



Cumberland Local Plan

Draft Consultation and Engagement Plan

September 2026

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Introduction

Background

- 1.1 Cumberland Council has started work on a new Cumberland Local Plan. This plan will replace the former district council Local Plans (for Carlisle, Allerdale and Copeland) and the former County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Plan will be prepared under a new plan making system introduced in March 2026¹. The new system seeks to involve more objective engagement from a range of parties through the introduction of a series of gateway assessments that will happen as the Local Plan progresses.
- 1.3 Under the new regulations we must ensure that our local plan has an engagement strategy which is proactive, takes a digital first approach and fits within a 30-month timeline. This will replace the previous Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which is no longer a statutory requirement.
- 1.4 There will be three statutory consultations, one more than under the previous regulations. We need to make sure that ‘seldom-heard’ groups can find it easy to have their say. In Cumbria these groups could be younger residents, or specific demographic groups. In addition, all our on-line documents must be readable by a screen reader.
- 1.5 The feedback that we receive during the statutory scoping consultation at Regulation 20 will inform the final engagement strategy, as we will be asking you about the best ways for us to engage with a full range of stakeholders.

Policy Context

- 1.6 In addition to meeting the consultation requirements set out in national planning legislation and regulations, the Council has also had regard to its Community Engagement Framework 2026 when preparing this draft Engagement Strategy.
- 1.7 The Framework is based on four key principles: Inclusive, Coordinated, Collaborative and Meaningful. These principles will help ensure engagement throughout the preparation of the Cumberland Local Plan is accessible, effective and provides meaningful opportunities for participation.

¹ The newly published Local Plan Regulations can be found here.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/186/contents/made>

Local Plan Timetable

- 1.8 Our timetable for producing a new Local Plan for Cumberland is set out below. Highlighted are the three main opportunities for all parties to get involved. Below this table we have set out what you can expect at each stage.

Regulation	Task	Date
4	Publish Timetable	30 June 2026
19	Give Notice of Intention to Commence Plan Making	30 June 2026
20	Run Scoping Consultation	Sept - Oct 2026
21	Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Published	Oct 2026
22	Publish Summary of Scoping Consultation	Jan 2027
23	Consultation on Proposed Plan Content and Evidence	Aug - Oct 2027
24	Publish Summary of Plan Content Consultation	Jan 2028
26	Gateway 2 Assessment	Jan 2028
27	Consultation on Proposed Local Plan (Final Draft)	May – July 2028
28	Consultation on Conformity with SDS (if applicable)	May - June 2028
30	Publish Summary of Consultation on Proposed Local Plan	Oct 2028
31	Gateway 3	Oct 2028
35	Examination	Nov 2028
39	Adoption	April 2029

- 1.9 In accordance with the Local Plan Regulations, the Local Plan Timetable will be kept under review and updated where necessary. As the plan-making process progresses, changes may be required to reflect consultation feedback, evidence gathering, Gateway assessments and other plan preparation requirements.

Draft Engagement Strategy

- 2.1 The new regulations require that at Gateway 1: (self-assessment of readiness for local plan preparation) the local planning authority must prepare a document to be known as their 'self-assessment' summary. This must include our proposed approach to consultation and engagement in preparing the Cumberland Local Plan. This draft engagement plan will form part of our self-assessment summary.
- 2.2 As we prepare the local plan it is important that we carry out effective engagement with local communities, businesses, voluntary bodies, landowners, statutory bodies, infrastructure providers and neighbouring local planning authorities. We are committed to ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to voice their opinions and help us inform the content of the Local Plan.
- 2.3 We will aim to make each stage of consultation as accessible as possible, and to use plain English throughout, together with making the information available in an accessible and standardised format including digital mapping.

What you can expect at each stage of consultation

Stage 1: Scoping consultation

- 2.4 The first stage of engagement will be a scoping consultation (Regulation 20 of the new Regulations) which will take place over September and October 2026. The scoping consultation provides an opportunity to tell us:
 - Whether we have identified the right priorities for the Local Plan and if there are any additional issues and opportunities that should be considered.
 - How you would like to be involved in future stages of engagement and consultation.
- 2.5 This broad, early-stage engagement will help us to understand and start to address the key issues and priorities in the area. From this understanding we can develop objectives and aims for the new Local Plan.
- 2.6 We will publish a summary from this stage of consultation in early 2027 on the Council's Local Plan web pages. The summary will set out the main issues raised in the responses that we have received, and how we might have regard to these responses. We must publish this before we embark on the next stage.
- 2.7 The feedback that we receive at this stage around how we should engage with stakeholders will help us to draw up a full engagement strategy for the next two stages.

Stage 2: Consultation on proposed plan content and evidence

- 2.8 The next stage of consultation (pre-Gateway 2) (August - October 2027) will invite representations on:
- 2.9 This consultation will last for a minimum of six weeks and after the close of consultation we will publish a summary of the main issues raised and how we have had regard to the responses received.
- Our draft vision and any aims and objectives
 - Our proposed spatial strategy
 - A summary of the evidence we intend to gather and details of any evidence we have already gathered
 - Initial draft policies and the policies map
- 2.10 We will also consult on the proposed level of detail and scope of our Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Stage 3: Consultation on the proposed local plan

- 2.11 Once we have taken into account the consultation from the previous stage and updated our plan, we will carry out the final consultation on the proposed local plan, currently scheduled for May - July 2028. This stage will last at least 8 weeks, and we will make available the following:
- Our proposed Cumberland Local Plan
 - A map of proposed local plan policies, site allocations and designations such as protected landscapes
 - Details of all the evidence we have gathered
- 2.12 We will also consult on the SEA environmental report, and if appropriate, will consult the Cumberland Combined Authority, as they will be drafting a spatial development strategy for Cumbria, and it will be important that our local plan conforms with this strategy.
- 2.13 After this final stage of consultation, we will analyse the feedback and have regard to it when making any appropriate changes needed to finalise our plan before submitting it for the final Gateway. We will publish the outcomes from this consultation including a summary of the main issues raised, and how we have had regard to any responses received.

Stakeholder Groups

- 2.14 The Local Plan Regulations require the Council to consult both general consultation bodies and specific consultation bodies. The organisations and groups that fall within these categories and which may have an interest in the preparation of the Cumberland Local Plan are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.15 In addition to the requirements set out in the Regulations, there will be open consultation within the Council involving other departments whose skills and experience can help inform the Plan. For example, this could include the Highways, Education, Green Spaces, Housing and Flood teams.
- 2.16 We will hold proactive ongoing conversations with key stakeholders who are critical to delivering the plan.
- 2.17 We will also work with key stakeholders to prepare and maintain statements of common ground on any cross-boundary matters that we are addressing and our progress towards addressing them.
- 2.18 Due to the recent changes to the Local Plan system in England, the timetable, evidence requirements and approach to engagement has changed. However, work undertaken to date in Autumn 2025, when we consulted on issues and options for the Cumberland Local Plan will not be lost. All the responses received through this earlier consultation will also be considered.

Proposed methods of consultation

- 2.19 The Regulations require that we must invite certain bodies to make representations at each consultation stage. These are divided into general consultation bodies and specific consultation bodies, which are listed below.
- 2.20 We propose to engage with you using the following methods of consultation:

Our communities

- Website: the Council will publish all consultations on its dedicated planning policy web pages
- Social media; Facebook and X
- Mainstream media including press releases in the local press, local TV and radio, use of the Council's residents' email newsletter;
- Direct notification via email to all those who have signed up for updates
- Public exhibitions and drop in events, in the main centres of population
- Pop-up stalls at existing planned events such as food markets, fairs and fetes etc.

- Engagement with primary and secondary schools, and places of further and higher education.

General Consultation Bodies

- Direct emails
- Workshops where requested
- Staffed displays at e.g. Cumbria Chamber of Commerce events

Specific Consultation Bodies

- Direct emails
- Workshops either for individual organisations, or where beneficial, groups of stakeholders, eg technical stakeholders or infrastructure providers
- Attending parish council meetings
- Specific focus groups or workshops with voluntary bodies where requested.

Next Steps

- 2.21 The Council will review all comments received in response to this Draft Engagement Strategy as part of the scoping consultation.
- 2.22 Feedback will be used to inform the final Engagement Strategy, including the methods of consultation, communication channels and stakeholder groups involved in the preparation of the Cumberland Local Plan.
- 2.23 The final Engagement Strategy will form part of the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment and will provide the framework for engagement throughout the plan-making process.

Appendix 1: General and Specific Consultation Bodies

General Consultation Bodies

- Voluntary bodies, some or all of whose activities benefit all or part of the planning authority's area
- Bodies which represent the interests of persons in the planning authority's area who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010; (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).
- Bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the planning authority's area.

Specific Consultation Bodies

- Active Travel England;
- Designated telecoms operators such as mobile network operators, fixed line network operators, independent infrastructure providers, broadband and fibre network providers.
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Sport England; The Environment Agency; The Forestry Commission; National Highways; Historic England; Homes England; Natural England.
- The NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board; NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB); Electricity North West; Northern Gas Networks; United Utilities
- Marine Management Organisation
- Any neighbourhood forum active in the Cumberland area
- Network Rail
- Office for Nuclear Regulation
- All adjoining local planning authorities; all parish councils; Cumbria Combined Authority; Cumbria Constabulary