

**CABINET**  
**13 MAY 2021**

## **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION**

### **CULM GARDEN VILLAGE STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT AND DRAINAGE STRATEGY EVIDENCE BASE**

**Cabinet Member**                      Cllr Richard Chesterton  
**Responsible Officer**                Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration

#### **Reason for Report:**

To seek approval to engage consultants to prepare a strategic flood risk assessment and drainage strategy as evidence base for the Culm Garden Village masterplanning process.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to engage consultants to produce a strategic flood risk assessment and drainage strategy.**

**Financial Implications:** This significant project requires financial resources to continue progress towards delivery. Capacity funding from Homes England's Garden Villages and Towns Programme to advance the project has been received over the past 4 years. Continued financial support from capacity funding is critical to adequately resource the project. This capacity funding is conditional on progress being made with the project in line with the Council's place making aspirations and to meet the Government's requirements.

The cost of appointing the consultants of approximately £50,000- £75,000 will be financed entirely from the capacity funding budget (with sufficient funds available) and is therefore at no cost to the MDDC budget. A range of costs is appropriate at this stage as the extent of the work will depend on the amount of modelling work required (to be agreed with the Environment Agency) and whether gauging of ordinary watercourses is included. It is intended that consultants be selected via a tender process.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** This report relates to strategy formulation which is currently budgeted for under Homes England capacity funding. The document will not affect the existing policy framework but will add detail to existing policies and help inform future policies.

**Legal Implications:** None anticipated at this time. Procurement will be in accordance with requirements commensurate with the value of the commission. The Council's financial regulations stipulate a formal tender process.

**Risk Assessment:** If progress on masterplanning the garden village is delayed, the Council may become vulnerable to speculative planning applications being submitted

which do not accord with the Council's aspirations for the garden village and which could lead to unsustainable and uncoordinated development which would not meet policy requirements for essential infrastructure, open space and local services.

One of the Government's priorities is the delivery of housing, the achievement of which is increasingly linked to future success of funding bids. The ability to show progress against key milestones in the delivery plan for the project is of increasing importance.

Establishment of a comprehensive masterplanning framework for the development is considered vital to achieving the Council's aspirations for the garden village in terms of community, place making and quality. The absence of such an approach would represent a significant risk to achieving the desired quality outcomes. The flood risk and hydrology work is a key piece of evidence base to run in parallel and to inform the garden village masterplan.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** The garden village project contributes to all four corporate priorities of homes, environment, community and economy and the objectives of sustainable and prosperous communities, a sustainable planet and sustainable participation. The project is central to the delivery of many of the aims identified within the Corporate Plan. It is a significant strategic project with a national profile.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** No equality issues are identified for this report at this stage.

**Impact on Climate Change:** The commission is essential to inform the garden village masterplan. The work will include consideration of the current and future impacts of climate change and recommend opportunities for natural flood management/nature based solutions within the Culm catchment.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policies CU7-CU12 of the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan Review allocate 160 hectares of land to the east of Cullompton for up to 1,750 homes and associated development within the period up to 2033 (with at least 850 houses thereafter). This allocation is intended to form part of a larger garden village proposal. Policy CU7 of the Local Plan Review requires comprehensive masterplanning of the development including at least two stages of public consultation, and adoption of the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document before any planning application is determined. The Mid Devon Local Plan Review was adopted at the meeting of Full Council on 29 July 2020.

1.2 Culm Garden Village was one of 14 initial areas awarded garden village status by the Government in January 2017 following a successful expression of interest by the Council. The background to this was summarised and included within the report considered by Cabinet on 6 July 2017.

1.3 With Culm Garden Village receiving garden village status, there is a clear intention and direction of travel towards a garden village of significantly

greater scale and covering substantial additional land to that currently allocated by policy CU7 of the Mid Devon Local Plan Review.

- 1.4 The remainder of the garden village does not at present benefit from a plan allocation. It is expected that the review of the Local Plan will consider this.
- 1.5 At the meeting on 1 October 2020, Cabinet approved the appointment of consultants to progress a Masterplan SPD for the East Cullompton Local Plan allocation and a Framework Masterplan for the wider garden village.
- 1.6 Flooding and hydrology is a very important consideration for the garden village, there being numerous small watercourses crossing the site, as well as the river Culm to the west of the garden village and areas of flood zones 2 and 3 in the wider garden village area. The flood risk and hydrology work is a key component of the evidence base for the garden village masterplan, which will inform the distribution of land uses, design of green spaces such as the proposed country park, and a high level strategy for sustainable urban drainage systems.
- 1.7 The commission will build on the baseline model developed through the Connecting the Culm project and the flood modelling carried out for the Town Centre Relief Road, as well as early flood risk work carried out by the land promoters, and will be complementary to the strategic flood risk assessment to be commissioned for the Local Plan Review.
- 1.8 The flood risk assessment, mitigation and drainage strategies will be developed through engagement with the Environment Agency and Devon County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority.

## 2.0 **BACKGROUND WORK**

- 2.1 A preliminary flood risk and drainage assessment was carried out by the main land promoters for the East Cullompton allocation in 2017 to inform the stage 1 public consultation on the Masterplan SPD. Further information was received from statutory consultees and other interested parties during the stage 1 public consultation which took place in January/February 2019.
- 2.2 A whole catchment model of the Culm has recently been developed through the Connecting the Culm project. This model will form a baseline for further, more detailed, modelling required for the garden village project specifically.
- 2.3 The Connecting the Culm project is also developing a “blueprint for the Culm” to identify natural flood management solutions to reduce flooding and improve water quality in the Culm catchment. These solutions will be expected to form part of the flood risk mitigation for the garden village. Details of the Connecting the Culm project can be viewed on their website: <https://connectingtheculm.com/>.
- 2.4 Detailed flood modelling of part of the catchment was included in a flood risk assessment carried out in 2018 to inform the design of the Town Centre Relief Road and associated flood risk mitigation.

2.5 A strategic flood risk assessment was prepared for the adopted Local Plan in 2014. An up to date strategic flood risk assessment will be commissioned to support the review of the Local Plan. This will be a high level assessment which will need to be supported further by the detail proposed in this garden village flood risk and drainage strategy commission.

2.6 The Environment Agency is carrying out further work to gain a greater understanding of the hydrology of the Cullompton area. The Environment Agency has been, and continues to be, involved in setting the brief for this commission, and will be working with the appointed consultants throughout the commission.

### 3.0 **SCOPE OF COMMISSION**

3.1 It is recommended that consultants (funded by capacity funding set aside for this purpose) be engaged to produce a strategic flood risk assessment and high level drainage strategy. The work must provide a sufficient understanding of the hydrology of the area to inform detailed masterplanning work.

3.2 The work will need to align with the strategic flood risk assessment to be carried out to support the Local Plan review.

3.3 The strategic flood risk assessment will utilise the existing Connecting the Culm baseline model, particularly in relation to flows upstream and downstream of the Cullompton area to provide a whole catchment approach to flood risk.

3.4 More detailed modelling will be required, within an area to be defined and agreed with the Environment Agency, to take into account river, ground water and surface water flooding (including rainfall). All modelling will need to be compatible with the existing Connecting the Culm and Environment Agency models.

3.5 The modelling and any recommended mitigation will be required to take climate change into account, in accordance with the latest Environment Agency guidance.

3.6 The report will clarify the current understanding of flood risk in the Cullompton area and recommend flood risk management strategies, to include natural flood management/nature based solutions, where possible aligning these with emerging solutions within the Connecting the Culm blueprint, and a “landscape-led” approach to masterplanning.

3.7 The report will recommend high level sustainable urban drainage strategies in accordance with guidance prepared by Devon County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority.

3.8 The report will outline the extent of any further work required by developers to support planning applications, and include guidance on this further work.

3.9 The commission will also need to explore the option of gauging minor watercourses to gain a more in-depth understanding of flood risk to inform future flood risk mitigation.

3.10 A provisional timetable is proposed:

Action	Date
Cabinet	13 May 2021
Award of contract	June/ July 2021
Draft report	January 2022
Final report to Cabinet	April 2022

#### 4.0 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 A good understanding of the flood risks to the garden village and wider Cullompton area is essential in developing a detailed masterplan for the garden village.

4.2 The flood risk and hydrology work is a key component of the evidence base for the garden village masterplan, which will inform the distribution of land uses, design of green spaces such as the proposed country park, and a high level strategy for sustainable urban drainage systems.

4.3 The commission will identify flood risks and recommend flood mitigation measures and a high level sustainable urban drainage strategy, taking into account climate change and a “landscape-led” approach to masterplanning.

<b>Contact for any more information</b>	Tina Maryan, Area Planning Officer <a href="mailto:tmaryan@middevon.gov.uk">tmaryan@middevon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Background Papers</b>	Local Plan Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Town Centre Relief Road Flood Risk Assessment East Cullompton Preliminary Drainage Strategy
<b>Circulation of the Report</b>	Members of Cabinet