches and employment areas.



Heritage

There are no designated heritage assets within the site, and the redevelopment of the site would not impact on the nearby Grade II Listed Building, North Lodge and Gateway other than very minor impact on views from North Lodge.

As there is a medium potential for the presence of prehistoric remains on the site, archaeological evaluation comprising of trial trenching is proposed to be undertaken prior to development.



Transport

Public transport

As part of the core site planning permission, the existing bus service 9 (serving Kidderminster and Cookley) will be routed through the core site and discussions are taking place about extending its reach through the wider site as well with access via one of the new junctions off Wolverhampton Road. In addition, consideration is being given to the possibility of routing the existing bus service 125 (Stourbridge to Bridgnorth) through the site. This would provide excellent access to the services for all existing and new residents.

Pedestrian/cycle links

Pedestrian and cycle links through the core site to the existing walking and cycling routes on the A449 Wolverhampton Road and a new link to the footway on Stourbridge Road are part of the core site planning permission. This network of pedestrian and cycle links will be augmented with further provision through the wider site ensuring connectivity between development plots and different land uses such as the school and local centre. The potential for further improvement schemes on Wolverhampton Road, Stourbridge Road and Wolverley Road is being considered including a crossing on the Wolverhampton Road near Cookley.

The highway network

A transport assessment (including traffic modelling) and strategy are being prepared for the wider site to ensure that new traffic is minimised, and that local roads are able to cope with new traffic. Improvements to the wider highway network/key junctions will be identified to minimise the impact of the traffic generated by the wider site.

Our work will consider whether it is appropriate to seek a speed reduction on surrounding roads, in particular Wolverhampton Road as this would improve road safety.

Site access

The site can be safely accessed from new junctions on Stourbridge Road and Wolverhampton Road. Consideration is also being given to the potential for accessing a very small number of houses from Axborough Lane. Vehicle connections between the core site and the east and west sections of the wider site are being considered which would be designed to minimise rat running through the whole Lea Castle Village development, while also minimising tree loss through the woodland.





Utilities / services

Discussions are taking place with public utility providers to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the existing utility networks to serve the needs of the site. Upgrades will be required to some of the existing public utilities, in particular to the existing High Voltage (HV) electricity network. Initial discussions with Western Power Distribution have indicated that reinforcement of the existing primary substations at Kinver and Hinksford to the north of the site will be required to accommodate the development, from where a HV connection into the site will be taken.

The government has confirmed that from 2025 it does not want any new homes to be built with fossil fuel heating, such as a natural gas boilers. The Building Regulations sets out how, within four years, new housing must produce 75-80 per cent less carbon emissions than allowed under the current regulations, and an increased use of renewable energy should be considered. It is anticipated that the site will be developed after 2025, so it has been assumed that dwellings will have predominantly low carbon electric heating and hot water, and therefore new gas supplies will be limited.

There are a number of existing services located on the site which will partially constrain the development and in particular, the Elan Valley Aqueduct which crosses the north-west corner of the northern parcel of the wider site. Development will respect the easements in this area of the site.

There are existing overhead HV conductors and underground cables present in the area of green space in the northern part of the western parcel of the wider site, and as such these cables can be accommodated by the development proposals. There are existing overhead British Telecom cables which are located in the eastern parcel of the wider site which will need to be diverted to accommodate the development. There are a number of other utilities located inside each the development parcels and where possible, these will be accommodated within the development or alternatively, they will be removed or diverted.

Local facilities and services

As well as proposing new homes and employment on the site, it is important that local facilities can cope. Therefore, to create a sustainable new village, the proposals include a local centre which will provide a range of local facilities to serve the new village and communities in the surrounding area. These could include small shops and a community building that is able to accommodate a range of uses such as a potential GP surgery or day nursery. The local centre could also accommodate some apartments and senior living or extra care. Other new facilities include on-site sport and recreation facilities. Provision of a two form entry primary school with early years on site will serve new and nearby residents, reduce pressure on other primary schools in the area and encourage walking to school within the village.

These new facilities around the local centre, school and sports pitches will also integrate well with the existing Pub on Park Gate Lane to create a social hub.

A financial contribution will be made towards the provision of new secondary school places and the provision of a bus from the site to the secondary school at Wolverley. New play areas will be provided on the site.





The Draft Illustrative Masterplan and scheme benefits

Quality of development

While developing the layout of the site, as well as being guided by the Local Plan requirements, we have responded to the site's local physical context including:

- Ensuring that the site is well integrated with the core site to ensure a cohesive and sustainable village development.
- Ensuring that there are links to the wider green infrastructure network for wildlife and for people.
- Respecting valued habitats and species within the site and the surrounding woodland.
- Ensuring the most appropriate drainage strategy for the ground conditions and topography of the site.
- Ensuring a sensitively designed scheme along the road frontages is delivered to reduce the visual impact of the development.
- Creating a clear new Green Belt boundary and physical separation from Cookley and Broadwaters.

We seek to integrate all of our developments into the local area and create desirable places to live. We will ensure that the development compliments the existing natural and built environment.



Click on this image to access a printable version of the masterplan

Key features and benefits

The Lea Castle Village wider site will include:

- Up to 800 new homes including affordable housing, self build and custom build.
- The delivery of a range of house types and sizes including opportunities for live/work units in the local centre and senior living accommodation.
- A local centre which will include retail and a community building able to accommodate a range of uses such as a GP surgery.
- 420 place primary school to be located next to the local centre.
- Around 7.8ha of employment land to include small-scale workshops and offices.
- A village green and sports hub for a range of play opportunities.
- Allotments or community orchard.
- New play areas throughout the site.
- The creation of a landscape buffer between the development and ancient woodland.
- The creation of pedestrian and cycle linkages throughout the development that will link to public footpaths surrounding the site; and
- Green and blue infrastructure including Sustainable Drainage Systems attenuation including green spaces for informal recreation. 40% of the site will be Green Infrastructure.

Wider benefits

Our proposals can deliver a number of benefits for the local area, including:

- The provision of new homes including affordable housing for the local community.
- Economic benefits through job creation in the construction sector and additional income from residents being spent in the local economy.
- Investment in local infrastructure and traffic mitigation including junction improvements to the local road network.
- Additional retail, sport and recreation provision to the north of Kidderminster.
- New primary school provision.
- Increased employment opportunities in the local areas; and
- Public access to surrounding woodland areas.





What happens next

Your views

We are keen to hear your views on our proposals for development of the wider site at Lea Castle Village. This is your opportunity to influence the proposals and let us know your thoughts and suggestions on how we can deliver a new development that integrates into the local area. You can submit your response by:

- Answering the questionnaire found on this website or
- Email your comments to leacastlevillage@woodplc.com.

The deadline for comments is 11:59pm on 11 July 2021.

What happens next

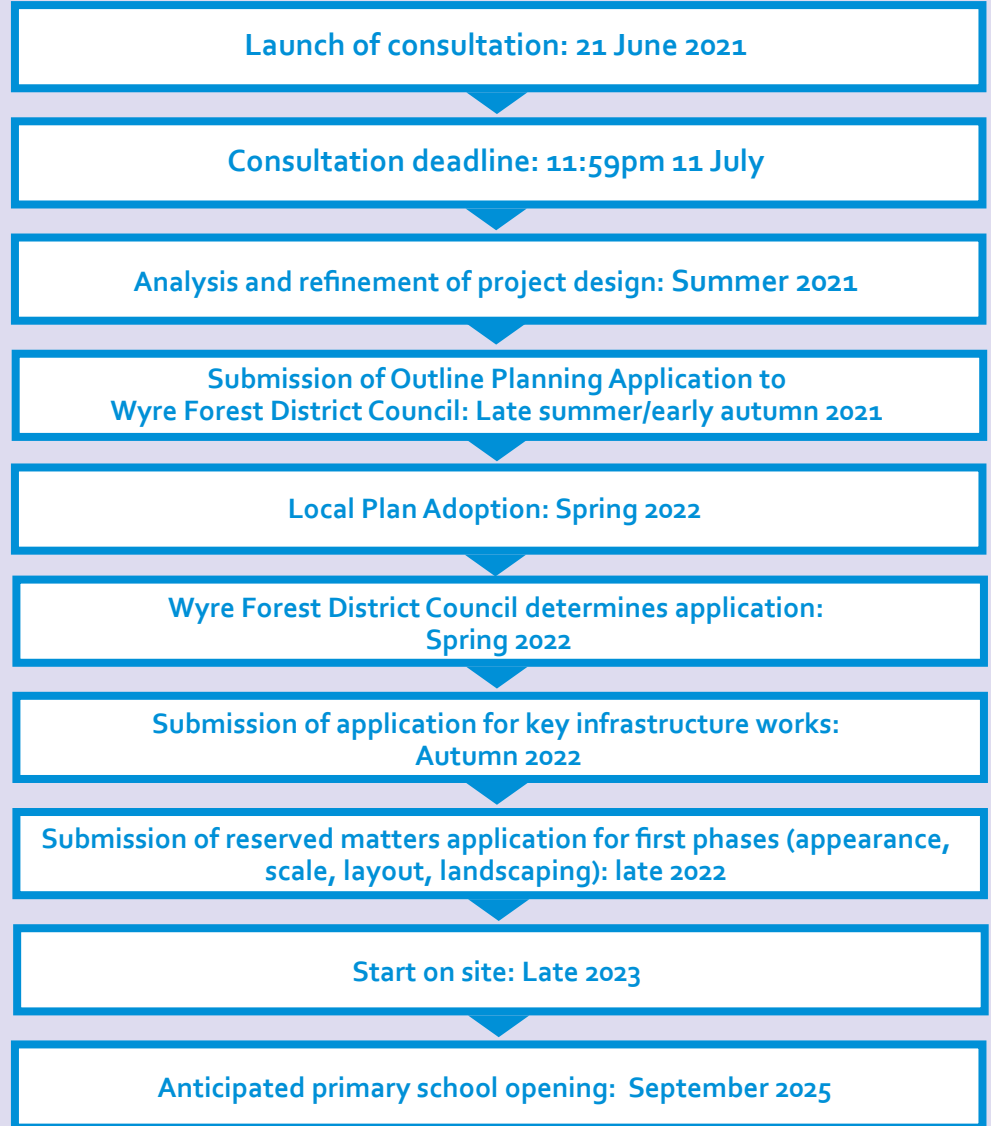
Your feedback is important to us and all comments will be considered. Once the project team has reviewed your comments and those of other stakeholders, and once all of the technical supporting studies are complete, we will make any necessary amendments to the proposals. This will ensure that all views have been taken into account prior to submission of an outline planning application. A report will be produced and made available on the feedback received.

It is anticipated that an outline planning application will be submitted in late summer/early autumn 2021.

Once the application has been submitted, it will be published on Wyre Forest District Council's website for all interested parties to view, and there will be a formal opportunity to comment on the application directly to the Council. The application will not be determined by the Council until the Local Plan has been adopted.

**Thank you for taking the time to visit
and respond to the consultation.**

Timeline



It is anticipated that the development will be constructed over a 10-year period.