Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report

Tendring Colchester Borders
Garden Community
February – October 2021

Colchester

Essex County Council

Tendring
District Council

Contents

Introduction

In December 2020 an **Engagement and Consultation Strategy** for the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community was published.

The strategy outlined the approach Colchester Borough Council, Tendring District Council and Essex County Council would take to engage and communicate with various audiences, to help produce the content for the next stage of the process – the preparation of the **Draft Plan** (Development Plan Document or 'DPD') for the Garden Community. The strategy pointed out the different 'engagement' and 'consultation' activities that the Councils would run.

This report summarises the **Council led** informal engagement activity that took place between February – October 2021 and looks at the feedback received via the various engagement opportunities that were made available to the community and stakeholders.

This engagement feedback helped the Councils shape the draft version of the Plan for the Garden Community, in preparation of it going out for a statutory consultation in early 2022.

A separate report has been produced by **Traverse** and **Community Regen** who were commissioned to design and facilitate an engagement programme over the summer and autumn of 2021, in close collaboration with masterplanners **Prior + Partners**, specifically as part of their visioning work and for the preparation of the masterplan layout options.

Council Engagement Methods Summary

The Engagement Website

An engagement website was launched in February 2021. The website, **talk.tcbgardencommunity.co.uk**, hosts a range of information about the history of the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community project and includes useful documents, including the adopted **Shared Section 1 Local Plan**.

The website hosted a series of **engagement tools** between February and October 2021, encouraging residents and stakeholders to share ideas and aspirations for the Garden Community. The different tools aimed to suit a variety of people, as outlined in the Engagement and Consultation Strategy, so that the Councils could hear from as many different people as possible.
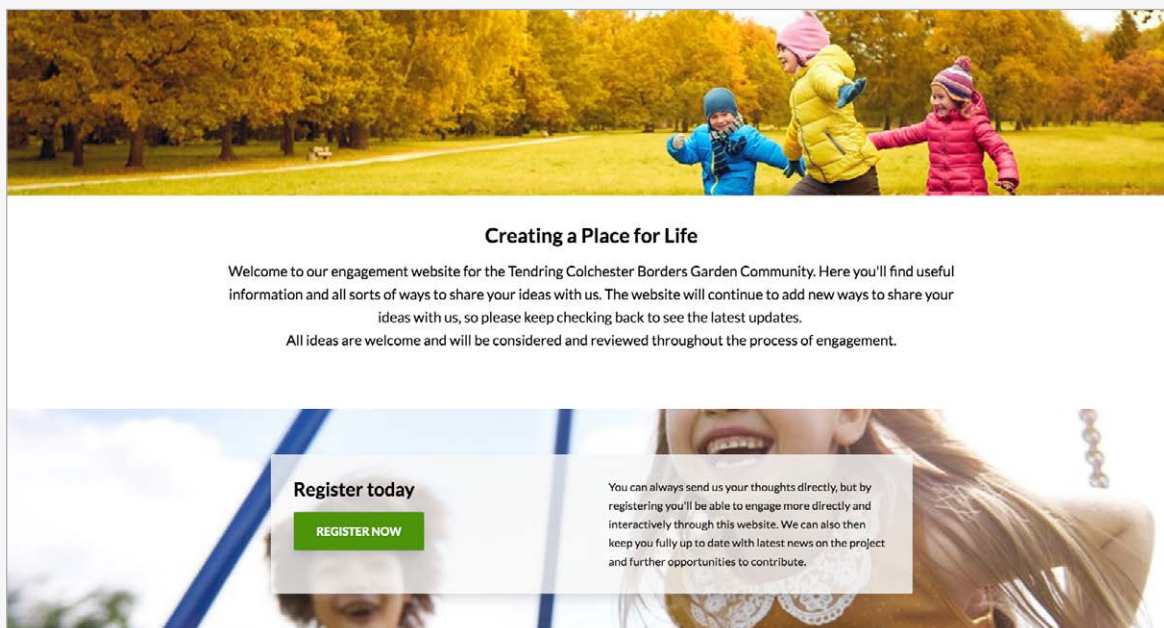

A screenshot of the engagement website homepage at the time of launch

The engagement tools were:

Give us Your Ideas

An open forum, and quick way to feedback, where people could share ideas on anything and everything. All ideas were publicly visible, and registered users of the website could comment on other people's ideas and 'like' them.

The archive tool can be viewed here Archived Engagement Activity | Creating a Place for Life (tcbgardencommunity.co.uk)
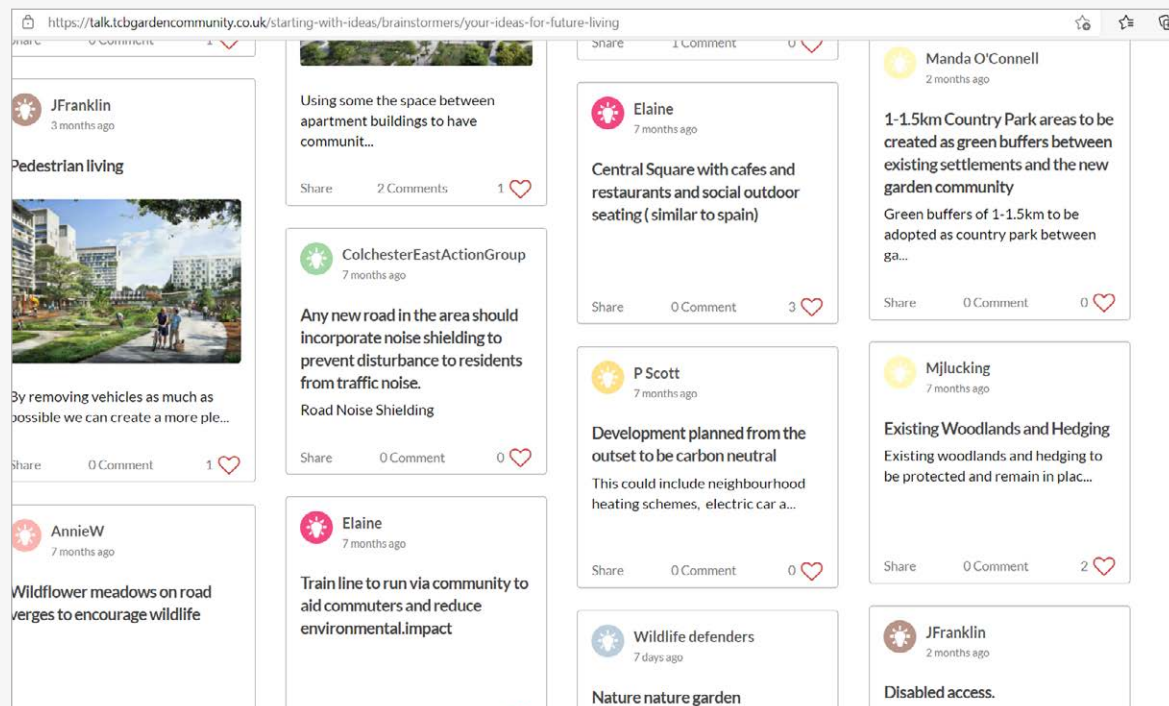
A screenshot of the ideas tool

Three Words on What's Important to You

A very short survey which invited people to share three words on what is most important to them for a good quality of life.

The archive tool can be viewed here **Archived Engagement Activity | Creating a Place for Life (tcbgardencommunity.co.uk)**

A word cloud of the responses, larger words were the ones most frequently mentioned

Share Your Story of Hopes for the Future

Reflecting on life during the Covid-19 pandemic, this open forum asked people to think about what holds most value to them and what their hopes for life 30 years into the future would be. People were asked to share these reflections in a longer written form.

The archive tool can be viewed here **Archived Engagement Activity | Creating a Place for Life (tcbgardencommunity.co.uk)**

Pin Your Thoughts on Our Interactive Map

This open forum invited people to drop a pin on an interactive map to identify assets, opportunities and issues within the proposed Garden Community area. People were invited to comment on where they placed their pin and why.

The archive tool can be viewed here **Archived Engagement Activity | Creating a Place for Life (tcbgardencommunity.co.uk**)
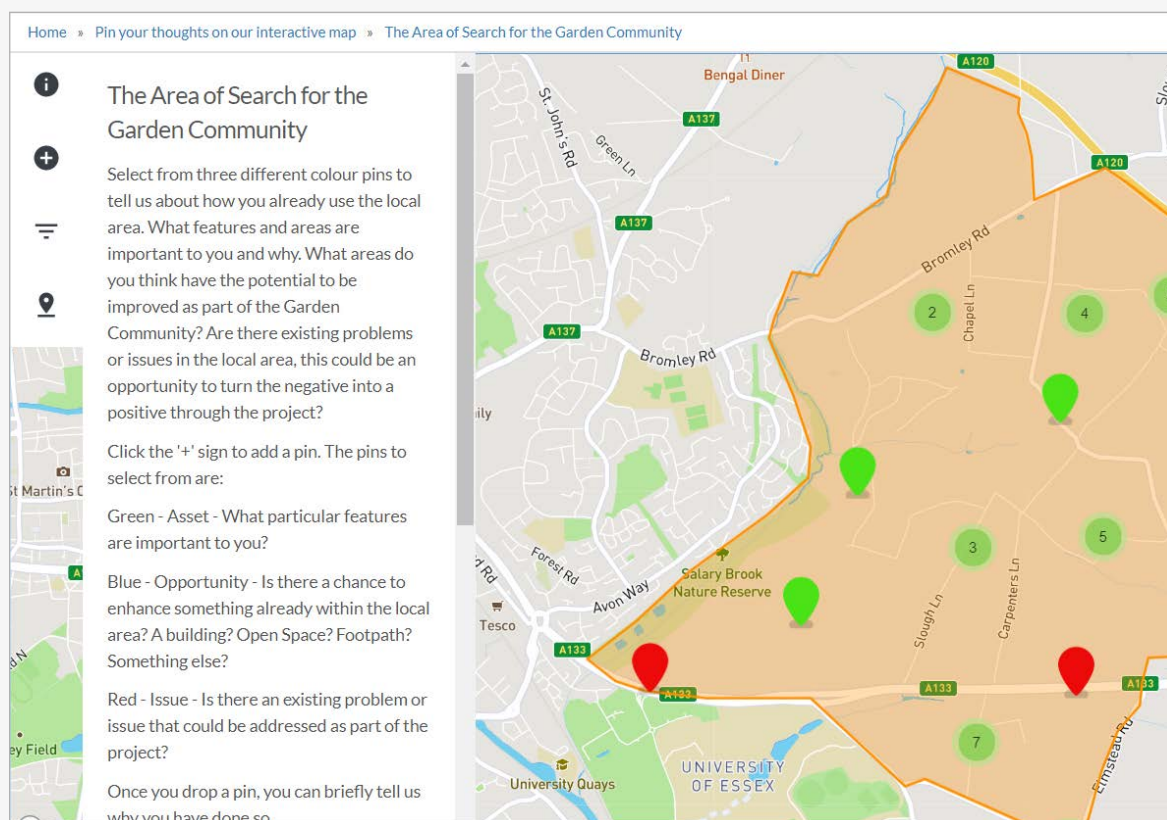
A screenshot of the map tool

Send a Pic

This open forum introduced our set of themes and asked people to submit photos, based on those themes, looking at what kind of place people want the Garden Community to become.

The archive tool can be viewed here **Archived Engagement Activity | Creating a Place for Life (tcbgardencommunity.co.uk)**

A photo submitted via the 'Send a Pic' tool

Freepost

When promoting the engagement website in local newspapers, magazines and on posters in the community, a Freepost address was also publicised. This offered any resident the option to engage via Freepost. All tools that were published on the engagement website were printed in paper copy format and sent out to those requesting posted versions.

Virtual Workshops

In September and October officers from the partner councils hosted a series of online stakeholder workshops. (These workshops complemented a series of workshops which were run separately by consultants **Traverse** and **Community Regen** to support the masterplanning process).

These stakeholder workshops followed a set of themes. The themes were Nature; Community and Social Infrastructure; Movement and Connections; Buildings, Places and Character; and Sustainable Infrastructure.

Statutory stakeholders were invited to these workshops, as seen in Appendix 1.

The Five Themes

The five themes Nature; Community and Social Infrastructure; Movement and Connections; Buildings, Places and Character; and Sustainable Infrastructure were created to help categorise thoughts and ideas, in the summer of 2021.

These themes emerged as a result of looking at what is set out in the Section 1 Local Plan, what is set out in the National Model Design Code and following an early review of the ideas that were emerging via the engagement website in early 2021.

These five themes will provide the format for the Draft Plan for the Garden Community as it goes out to statutory consultation in early 2022.
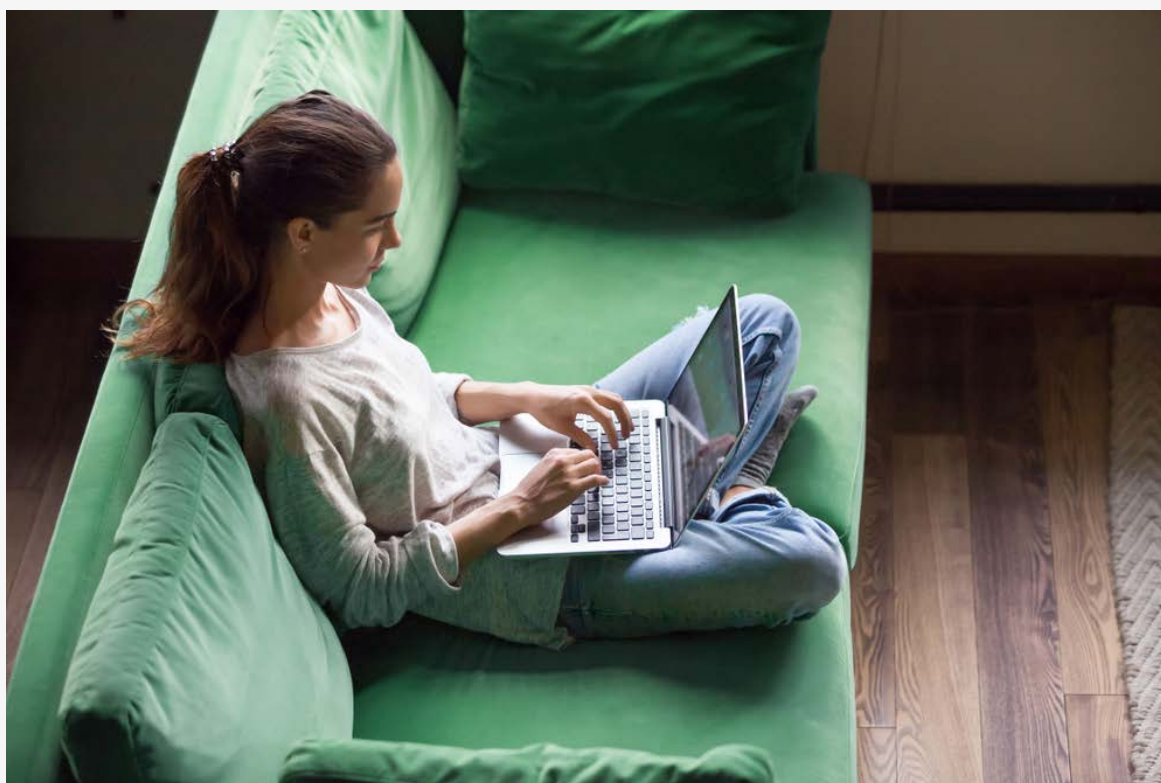
Engagement Summary in Numbers

96
contributions received via 'Give us Your Ideas'

18
survey responses to 'Three Words on What's Important to You'

3
stories received via 'Share Your Story of Hopes for the Future'

51
pins placed on 'Pin Your Thoughts on our Interactive Map'

12
images and comments received via 'Send A Pic'

62
attendees took part in 3 stakeholder Council led workshops

1
freepost user

69
Social media comments in response to engagement ideas

1
email submission

How We Looked at Engagement Data

All of the contributions generated from the Council led informal activities on the engagement website, Freepost replies, Council run workshops, and comments via email and social media, were categorised under the five themes for the purpose of this report.

Within each theme we then looked at the similarities between those contributions, and how frequently they occurred. There was a great deal of crossover within the themes themselves, and across all of the themes in a broad sense, with so many of the ideas connected and interlinked. As you read through this report you may see things repeated, therefore.

On the following pages we look at each theme and outline a summary of the contributions received, grouping those topics that were spoken of by a majority, moderately, and then where just a few people mentioned specific things.
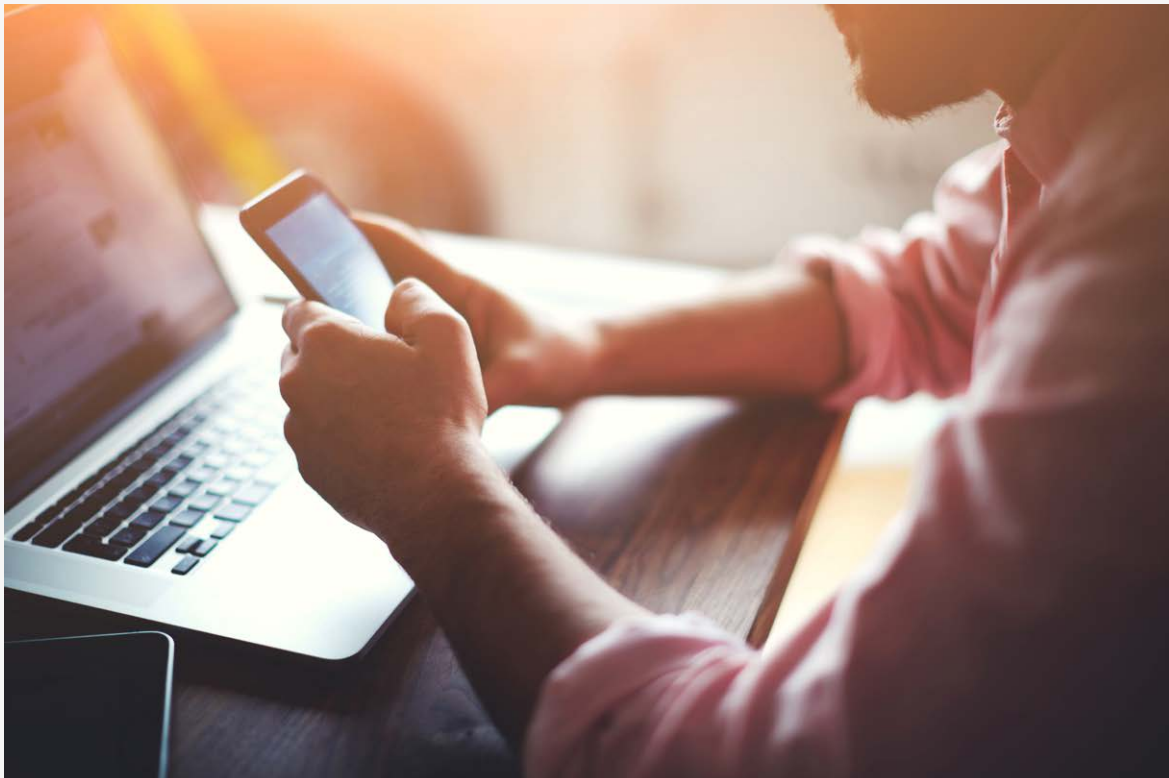
Nature

Looking at all of the feedback from the engagement activity, there were many ideas, aspirations and concerns raised under the theme of Nature.

A majority spoke of:

A majority of people voiced the **importance of the need for green space and access to nature** in the Garden Community. People cited the importance of opportunities to enjoy walking, nature, publicly accessible open space, and green frontages and green spaces for places, such as schools.

People also highlighted the importance of green spaces that require low maintenance – such as wildflower meadows on verges to encourage wildlife. Within this topic area, some people suggested that wild areas should be protected and designated before any other plans.

Many people also highlighted the importance of creating a **Country Park** incorporating Salary Brook Local Nature Reserve, Salary Brook valley slopes, and the nearby areas of woodland. Salary Brook (both the Local Nature Reserve and the slopes) and other areas, such as Churn Wood, Home Wood and Thousand Acre Wood were mentioned, especially with regards to the importance of retaining them and to protect the views of the slopes for existing residents.

> **"*...The whole area is criss-crossed with beautiful quiet lanes edged with old trees and these desperately need to be preserved as "arteries for wellbeing"*
> Engagement website comment**

Many people also pointed out the **importance of biodiversity and habitat creation**. People talked about the importance of being ambitious with biodiversity net gain and creating habitats that will encourage this. People talked about the importance of existing hedgerows, planting suitable tree

and plant species, and supporting wildlife through wildlife friendly features, such as wildlife boxes and 'hedgehog holes' in gardens.

However, people also highlighted the importance and value of the green space and how it supports the **wildlife already in the site.** Some talked about the importance of the **existing lanes, hedgerows and footpaths**, and one person specifically highlighted mature woodland in the Crockleford Heath area, mentioning species such as barn owls, bats, buzzards, rabbits and muntjac deer.

When considering the importance of green space and nature, many people highlighted their concerns at the **loss of green space and quality farmland**, particularly those that commented on social media. Some people remained firmly opposed to the proposals for the Garden Community, particularly mentioning the loss of quality farmland, and with several people referring to the future development as a 'concrete jungle' or similar.

> *"What about a lovely lake and surrounding wild flowers and native trees, would need to be a nature reserve where people can relax and rejuvenate"*
> Social media comment

Within this topic area, one point that came out strongly, particularly in the statutory stakeholder workshops, was the need for **multi-functional, well planned and strategic green infrastructure**. Stakeholders commented on the importance of things like a green infrastructure network across the whole site, and the need for green space to be multi-functional so its benefits can be maximised. Workshop participants spoke of the importance of: tree cover as part of the green infrastructure network; the retention of existing trees, lanes and hedgerows; and the connectivity of nature throughout the site. In terms of 'multi-use' green infrastructure, some of the ideas included: biodiversity creation; general open space; recreational space; community orchards; Sustainable Drainage (SuDS); microclimate regulation; 'edible walkways'; and the role of 'blue' (water) infrastructure – such as lakes in open spaces.

Strategically planned Green Infrastructure was also mentioned by residents, with ideas including: 'hubs' interlaced/encircled with green areas; providing wildlife corridors; and low management green areas with good bike access.

A moderate amount of people spoke of:

Landscape buffers were mentioned, both in terms of how they can be used to preserve nature and green space as mentioned above, but also their importance in protecting existing assets, and nearby towns and villages.

A few specifically mentioned the need for a 1.5km buffer between the Garden Community and existing settlements, with Greenstead and Longridge highlighted. Some also talked about the need for buffers: between ancient woodland and the Garden Community; along Salary Brook Nature Reserve; and along the A133 to screen the Garden Community from existing settlements.

The importance of trees in general was also raised, and in regard to **tree cover and tree lined streets**. The role of trees in tackling the climate and nature emergencies was highlighted, as well as their role in improving air quality and how tree cover can help to reduce temperatures and capture carbon. Some talked about planting fruit trees, rather than ornamental ones, and others talked generally about the importance of trees for health and wellbeing.

People also talked about green space and the need for it to be **accessible** both in a formal and informal sense. Some people said that green space should be incorporated into school playing fields, but still be accessible to the wider community. A few people talked about the importance of making green space accessible for those with sensory or physical disabilities, including the need for public furniture in these spaces. Some also talked about incorporating edible walkways and wildlife trails.

> *"Retain slopes up from Salary Brook and woodland beyond – the greatest asset to this area by far. Used by many for exercise, beautiful views and nature spotting. Stunning area of biodiversity and natural beauty."*
> Engagement website comment

The term **ancient woodland** was mentioned across various ideas, from specifying buffers and mentioning the existing wildlife, to making sure the woodland areas (such as Churn Wood) near and around Salary Brook Local Nature Reserve were protected and incorporated into a Country Park.

Linked to the ideas outlined above, regarding strategically planned green infrastructure and the importance of biodiversity gain, people also talked about how to **encourage species movement**. People talked about wider links to the ecology network and specifically planning wildlife corridors through the site, as well as wildlife friendly features in private gardens.

Finally, when discussing the importance of green space and nature, a moderate amount of people linked this specifically to **wellbeing**. People linked nature and green space to: relaxation; lessons learned from the Covid pandemic about the need for outdoor space; and improving/ increasing access to nature for population groups who may not usually frequent nature. People also talked about how nature and walking can: help support good mental health; reduce stress; improve quality of life; reduce crime; and foster socialising.

A few spoke of:

Within this theme, and compared to the most frequently mentioned topics, there were some that were mentioned a handful of times, or specifically by one or two people.

One of the more common topics raised was around **climate change resilience**. These people referenced this, when talking about other ideas, such as the need to address pollution and climate change, and the role of trees in tackling the climate emergency. One person specifically mentioned creating biodiversity, by using the whole site to develop carbon holding green areas and species, to support the health of the environment.

A few people specifically mentioned the need for **allotments, orchards and community garden projects**, with one person specifically suggesting green burial.

> *"Make sure that hedgerows are kept to retain biodiversity"*
> Workshop comment

Green roofs on homes, bike storage areas and other buildings was mentioned by some, as well as making trees and plants a part of buildings, and how this could give the area a distinctive look and feel.

The inclusion of **blue infrastructure** (water) was also mentioned by a few, with suggestions that water is incorporated into green space, with things such as lakes and ponds.

As well as the suggestions of trees, orchards and gardens to support food growing for people, a few people also talked about **fruit trees and flowers specifically suitable for insects**. Someone suggested not planting F1 (first generation) hybrid flowers, as insects, butterflies and birds can't feed on them.

Under the topic of landscape buffers, a couple of comments were made suggesting that if all suggested buffers were introduced, it would leave **little developable land** in the Garden Community.

Finally, under this theme area there were individual mentions of: Nutrient Neutrality; concerns about the impact on the **Colne Estuary**; the consideration of **safety** in public spaces; and that **no pesticides or herbicides** should be used.

> *"Will there be any country side left in Essex, so many houses being built?"*
> Social media comment

Movement and Connections

Looking at all of the feedback from the engagement activity, there were many ideas, aspirations and concerns raised under the theme of Movement and Connections.

A majority spoke of:

A notable majority of people talked about the importance of the Garden Community being **walkable, cyclable and promoting active travel generally**.

Many people spoke of the importance of linking the Garden Community to: other walking and cycling networks; jobs; and particularly to day-to-day amenities, such as shops and schools, to help reduce the need for reliance on the private car. When talking about making day-to-day amenities accessible by walking and cycling, many also commented on making sure these journeys were **safe**, as well as faster or more convenient, than using a car so that they were the more attractive choice for people.

> **"** *Co-locate facilities to encourage linked trips by walking/cycling and reduce the need for multiple trips by car."* Workshop comment **"**

Linked to this, some people also commented on the importance of making **travel choices** clear and how the design of the community would help this, for example by locating schools in the right kind of place. Some felt that walking and cycling should be the default option.

When thinking about **walking and cycling infrastructure** there were some specific suggestions about how these should be developed such as: making footpaths winding, rather than straight to give character to the area; preserving existing footpaths/lanes and adding new ones to create suitable

connections to green areas or play areas; considering raised walkways; and making sure there was suitable storage for things like bikes.

The **private car** was also a common topic within this theme, with people highlighting the importance of other travel choices to help reduce car use. People talked about the need for early and quality public transport, as well as good walking and cycling routes. The cost and quality of public transport was mentioned, to make sure it was an attractive option for residents. A few people also suggested train or tram lines to serve the Garden Community.

> **"Ensure you have planing (sic) for 1 car per 1.5 bedrooms as nowhere else does and it's ridiculous."**
> Social media comment

Some people acknowledged that car *ownership* wasn't necessarily the focus, but car *use*. There were suggestions within this topic that covered: car sharing and car clubs; restricted parking; and making some areas pedestrian based, with designated parking in communal or other areas of the community.

However, whilst a majority discussed ways to reduce car access and car use, a few people talked specifically about **making provision for the car**. These people talked about the need for allocated and sufficient parking/driveways for homes and good car access for those that need it, such as those who have to travel far for work, those with disabilities and key workers – such as carers.

A moderate amount of people spoke of:

Concerns were raised about the Garden Community with regards to **traffic congestion, traffic noise and pollution**.

These comments and concerns were around local roads, including the A12 and A133 (Clinghoe Hill), already being too congested and the impact that the Garden Community would have on this.

Some people also commented on the need for the new Link Road to incorporate **noise shielding** to protect from noise pollution.

> **Footpaths should be winding, rather than straight to give extra character in green areas."**
> Engagement website comment

Linked to the comments about 'walkable, cyclable and promoting active travel generally' there were people who also talked in more detail about **public transport** as part of their comments and contributions. The need for early, quality, well planned, well positioned, frequent, and well costed public transport was highlighted. Some also gave a bit more detail on public transport infrastructure, such as the need for a new bus depot site due to current depots being at capacity, and the need for new bus services to be suitably funded early to secure a good service in initial phases of development of the Garden Community.

> **PLEASE preserve the public footpaths, and add new ones to create a complete network for walking in green arteries and connect the country parks/green belts surrounding the new development (sic)."**
> Engagement website comment

A few spoke of:

Within this theme, and compared to the most frequently mentioned topics, there were some that were mentioned a handful of times, or specifically by one or two people.

Some people talked about the role of electric vehicles and bikes and the need for **electric vehicle and bike charging points** in homes and in parking areas.

Referencing other comments about having designated car parking in specific areas of the community, some other ideas included **underground parking** and **solar communal parking bays**.

> **"I agree we need to be designing out car usage where possible but there needs to be good public transport to enable people to get to nearby towns, recognising that not everyone can walk or cycle."**
> Workshop comment

A couple of people suggested new **train facilities**, with someone specifically suggesting a new station at the University of Essex.

There were other individual suggestions of: **Cul-de-sacs rather than continuously-connected streets** to prevent racing of cars; raised walkways; and a vertiport.

Community and Social Infrastructure

Looking at all of the feedback from the engagement activity, there were many ideas, aspirations and concerns raised under the theme of Community and Social Infrastructure.

A majority spoke of:

There were many individual ideas suggested across this theme, but within their comments and suggestions a large majority of people made specific mention of the importance of **'community' in a general sense**. People talked about involving residents within the community in the management of green space (not necessarily 'mown' green space, but wildflower etc too) and developing community cohesion, as well as bringing people together through things like community orchards. There was also mention of engaging and linking up with existing communities in the management, and creation of, community facilities in the Garden Community, such as sports and recreation.

People talked about how the **design of a community** can foster interaction, such as by creating small spaces for incidental meetings, well equipped 'centres' and putting multi-use education facilities at the heart of the community.

> *"I would very much like to see a patch, say, 3 hectares set aside for a community city farm. (sic) offering lifelong learning, outdoor therapy and education to children, adults with special needs and anyone needing respite from the strains of urban life".*
> Social media comment

The importance of making community facilities within easy reach of **active travel** (walking, cycling etc) links and centring facilities around transport hubs, was mentioned. Hubs were also mentioned in a more traditional community

sense, by creating 'community hubs' for the wider benefit of the community. Linked to this, the importance of a **community focused layout/design** was mentioned, including planning community space from the outset, so that groups can meet and build a sense of community from the start.

The importance of taking a **strategic approach** to planning things such as sports provision, was also raised.

> *Education facilities are the heart of the community and placement can be important – must maximise walkability to schools and reduce the need to drive – limited in any "drop off zones" and parking for parents."*
> Workshop comment

A moderate amount of people spoke of:

When thinking about Community and Social Infrastructure, a moderate amount of people spoke about how to **join up community facilities and generate income**. In stakeholder workshops specifically, people talked about innovative approaches, such as: opportunities to co-locate facilities, such as health and community assets; how multiple uses should be considered; the role a Country Park can play in meeting sport and recreation needs; and how multi-functional sites could be used (e.g., cricket ground can be used for football in the winter). In the workshops, it was also highlighted that the role of existing assets should be considered, especially at the University of Essex and Northern Gateway in Colchester, and how any new assets would interact with existing ones.

Stewardship was also mentioned in general terms, particularly around the maintenance of the development and that it does not come out of the "public purse" but has assets that can generate revenue to maintain the Garden Community. No specific stewardship models were suggested, but one person highlighted that it should be a collaborative partnership with the voluntary sector.

Feedback from the community on the engagement website specifically highlighted the importance of **children and family**, when identifying what is important to them for a good quality of life. This extended into other comments, with people mentioning specific facilities for young people such as early delivery of schools, sports pitches, and youth sports teams within walking/cycling distance of every home.

Much like in the Nature theme, people also talked about the importance of community facilities with regards to **healthy lifestyles**. People spoke about plans for the Garden Community needing to work for people's wellbeing and fitness, and the importance of social infrastructure in supporting people. One workshop participant specifically mentioned the higher-than-average suicide rates in Essex, and the importance of social infrastructure in supporting people with these challenging issues.

The idea of **'hubs' and 'centres'** was mentioned again, in relation to healthy lifestyles, by encouraging people to use active travel links.

> *"Agree...that plans have to work for people and wildlife – this will enhance feelings of wellbeing and will encourage fitness – this can be done and it can be beautiful".*
> Workshop comment

A lot of people in the local community contributed comments expressing a **lack of belief in Garden Community principles**. Many people believe that the Garden Community will just be expensive houses, and that there will be no provision of infrastructure such as schools, health facilities, green space and employment. People are concerned about the impact of the Garden Community on health services in the area, mentioning that health services are already strained. Some also talked about the fact there was already too much overcrowding in the area, in terms of housing, and that the houses were not needed, or that they should be built elsewhere.

This also linked to several comments which showed there is a **lack of trust in the developers**. Some people commented specifically on developers being led only by money and did not believe things like affordable housing would be delivered.

Whilst some did not believe that the Garden Community principles would be upheld, some specifically talked about the importance of making sure the Garden Community was developed with an **infrastructure first** approach. People said that things like schools, GP surgeries, and community spaces should come first, and reflected on the importance of this to promote community cohesion and the wellbeing of residents.

> *"...Youth football teams and sports clubs can generate instant, fierce community loyalty, tradition and cooperation".*
> Engagement website comment

The need for **allotments and community orchards/gardens** came up a few times, with people suggesting that community allotments would be a good way to encourage people to meet up and work together, as well as providing a source of local food.

Some people also highlighted **maintenance and cleanliness** regarding stewardship, and the importance of involving local people in this.

A few spoke of:

Within this theme, and compared to the most frequently mentioned topics, there were some that were mentioned a handful of times, or specifically by one or two people.

Some people talked about the need for **disability access and special needs provision**, such as: convertible and flexible space; good 24-hour access; community learning projects; and planning for 'person centred enabling support'. Linked to this, someone talked about health and social care rooms within community buildings (e.g., libraries and community cafes) and that accessibility to buildings, is not just about mobility - but unseen disabilities too, e.g., sensory disabilities.

> *"Planning community space from the outset so that community groups can meet and help together to build that sense of community".*
> Engagement website comment

One workshop participant stressed the need to ensure that **health-making principles** are embedded into the masterplanning, including learning from the NHS's **'healthy new towns'** programme.

As seen in the infographic on page 6, some individual members of the community talked about the **approach to planning the Garden Community** and used words such as peaceful and tranquil, as well as words like honesty, integrity and intelligence. When thinking about the approach to planning the Garden Community, someone also mentioned the need to be flexible, to adapt to the changing needs of a future community.

Sport came up as part of various contributions, in terms of community infrastructure, with some people specifically mentioning sport as being important to them. Some specific ideas included: AstroTurf pitches; Padel Tennis; street gyms; skating rinks; and a covered ball pool for the under 10s.

Linked across several ideas was also the need to promote **active travel** to access community infrastructure, which is discussed more in the Movement and Connections chapter of this report.

The importance of **safety** was also raised by a few, and a specific idea suggested that crime prevention should be addressed through the design of the Garden Community. A couple of people used 'safe' as one of their three words, when completing our 'Three Words Survey'.

The importance of **faith and God** was also raised a couple of times. A Church, or shared space, for the Church of England was suggested, and this was expanded upon by the additional suggestion of a multi-faith space for the Garden Community.

There was some support for a **lido** as a local attraction, and for the health benefits of residents, with someone else suggesting a water park. One person did not agree with this though.

Finally, some individual ideas included: making sure the **quality of the environment around schools** isn't compromised by broader community use; the importance of **equality**; **outdoor performance** spaces; **independent living schemes**; opportunities to increase people's appreciation and enjoyment of **local heritage**; and **street gyms** (with lighting).

Buildings, Places and Character

Looking at all of the feedback from the engagement activity, there were many ideas, aspirations and concerns raised under the theme of Buildings, Places and Character.

A majority spoke of:

There were many individual ideas suggested across this theme, but the most common contributions related to the **cohesion, look and feel** of the Garden Community. People talked about the importance of design, both in terms of individual homes and the design of the Garden Community itself for a good quality of life. People talked about things like sustainable homes with a distinctive character and beautiful green gardens, and how the design of homes should be strong, interesting, compatible and have a pleasing appearance. Design was also spoken about with regards to making sure different areas of the Garden Community are distinct, and have different design codes, and that this could contribute to local pride. Someone also mentioned how practical design either promotes or discourages anti-social behaviour.

> **"Housing design in the new development should be comparable with the best in Colchester."**
> Engagement website comment

Linked to this a few people spoke about **beauty** and creating space for people, such as a town centre with a parade and village green, and a central square with cafes and restaurants. Additionally, one person made the point that the look and feel of a place is not just 'visual' but what can be smelt and heard, too.

Employment came up as an important point, specifically during the stakeholder workshops. Key points that came up centred around the nature and quality of jobs, especially around providing for the daily needs (good housing and transport etc) of keyworkers and attracting new workforces. People talked about the need to genuinely create a place where people could both live and work, and for the Garden Community to not just be a dormitory town.

Innovation in employment was also discussed and included ideas such as: co-working spaces for homeworkers; linking up with local opportunities, such as with the University of Essex; and mirco-enterprise.

Specific conversations also took place around **employment for disadvantaged communities**, young people, and people with disabilities or additional needs. There was broad agreement that employment opportunities in the Garden Community, and created by the development itself, should provide: support in tackling local deprivation; ensure pathways and support to employment for people with varying disabilities; and offer opportunities for younger people. Discussions also took place about the importance of jobs for **mental, social and physical health**.

> **"Design new open spaces and civic spaces so that they are multi-functional and therefore encourage use by different users, ages etc."**
> Workshop comment

Acknowledging that employment would not be an option for all people, there were also comments with regards to the importance of **volunteering, training, and social enterprise** opportunities, in the Garden Community too.

Concerns were raised around the buffers for the Garden Community under this theme. Salary Brook Local Nature Reserve has been mentioned in the Nature theme, but it was mentioned here too, with regards to making sure that no new development west of Elmstead Market should be visible when viewing from Salary Brook. There was also particular mention of the land **south of the A133**, from those who contributed to the 'Pin Your Thoughts on Our Interactive Map' tool. All comments contributed to this tool were opposed to any development on this land, particularly regarding its proximity to Wivenhoe.

Landscape, Ecology and Green Infrastructure was also a common topic of discussion. Much like in the Nature theme, people spoke about the importance of including and protecting existing landscape and ecological features, and the need to include green infrastructure in the planning of the Garden Community, such as things like green walls and roofs.

A moderate amount of people spoke of:

There were differing opinions when discussing the **height of buildings** in the Garden Community on the engagement website, when the idea of building vertically, via apartments, was suggested. Whilst the idea of building vertically, to save green space, was suggested as an idea and supported by some, not everyone agreed and doubted its feasibility and cost implications. One comment specifically said that there should be a height restriction on buildings, so that they will not be visible from Greenstead and Longridge Park.

> **"This area, all south of the A133, needs to stay free of development, green space, green belt, for recreational activities – to preserve the separate identity of communities"**
> Engagement website tool

Several people talked about the importance of **affordable housing**. Some people referenced the 30% affordable housing policy in Section 1 of the Local Plan, and specifically raised the need for **social or low rent housing**, with one person specifically mentioning they should be for local people.

A few spoke of:

Within this theme, and compared to the most frequently mentioned topics, there were several issues that were mentioned just a handful of times, or specifically by one or two people.

The local **historic environment** was mentioned (such as Salary Brook Local Nature Reserve and ancient woodland) and the need for a Heritage Impact Assessment, with the design of the Garden Community being informed by (and responding to) the character of the area's historic environment.

A few people specifically mentioned the importance of **density**, and this was also discussed in the conversations about height. One person specifically said that the Garden Community should be 50dph (dwellings per hectare) or more, mentioning that this would support walkable and vibrant communities, whereas low density housing does not support healthy lifestyles and would lead to a car dependant dormitory to Colchester.

> *"There is no need to keep parroting 30% affordable housing when we all know that you are talking about the government definition of 'affordable' housing which means houses to buy. We don't need that – we need a proper percentage of social and low rent housing that provides a roof over the head for people who are on very low incomes."*
> Social media comment

There was also the suggestion for **more starter homes** for first time buyers and single people, to help get people on the housing ladder.

A couple of people spoke of the importance of making all homes in the Garden Community **accessible for people with disabilities**, mentioning ideas such as wider doorways for wheelchair users and making sure toilets are suitable for wheelchair users.

Other contributions included: future proof **broadband**; **co-operative housing**; the importance of the Garden Community being **innovative**; building **a model** of the Garden Community to help engage the public; and making sure the Garden Community had **skilled masterplanners**, citing Malmo as an excellent model to follow.

> *"What would be good is if the concept of character is not just visual; it is how we experience a place by touch, smells, sound as well. More about the experience, not just the look and this is more inclusive. Character is different for different people."* Workshop comment

Sustainable Infrastructure

Looking at all of the feedback from the engagement activity, there were many ideas, aspirations and concerns raised under the theme of Sustainable Infrastructure.

A majority spoke of:

The most common topics spoken about within this theme were related to **renewable and low carbon energy**. Lots of people talked about the need for: solar panels (on homes and non-residential buildings); ground source heat pumps; air source heat pumps; energy storage; good insulation; south facing properties; solar glazing; heat networks; and double glazing.

> *"Are the houses going to be carbon neutral or whatever it is called now? I think all new homes should be built with solar on the roof and ground source heating."*
> Social media comment

People also spoke about: the "**passivhaus**" standard; solar panels on street lighting, street furniture and bus stops; and community energy schemes such as community heat pumps, community energy generation projects and neighbourhood heating schemes.

Other ideas included: reusing heat from non-residential uses; the energy demand being provided by renewable energy sources on site; wind power to charge cars; and making sure buildings meet **BREEAM** (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) outstanding.

> **"We don't want houses that make our communities choose between heating and eating."**
> Workshop comment

A moderate amount of people spoke of:

Linked to the ideas about renewable and low carbon energy, there were several people who spoke about **efficient water use**. People spoke about: the need for water harvesting systems in homes; utilising grey water; the need for water efficient systems and fittings; rainwater systems and butts; and water recycling infrastructure.

> **"Can you encourage new homes to be built with solar pv (sic) and batteries, so that residents can achieve some degree of self sufficiency in energy and also have access to power at cheaper rates."**
> Workshop comment

There was a specific concern raised around **sewage**, as well as a suggestion that **SuDS** (Sustainable Drainage Systems) could be used to manage surface water, rather than taking it into the public sewer network.

Other suggestions for SuDS included: ponds being designed to function for nature and enhance biodiversity in addition to managing site water; and that they should be integrated into new green infrastructure and be a destination for people to visit for recreation purposes, e.g., circular walks around ponds.

Someone also mentioned the importance of street trees in slowing down the rate at which heavy rainfall gets into the drains, and hence reduces the possibility of surface water flooding.

> **"Development planned from the outset to be carbon neutral. This could include neighbourhood heating schemes, electric car and bicycle charging points, significant green spaces and tree lined roads and with walking and cycling and public transport links key."**
> Engagement website comment

A few spoke of:

Within this theme, and compared to the most frequently mentioned topics, there were several that were mentioned just a handful of times, or specifically by one or two people.

A few spoke about the need for **energy efficient and sustainable materials and approaches** to be used. People spoke about the need for a 'fabric first' approach, and that the Garden Community should be built to the highest possible standards, using local tradespeople.

There was some **scepticism** around the various sustainable energy ideas put forward, with one person questioning the reality of it, when considering the cost, maintenance, and UK weather.

Other ideas included: **solar powered** electrical bike charging and USB points; **banning gas** heating and cooking; an **anaerobic digester** to take care of food waste and provide electricity and compost as a by-product; a modular housing factory on site; and the need for **incremental change in the infrastructure** requirements as technology/lifestyles change over time.

> *"All buildings incorporate the latest solar technology, such as solar tiles or other new technologies that don't require huge hectares of land – utilising all buildings roofs would double up the productivity of any venture."*
> Engagement website comment

The Draft Plan

Since the shared Section 1 Local Plan was adopted in early 2021, Officers from the Councils have been considering what needs to be included in the Draft Plan for the Garden Community. Looking at all of the ideas, aspirations and concerns raised via the informal engagement activity has helped officers to better understand what things are most important to people locally, and what needs to be addressed in the Draft Plan, bearing in mind what is set out in the Section 1 Local Plan.

Many of the ideas, comments and concerns raised by the community and stakeholders are subjects which relate to the key policies covered within the shared Section 1 Local Plan. This highlights the common aspirations of the Councils, the community, and stakeholders for how this Garden Community should be developed to be the best it can be for existing and future generations.

The Draft Plan for the Garden Community will set out a clear vision and policies for how the Garden Community should be developed and refer to what we heard from the community and stakeholders, via this engagement process, as well as the engagement activity undertaken by Traverse and Community Regen to support the visioning work and for the masterplan layout options.

Appendix 1: Statutory Workshop Attendees

Essex County Council: Transportation Planning and Infrastructure; Strategic Growth Infrastructure & Integration; Sustainable Travel Planning; Strategic Development; Planning; Development and Flood Risk; School Place Planning; SEND Strategy and Innovation; Economic Growth; Economic Infrastructure; Skills Development; Wellbeing and Public Health; Housing Growth; Independent Living; Environment.

Sports England, Historic England, RSPB, Environment Agency, Natural England, Essex Police, Affinity Water, University of Essex, Beth Chatto Gardens, Essex Gardens Trust, Forestry Commission, Anglian Water, Network Rail, Woodland Trust, Maldon District Council, Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group, North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Breaking Barriers Innovations.
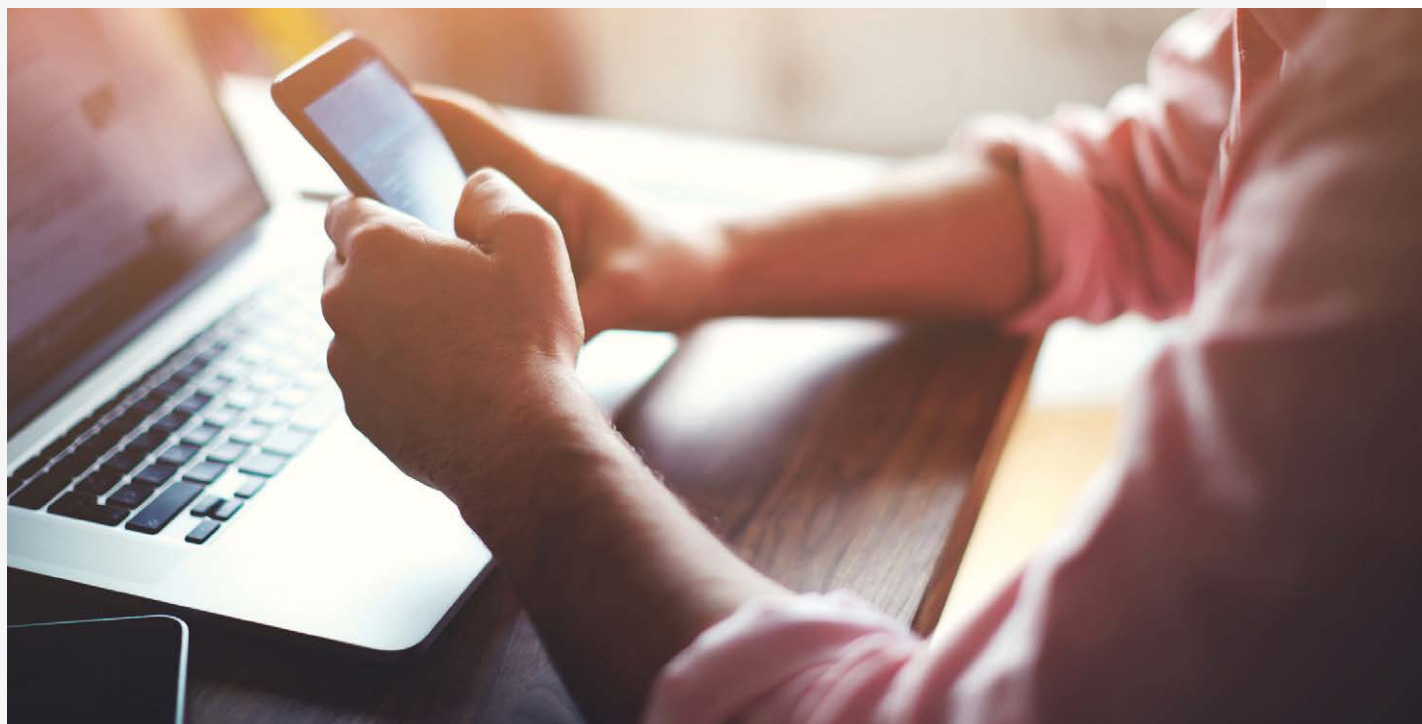
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