

Consultation strategy for the Design Code

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1 Introduction

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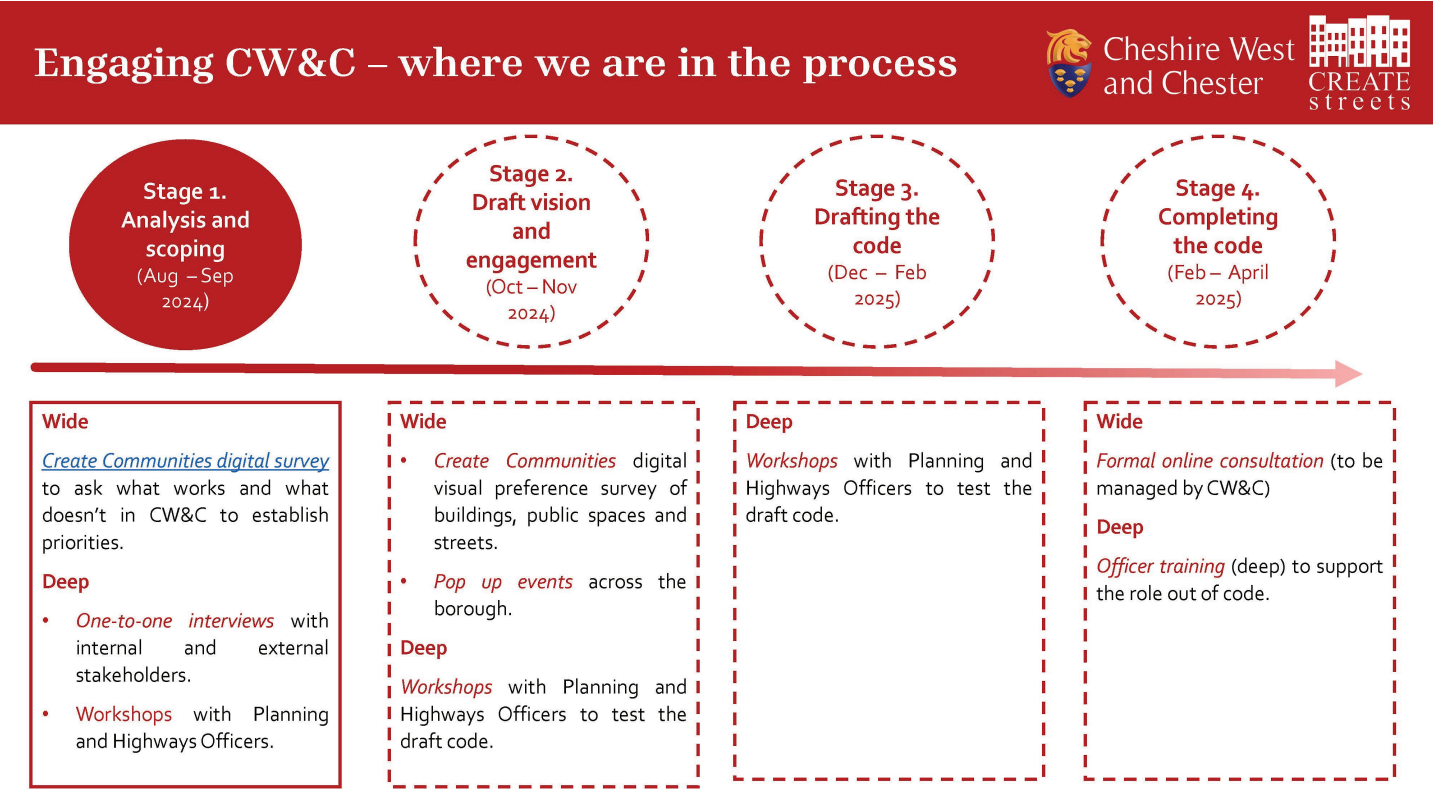
1.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council have commissioned Create Streets to support the production of a Design Code. This project will cover both the planning and highway functions in the Council. Create Streets have already undertaken some initial work from both a transport perspective and planning, interviewing stakeholders and understanding the design issues we have.

1.2 The Design Code project builds upon this initial work and was launched in August 2024 with 12 months to complete. The process has been split into 4 stages:

- Analysis and scoping
- Draft Vision and engagement
- Drafting the code
- Completion and implementation

1.3 The chart below details when and how engagement and consultation will feed into the production of a Design Code.

Figure 1.1 Engagement chart



How will consultation take place? 2

2 How will consultation take place?

2.1 To meaningfully engage on the Design Code, 'wide' (collecting lots of high-level information) and 'deep' (talking in depth) approaches will be used.

2.2 The Design Code will be in line with the Statement and Community Involvement (SCI) 2022 update ([Cheshire West and Chester Statement of Community Involvement - 2022 update - Details - Keystone](#)).

2.3 The Council will use a range of methods to engage with the community and stakeholders including:

- Planning policy consultee database
 - Email and letters where appropriate to ensure no exclusion through the use of online
- Press releases
- Council website - [Design code - Keystone](#)
- Council's social media
- Community newsletters where appropriate
- Member Briefings
- In person events held in locations that will have a natural footfall
- One-to-one interviews
- Group workshops with stakeholders
- Presentations on the design code project with Members and Parish Councils

3 What will be consulted and when?

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3.1 The National Model Design Code ([National Model Design Code - GOV.UK](#)) sets out that communities must be involved within the design code process and be prepared in light of what is popular locally based on evidence. At each stage of the process, the Design Code will be consulted upon. This Consultation Strategy has taken account of the 'Community Engagement' chapter of the National Model Design Code and the 'Effective Community Engagement on Design' chapter in the Planning Practice Guidance ([Design: process and tools - GOV.UK](#)).

Stage 1 – Analysis and scoping

3.2 The aim of this stage is to get an understanding of what already exists, what people like, what they dislike, the design issues we have and community preferences on how this can be improved.

3.3 A review of the existing engagement information carried out by Cheshire West and Chester will be appraised, this also includes existing Neighbourhood Plans and associated Design Codes. The council has previously undertaken extensive engagement regarding development in the borough including formal consultations on both the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan will also be fed into the Design Code.

3.4 An online survey, that was also available on hard copy upon request will be undertaken to get an idea of the communities thoughts of their local area, what is good and bad and the reasons for this. This not only gives us an idea of what is locally popular, but also where development has gone well, in terms of the communities view and where it hasn't and why.

3.5 In addition to the online survey, workshops and interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders to discuss key design issues and opportunities in the borough.

3.6 These will all inform the scope of the Design Code, allowing the Council to concentrate on the key design issues identified by communities and stakeholders, whilst taking into account engagement work and council guidance that already exists.

Stage 2 – Draft vision and engagement

3.7 The aim of this stage is to set out the emerging vision for the Design Code, based on the findings in stage 1 to fully understand local preferences.

3.8 A second survey will be launched. Taking account of what the local community thinks works well and doesn't, a visual preference survey will be used. This will be held both online and in person at pop up events in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich.

3.9 The draft vision will be available for comment and respondees will be asked to select which of the five vision themes they feel should be a priority.

3.10 There will also be workshops with Planning and the Highway Department to test the vision and the scope of the draft Design Code in further technical detail.

What will be consulted and when? 3

Stage 3 – Drafting the code

3.11 The consultation data, existing information, comments from workshops and interviews will determine the scope of the Design Code and the agreed vision. From this, the Design Code will be drafted in further detail to meet the local preferences and address the issues and opportunities identified. During the drafting stage, workshops with the Officers that will be use and implement the code in their day-to-day work will test it and provide feedback on this initial draft.

Stage 4 – Completion and Implementation

3.12 Once the Council has agreed it has a Design Code that achieves its place vision and wider Council objectives on the poverty, climate and biodiversity crisis along with being practical and deliverable, it can then be subject to public consultation.

3.13 This is expected to be a formal consultation, that meets planning regulations.

3.14 Along side this consultation, continued testing and discussions will take place on the draft code.

3.15 The consultation comments, along with testing will be taken into the final code. The Council will then follow its procedure to finalise the code.