

Consultation Statement

Westmorland & Furness Design Code

Supplementary Planning Document
March 2026



Our Place... Our **FUTURE**... Join the conversation

 Westmorland and Furness Local Plan

1 Introduction

- Westmorland and Furness Council is the Local Planning Authority for the District outside the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. Whilst this is only half of the district by area, it contains 85% of our population and parts of two National Landscapes.
- The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, enacted in 2023 requires local planning authorities to prepare area-wide Design Codes, based on the policy and guidance set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. The overarching purpose of the Design Code is to provide an adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which sets out clear coding and guidance on the policies in the Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland Local Plans.
- The aim of the Design Code is to
 - enable and ensure sustainable development, which makes the strongest possible contribution to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change and encouraging greater biodiversity.
 - improve the quality of design which more fully respects the Council's and communities' expectations, and more fully respects and reinforces the district's diverse character and high quality built and natural heritage.
 - inspire applicants, developers, architects, parish councils and planners to create more beautiful places and well-designed buildings and places.
 - provide area-wide design guidance which will provide a framework for the development of detailed design codes or masterplans, to be prepared subsequently for specific areas or sites and led either by the local planning authority, neighbourhood planning groups or by developers as part of planning applications.
- Land Use Consultants were appointed as lead consultants to prepare the Design Code supported by McMullan Studio and PLACED. Work on the Design Code began in 2024 and it is anticipated it will be finalised in Spring 2026. Whereupon it will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- Westmorland and Furness Council has prepared the Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This document summarises who was consulted during the preparation of the document and the various stages of consultation, the main issues raised, and how the Council has addressed these issues in the Design Code

- The Consultation Statement supports the provisions of regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 these being, that before a Local Planning Authority adopt a Supplementary Planning Document it must:

Prepare a statement setting out -

- The persons the local planning authority consulted when preparing the Supplementary Planning Document and
- Summary of the main issues raised by those persons and
- How those issues have been addressed in the Supplementary Planning Document

2 Who contributed to the Design Code and how – Who was engaged and how were they engaged

Inception

2.1 Upon inception we put together two groups to help steer the direction, content and the preparation of the Design Code. These groups comprised of the:

Reference Group - a range of local organisations and interest groups as well as Statutory bodies as follows: Crosby Grainger Architects, Skandishack Architecture, South Lakes Housing, Environment Agency, RSPD, Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape Partnership, Lake District National Park Authority, BAE Systems, Brookhouse Group, Friends of the Lake District, Eden Housing Association, Country Land & Business Association, Oakmere Homes, Holker Estates, Active Travel England, Hyrd Architects representing LAWSA, Historic England, Hart Architecture, Burlington Stone Ltd, Story Homes, James Cropper Ltd, Gleeson Homes / Cumbria House Builders Forum, Kendal Future, Harrison & Hetherington Land Estates, National Trust, North Pennines National Landscape Partnership, Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group, United Utilities, and MWT Planning.

Delivery Group - Westmorland and Furness Officers with different specialisms including Planning Officers from the Planning Policy and Development Management Teams, Conservation Officers, Ecologists, Highways Officers, Local Lead Flood Authority Officers, Economic Development Officers and Climate and Nature Officers.

2.2 These groups were engaged at the outset of project inception and helped to define the scope of the Design Code, input into the baseline report and character appraisal report, and input into the Draft Design Code and final Draft Code through both informal and formal comments.

Early Consultation Late Summer 2024

2.3 As part of the early conversation engagement on the Westmorland and Furness Local Plan, which took place from 8th July 2024 to 9th September 2024, a separate consultation was undertaken about the Design Code. Details were available to view on the Council's website and in hard copy at deposit locations during their normal opening times.

2.4 The following methods of communication were used to publicise the consultation:

- Notifications to Town and Parish Councils, statutory consultees, specific consultation bodies, and individuals and interested parties on our database listed as wishing to be notified of Local Plan documents.
- Press release
- Social media campaign
- Publication of consultation documents on Council's website
- Consultation drop-in events at venues across the district
- Notification to Elected Members of the Authority.

2.5 Consultees were invited to give their views via a comprehensive survey (also provided in hard copy on request). This explored design preferences, local views on development, and sought to understand the different characters of places across Westmorland and Furness (excluding those parts within the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks). It was structured around the ten characteristics of well-designed places as identified in national guidance. A summary of the feedback received to the survey is contained in the report available on the website [250108 WFC Design Code Early Engagement Report - Final.PDF](#)

2.6 Officers were also available to discuss the Design Code and how to respond to the consultation at a series of Westmorland and Furness Early Conversations public drop in events at the following locations:

- Wednesday 10 July 2024 Masonic Hall, Kirkby Stephen 3-7pm
- Thursday 11 July 2024 Ante Room, Ulverston 3-7pm
- Saturday 13 July 2024 Westmorland Shopping Centre, Kendal 10-2pm
- Saturday 13 July 2024 Sainsbury's, Penrith 10-2pm
- Tuesday 16 July 2024, The Forum, Barrow-in-Furness
- Wednesday 17 July 2024 Lunesdale Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale
- Thursday 18 July 2024 Appleby Public Hall

- Friday 19 July 2024 Buccleuch Hall, Lindal-in-Furness
- Saturday 20 July 2024 Festival of Transport, Barrow-in-Furness
- Tuesday 23 July 2024 Alston Town Hall
- Wednesday 24 July 2024 Askam and Ireleth Community Centre
- Thursday 25 July 2024 Victoria Hall, Grange-over-Sands
- Tuesday 30 July 2024 Christ the King Church Hall, Milnthorpe
- Tuesday 30 July 2024 Round House, Walney
- Thursday 1 August 2024 Dalton Community Centre, Dalton-in-Furness

2.7 132 responses to the consultation were received in total, comprising 125 online responses and 7 paper responses. Additional letters were received from Parish Councils and Statutory Consultees. Responses were received from residents and from the following bodies:

- 10 Parish/Town Councils comprising Lakes Parish Council, Grange-over-Sands Town Council, Dalton with Newton Town Council, Kirkby Ireleth Parish Council, Kendal Town Council, Penrith Town Council, Arnside Parish Council, Morland Parish Council, Great Salkeld Parish Council
- 25 Organisations comprising of North Pennines National Landscape, Kendal BID, Sporadic Illustration, Helsington Laithes Manor, Human Support Group, Farrer Huxley (Landscape Architects), Penrith Action for Community Transition (PACT), Kendal Swifts, Keswick Swifts, Environment Agency, Clean River Kent Campaign (CRKC), Kendal Futures, Home Group, Friends of the Lake District, Peninsula Environmental Action Together (PEAT), Furness Creatives, St Matthews Community Halls, Swifts Local Network, South Lakes Housing, Zero Carbon Cumbria, Historic England, Coal Authority, United Utilities and Cumbria Constabulary.

2.8 Further details of who responded and by what means is contained within the report available online here [250108 WFC Design Code Early Engagement Report - Final.PDF](#).

Summary of Feedback received

2.9 The following is an overview of the key findings from the early engagement. For a more detailed account of what people said please see the report referenced in paragraph 2.8 above.

Public spaces and safety

Participants often mentioned the need for public spaces that could host various events and activities. Some respondents noted that current designs often fail to meet the needs of disabled people, particularly in terms of accessibility and safety, hence streets and public spaces should cater to a diverse range of users, including disabled people, older people, families, and young people. While many acknowledged the need for adequate lighting for safety, there was a strong preference for Dark Skies compliant lighting.

Local Character and Materials

Some participants expressed concern about new developments that fail to respect local architectural traditions. Many suggested that the use of traditional materials, such as local stone and slate, should be encouraged. Some respondents proposed that modern, innovative designs could be incorporated, provided they were sympathetic to the local context.

Sustainable and Energy-Efficient

Design Some participants felt that current practices were not sufficiently environmentally friendly and called for more sustainable approaches. There appeared to be widespread support for incorporating sustainable features in new developments. Many participants suggested that features such as solar panels, air source heat pumps, and green roofs should be standard in new buildings. Some respondents proposed that the Design Code should require higher energy efficiency standards than current building regulations.

Affordable Housing and Local Needs

Many participants suggested that there should be a greater focus on smaller homes, flats, and bungalows to meet the needs of first-time buyers, young families, and older residents wishing to downsize. Some respondents expressed concern about the proliferation of second homes and holiday lets, particularly in popular tourist areas.

Green Spaces and Biodiversity

It was often suggested that new developments should incorporate green areas and wildlife habitats. Some participants proposed that the Design Code should require developers to demonstrate how they will achieve biodiversity net gain in their projects. There seemed to be strong opposition to building on greenfield sites, especially when brownfield sites were available. Many participants valued the incorporation of trees, planting, and sustainable drainage systems. Some respondents expressed concern about the loss of green spaces in urban areas and suggested that future designs should prioritise the inclusion of natural elements.

Community-Focused Development

Many participants emphasised the need for new developments to foster a sense of community. It was suggested that developments should include central community

spaces, play areas for children, and easy access to local amenities. The importance of variety in housing was mentioned by several participants, who suggested that developments should include a mix of housing types and avoid uniformity in design.

Transport and Accessibility

Many suggested that new developments should prioritise walking, cycling, and public transport to reduce car dependency. Active travel promotion emerged as a priority for many respondents. Several participants called for designs that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists, with dedicated cycle paths and pedestrian-friendly zones.

Maintenance

Many respondents suggested that the success of any design improvements would depend on ongoing care and community involvement. Some participants expressed concern about the current state of maintenance in public areas. Many respondents supported the idea of repurposing empty or underused buildings, particularly in town centres. Converting empty shops or commercial buildings into residential properties could help meet housing needs while revitalising urban areas.

2.10 The findings from the early engagement have been used to inform the values underpinning the Design Code and the direction and focus of guidance contained within.

Consultation on Draft Design Code

Who was engaged and how were they engaged

2.11 Following the early engagement; a Draft Design Code was prepared. Early iterations of it were shared with the Reference Group and Delivery Group for feedback. Comments received were considered in finalising the Draft Design Code. To accompany the Design Code additional supporting documents were also prepared as follows:

- Viability Statement
- Glossary
- Summary Character Appraisal
- Strategic Environmental Assessment / Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Baseline Review

2.12 The Draft Design Code comprises 13 chapters each with an accompanying compliance and context checklist.

2.13 A public consultation was undertaken on the Draft Design Code between 3 November and 14 December 2025. Details were available to view on the Council's website and in hard copy at deposit locations during their normal opening times (Kendal Town Hall, Barrow Town Hall and Voreda House, Penrith).

2.14 Parish and Town Councils and local members and councillors were briefed about the contents of the Draft Design Code, and how to engage and respond to the consultation prior to the commencement of the consultations. Notifications to Town and Parish Councils, statutory consultees, specific consultation bodies, and individuals and interested parties on our database listed as wishing to be notified of Local Plan documents was undertaken. Methods for engagement included:

- Social media campaign
- Publication of consultation documents on Council's website
- Six Public Consultation drop-in events at venues across the district
- Online short and long survey
- Responses could be sent by email
- Six Stakeholder events – invitation only

2.15 Six public drop in events were held at the following locations and times. Officers were at hand to answer questions and guide people to how to respond to the consultation. People were able to provide feedback to the Draft Design Code there and then, with material available and activities displayed to capture views based on the questions in the short survey. The feedback was captured and recorded as evidenced in the Draft Design Code Consultation Report available to view on the Council's website [Westmorland and Furness Design Code Consultation Report](#).

- Wednesday 12 November 2025 3:00-6.30pm, Ulverston Coronation Hall
- Thursday 13 November 2025 2:30-5.45pm, Barrow Library
- Thursday 18 November 2025, 2.30-6.30pm, Penrith Parish Centre
- Wednesday 19 November 2025, 2.30-6.30pm, Appleby Main Hall
- Thursday 27 November 2025, 3.00-6.45pm, Grange Victoria Hall
- Friday 28 November 2025, 2.30-5.30pm, Westmorland Shopping Centre, Kendal

2.16 Six stakeholder events were held at the following locations and times. These events were by invitation only and provided participants with the opportunity to consider the values underpinning the Draft Design Code and to focus on the content of the Draft Design Codes as well as discuss the overarching themes contained within. The feedback was captured and recorded as evidenced in the Draft Design Code Consultation Report available to view on the Council's website [Westmorland and Furness Design Code Consultation Report](#)

- Wednesday 12 November 2025, 10.00am-12.00pm, Ulverston Coronation Hall – Town and Parish Councillors and local members/councillors
- Thursday 13 November 2025, 10.00am-12.00pm, Barrow Library – Young People
- Tuesday 18 November 2025, 10.00am - 12.00pm, Penrith Parish Centre – Community Interest Groups/representatives
- Wednesday 19 November 2025, 10.00am-12.00pm, Appleby Main Hall – Town and Parish Councils and local members/councillors
- Thursday 27 November 2025, 10.00am-12.00pm, Grange Victoria Hall – Town and Parish Councils and local members/councillors
- Friday 28 November 2025, 10.00am-12.00pm, Kendal Town Hall – Design Code Reference Group

Who engaged in responding / providing feedback

2.17 In total, we engaged with approximately 225 people and stakeholders through the consultation activities as follows:

- Online short survey (65 in total, 56 published, 9 did not wish responses to be published)
- Online long survey (10 in total)
- Email responses 13 in total
- Drop-in-events 60 attendees
- Stakeholder workshops 77 attendees

2.18 The following individuals and organisations either attended the stakeholder events or responded to the online surveys or by email:

Westmorland and Furness Council (councillors and officers)

- Councillor for Appleby and Brough
- Councillor for Eamont and Shap
- Councillor for Greystoke and Ullswater Ward
- Councillor for Kirkby Stephen and Tebay
- Councillor for Hawcoat & Newbarns
- Countryside Access
- Community Development
- Public Health
- Economic Development
- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

Parish and Town Councils

- Appleby Town Council
- Allithwaite and Cartmel Parish Council
- Askham Parish Council
- Bampton Parish Council
- Barton and Pooley Bridge Parish Council
- Brougham Parish Council
- Burneside Parish Council
- Dalton with Newton Town Council
- Dufton Parish Council
- Egton-with-Newland, Mansriggs and Osmotherley Parish Council
- Grange-over-Sands Town Council
- Hesketh Parish Council
- Kirkby Stephen Parish Council
- Lazonby Parish Council
- Lindal and Marton Parish Council
- Lowther Parish Council
- Penrith Town Council
- Skelton Parish Council
- Ulverston Town Council

External Stakeholders

- Action for Swifts
- Action with Communities Cumbria
- Active Cumbria
- Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape
- BAE Systems Submarines
- Burlington Slate
- Churches Together in Penrith
- Clean River Kent Campaign
- Coal Authority
- Connecting Cumbria
- Cumbria Constabulary
- Environment Agency
- Farley Huxley
- Genesis Homes
- Historic England
- Holker Estates
- Home Group

- Kendal Futures
- Kendal Swifts
- Keswick Swifts
- Lake District National Park Authority
- Lancaster City Council
- Manna House Cumbria
- Marine Management Organisation
- Ministry of Defence
- MJ Gleeson
- Mulberry Homes Limited
- MWT Planning
- My Community Penrith
- National Grid
- National Trust
- Natural England
- NCIC Wellbeing Service
- Network Rail
- North West Music Academy
- Oakmere Homes
- Penrith Business Improvement District (BID)
- Penrith Swift Group
- Persimmon Homes
- RSPB
- Skandishack
- South Lakes Housing
- Story Homes
- United Utilities

2.20 For further details of who responded to the Short Survey and at the in-person events please view the Draft Design Code Consultation Report.

2.21 Three officer testing workshops were held in November at Penrith, Barrow and Kendal. These provided the opportunity for Westmorland and Furness Council Officers (specialists in Development Management, Climate and Natural Environment team, Local Lead Flood Authority and Highways Authority and Conservation Officers) along with Planning Policy officers to consider the Code and how it could be applied to real case planning applications. A significant amount of feedback was received, and this has been recorded and where appropriate has been considered and resulted in additional changes to the Draft Design Code. Feedback received that has resulted in changes to the Design Code is captured in the schedule of changes included at the end of this report.

Summary of Feedback received

2.22 Published short survey responses are available to view online here. https://consult.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/westmorland-and-furness-council/draft-design-code-consultation-short-survey/consultation/published_select_respondent. Responses to the long survey and by email are included in the schedule of changes table in this report.

Short Survey and In-person events

2.23 The Draft Design Code Consultation Report provides a summary and details of the feedback received to the short survey and in person events. In summary the following main issues were raised:

Design Code values and priorities

Participants and respondents generally felt that all the values presented were desirable and important, with most commenting that they should be considered in parallel. Well-designed, accessible, and green developments were seen as equally important by many. Some noted subtle differences between local distinctiveness and inspirational places as concepts. Others specifically noted the need to acknowledge the *identities* of Westmorland and Furness, rather than a single identity. The need for a balance between protection and innovation was emphasised, with some people stressing that requirements must be realistic. Several people commented that homes should be well-designed and of sufficient quality to be desirable and marketable. The role of the tourist economy was raised, with suggestions that this should perhaps be referenced. The balance between protection and innovation was emphasised, with participants stressing that requirements must be realistic.

Local distinctiveness and materials

The connection between local distinctiveness and carbon efficiency was highlighted, as people suggested that using local materials would reduce the carbon footprint of developments, and participants recommended that the design code should have regard to local geology. Some people suggested that stone facing could be used to help new developments fit in, particularly along development edges. It was noted that local distinctiveness was important to local people, and there were calls for careful balance when establishing reference points to place. A few participants commented that it was possible to have modern development that still responds to local distinctiveness, citing examples in where stone and slate were being used. Several people felt it was important to introduce new designs and modern buildings with character, rather than simply replicating existing styles.

Some people commented positively on seeing a variety of materials specified. It was suggested by some that designs could give a nod to older or existing buildings and design styles through small details, proportions or specific design features. Attendees noted that there was a difference between things that should be kept in

keeping and things that could be distinct. Landmark buildings could be used to break up housing developments. The distinctiveness of neighbourhoods was highlighted, with participants feeling developments should not all be the same, but design should protect and enhance local distinctiveness suggesting that the feel of a place was important, not just its visual appearance.

Viability and development costs

Several participants at the events (professionals including housebuilders and members of the public) raised concerns about viability, with some commenting that certain design requirements could make development expensive. Financial constraints were noted as impacting the choice of materials used, particularly for smaller developers. There was concern expressed that if requirements were too rigid, developers might look elsewhere, with affordable housing potentially being squeezed as a result. Some attendees felt that the difference in development across different parts of the district should be recognised to avoid mass replicated housing.

Development Types

Participants emphasised that shopfronts should respond to the character of each town, with colour schemes and quality of finish noted as important considerations. The topography of sites was commented on as key to housing design. Some attendees at the events suggested that the design code needed to be adaptive to specific views and that housing developments should ensure local uniqueness of the areas were valued and enhanced.

Green Infrastructure and sustainability

Participants placed high priority on green thinking and environmental standards, with several suggesting that green infrastructure should be in place within new developments from the outset. Some attendees suggested encouraging the use of swift bricks, bat boxes, and wildlife-friendly planting, with calls for education on sustainability, wildlife and ecology.

Higher regulations for developers regarding green infrastructure were proposed by some participants. Sustainable drainage was also mentioned as an important consideration. The maintenance of green spaces was raised as a problem by young people. It was suggested that green spaces should support biodiversity and be easy to maintain. New-build parks were noted as being well-used, whilst other parks were seen as being misused. The need for spaces suitable for different ages was highlighted.

Accessibility and healthy living

The concept of designing places so that people would not need to use cars was raised by several people, who linked this to accessible and healthy living. However, some attendees questioned whether this was realistic for an ageing population and whether services could genuinely support sustainable travel for all groups. The importance of safe and accessible walking routes was emphasised, with

participants suggesting that rights of way were often an afterthought and should be incorporated from the design stage, potentially through a checklist approach. Active travel links were mentioned as having always been desirable, though participants suggested the design code could make them a priority.

Participants emphasised that it was important to include good walking routes within developments, with walkable developments connected to services, town and village centres, and schools. Routes to school were specifically highlighted. Cycle storage was raised by several participants, with attendees suggesting it should be well-placed and usable. However, some felt cycle infrastructure might not be suitable in all locations, e.g. due to narrow rural roads, and should not be introduced universally.

Participants felt it was important to include adequate parking to avoid clogging up streets, though several suggested parking should be communal or located away from houses.

Well-designed housing for all

Participants felt that energy efficiency was important, alongside proper ventilation and natural light, with renewable energy and EV charging points highlighted. However, concerns were raised about unforeseen impacts on running costs, with suggestions for more focus on running costs as well as installation of the green features. People felt that neighbourhoods need to have a mix of styles and layouts. Many people commented on the mixing of housing tenures, suggesting affordable housing should not be concentrated in one place. Several participants also said layouts should be designed so that cars do not dominate, though attendees stressed the need to be realistic about where people would park vehicles. People expressed the importance of green spaces around housing development, with questions about how the new green space would be maintained. Some participants questioned whether adaptable housing requirements adequately reflected policy caveats around viability and site-specific constraints.

The design of accessible public spaces was raised. Some participants commented that shared spaces should include somewhere to dry clothes, with yards required rather than internal drying.

Views and design of development next to the countryside

Participants commented that space around settlements and greenery was important. The retention of trees was emphasised by attendees, who felt trees should not be lost during development. The importance of bringing habitat into development was highlighted. Participants felt that protecting views was important, with several commenting on retaining views out to vistas. The views of the Beacon were given as a specific example that should be retained, alongside protecting Penrith's ridgeline, which was noted as being in danger from development.

The height of buildings was raised by several participants, with topography noted as affecting visual prominence. Spacing between homes and streets was noted as

important. Several participants felt horizons should not be broken and skylines should be respected.

2.25 Table 5 of the Draft Design Code consultation report includes code specific comments received from the short surveys and workshops.

Long survey, emails and officer comments

2.26 Detailed responses were received via the online long survey and by email. Some of these responses requested changes to the Draft Design Code, either for clarification purposes, factual correction reasons, technical and presentation amendments or improvements to aid application of the code or bring into line with other national or local guidance and current practices. In some cases, respondents have expressed a need for changes to be made to reflect their specific interests, to improve how the Design Code is presented or to remove aspects of the Code that they feel are inappropriate or unnecessary. Some respondents feel the Design Code could be improved with additional examples of local good design through use of photographs and illustrations. The schedule of responses provides a response to all the feedback received by the long surveys, emails as well as officers who provided comments at the Testing Workshops or as part of the consultation more generally.

3. How the Council has addressed the comments / issues raised

3.1 Attached as an appendix 1 is a schedule containing all the consultee comments to the long survey, along with Westmorland and Furness officer feedback received on the draft Design Code Supplementary Planning Document which have resulted in changes being made to the Design Code. Details of responses to the short survey and feedback at the in-person events is contained within the Draft Design Code consultation report at Appendix 2.

3.2 All of the responses have been considered, and proposed amendments to the document have been prepared considering the consultation feedback. These amendments can be summarised as:

- Factual amendments
- Updates for clarification
- Technical and presentational amendments
- Improvements to aid application of the code or bring into line with other national or local guidance and current practices.

Note: In the Council's response proposed amendments are shown in **Bold** text and deletions as ~~strikethrough~~ text

3.3 The schedule presents a complete list of all the amendments made to the Code to form the final version by members of the public (indicated as individuals), organisations, and Westmorland and Furness Council.