



Culm Garden Village Communications & Engagement Strategy V2

September 2023

1. About Culm Garden Village

On 2nd January 2017, the Government announced plans for a number of new Garden Villages and Towns across the country, including Culm Garden Village.

The long term plan for the Garden Village is to deliver up to 5,000 sustainable new homes, as well as employment, shops, schools, healthcare facilities and leisure opportunities including the potential for new sports facilities and a country park. The development will help to improve connections to the M5 motorway and will provide benefits in terms of natural flood management. There is an ongoing project to re-open Cullompton railway station and plans to improve bus transport.

Part of the garden village is allocated for development under the Mid Devon Local Plan (1,750 houses to 2033, and at least 850 after that). However, the wider ambition is to create a new community of up to 5,000 houses and the remainder of the land will need to be allocated through a later development plan such as the next Mid Devon Local Plan.

The garden village project is locally-led. The project is supported by Cullompton Town Council and a lot of work has already been done with community groups in thinking about the new community and its relationship to Cullompton and Kentisbeare.

A stage 1 public consultation took place in 2019 on a Vision for the garden village and some initial ideas for the East Cullompton allocation masterplan supplementary planning document (SPD).

Following feedback on the stage 1 documents and ongoing technical work and stakeholder engagement, a draft East Cullompton Masterplan SPD went out for Stage 2 public consultation in Autumn 2022.

The SPD was revised following the public consultation and was approved by Mid Devon's Cabinet in February 2023 and adopted by Full Council on 26 April 2023.

See the [Masterplanning](#) page of the Culm Garden Village website for more information.

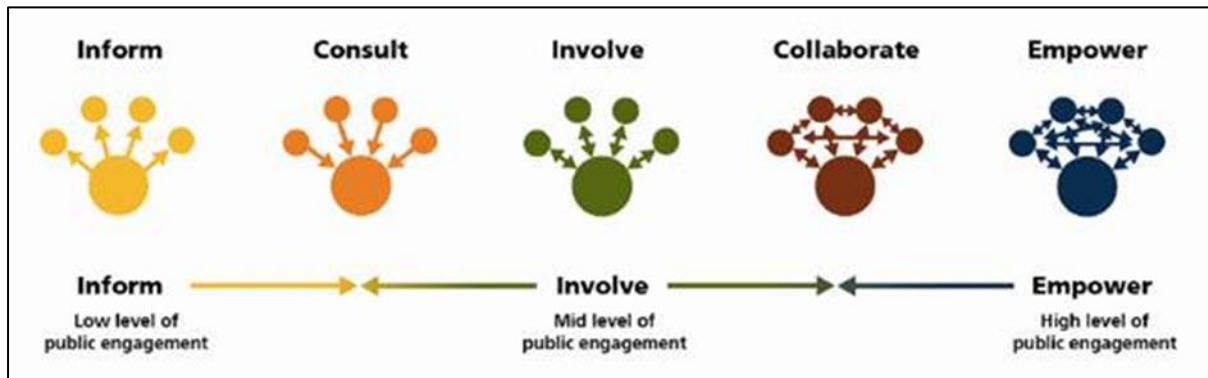
The next stage for East Cullompton is to prepare a Phasing and Delivery Strategy to identify and clarify infrastructure requirements to be delivered in step with development, and to produce a Strategic Design Code to set out how the place should be designed to meet the aspirations in the Masterplan SPD.

2. Purpose of the Strategy

The strategy aims to ensure all stakeholders and local communities are aware of the Garden Village, its vision, how it affects them, and how they can contribute to the delivery of the Garden Village ambitions.

Mid Devon has an adopted [Statement of Community Involvement \(SCI\)](#) which sets out how the Council will consult and engage communities and key stakeholders at various stages of developing planning documents and in respect of planning applications.

However, it is recognised that the delivery of the Garden Village will go beyond the development of policy and planning applications and will be linked to growth and ambitions for the wider Cullompton area. Therefore, this strategy looks beyond the SCI and requirements of planning policy in aiming for comprehensive and ambitious community and stakeholder engagement, making it as easy as possible for people to be involved through a range of engagement techniques and approaches.



The resulting strategy aims to support the Council’s ambitions for the Garden Village, and the expectation of local communities in Cullompton and Kentisbeare that the project will continue to be locally-led, with comprehensive engagement throughout the project.

3. Communication and Engagement Principles

Mid Devon recognises that there are different strands to communication and that engagement goes beyond consultation. There is no one-size-fits-all approach that would support Mid Devon’s aim that the project be locally-led, involving the community.

Mid Devon’s Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out a number of principles for involving the community in the preparation of planning documents and in making planning decisions. These include adopting an inclusive approach to community involvement ensuring all sections of the community can be involved; documents to be written in plain English avoiding jargon, and providing information in different formats where possible; and promoting the earliest possible consultation with and involvement of interested parties, promoting consensus where possible.

For the Garden Village project, the following principles will be used to communicate with and engage stakeholders and the community which reflect the principles in the SCI but go further in their aim to ensure the Garden Village project is locally-led.

Communication principles

- Ease of access to information
- Simple and straightforward language – including minimising jargon in technical documents
- A range of communications methods to involve as many people as possible and ensure no-one is excluded
- A single point of access for all Garden Village-related activities

Engagement principles

- Seek the contribution of ideas to develop and deliver the Garden Village Vision and the development
- Seek the active involvement of communities and stakeholders in all stages of the project
- Provide feedback on how ideas have been incorporated and if not, why not
- Structure forums to ensure regular engagement and to reflect the community in their membership

A table setting out engagement methods for target audiences and levels of engagement is shown in **Appendix 1**. This table provides a list of potential methods and approaches but it is not expected, nor possible, that every element will be implemented during every stage of the project.

Potential barriers to effective communication and engagement

There are a number of potential barriers to effective engagement that need to be recognised and taken into account in developing and reviewing the engagement strategy.

- Jargon busting – communications need to be written in Plain English.
- Resourcing – limited communications and ICT support for the project.
- Length of project – this is a long-term project and the communications strategy will need to be continually evolved as new communications methods become mainstream.
- Accessibility – need to ensure communications methods are accessible to all – e.g., social media
- Consultation overload – need to schedule consultations to avoid confusion and failure to engage.
- Project timescales – need to ensure effective communication in the light of the potential timescales.

Ongoing feedback on methods of public consultation and engagement is important to ensure that the Project Team and others are getting it right.

4. Communication and Engagement Objectives

The strategy will necessarily need to continue to adapt as the project evolves and will need to be reviewed and potentially updated on a regular basis (at least annually). The objectives set out below are likely to be applicable for the short to medium term as the masterplanning and planning stages of delivering the Garden Village progress. However, they will be updated as and when considered necessary.

Engagement methods will include some or all of the following:

1. Create a communications and engagement strategy to identify ongoing engagement methods and opportunities.
2. Run media and social media campaigns during periods of public consultation.
3. Continue to develop constructive relationships with key delivery partners and stakeholders through the Delivery Board, and various other stakeholder forums.
4. Set up subject specific working groups to include participants from the local communities and relevant organisations as and when required.
5. Champion Culm Garden Village through engagement with key stakeholders.



6. Raise the profile of the Garden Village through contributing to journals, speaking at conferences and to local communities, businesses and other groups as opportunities arise.
7. Promote a locally-led focus and secure grass roots participation in the development of the Garden Village through various forms of engagement including public drop-in sessions, website, newspaper articles and social media.
8. Maintain a bespoke Culm Garden Village website.
9. Use the Council's engagement platform for consultations and public engagement.
10. Run workshops with technical stakeholders and community groups, including with design review input.

To achieve these objectives, we will put in place a strong culture of clear communication, based on our commitment to genuine interaction with stakeholders and local communities.

5. Communication and Engagement Methods

At the start of any important public engagement exercise the Council will provide:

- a timeline of the process;
- details of how to engage; and
- the purpose of the engagement and how we will feedback to participants.

Following the engagement, the Council will provide feedback that clearly explains what we did with contributions from the public and if relevant, why we did not act on the feedback received.

Mid Devon will also provide timely feedback on comments made outside these main engagement exercises, e.g. through the website, by email and via social media. The engagement and consultation findings and reporting are crucial to the project to ensure it is delivered with the support of the wider community. It is vitally important that the support from within the existing community for the Garden Village project is maintained during the planning and delivery phases of the Garden Village.

Dedicated website

Culm Garden Village has a dedicated website: www.culmgardenvillage.co.uk, hosted by Mid Devon District Council. The website is a communications tool that:

- provides access to information on the Garden Village;
- provides an opportunity for all to provide suggestions and comments;
- provides a central portal to access all Garden Village-related news and information;
- provides information on progress on delivering the Garden Village ambitions
- keeps people informed of upcoming activities and events and how they can get involved.

The Project Team will evaluate website feedback to inform whether there is a need to involve people in a different way to maximise opportunities for local communities to engage.

Potential engagement methods are set out in more detail in **Appendix 1** but will include:



Public exhibitions and drop-in sessions

Mid Devon will engage with the public by holding events in Cullompton, Kentisbeare, Willand and elsewhere if appropriate to provide information and to gain feedback on emerging documentation at key stages in the planning of the Garden Villages. As part of public consultation, the Project Team will attend existing events to take advantage of greater and more diverse attendance. Mid Devon District Council will also attend Town and Parish Council meetings to provide information, answer questions and listen to local people's ideas and concerns.

Social media and video

At key stages in the project, the Project Team will provide information and gain feedback using social media channels, usually focused on Facebook.

Press briefings

The Council will engage with the local media to provide them with updates and briefings on Garden Village activities and progress to raise awareness of the Garden Village and its ambitions. The Council may use video on newspaper platforms to reach a wider audience.

Statutory consultations

Consultation on planning policy documents and on individual planning applications, once submitted, are required to be undertaken within nationally set regulations. The approach is set out in Mid Devon's Statement of Community Involvement.

6. Garden Village Stakeholders and Related Engagement & Governance

Stakeholders

Cullompton Town Council was instrumental in identifying the site to the east of Cullompton for strategic growth and is supportive of the Garden Village project. Cullompton has a neighbourhood plan, which embraces the garden village concept. Both the Town Council and Kentisbeare Parish Council are involved in the Garden Village project with representation on the Delivery Board and Stakeholder Forum.

The Garden Village has a substantial number of stakeholders reflecting the breadth and complexity of the delivery of its ambitions.

Mid Devon has undertaken stakeholder mapping and analysis and will continue to review this to help build and develop understanding of the stakeholders as the project develops.

Governance

Delivery Board meetings

The Delivery Board provides strategic oversight of the project and makes recommendations for particular courses of action to be followed and will seek to steer, monitor and guide the project towards those key milestones and decisions. This will involve making some operational decisions, such as the approval of this engagement strategy or consultation that is not part of an existing statutory process, or to procure expertise or studies.

The Delivery Board has no statutory decision-making powers and statutory decisions (e.g. approval of planning documents) are made through the usual processes of the relevant authority. For clarity, the table below sets out a decision making framework. This clarifies the level and of nature of the input from the Delivery Board into Mid Devon’s statutory decision making processes.

Area/Type of decision	Culm Delivery Board	MDDC Planning Committee	MDDC Planning Policy Advisory Group	MDDC Cabinet	MDDC Council for approval of policy document for adoption
Supplementary planning document	Recommendation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
CGV planning policy	Recommendation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Consultation in connection with formal planning policy process	Recommendation	No	Yes	Yes	No
Planning applications	No	Yes	No	No	No

Delivery Board meetings are held in private although Minutes will be published on the Culm Garden Village website. Any published Minutes will exclude any discussion of a confidential nature as the project is at a stage where participants must have confidence to discuss and resolve complex and sometimes commercially sensitive issues. Delivery Board meetings are not committee meetings of the Council and so are not subject to the rules that mandate public access. Board meetings are attended by community representatives including Kentisbeare Parish Council, Cullompton Town Council and representatives from the Stakeholder Forum. It is part of their brief to seek and represent the diversity of views in their communities and also to feed back about the work on the project and its general progress.

Community & Stakeholder Forum

The Community & Stakeholder Forum is the key route for engagement with local community groups on the Garden Village project. Communication and engagement through the Forum involves:

- Dissemination of information on the work of the project team and Delivery Board
- Liaison with local community groups on projects/issues/concerns relevant to the Garden Village
- Involvement in developing the vision and principles for the Garden Village
- Involvement in masterplanning the Garden Village
- Identifying areas for further work and individuals/groups to participate in project areas
- Exploring the possibilities of community ownership and long term stewardship of assets
- Raising the profile of the Garden Village project with local communities.

Membership of the Stakeholder Forum is open to representatives of community and stakeholder organisations, as well as Mid Devon District Council elected members for Cullompton, Cullompton Town Council and Kentisbeare and Willand Parish Councils. Stakeholder Forum meetings are not open to the public, but the slides and notes of the meeting are published on the Culm Garden Village website.



Landowner/promoter/developer Forum

The Landowner/developer Forum allows engagement between Mid Devon and those delivering the project to seek consensus and buy in on the approach to delivery of the Garden Village, initially in relation to development of the vision and masterplanning, as well as resolution of landowner project related issues. Membership of the Forum is open to landowners, land promoters and developers with an interest in land in the Garden Village area. Landowner Forum meetings are also held in private and agendas and minutes sent to participants only.

More information on governance arrangements, memberships of the various groups, and decision taking processes can be found on the [Culm Garden Village website](#).

7. Monitoring and evaluation

The project team will monitor and evaluate communication and engagement activity in a number of ways so that we can measure the impact of activities and recognise gaps in the approaches. This will be undertaken:

- by recording variations in website hits and social media activity;
- by recording variations in the number of local people involved with engagement activities;
- by seeking participant feedback on the effectiveness of our engagement initiatives, e.g. on the consultation forms;
- and by developing mechanisms that capture the effectiveness of our public engagement activities.

Mid Devon will provide regular feedback to the Delivery Board on the effectiveness of the engagement undertaken and the Communications and Engagement strategy will be reviewed, monitored and updated on an annual basis.

For more information, please contact:

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Appendix 1 – Engagement methods

Engagement methods for target audiences and levels of engagement

Target = the whole community

Hard-to-reach groups

Particular consideration should be given to inform / engage with

- Physical inaccessibility - older people (especially frail and/or isolated older people), people with disabilities
- Language - minority ethnic communities
- Cultural views and traditions - faith communities
- Social expectations – commuter town/residents (non-engaged residents), children and young people – they will be growing up with it – may even live/work in the development, young working age (18-30yrs)
- Other - people who travel or commute into the area, small businesses

Level of engagement	Methods	Target audiences	Specific activity
Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Dedicated website • News coverage • Facebook campaign 	<p>Whole community Including hard to reach groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people / disability – newspaper / local news coverage / send links to disability groups • Gypsy & traveller communities: contact via liaison officers • Faith groups – as part of the Stakeholder Forum • Commuter residents (non-engaged) – Facebook campaign, exhibition at local events. Information at Culm Valley leisure centre and various other meeting places. • Children and young people – updates in the school newsletters, pupil workshops, competitions • Schools are key to reaching working parents / younger families (non-engaged residents) by engaging children, the parents become aware of what is happening • Young working age – Facebook campaign • People commuting into the area, small businesses – include Culm Valley in Business and other business groups in the Stakeholder Forum.

Appendix 1 – Engagement methods

Consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires/focus groups • Public meeting • Staffed exhibitions at local events / Roadshows 	Whole community including hard to reach groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people / disability – book exhibitions in accessible buildings • Faith groups – book exhibitions in accessible buildings • Commuter residents (non-engaged) – pop ups at different events – opinion polls • Children and young people – surveys through schools, school debate / workshops. • Young working age – polls through Facebook • People who commute into the area, small businesses – quick survey / invite to exhibition
Involve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops/stakeholder dialogue • Meetings 	Stakeholder groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery Board • Stakeholder Forum • Landowner Forum • Topic focused working groups
Delegate / Empower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership • Facilitation • Stewardship 	Community groups/ Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership building with sports clubs, interest groups, churches – involve them from the beginning • Facilitate and enable development of community groups and organisations to manage community assets • Involve volunteers / children in planting and looking after green spaces

External Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Role	Engagement methods	Workstreams
Central Government Departments: Levelling Up, Homes & Communities (principal), Transport, Health, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Culture, Media and Sport, Education, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Informing/influencing/ funding/ delivery	Formal communication, Delivery Board e.g. Government Agencies (Homes England, National Highways) and MP; Member/officer attendance at events, direct contact	All
Homes England	Informing/influencing/ funding/delivery	Delivery Board, meetings, direct contact	Housing, Infrastructure, Climate change
National Highways	Informing/influencing/ delivery/ statutory body	Delivery Board, meetings, direct contact; consultations	Transport infrastructure, Climate change
Heart of South West Local Enterprise Partnership	Influencing/funding	Delivery Board, meetings, direct contact	Economy & Employment, Energy & Innovation, Climate change
Network Rail	Influencing/delivery	Meetings, direct contact	Transport infrastructure
Devon County Council (Highways, Education, Public Health, Heritage, Waste, Lead Local Flood Authority)	Informing/influencing/ delivery/ statutory body	Delivery Board, Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, direct contact	Transport, Health & Wellbeing, Education, Waste, Heritage, GI/BI, SUDS, Climate change
Landowners/promoters	Influencing/delivery	Delivery Board, Landowner Forum, consultations, meetings , direct contact	All

Sport England	Influencing/funding/statutory body	Consultations, meetings, direct contact	Sports Facilities, Health & Wellbeing
Environment Agency	Influencing/statutory body/funding	Consultations, meetings, direct contact	Flood Risk and Drainage, GI/BI, Climate change
Historic England	Influencing/statutory body	Consultations, meetings, direct contact	Heritage, GI/BI
Devon and Somerset Metro Project Group	Influencing/delivery	Meetings, direct contact	Transport Infrastructure
Bus companies (Stagecoach, Others)	Influencing/delivery/funding	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, direct contact	Transport Infrastructure
Environmental groups (Devon Wildlife Trust, National Trust)	Influencing/delivery	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, direct contact, delivery	Biodiversity, GI/BI, Community stewardship, Climate change
Education Providers (existing and potential school providers)	Influencing/delivery	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, direct contact	Education; Employment
Skills Providers	Influencing/delivery	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, direct contact	Education; Employment
Health Providers	Influencing/delivery/statutory body (NHS)/funding	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, direct contact	Health & Wellbeing
Utility Companies	Influencing/delivery	Consultations, meetings, direct contact	Infrastructure
Digital Infrastructure Providers	Influencing/delivery	Consultations, meetings, direct contact	Infrastructure

Housebuilders/Developers	Influencing/delivery	Landowner Forum, consultations, meetings, direct contact	Housing, infrastructure, climate change
Registered Providers	Influencing/delivery	Direct contact	Housing
Agents	Informing/influencing	Website, social media, consultations, direct contact	Housing
Major Employers	Informing/influencing	Meetings, website, social media, direct contact	Economy & Employment, Climate change
Inward Investors	Informing/influencing/delivery	Meetings, website, social media, direct contact	Infrastructure , Economy & Employment
Business Groups (e.g. Culm Valley in Business)	Informing/influencing	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, social media, website	Economy & Employment
Small Businesses	Recipient/community link	Consultations, website, social media	Economy & Employment

Community Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Role	Engagement methods	Workstreams
Member of Parliament	Influencing/community and government link	Delivery Board, meetings, direct contact	All
Town and Parish Councils	Influencing/delivery/community link	Delivery Board, Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, website, social media	All, Community stewardship
Existing Residents (including residents associations)	Recipient/influencing	Consultations, website, social media, direct contact	All

New/Future Residents	Recipient/influencing	Consultations, website, social media	All
Visitors	Recipient	Consultations, website, social media	All
Youth Groups	Informing/influencing	Website, social media, consultations	All, Community facilities & stewardship
Voluntary Sector	Informing/influencing/delivery	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, social media, website	According to interests, Community facilities & stewardship
Faith Groups	Informing/influencing/delivery	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, social media, website	All, Community facilities & stewardship
Leisure, Sports, Arts and Culture Groups	Influencing/delivery	Stakeholder Forum, consultations, meetings, website, social media	Sports facilities, Health & Wellbeing, Community facilities & stewardship
Media e.g. Mid Devon Gazette	Influencing	Website, social media, direct contact	All
Local Interest Groups e.g. cycling, walking, horse-riding	Influencing/recipient/community link	Consultations, website, social media	According to interests, Community facilities & stewardship, GI/BI
Local Opposition Interest Groups e.g. RACE	Influencing/recipient/community link	Website, social media, direct contact, consultations	According to interests

Internal Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Role	Engagement methods	Workstreams
Leader/Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration	Decision-maker, influencing	Reports, meetings, briefings, direct contact	All
Cabinet	Decision-maker	Reports, meetings, briefings	All
Ward Members	Influencing/community link	Reports, meetings, briefings, Stakeholder Forum	All
Planning Committee	Decision-maker	Reports, meetings, briefings	Planning applications
Scrutiny Committee	Scrutiny/challenge	Reports, meetings, briefings	All Mid Devon District Council recommendations/decisions
Leadership Team	Delivery/influencing	Delivery Board, meetings, direct contact	All
Council Services (Housing, Leisure, Estates, Public Health, Environmental Health)	Delivery	Consultations, meetings, Stakeholder Forum, direct contact	According to interests
Financial Services	Supporting	Direct contact	Where financial decisions are to be taken or whether there are financial implications for the Council
Legal Services	Supporting	Delivery Board, direct contact	Where there may be legal implications
Communications Team	Supporting/promoting	Direct contact	All
Planning Policy/Development Management	Supporting/promoting/engaging/delivery	Direct contact, meetings	Development of policy and guidance, planning applications
Economic Development	Supporting/promoting/engaging/delivery	Direct contact, meetings	Economy & Employment, Energy & Innovation

