

## **Culm Garden Village Stakeholder Forum**

**Notes of workshop held on 11 August 2020 via Zoom**

### **Building with Nature**

#### **1. Welcome and introductions**

Paul Brockway (Project Lead, Hyas Consultants) welcomed the participants and introduced the speaker.

#### **2. Project Team update**

Engagement with the various stakeholder groups had been re-started including 3 planned Stakeholder Forum events on the subjects of Building with Nature (today's event), Connecting the Culm (9 September) and Transport and Future Mobility (October/November).

Technical work has been progressing, particularly around transport and masterplanning. Devon County Council has been working on updating traffic modelling and options analysis for junction improvements.

Mid Devon's Local Plan Review has been recommended for adoption by Full Council. The four Greater Exeter authorities are taking the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan draft policies and site options document through their respective decision-taking processes. Mid Devon's Cabinet has made a recommendation to Full Council that Mid Devon withdraws from GESP and that the next review of the Local Plan be brought forward. East Devon's Strategic Planning Committee has also recommended to Full Council that it withdraws from GESP.

#### **Q&A**

1) How will this affect delivery of the country park?

The Project Team is still considering the garden village to be a wider project than just the Local Plan allocation. If GESP does not proceed, there is likely to be an alternative planning document to allocate the remainder of the garden village, including the country park, e.g. a further revision of Mid Devon's Local Plan. This will be a decision for Mid Devon District Council.

2) The GESP documents shows two different boundaries – which is correct?

The GESP document is a consultation document and boundaries are subject to change. Any inconsistency would be picked up through the consultation process. The boundary showing the larger area is the correct one, however, land within the boundary would not all be for development, some would be open space that could be secured as such if it is within the allocation.

3) What effect will the proposed planning reforms have?

The planning reforms would result in radical change to the planning system. The current White Paper is only a consultation document at the moment. There is much to work through to understand the implications of the reform. As for timing, there is likely to be transition period for the reform to come in.

4) Beauty is mentioned 84 times in the White Paper and there is an emphasis on design codes, which is positive. However, green infrastructure is only mentioned once, and the proposals also seem to give carte blanche for developers. How will the garden village project ensure delivery of the sort of place we aspire to, which will also ensure opportunities for nature?

Simplifying the planning process could result in some loss of control over quality. We will need to safeguard the quality of the project by setting out a clear vision and guidance in the

masterplan and through the use of design codes. Setting out a local expression to supplement the national picture is very important.

- 5) How do we ensure a good variety of buildings, not just identikit housing, street after street? Terraced housing can be attractive where the basic house design is the same but each house has elements of individuality. This cannot be said for large developments of the same boxy semi-detached and detached house types. It is important to get the building blocks and layout right, with connected green spaces and trees.  
A future topic for the Stakeholder Forum could be local design, leading to the development of design codes. Design codes are likely to carry more weight with the proposed planning reforms.
- 6) Will Devon County Council be part of any design code work to ensure that is no conflict between the aspirations of the design teams and what DCC will adopt?  
It will be important that DCC are involved to consider roads, but also consider parking. Walking and cycling provision needs to be prioritised as set out in the garden village vision and objectives. Road safety is important in designing cycle routes, as is inspiration from local communities. The Government have published a [Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy](#) that sets out design for cycle ways and footpaths that need to be followed in order to qualify for funding.
- 7) How does the White Paper ensure infrastructure goes in first?  
The reforms envisage replacing Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy with a new Infrastructure Levy but does not mention infrastructure being delivered up front. The Project Team is looking at infrastructure delivery and viability to make sure infrastructure is front loaded as much as possible.

### 3. Building with Nature

Li-Lian Williams of Devon Wildlife Consultants gave a presentation on the Building with Nature accreditation, with various case studies (see attached slides). The website also has information on the scheme: <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/>.

The key to the scheme is its scope from initial policy development, through scheme design, to construction and post-construction monitoring, focusing on continuity and long-term management. Quality of green infrastructure is more important than quantity. Policy documents can either integrate the standards, or sign-post to them as part of a green infrastructure quality standard.

#### Q&A

- 1) How does Building with Nature judge long term sustainability and maintenance of green spaces?  
To start with the proposals need to be attainable and low maintenance, e.g. with species that will thrive and cope with stress. Long term maintenance is covered under a number of the standards and accreditation is only awarded after the development has been delivered and there is the right management in place.  
The Culm Garden Village Landowner and Promoter Forum is keen to pursue the accreditation which will add value and cache to the development.
- 2) The standards are applauded but are not without cost. Who is going to be responsible for maintenance?  
Long term stewardship is being explored. The Project Team recognises the need for a long term management and funding strategy to be in place early.
- 3) Are there any other standards?  
Building for Nature refers to and builds on other relevant standards and does not sit in isolation. Other accreditations such as BREEAM for example that look at a broader spectrum of standards

and are more general in approach (<https://www.breeam.com/>). There was a clear gap in the market for an accreditation such as Building with Nature.

Use of Building with Nature would not preclude the use of other standards such as in respect of low carbon development.

- 4) Water features fundamentally within the garden village. Will there be additional ponds and lakes? A water frontage can enhance development.

The Project Team are looking to use Building with Nature and other sources of inspiration such as the Connecting the Culm project and what has been done elsewhere to build in blue infrastructure at the design stage. It is important to make the most of what could be considered constraints and turn them into opportunities.

- 5) Will wildlife corridors connect into other habitats e.g. the CCA fields? How will we know what species are there?

There will be ecology surveys that will establish the types of habitats that need to be protected, expanded and linked, such as water courses and good hedgerows dominant in the area. The standards focus strongly on encouraging links to nearby wildlife sites.

#### **4. Next steps**

The next workshop is scheduled for 9 September 2020 and will focus on blue infrastructure and the Connecting the Culm project, led by the Connecting the Culm project team, that was originally planned for March 2020 but was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Steven Johnson, the Connecting the Culm project manager, asked participants to take a look at the Connecting the Culm website: <https://connectingtheculm.com/> which has a great deal of information on the project, and to complete the survey.