

A Visitor Centre for Dunluce Castle





Hello and Welcome to Dunluce Visitor Centre

Welcome to our public consultation for our proposed renewal application for a Visitor Centre for Dunluce Castle.

Planning permission was granted for the development of the Visitor Centre in 2015 and the current proposal is for the renewal of the extant permission (planning reference: C/2014/0109/O) in accordance with article 3(5) of The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. A copy of the extant planning permission can be viewed on the planning portal for Northern Ireland.

Our vision is to create a modern visitor and education centre dedicated to Dunluce Castle by replacing the existing farm buildings already on site and using their form and layout to create the centre.

The proposals include amended access arrangements from Dunluce Road with dedicated car parking and space for coaches to drop off visitors.

The plans were designed by the RIBA Specialist Conservation Architect firm, Manor Architects. The design of the proposal has not changed and remains the same as the extant permission.

Thank you for taking the time to view our presentation today

This is your chance to have a say and help inform the design of our proposed development before we submit a planning application to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Unfortunately, as a result of Covid-19 social distancing it has not been possible to hold a public event; however, we would be happy to answer any questions you have, just email us at consultations@pragmaplanning.com.

Feedback forms are available on the website for you to provide comments to the project team. You can download it and email it to us at consultations@pragmaplanning.com or post it back to Pragma Planning and Development Consultants Limited, Scottish Provident Building, 7 Donegall Square West, Belfast BT1 6JH.

The closing date for feedback is 3 June 2020.



About the Site

Perched on the cliffs above the Atlantic Ocean, Dunluce Castle has long been one of Northern Ireland's most iconic visitor attractions inspiring painters and writers such as CS Lewis and more recently was a setting for Game of Thrones.

Adjoining the Castle are the ruins of a town dating from the early 1600s that was only uncovered in 2011, it had cobbled streets, a market, courthouse and numerous dwellings all connected to the prosperity of the Castle. The Castle is now a monument in state care, managed by the Historic Environment Division of the Department for Communities. The town is a scheduled monument.

Access to the Castle is currently via a lane, which loops between two points junctions on the Dunluce Road, it is narrow but nonetheless allows two-way traffic and also must accommodate parking. Obviously, it can become very congested.

Other than the Castle, the only buildings currently at the site are the group of farm buildings; these sit on the lane that was once the main street through the town and may be the only remaining upstanding buildings. The group of farm buildings contains a farmhouse and adjoining cottage, a stone barn built in the 18th Century and two metal clad 20th Century barns that form a courtyard with the stone barn. Associated with this group of buildings is a small café and shop built in the 1970s.

Background to Our Proposed Development

We propose to construct the Visitor Centre on the footprints of two 20th Century barns, while retaining and converting the 18th Century stone barn as part of the development and covering the courtyard with a single storey mostly glazed structure; the existing café will be demolished. Car parking will be located south of the existing farm buildings with access off Dunluce Road.

Planning permission was granted for the development of the Visitor Centre in 2015 and so the current application is for renewal of the extant permission.

The Castle attracts around 60,000 visitors per annum, which contrasts unfavourably with other attractions on the North Coast (last year the Giants Causeway and Carrick-a-Rede attracted 1.5 million between them); however, it is believed that a further 60,000 people visit Dunluce Castle without entering the Castle itself.

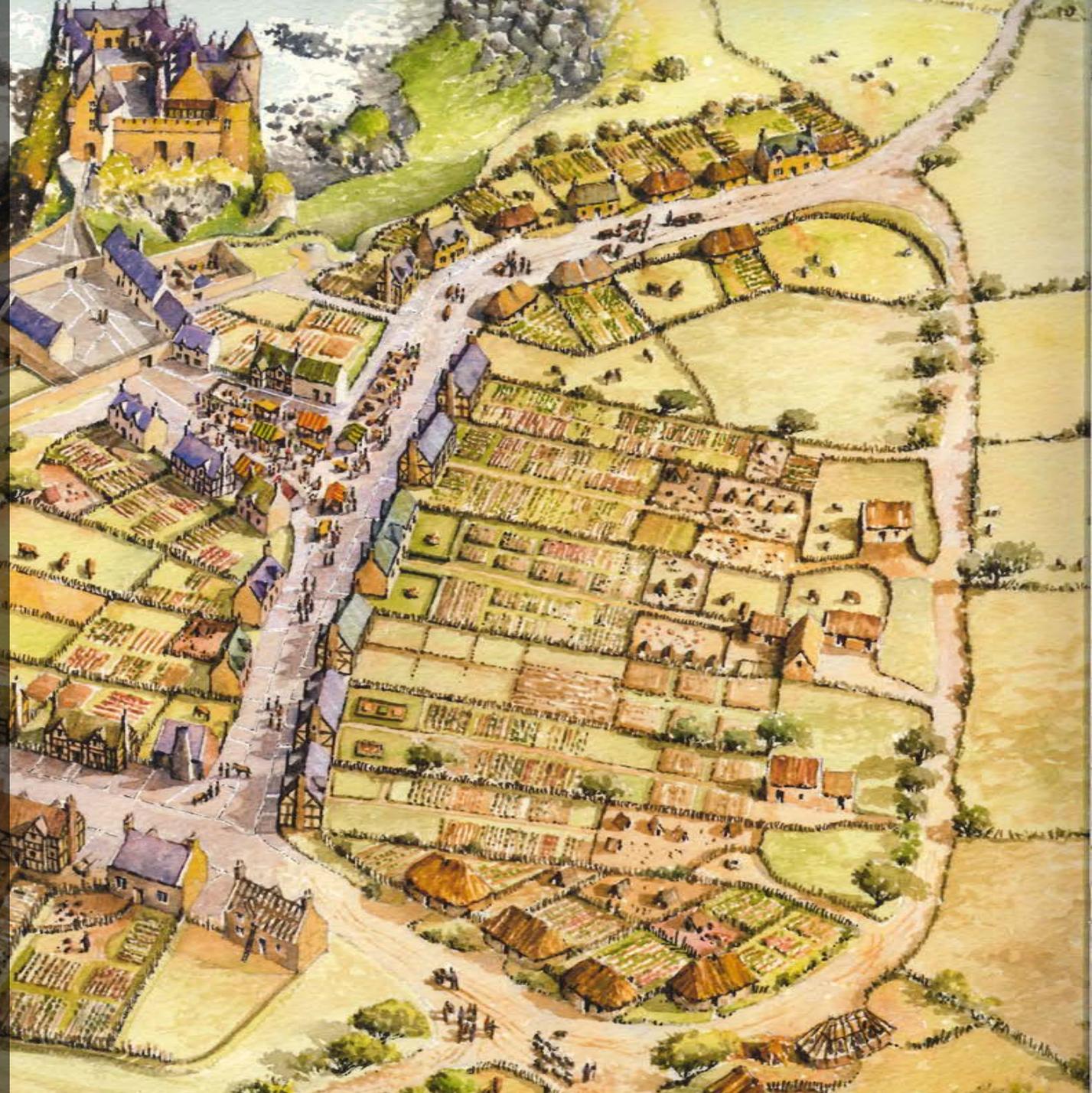
Tourism strategy for the Causeway Coast and Glens is to expand the quality and extent of the facilities on offer in the area to encourage increased visits and longer dwell time with more overnight stays in order to generate more spending in the area.

Dunluce has substantial potential; the ruins of the Castle are already an iconic image, but the continued excavation of the town combined with continued improvements to the Castle offers a destination that could be a great attraction.

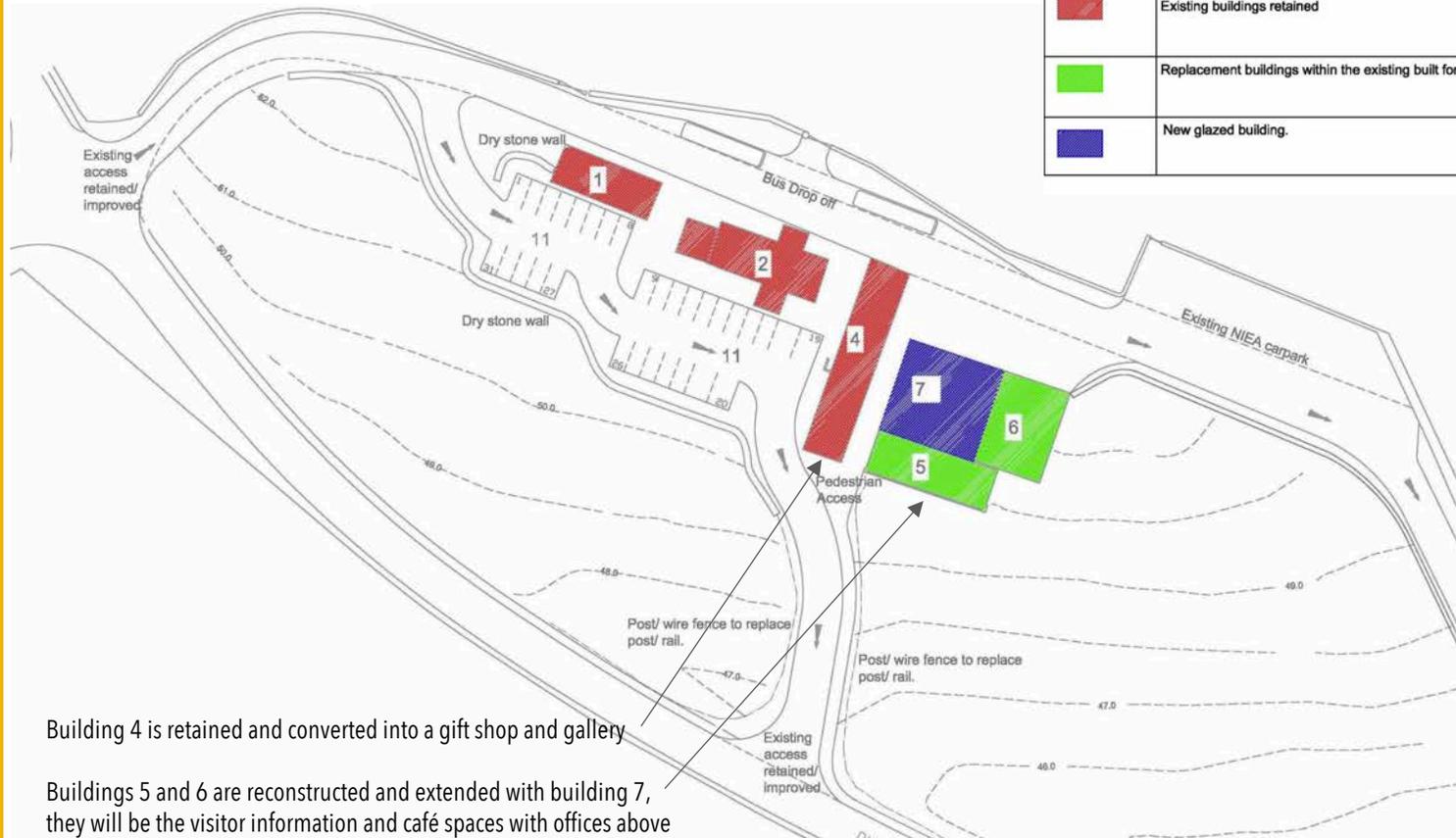
Currently facilities at the Castle are very limited and there is little scope for providing them in the existing historic buildings. The access creates congestion problems with a lack of management of both traffic and parking.

Therefore, to fulfil its potential Dunluce needs a facility to complement the Castle and the emerging town, provide information and food to increase dwell time and that will manage access and parking.

Replacing and reusing the existing buildings for a Visitor Centre that can manage the congestion issues offers the best solution for the future of the Castle as a major visitor attraction. The buildings are on site immediately adjacent to both the Castle and access lane, they are part of the existing landscape and so the proposed development does not involve introducing a new and potentially discordant element into the landscape while the re-use of the historic barn is sustainable.



Key	Description
	Existing buildings retained
	Replacement buildings within the existing built form
	New glazed building.



Building 4 is retained and converted into a gift shop and gallery

Buildings 5 and 6 are reconstructed and extended with building 7, they will be the visitor information and café spaces with offices above

USAGE	EXISTING (sqm)	PROPOSED REPLACEMENT (sqm)
Agricultural storage	656	0
Open Yard	575	0
Cafe	60	189
Retail	10	150
Interpretation- educational/tourist/ recreational		372
Office		50
Conference		50
Ancillary	9	175
TOTAL AREA	1,310	986

How will it be done?

The proposal envisions retention of the existing stone barn and its conversion and integration into the Visitor Centre. The existing 20th Century barns will be demolished and re-built on their existing footprints, with the yard area incorporated into the Visitor Centre.

The stone barn is proposed to be retained in its current form as a stand-alone building, facing the new buildings across an open mall space. The new build parts take the simple rural form established by the 20th Century barns and connect them with a lightweight, single storey structure incorporating a lot of glazing.

Materials proposed to be used on the new build sections are also simple, wood and glazing for the single storey structure and render with dark coloured metal roofs for the barn replacements. The stone barn will be restored with its natural slate roof and stonework repaired, openings reinstated and repaired and converted to windows, internally a mezzanine floor will be installed to provide an upper floor gallery with views over the Castle.

Externally, a landscape scheme links the elements of the proposal and provides a pleasant outdoor space to the lane side of the building, while the proposals involve the replacement and reinstatement of stone walls along the lane and around the southern side of the property replacing the existing whitewashed wall.

Our Proposed Development

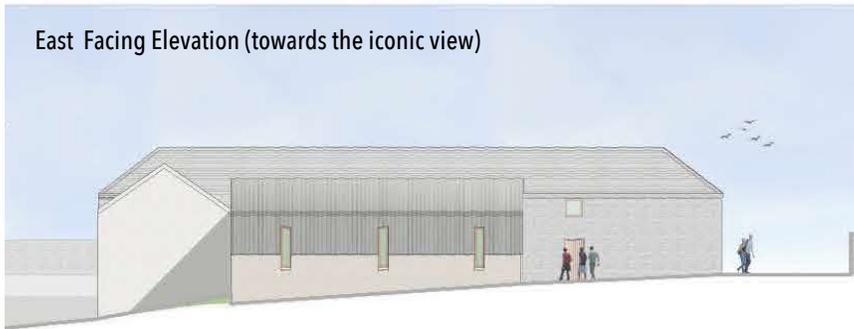
North Facing Elevation (towards the Castle)



South Facing Elevation (towards the Coast Road)



East Facing Elevation (towards the iconic view)



What will it look like?

The proposals retain the existing rural forms of the buildings; the plans show how the proposals mirror the scale and mass of the 20th Century buildings completely. Muted colours in the palette of materials means they blend into the background and the removal of the existing café adds to a general effect of improving the view of the site and the Castle.

The low glazed section is screened from most views by the existing and proposed buildings.

Replacement stone walls also add to the general enhancement effect.

Overall, therefore the intent of the proposals is that they should be ancillary and subservient to the Castle, they should not seek to challenge it visually or in terms of their function, their purpose is to add value by improving the visitor experience. Accordingly, the architecture of the scheme blends into the background and enhances the views of the Castle.

What will it contain?

The purpose of the Visitor Centre is to provide information about the Castle and food and drink for the visitors to encourage them to stay and visit the Castle. It has the additional role of managing traffic at the site and on the lane and controlling congestion.

The ground floor will therefore be devoted to information and will contain an exhibition space about the Castle and will also provide a café and seating area for visitors. There will be a mezzanine space above the exhibition/café that will contain administration, offices and meeting spaces.

The stone barn will contain the retail shop and gallery with conferencing above.

How will it be accessed?

The Visitor Centre will manage traffic on the lane.

A new one-way system will be introduced with traffic entering at the south-western end of the lane. A short distance from the junction the traffic will be split with cars leaving the lane and entering the car park and coaches directed on along the lane to a drop off point.

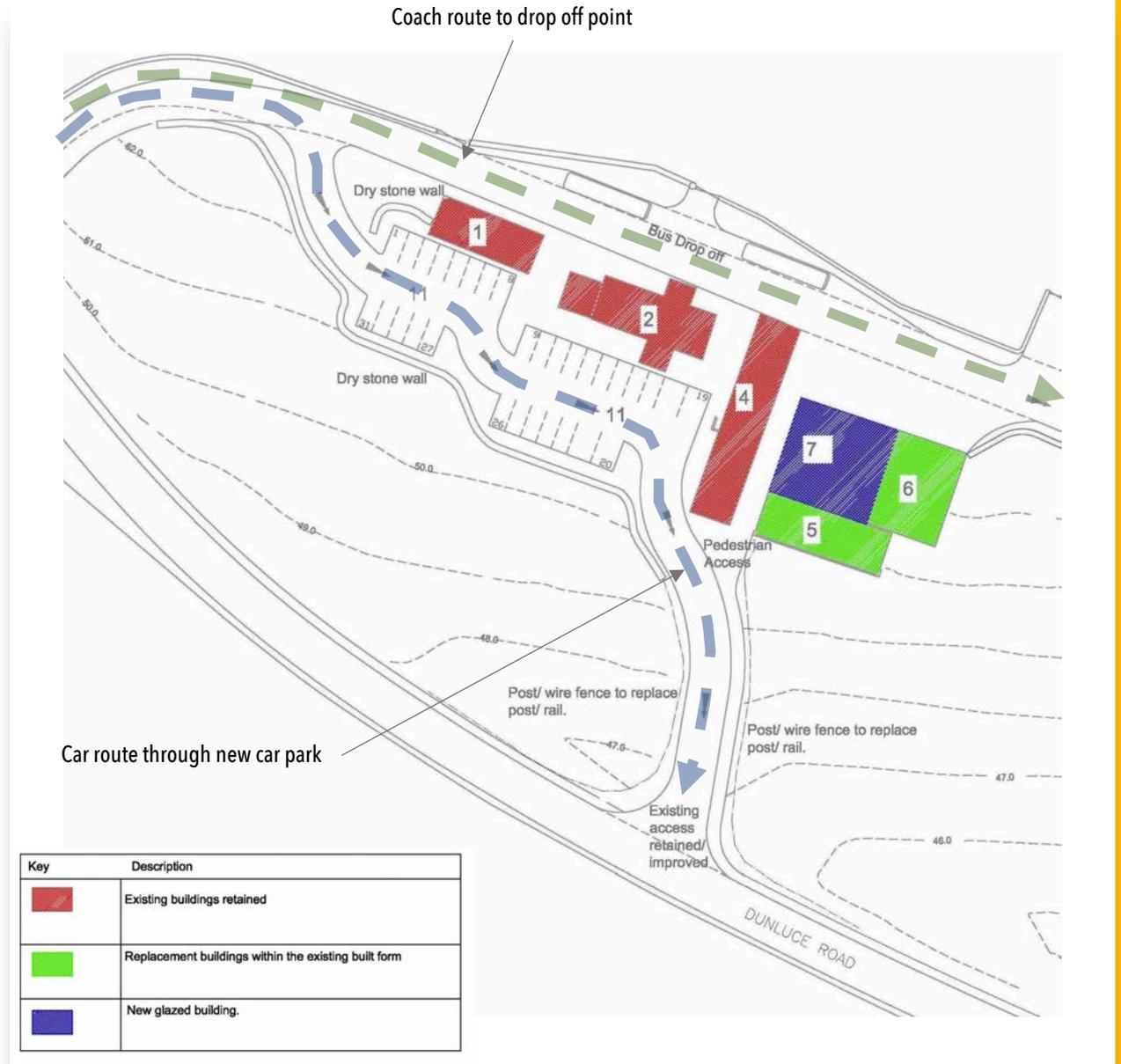
The car park is close to the Visitor Centre and pedestrian access is proposed through an existing archway in the stone barn. Exit from the car park is along the existing farm access to its junction on the Dunluce Road, visibility is good at this access and the necessary sight splays can be provided.

On busy days cars can also be directed to the existing parking areas along the lane, exiting back onto Dunluce Road at the north-eastern junction.

Parking may be charged in order to help with management.

What about coaches?

The Visitor Centre will operate a drop-off/pick-up arrangement for coaches, which will have to exit the site and park remotely at either the Council car park at Magheracross or at the dedicated coach park in Bushmills before returning to collect passengers.





We are proposing to construct a visitor centre to support and add value to Dunluce Castle so that it can make an enhanced contribution to local tourism and the economy. Dunluce Castle and its surrounding town are amongst the least visited attractions on the north coast, this proposal will change that.

The proposal makes the best use of buildings on site and, through sensitive replacement, will visually enhance the setting of the Castle and the historic town.

It will provide much needed interpretive and educational facilities, a café where visitors can take a break and a shop. Importantly, it will control and rationalise the access, provide organised car parking, reduce the congestion around the Castle and make it more appealing as a destination.



Photomontage of the proposed development

Summary



Photomontage of the proposed development



Photomontage of the proposed development

Next Steps

Thank you for taking the time to take part in our consultation.

We want to ensure that we are being a good neighbour and consult with you fully before we submit our planning application to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. Your views, opinions and insight will help us shape our proposals.

We would be very grateful if you could take the time to fill in the feedback forms and either submit them via the website or by email to consultations@pragmaplanning.com or you can print them and post them to Pragma at:

Pragma Planning and Development Consultants Limited

Scottish Provident Building

7 Donegall Square West

Belfast

BT1 6JH

Because the application is for renewal of an existing permission, we are unable to make substantial changes; however, the permission is outline and there will be an opportunity to make changes later. We will therefore note your comments and revisit them when making our detailed application.

Consultation Closing Date

Once the consultation closes on 3 June 2020, all comments will be independently collated by Pragma and considered by our design team.

All issues raised through the consultation will be documented as part of the pre-application community consultation process and reported in a consultation report that will side alongside the broader Planning Application, which we intend to submit in summer 2020.

Once we make the submission the planning teams in Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council will do their statutory consultation on the proposed plans and you will have a chance to comment on the proposal again.

The closing date for feedback is 3 June 2020.

