



PLAN MID DEVON - ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

August 2026

Engagement Strategy

This Engagement Strategy sets out how Mid Devon District Council ('the Council') will engage residents, businesses, statutory consultees, infrastructure providers, parish and town councils, community groups and other stakeholders throughout the preparation of Plan Mid Devon, the emerging new local plan for the District.

The Strategy explains who we will engage, when engagement will take place, and how people can participate in shaping the future planning of Mid Devon. It aims to ensure that engagement is inclusive, transparent, proportionate and effective throughout the plan-making process.

The Strategy is intended to be a living document and will be reviewed following each major consultation stage to reflect lessons learned, changes to national planning policy, emerging evidence and feedback from participants.

Meaningful engagement is fundamental to preparing a sound local plan. The Council is committed to ensuring that communities and stakeholders have genuine opportunities to influence the vision, objectives and policies that will guide sustainable development across Mid Devon over the coming decades.

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1. Introduction

The Council is preparing **Plan Mid Devon**, a new local plan that will establish the long-term planning framework for the District. The local plan will identify how future development should be managed, where new homes, employment opportunities and other uses should be located, how infrastructure should be delivered, and how the District's natural and historic environment can be protected while supporting sustainable development.

The District faces significant opportunities and challenges over the plan period. These include delivering sufficient housing to meet identified needs, supporting economic growth, responding to an ageing population, improving infrastructure, addressing climate change, enhancing biodiversity and maintaining the distinctive character of Mid Devon's towns, villages and countryside. The evidence base demonstrates that Mid Devon continues to experience population growth, increasing housing affordability pressures and strong economic and commuting relationships with Exeter, all of which will influence the future spatial strategy for the District.

Preparing an effective local plan requires collaboration between the Council, local communities, businesses, neighbouring authorities, statutory organisations and infrastructure providers. Meaningful engagement at an early stage, and throughout the plan-making process, helps ensure that local knowledge, community aspirations, and technical expertise can inform the preparation of the plan.

This Engagement Strategy sets out how the Council will undertake consultation and engagement during the preparation of Plan Mid Devon and is based on 8 guiding principles.

1.1 Legal and Policy Context

The preparation of Plan Mid Devon is governed by national planning legislation and guidance, which establishes both the statutory requirements for consultation and the principles of effective community engagement.

This Engagement Strategy has been prepared having regard to:

- The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)
- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Equality Act 2010

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

This Engagement Strategy replaces sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which relates to Local Planning - General Policies, Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents.

The Council recognises that consultation is more than meeting statutory requirements. Effective engagement improves the quality of evidence, increases transparency, strengthens public confidence and contributes towards preparing a local plan that reflects local priorities while meeting national planning policy requirements.

Throughout the preparation of Plan Mid Devon, the Council will ensure that consultation activities comply with statutory requirements and are undertaken in a fair, transparent and accessible manner.

1.2 Approach and Principles to Engagement

Mid Devon is predominantly rural, comprising the market towns of Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton, together with numerous villages and rural communities spread across a large geographical area. This presents both opportunities and challenges for engagement.

The Council will therefore adopt a **digital-first but not digital-only** approach to engagement and this is explained in section 5 to this Engagement Strategy.

The Council's approach for engagement with plan making will be underpinned by the following 8 guiding principles:

Principle 1: Effectiveness

Provide meaningful opportunities for residents, businesses and organisations to influence the preparation of Plan Mid Devon from the earliest stages through to adoption.

Principle 2: Accessibility

Ensure consultation materials are written in plain English, so they are clear, easy to understand and free from jargon where possible. They will be made available in accessible formats where needed, in line with relevant accessibility legislation and guidance. Reasonable adjustments will be provided on request. Where technical documents are published, summary documents and explanatory material will also be produced where necessary to help people understand the issues being considered.

Principle 3: Inclusivity

Engage a diverse range of communities across the District, recognising that different groups may require different approaches to participation.

Principle 4: Transparency

Clearly explain how consultation responses have informed decision-making and publish consultation summaries following each engagement stage.

Principle 5: Evidence-led

Ensure engagement activities are informed by the Council's growing evidence base, allowing consultees to understand the issues facing Mid Devon and provide informed comments.

Principle 6: Proportionate

Tailor consultation activities to the significance of each stage of plan preparation, audiences and level of interest, making effective use of the time and Council's resources available while ensuring statutory requirements are met.

Principle 7: Collaboration

Work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities, infrastructure providers, statutory consultees, parish and town councils, community organisations and other partners to support integrated planning across the District and wider region.

Principle 8: Flexible

Provide flexibility to amend engagement approaches so they are responsive to changing needs and circumstances. This could include specific consultation groups but also how Local Government Reorganisation might impact on how the emerging local plan is taken forward by new unitary Councils for Exeter and Devon.

1.3 Role of the Engagement Strategy

This Engagement Strategy provides the overarching framework for engagement throughout the preparation of Plan Mid Devon. It explains how consultation activities will be organised, who will be involved, and how feedback will influence the development of the local plan.

The Engagement Strategy supports the Council's commitment to openness, accountability and continuous improvement by establishing consistent principles for engagement across each stage of plan preparation.

Specifically, the Engagement Strategy:

- identifies the stakeholders who will be involved throughout plan preparation;
- explains when consultation will take place;
- sets out the methods that will be used to engage different audiences;

- demonstrates how engagement will support evidence-based decision-making;
- explains how consultation responses will be recorded, analysed and reported;
- supports compliance with statutory planning regulations; and
- provides a framework for monitoring and reviewing engagement activities throughout the plan-making process.

The Engagement Strategy will be used by the Council as a basis for preparing a programme for specific engagement events at each stage of consultation on the local plan.

This Engagement Strategy will be reviewed as needed throughout the local plan process to reflect changes in legislation, national policy, emerging evidence and lessons learned from previous consultation exercises.

2. Local Plan Stages and Engagement

The preparation of **Plan Mid Devon** will follow the statutory plan-making process set out in national planning legislation and guidance. Engagement will take place at key stages of the local plan to ensure that residents, businesses, statutory consultees, infrastructure providers and other stakeholders have appropriate opportunities to influence the development of the plan.

The Council recognises that engagement should be proportionate to the purpose of each stage. Early engagement will focus on identifying issues, opportunities and priorities, while later stages will seek views on emerging policies, the preferred spatial strategy and the proposed local plan before it is submitted for its independent examination.

The programme of engagement will remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in legislation, Government guidance, the emerging evidence base and project requirements. Where necessary, consultation periods and engagement methods may be refined to ensure that stakeholders continue to have meaningful opportunities to participate.

The Council's approved **Local Plan Timetable** sets out the key milestones for preparing Plan Mid Devon over the 30-month plan-making period. The timetable was approved by the Council's Cabinet in May 2026 and will be reviewed and updated where necessary to reflect changes in the plan-making programme. The principal milestones are summarised below.

Key Milestone	Date
Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan Preparation	26 th May 2026
Notice of Scoping Consultation Published	26 th May 2026
Close of Scoping Consultation	10 th July 2026
Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Published	19 th October 2026
Notice of Plan Content and Evidence Consultation published	22 nd January 2027
Representations to be received by (Plan Content and Evidence Consultation closes)	8 th March 2027
Observations and advice sought (Gateway 2)	1 st November 2027
Notice of Proposed Local Plan Consultation published	21 st January 2028
Consultation on the proposed local plan (Regulation 27)	20 th March 2028
Gateway 3 Self-Assessment Published	3 rd July 2028
Submission for Independent Examination	4 th September 2028
Adoption	1 st April 2029

The stages of engagement for this Local Plan Timetable are summarised below.

Stage	Purpose of Engagement	Indicative Activities could include
Notice of Intention to Prepare Plan Mid Devon (Regulation 19)	Inform stakeholders that the preparation of the new local plan has commenced	Website announcement, press release, social media, email notifications, Member briefings.
Scoping Consultation (Regulation 20)	Identify the key planning issues, opportunities and priorities facing Mid Devon and seek views on the scope of the local plan and how people would like to be involved.	Website announcement, press release, social media, email notifications. Public consultation through an online survey.
Consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence. (Regulation 23)	Share the emerging evidence base and seek views on the vision, objectives, spatial strategy and site options and other strategic planning issues.	Public drop-in events, online consultation, technical stakeholder meetings and workshops, engagement with infrastructure providers.
Consultation on the proposed local plan (Regulation 27)	Publish the proposed local plan and invite formal representations regarding	Public drop-in events, online consultation, technical stakeholder

	legal compliance and soundness.	meetings and workshops, engagement with infrastructure providers.
Submission and Examination (Regulations 34 – 37)	Submit the local plan for independent examination and continue to engage with participants throughout the examination process.	Examination hearings, publication of examination documents, responses to Inspector's questions.
Adoption (Regulation 39)	Adopt Plan Mid Devon following examination and publish information explaining how consultation has influenced the final Plan.	Adoption statement, consultation summary, website publication, stakeholder notifications.

As the evidence base develops, engagement activities may also be undertaken on specific technical studies where early discussion could assist policy development. These may include housing and employment needs, infrastructure planning, transport, climate change, biodiversity, design, heritage, flood risk and environmental assessments. Such targeted engagement will complement, rather than replace, the formal consultation stages.

By adopting a continuous programme of engagement, The Council aims to ensure that Plan Mid Devon is informed by robust evidence, local knowledge and meaningful collaboration with communities and stakeholders throughout the plan-making process.

2.1 Scoping Consultation

The Scoping Consultation represents the first formal stage of engagement in preparing **Plan Mid Devon** and provides an opportunity for communities, businesses, infrastructure providers and statutory consultees to influence the direction of the local plan from the outset.

The purpose of the consultation is to establish a shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing Mid Devon over the plan period and to identify the issues that the local plan should address. Early engagement enables the Council to gather local knowledge, understand community priorities and ensure that the evidence base reflects the needs and aspirations of those who live, work and invest in the District.

A Scoping Consultation was held from 26th May to 10th July 2026. This invited comments on:

1. How the Council should engage with you in the preparation of Plan Mid Devon;

2. What Plan Mid Devon should contain;
3. Any other matters about Plan Mid Devon that you wish to bring to the Council's attention.

The consultation was publicised through a range of communication channels to maximise participation and ensure that information was accessible across the District. These included:

- the **Let's Talk Mid Devon Community Engagement Hub** consultation webpage;
- email notifications to people and organisations on the Local plan consultation database;
- direct communication with statutory consultees and infrastructure providers;
- a press release;
- a poster sent to all Town and Parish Councils and libraries in Mid Devon.

A total of 84 consultation responses were received during the Scoping Consultation. The Council has used an artificial intelligence tool in its tenancy to assist officers in an initial analysis of these consultation responses. This has included identifying themes and producing draft summaries. Officers have reviewed and validated the artificial intelligence generated outputs against the original consultation responses and the original responses remain the official consultation record. The initial analysis has been used by officers to help inform the preparation of a **Scoping Consultation Summary Report** which will be published in the autumn 2026. The artificial intelligence tool will not be used to make decisions, or replace officer judgement about how these consultation responses will be treated and responded to.

The initial analysis has identified support for ongoing, transparent, and proportionate engagement throughout the preparation of Plan Mid Devon. Respondents have highlighted the importance of earlier involvement in the plan-making process, clearer communication of technical evidence and decision-making, greater transparency regarding how consultation responses are considered in preparing the emerging local plan, and continued opportunities to participate as technical evidence, spatial options and policies are developed. Email and digital communication were commonly identified as preferred methods for receiving updates and consultation notifications. A range of additional engagement approaches were also supported, including online consultations and surveys, public meetings, exhibitions, workshops, presentations, discussion sessions, town and village hall events, and online or in-person meetings with officers. Responses have also highlighted the importance of maintaining accessible engagement opportunities for those who may be excluded by digital-only approaches and of providing targeted engagement with communities, statutory and technical consultees, infrastructure providers, environmental and community organisations,

landowners, developers, parish and town councils, businesses, and neighbouring authorities where appropriate. These findings have been used to inform the preparation of this Engagement Strategy and will also be used to help shape future consultation and engagement activities throughout the preparation of Plan Mid Devon.

The **Scoping Consultation Summary Report** will provide a transparent account of the issues raised, the Council's response and how the findings have influenced the ongoing preparation of Plan Mid Devon. This report will form part of the evidence supporting the local plan and contribute to demonstrating that the Council has undertaken effective and meaningful engagement throughout the plan-making process.

3. Who We Will Engage

The preparation of **Plan Mid Devon** requires engagement with a wide range of individuals, organisations and communities. Effective engagement ensures that the local plan reflects local needs and aspirations while addressing strategic planning issues and meeting statutory requirements.

The Council is committed to engaging those who are affected by, have an interest in, or possess expertise relevant to the preparation of the local plan. Engagement will therefore include specific, relevant and general consultees to include local communities, businesses, landowners, infrastructure providers, environmental organisations and other key stakeholders.

The Council will maintain a local plan consultation database to enable interested individuals and organisations to receive updates on consultation opportunities, evidence publications and key milestones throughout the preparation of Plan Mid Devon.

The following sections describe the principal groups that will be engaged during the preparation of Plan Mid Devon.

3.1 Strategic Cooperation and Cross-boundary Working

Strategic planning issues frequently extend beyond local authority boundaries and require engagement and collaborative working between neighbouring authorities, infrastructure providers and other public bodies. Effective cross-boundary cooperation is therefore essential to ensuring that Plan Mid Devon supports sustainable growth across the wider region.

Mid Devon occupies a strategically important location within Devon and forms part of the wider Exeter Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) and Exeter Housing Market Area (HMA). The District has strong economic, transport and housing relationships with

neighbouring authorities, particularly Exeter, East Devon, Teignbridge and the wider Devon area. The Baseline Evidence Report identifies significant commuting patterns between Mid Devon and Exeter, together with strong migration flows that influence housing demand, employment opportunities and infrastructure requirements.

Strategic cooperation will therefore play an important role in preparing a local plan that responds effectively to issues operating at a wider-than-local scale.

Strategic Matters

During the preparation of Plan Mid Devon, the Council will work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities and other relevant organisations on strategic matters, where appropriate. This will include at **local plan level** and also collaborative working with the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority which is responsible for preparing a **Spatial Development Strategy** for the wider area. The Council will work with the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority to ensure the new local plan is in general conformity with the emerging spatial development strategy.

Strategic planning matters can include:

- Housing needs and housing market relationships.
- Employment land provision and economic growth.
- Strategic transport infrastructure and public transport connectivity.
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Flood risk management and water resources.
- Green infrastructure and biodiversity recovery.
- Renewable energy opportunities.
- Healthcare and education infrastructure.
- Utilities and digital infrastructure.
- Environmental protection and landscape conservation.

The Council will seek to ensure that strategic planning decisions are informed by robust evidence and coordinated with neighbouring authorities wherever appropriate.

Working with Neighbouring Authorities

The Council will continue to engage with neighbouring local planning authorities and others in Devon and Somerset, including:

- Exeter City Council

- East Devon District Council
- North Devon Council
- Torridge District Council
- Teignbridge District Council
- Torbay Council
- West Devon Borough Council
- South Hams District Council
- Somerset Council
- Devon County Council
- And also the Exmoor and Dartmoor National Park Authorities

This will need to be reviewed following the implementation of Local Government Reorganisation.

Regular officer meetings, technical workshops and evidence-sharing arrangements will support the identification of shared planning issues and opportunities throughout plan preparation.

Working with Neighbourhood Planning groups

Parish councils are able to prepare neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders for their areas. These can provide an opportunity for people to have more say about what development can and cannot take place in their communities. There are currently five 'made' neighbourhood plans in Mid Devon, for the parishes of Tiverton, Cullompton, Crediton, Silverton and Willand. A neighbourhood plan is currently being prepared for Lapford parish. The Council will support the preparation of neighbourhood plans where it is required to do so through the formal stages of preparation, including leading the consultation on the submission neighbourhood plan and arranging an independent examination and local referendum. The Council will also seek to provide general assistance and advice to parish councils where practicable. More information about neighbourhood planning is provided on the Council's website here: [Neighbourhood planning - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning)

Infrastructure Providers and Strategic Partners

Close communication will also take place with organisations responsible for delivering infrastructure required to support sustainable development.

These include:

- Devon County Council
- NHS Devon Integrated Care Board
- National Highways
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Historic England
- South West Water
- Western Power Distribution / National Grid Electricity Distribution
- Network Rail
- Telecommunications providers
- Emergency services
- Education providers

Engagement with infrastructure providers will assist the Council in understanding future infrastructure requirements, delivery constraints and investment priorities associated with planned growth.

Statements of Common Ground

To demonstrate effective strategic cooperation, the Council will prepare and maintain **Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs)** where appropriate.

These documents will:

- identify strategic planning matters requiring cooperation;
- record areas of agreement between organisations;
- identify any outstanding issues requiring further work;
- demonstrate how strategic matters have influenced Plan Mid Devon; and
- provide supporting evidence during the independent examination of the local plan.

SoCGs will be reviewed periodically throughout the preparation of the Local plan and updated where necessary to reflect changes in evidence, policy or infrastructure planning.

3.2 Specific and General Consultation Bodies

The Council has a statutory duty to consult prescribed organisations during the preparation of Plan Mid Devon, some of which are already listed above. This includes specific, general and relevant consultation bodies set out in the Town and Country (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2026.

Consultation bodies have different responsibilities, expertise and interests in relation to planning matters. Their involvement helps ensure that the local plan is supported by robust technical evidence and reflects wider environmental, economic and social objectives.

Specific Consultation Bodies

Specific Consultation Bodies include organisations prescribed by planning legislation that have statutory responsibilities relating to planning, infrastructure, environmental protection and public services.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Active Travel England
- Any person whom the electronic communications code applies under the Communications Act 2033 and who controls electronic communications apparatus in the District
- Canal & Rivers Trust
- Sport England
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- National Highways
- Historic England
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Historic England
- National Highways

- Devon County Council (as the local transport authority, local education authority, lead local flood authority, responsible authority for a local nature recovery strategy)
- NHS Devon
- South West Water
- National Grid
- Network Rail
- Civil Aviation Authority (where relevant)
- Marine Management Organisation (where relevant)

These organisations will be consulted throughout plan preparation, particularly where specialist advice or statutory input is required.

General Consultation Bodies

General Consultation Bodies include organisations representing community interests, voluntary organisations, businesses and groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

These can include:

- Residents' Associations
- Community organisations
- Housing associations
- Landowners and developers
- Business organisations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Environmental organisations
- Heritage groups
- Youth organisations
- Faith groups
- Educational institutions
- Accessibility and disability organisations
- Voluntary and community sector organisations

- Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership

The Council will focus engagement on organisations whose interests are directly relevant to the matters being considered at each stage of plan preparation.

Targeted engagement will help ensure that specialist knowledge and local expertise contribute to the development of robust planning policies.

Relevant Consultation Bodies

In addition to the statutory consultation bodies, the Council will engage with a wider range of stakeholders to ensure that Plan Mid Devon reflects local knowledge and supports sustainable development.

- Neighbouring planning authorities including Devon County Council (as the minerals and waste planning authority) and the Exmoor and Dartmoor National Park Authorities
- Parish and town councils within and adjoining the Mid Devon local planning authority area
- The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority

3.3 Engaging with Residents

Residents are central to the preparation of Plan Mid Devon. The local plan will influence where people live, work, travel and access services over the coming decades, making community engagement fundamental to the success of the planning process.

The Council's engagement approach has been informed by the evidence presented within the Plan Mid Devon Baseline Evidence Report, which provides a comprehensive understanding of the District's demographic, social and economic characteristics.

Population Characteristics

According to the 2021 Census, Mid Devon has a population of approximately 82,000 residents. The District has experienced sustained population growth and is expected to continue growing over the plan period. Mid Devon also has an ageing population, with a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 65 and over than the national average. This demographic profile has important implications for housing, healthcare, transport and community infrastructure.

The District is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern comprising the principal towns of Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton, together with numerous villages and rural communities. Many residents rely on private vehicles to access employment, education and services, reflecting the District's rural nature and dispersed population. The

Baseline Evidence Report also identifies strong commuting links with Exeter, highlighting Mid Devon's role within the wider Exeter Functional Economic Area.

These characteristics influence how the Council will engage with residents and reinforce the need for a flexible and accessible programme of consultation.

Engagement Implications

The Council's engagement programme will take account of the District's demographic profile by:

- Providing online engagement opportunities;
- in person consultation events in the 3 main towns – Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton where the District's resident population is concentrated;
- ensuring consultation materials are accessible and written in plain English;
- offering flexible engagement opportunities, including daytime and evening sessions where appropriate;
- providing opportunities for people who commute outside the District to participate online;
- using existing community networks and local organisations to reach residents across rural areas; and
- making consultation information available through multiple communication channels.

Recognising the District's ageing population, the Council will ensure that engagement activities remain accessible to older residents while also encouraging participation from younger people and working-age households who may be less likely to engage with traditional planning consultation methods. This can include ensuring that where face to face drop in events and exhibitions are held these are both within and outside normal working hours and may include weekends.

The Council will keep its engagement approach under review throughout the consultation process and consider whether additional engagement activities are appropriate where opportunities to improve participation are identified.

3.4 Reaching Under-represented Groups

The Council recognises that some individuals and communities may experience barriers to participating in planning consultations. These barriers may arise from age, disability, digital exclusion, language, geography, caring responsibilities or other personal circumstances.

The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and will take reasonable and proportionate steps to encourage participation from all parts of the community, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of Plan Mid Devon.

Engagement activities will be designed to be as inclusive and accessible as reasonably practicable.

The Council has an established forum for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling show people which can provide opportunities for engaging with members of the travelling community.

The Council will also work with Town and Parish Councils and other community partners to help raise awareness of consultation opportunities and encourage participation across the District.

The Council will keep the effectiveness of its engagement approach under review throughout the consultation process and will consider whether additional engagement activities are appropriate where opportunities to improve participation are identified.

By adopting a flexible, proportionate and inclusive approach, the Council aims to ensure that people from all parts of the community have meaningful opportunities to contribute to shaping the future of the District through Plan Mid Devon.

4. How We Will Engage

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 set out the minimum statutory requirements for local planning authorities to consult on their local plans. This Engagement Strategy builds upon these requirements by setting out how the Council will engage with residents, businesses, statutory consultees and other stakeholders throughout the preparation of the local plan having regard to the 8 guiding principles set out in section 1 to this Engagement Strategy.

The Council will adopt a **digital-first, but not digital-only**, approach to engagement. Recognising that residents access information and engage with services in different ways, and that not all residents have equal access to digital technology or feel confident participating online the Council will provide a mix of digital and in-person engagement opportunities to ensure participation is as inclusive and accessible as possible across the District. Different stakeholders will have different interests and levels of involvement throughout the plan-making process. Consequently, engagement methods will be tailored and proportionate to the purpose of each consultation stage and the specific needs of each audience wherever practicable to do so.

While the Council is committed to maximising opportunities for engagement throughout the plan making process this will need to be balanced with the time and resources available. The Council will seek to avoid consultation fatigue by coordinating activities where possible. Rather than relying on repeated standalone events, opportunities will be taken to align engagement with existing community events, local meetings, exhibitions, markets and other well-attended activities. This approach can increase awareness, reduce demands on participants' time and help reach a broader cross-section of the community. Where possible consultation will be programmed to avoid public holidays and other consultations which may cause potential confusion with the purpose of the engagement on the local plan.

Digital engagement provides an efficient and accessible means of sharing information and gathering feedback. Digital engagement enables information to be made available quickly and efficiently to a wide audience while providing opportunities for online participation at key stages throughout the plan-making process. However, recognising Mid Devon's rural geography and the varying needs of local communities, **traditional methods of engagement** will continue to play an important role to ensure that opportunities to participate are accessible to as many people as possible.

The range of digital and traditional engagement methods used will include:

- publication of consultation documents, evidence and supporting information through the Plan Mid Devon pages on the Let's Talk Mid Devon Community Engagement Hub and the Council's website;
- online consultation and surveys through the Council's consultation portal;
- email notifications and newsletters to consultees registered on the local plan consultation database;
- updates through the Council's social media channels and other digital communications;
- in person / face to face public exhibitions, drop-in events and consultation sessions held at appropriate locations across the District, at venues that are accessible for all members of the community, visible, convenient, and which can attract a high level of footfall;
- workshops, meetings and discussions with statutory consultees, infrastructure providers, Town and Parish Councils, businesses, developers, community organisations and other stakeholders;
- attendance at community events and meetings where appropriate;
- webinars and other online engagement events to improve accessibility for those unable to attend in person; and

- printed consultation materials, notices and other supporting information where appropriate.

5. Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensuring that engagement activities remain effective, inclusive and responsive throughout the preparation of Plan Mid Devon.

Evaluation will consider both quantitative measures, such as participation levels and geographic coverage, and qualitative measures, including the quality of consultation responses, stakeholder feedback and the effectiveness of engagement methods.

Following each formal consultation stage, the Council will prepare a Consultation Summary Report outlining:

- the engagement activities undertaken;
- participation levels and stakeholder representation;
- the principal issues raised during consultation;
- how consultation responses have informed the preparation of Plan Mid Devon;
- lessons learned; and
- recommendations for improving future engagement activities.

The Council will publish these reports to promote transparency and demonstrate how stakeholder feedback has influenced the development of the local plan.

The findings from these reports will be used to refine engagement methods throughout the remaining stages of plan preparation and will contribute to the Consultation Statement submitted alongside the local plan at examination.

6. Risk Management

The successful preparation of **Plan Mid Devon** depends upon effective and timely engagement with communities, stakeholders and statutory consultees. Throughout the plan-making process, the Council will identify, monitor and manage risks that may affect the delivery of the engagement programme.

The Council recognises that external factors, including changes to national planning policy, legislative reforms, resource availability and unforeseen events, may influence the engagement programme. Risk management will therefore remain an ongoing process throughout the preparation of Plan Mid Devon.

Potential risks to engagement could include adverse and extreme weather events preventing public drop in events and exhibitions taking place or resulting in low attendance; and disruption to digital communications.

A further risk to engagement could arise through the implementation of Local Government Reorganisation and how the emerging local plan and its policies and proposals are taken forward by the new unitary Devon Council and new unitary Exeter Council that were confirmed by the Government in July 2026. At that time it was expected that local government re-organisation would come into force on 1st April 2028. However, on 7th September 2026 the Government subsequently announced a review in the Government's plans for local government re-organisation. Local government re-organisation for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay will be paused while that review is carried out.

The Government is expected to introduce transitional regulations for preparing local plans through local government reorganisation.

Potential risks will be reviewed regularly by the Forward Planning Team and identified and reported promptly through the Council's governance arrangements for preparing the local plan. Appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce the likelihood or impact of identified risks and ensure that engagement remains inclusive, proportionate and effective.