

Gravity webinar #1 – questions and responses

This document contains all questions asked by attendees at the first Gravity Local Development Order engagement webinar, 'Gravity: what's next?', and our responses to those questions. Due to the number of questions received we were unable to answer every question on the night. This document will be shared with all those who attended and uploaded to the Gravity [website](#) alongside a summary of the event and a recording.

If you have any further questions the project team can be contacted through Gravity@social.co.uk or 0330 107 0535.

#	Question	Answer (post-event)
1	Can Gravity improve the public footpath across the top of the hill that joins Puriton to Woolavington? The part in the woods gets very muddy and takes a month to dry out and the mud can be deep.	The public footpath over the hill between the two villages is not directly related to the main Gravity site. Gravity would like to work with the County Council and the community to improve its condition and make it more accessible.
2	2 linked questions, why are Sedgemoor District Council so obsessed with building houses at the expense of green space, you have already forced over 100 houses on Puriton many outside the village boundary and looks like you are now going to approve another 1420 houses (1300 on Gravity and another between Puriton and the link road) How are Gravity going to stop Bristol commuters buying up their 1300 houses?	<p>We understand that the Government directs housing numbers and provides a number to Sedgemoor District who then have the role of managing this target and reporting on progress via a Housing Delivery Test. If insufficient housing is delivered to meet the Districts' needs, then penalties are applied and further targets are imposed.</p> <p>It is quite rightly a matter for the local authority to determine through the local planning process where these homes are best suited in the District as a whole taking into account a wide range of policy objectives that support sustainable development.</p> <p>In respect of Gravity, it is too early to provide exact detail, but what we can say is that we are considering the role of accommodation, including some housing, and other social infrastructure, in developing the vision of an integrated, sustainable campus and community at Gravity. We are creating 4,000 new jobs across 616 acres. Many of these jobs will be for people already living locally, they will also provide new choices closer to home for those that commute elsewhere or those currently in more temporary work and indeed those who would like new opportunities.</p> <p>The indicative 1,300 homes figure estimated in 2020 was to illustrate the role and potential of homes to help create a balanced and sustainable community as an integral part of the smart campus and to specifically meet occupier needs. The extent and quantum of any accommodation, including housing remains to be tested as part of the Local Development Order process.</p> <p>Design of any accommodation at the smart campus will be central in ensuring the accommodation caters for the workforce and the community will have a role in shaping all aspects of the smart community from homes to open space, walking and cycling routes and to leisure opportunities.</p>
3	Are there any thoughts of building a train station on the main line near the motorway with car parking facilities which will allow locals and others to access good transport connectivity for the site?	The redundant rail line crosses the motorway into the Gravity site. We are exploring the feasibility of both passenger and freight rail services. We will also be exploring consolidated parking and public access to allow local people to have a wider choice of transport and improve connectivity.
4	When will the walking / cycle path linked between Woolavington and Puriton be built?	<p>The popular Village Enhancement Scheme, which includes the walking / cycling path between Woolavington and Puriton, has now been approved by the council.</p> <p>The multi-use path is one of several measures aimed at improving safe and sustainable transport connections in, and around, the two villages as part of Gravity's 'Clean and Inclusive' growth strategy.</p> <p>It is due or 'triggered' to start 6 months after the opening of the link road, and to be completed 6 months thereafter. Work will potentially start late 2021.</p> <p>The route has been carefully designed to minimise impacts and avoid a loss of the hedgerow along the road. It is set back within Gravity's land ownership, with a surface and lighting chosen to provide a safe route.</p>
5	Linked to the above comment, please can you confirm that it will follow the Puriton/Woolavington Road and not go through the centre of the site.	Yes. It will follow the Puriton/Woolavington Road but will be set back within Gravity's land ownership.
6	How many companies and what sort of trades have shown interest in the site and have any committed to opening a business at the site?	Gravity and their agents JLL have received a range of confidential enquiries. At present the market is a little slow due to the economic context. Our priority this year is to secure early 'first movers' to create jobs at Gravity.

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7	What is the future for the 37 club?	<p>It's a bright future. We will create a new 37 Club. It will include skittles and snooker and remain a welcoming place for the local communities.</p> <p>Thoughts and ideas on what the people would like to see in a new 37 club are welcome and will be explored further as we continue to engage with the public.</p>
8	Will the ecosystems within the site be improved to increase biodiversity of species? There is great scope here to manage wetland and woodland areas already in existence, including the supply of nest boxes for owls (I recorded 4 species here in my time), kestrel and small passerines.	<p>Gravity has conducted extensive ecological surveys to investigate, monitor and record biodiversity.</p> <p>We have appointed specialist teams in arboriculture and ecology to advise how best to manage the site, as well as other teams to advise on surface water management.</p> <p>The approach and the design code for Gravity will absolutely be geared to support and enhance biodiversity. We see this as an essential element in the quality of the place we aspire to create for the community to enjoy.</p>
9	Are there any specific and quantifiable targets documented within the Gravity project with regard to post-16 education and training and, in turn, attracting high-value industry as part of your economic regeneration plan?	<p>The high value employment will be driven through the clean growth target sectors. The specific targets for local employment, work placements and apprenticeships will be driven through the local labour agreement and specific employment and skills plans, using a formula from the Construction Industry Training Board based on the value of the construction project per occupier. The plans will be developed closely with Bridgwater & Taunton College who will be directly involved in linking young people to opportunities.</p>
10	Not sure who it is imagined would want to live on site next to their workplace. Especially when there are two wonderful villages on each side of Gravity. Woolavington has three new housing developments planned. Isn't there also an advantage to Gravity to having staff imbedded in the local communities, hopefully playing an active part in village life.	<p>We want to create a community that is fully integrated with the villages. Gravity will benefit the people in the villages and the communities from the villages are key to Gravity's success.</p> <p>We are very conscious that the ways we live and work are changing quickly. We know there is demand for campus style community living where people live, work and play in the same area. Many young people are choosing not to own a car, so we are anticipating future work and travel patterns and working to create a smart campus and community that responds to this.</p> <p>Gravity will generate more than 4,000 jobs. Any homes that we need to build would accommodate people working in some of these jobs. Others employed at Gravity will live in the villages and we hope some people already living in the villages will work at Gravity.</p> <p>People living at Gravity or in the villages will be able to walk or cycle to work.</p> <p>The campus will be open to the local community. If residents were working from home and wanted to pop into the campus to use a work hub or to have a coffee, they'd be welcome.</p>
11	Building 1300 houses will destroy the community of Puriton.	<p>See answer above (Q2)</p>
12	Will you be promoting the use of green vehicles for employees of the site to use to and through the site?	<p>The site is an enterprise zone until 2042 so we appreciate that not everything can be tackled at once and some actions will need to be phased.</p> <p>We will be working with E.ON as our 50-year energy partners to investigate the provision of electric charging on the site, with community access, as well as the operation of green vehicles - including public transport.</p> <p>On site we would like to see a great deal of walking and cycling. As the site evolves, we are mindful of new solutions such as autonomous vehicles that could be deployed in future years.</p>
13	There is a concern among local people that your emphasis on 'leisure' etc. may result in the two local villages being 'hollowed out', i.e., our existing facilities will lose out to those at Gravity.	<p>The leisure offer will be carefully crafted with community input as we would not wish to impact on existing facilities. The offer should complement local facilities and provide a direct offer to the occupiers and their workforce.</p> <p>We hope local communities will enjoy the additional choice and services.</p>
14	How will the employment opportunities within the site be advertised and promoted?	<p>Any job opportunities will be promoted locally, through Under Construction - an employment and skills centre, located in Bridgwater town centre - and local media and employment services as well as LinkedIn.</p>
15	How will traffic into the site be managed - both in respect of construction and, later, occupation? Will this lead to increased traffic flow through Puriton and Woolavington - both villages already have a relatively high traffic density on their local through roads?	<p>As with any large development site, there will be a construction management travel plan, and travel plans for occupiers.</p> <p>The prime purpose of the new link road is to accommodate all of the site traffic remove traffic from the villages. The Village Enhancement Scheme is also designed to reduce and discourage through traffic in the villages.</p>

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16	Will there be cycleway connections to Highbridge and Bridgwater railway stations?	<p>There will be improved cycle connections. It is too early to say if these will extend to Highbridge and Bridgwater railway stations. We are exploring rail restoration at Gravity and will want to explore other public transport solutions as well as cycle links.</p> <p>The council and the county council are working hard to improve cycle links in Bridgwater and out to the A38 / Dunball roundabout. We will be working closely with them to integrate our plans to create connected routes. We will be looking at the cycle links as part of our travel plan.</p>
17	First of all, we at Impact Design & Marketing would like to say, what fantastic news it is to know of another Megaproject being developed in the heart of the South West region. Well done to all involved with Gravity. Can you kindly expand upon two things, Q1. What bespoke renewables and low carbon on site energy solutions will Gravity provide? Q2. Are there particular brands and business sector focus areas that will be coming to Gravity and if so, when will that likely be?	<p>Thank you. Gravity really is the transformational economic opportunity beyond Hinkley Point C. It can create sustained employment and a wider legacy as we look to the future and secure new sectors and businesses into Sedgemoor.</p> <p>E.ON our partners will be shaping the energy strategy and will be looking into solar, ground source heat pumps and a heating and cooling network. We think we should explore wind potential but are aware of the previous concerns about turbines in Sedgemoor. Microgeneration – small scale energy generation on site - is also being considered.</p> <p>Clean growth is multi-dimensional and market led – to summarise and provide examples: energy management / storage, advanced engineering, data, digital, AI, robotics, life sciences, agri-tech, science park, zero carbon homes. Timing will depend on market needs.</p>
18	What is the timeline for the development of the site: through the construction process to occupation to completion?	The enterprise zone commenced in 2017 and runs to 2042. Construction is underway through the construction of the link road and further on-site construction will depend on market interest and needs. Our aim is to secure a first occupier during 2021.
19	We see the road being built and really pleased that the main line rail link will be reinstated. When will the construction on the site begin? What jobs are likely to be created over that period for the local community given the increasing unemployment due to Covid?	<p>Please answer above (Q18).</p> <p>Jobs will be created by each occupier. We're excited to see occupiers showing interest to deliver the site and create new opportunities to recreate a new era of employment and help the economy re-start and build back better.</p>
20	Will the development provide opportunities for the local economy on a smaller scale similar to what HPC has brought and is there an opportunity to engage with the supply chain to bring some much needed business in to the local economy in the immediate future rather than once complete?	<p>Absolutely yes. Gravity is not as big as Hinkley in financial terms; however, the site is bigger, and the construction, development and operation of the site is likely to be much longer and create greater numbers of sustained jobs. Hinkley C has 900 jobs in operation, Gravity will host 4,000.</p> <p>Gravity will have a Business Charter and will work to match local businesses to supply chain opportunities.</p> <p>Supply chain development is more likely to be incremental as occupiers come forward. The Gravity occupation is not going to happen all in one go.</p>
21	With all the infrastructure build, how are Gravity offsetting the carbon impact with building the project?	How we shape the site, its occupiers and its day to day management, will be key to minimising carbon emissions on the site. We have developed a Clean and Inclusive Growth Strategy and an Environmental and Social Governance policy to start to consider how we monitor and report on progress. Well-designed infrastructure can play a key part in reducing carbon emissions.
22	What is your approach to protecting wildlife please and will there be wildlife areas within the site that the public can access?	Biodiversity / wildlife is really important to Gravity. We plan to work hard to understand the local ecology and work with our specialist team to consider ways to enhance biodiversity and create new areas of open space for wildlife. There will be areas that the public can access, and other areas which are more protected.
23	When is the orbital bridleway around the site likely to be constructed and can you confirm this will also be for horse riders please? The roads are becoming increasingly dangerous for horse riders and with the potential for an increase in traffic, a safe bridleway for local residents is very important.	The orbital will be completed as we bring occupiers forward. I am afraid we cannot put a date on this yet as we are so early in the process - i.e. just starting the planning process. As part of the LDO we will be considering which routes are suitable for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.
24	With all the infrastructure build how are Gravity offsetting the carbon impact with building the project?	See answer above (Q21).
25	In the LDO document, you mention 'extension of the red line'. Does that mean that you would like to extend the built-up area of the site?	<p>Not everywhere within the 'red line' will be built on. Green and open spaces across the site will be important parts of our plans.</p> <p>The previous planning permission was not aligned to the enterprise zone boundary and covered the majority but not the full site. The new LDO 'red line' will align with the enterprise zone boundary.</p>

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26	Listening to all the speakers this evening, nothing has been said about an expected commencement date for work to be carried out. Do you have an expectation?	<p>The presentation referred to the lifetime of the enterprise zone between 2017 and 2042. The work has commenced with remediation and link road construction under previous consents issued.</p> <p>This is a large site and it will take some time to attract occupiers and fill the site. We expect the construction of the site to be phased on an occupier by occupier basis.</p>
27	When will the link road be completed?	We anticipate the road being completed by April / May 2021, with the landscaping to follow in the Autumn planting season.
28	This is all quite vague, has any commitment been made by any businesses? What is defined as a green business? What is intention in regard to new houses, is the 1300 number referenced above correct?	<p>This webinar was an introduction to the process that will be followed during 2021. It is high level to provide a general introduction.</p> <p>The purpose of the Local Development Order is to refresh and update the existing consent to make the site attractive to potential occupants. Gravity inherited the previous consent from the applicants BAE Systems and we really feel that whilst it still has a valid role to play in the short term, it can be improved on and we can secure a better outcome and response to climate change and economic transformation.</p> <p>The 1300 housing number was an initial estimate during 2020, based on the creation of over 4000 new jobs. As we move into the technical work this number may change and potentially reduce.</p>
29	The two questions about the housing on site have been marked 'answered live'. I don't think they have been	<p>There were quite a number of questions coming in (about 30 in total). We therefore focused on the themes that were most covered by the questions as to answer as many as possible.</p> <p>The Gravity smart campus is an enterprise zone and so employment led. Any homes are being considered as part of a wider mix of uses to attract high value occupiers to benefit the Sedgemoor area. Prospective occupiers naturally want to understand where their workforce can live and we are responding to that challenge.</p>
30	Perhaps I misunderstood the last answer: which was access to the village (of Puriton) was via Hillside or Hall Road, access to the site is via the A39 roundabout. Does this mean no vehicle (car) access from Puriton to the Woolavington surgery via the existing local road past the gravity site?	<p>On completion, access to the village of Puriton will be via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hall Road (one way in) <p>A39 Roundabout via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Puriton Hill • New Link Road <p>New Link Road via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hillside • Woolavington Road <p>Access to the Surgery will be via the existing route.</p>
31	I don't think you have addressed cycleway links to Highbridge and Bridgwater.	See answer above (Q16).
32	Will Gravity adopt any of the infrastructure / roads that have been installed for the construction of the new pylons?	<p>The new pylons are part of the National Grid Hinkley Point C Connection project so whilst they go through part of the Gravity site, they are not ours to adopt.</p> <p>The County Council will adopt part of the link road between the A39 and Woolavington Road as per normal practice, and Gravity will be responsible for all roads from Woolavington Road into and around the site.</p>
33	Very large capital investment will be required to secure this excellent proposal. What funding has been agreed via government grants/loans and potential investment from industry?	<p>In terms of capital investment, £3.94m has been secured from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership to assist with the initial cost of part of the new link road.</p> <p>The remaining capital costs remain significant and we are exploring other sources of finance to accelerate delivery and attract occupiers.</p>
34	Thank you very much for a very informative presentation	Noted thank you.
35	Given time constraints during this webinar, how do you plan to answer all the unanswered questions contained within this Q&A?	This was the first of many webinars and engagement opportunities so there will be many further opportunities to ask questions. All the questions that we were unable to answer on the webinar have been responded to in this document and shared with the public.

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36	Instead of air source heating has anyone considered ground source heating?	Yes this will be one of the key considerations for E.ON who will be developing an energy strategy for the site. We see this as an important element.
37	Very exciting project for the area. Congratulations	Thank you!