



Building with Nature Director visits site of Langarth Garden Village

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Dr Gemma Jerome, Director of Building with Nature, visited the site of the proposed Langarth Garden Village last week to see how Cornwall Council is working to deliver a scheme which puts nature at the heart of development by providing high quality green and open spaces which are good for people and for wildlife, alongside new high quality, well designed homes, education, health, cultural and leisure facilities, and innovative and flexible workspaces.

The UK's first green infrastructure benchmark, the voluntary Building with Nature scheme aims to support and encourage developers to create high-quality, sustainable places where people and nature can thrive.

The Council is working with partners to achieve a Building with Nature Design Award for the scheme which, if successful, will see Langarth become one of the first Garden Villages in the country to receive a Building with Nature accreditation.

“We work with planning authorities, professional experts and developers to design and deliver high quality green infrastructure” explained Dr Jerome. **“As we face the triple challenge of the Public Health, Climate and Ecological Emergencies, there has never been a more pressing need for better integration of high-quality green infrastructure into the built environment”**

“Our networks of green areas, street trees, rivers and ponds not only regulate the climate and support wildlife but deliver countless benefits for our wellbeing. Now, more than ever, we need to think about ways to create sustainable places that really deliver for people and wildlife.

Since taking on a proactive role in planning and delivering a new integrated community at Langarth two years ago, the Council has worked closely with environmental experts and the local community to create a scheme with green infrastructure at its heart.

A hybrid planning application, which includes outline planning permission for the Garden Village and full planning permission for the Northern Access Road, was

submitted to the Council's planning authority in November 2020. Work is currently taking place to assess the details of the application, with the planning application due to be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee later this year.

The masterplan includes around 45% of green space within the site (compared with just 19% in the previous planning applications). The proposed scheme works with the landscape to make the most of the natural environment; retaining as much of the existing field pattern as possible by retaining the majority of hedgerows, preserving green spaces and creating new community hubs for everyone to use and enjoy

As well as preserving green space and protecting existing Cornish hedges, the plans include the creation of new hedges, rivers and wetland areas to provide habitats for insects, songbirds and badgers; using sustainable drainage as a natural flood prevention system and planting over 5 hectares (12 acres) of new woodland as part of the Forest for Cornwall and other trees throughout the site to support cleaner air and help capture carbon.

A tree nursery has also been created on the site which will begin hosting visits for pupils from local schools in September.

Together these measures will increase biodiversity by up to 20% across the whole site compared with the current farmland.

The new housing will be well integrated into the landscape and will feature allotments, community gardens and community orchards to support food production and bring communities together. Walkable green corridors, cycleways and pedestrian walkways will connect all parts of the development, together with river and woodland walks, with sports pitches and public open spaces for play and recreation.

"We want Langarth Garden Village to be a vibrant, connected, sustainable and well-planned community" said Councillor Martyn Alvey, Cornwall Council's Cabinet member for environment and climate change. **"This means delivering a scheme which protects the environment and wildlife and creates a new community that sits within a biodiverse and hard-working landscape"**.

"By working from the landscape upwards, protecting and enhancing green space, maintaining existing and creating new Cornish hedges, planting trees, creating diverse, natural green space for everything from leisure, sport, play, growing, wildlife and nature, and soft engineering, incorporating elements of 'eco' living and promoting high quality building design, we can create a nature friendly development at Langarth at the same time as setting a "gold standard" for all future development in Cornwall."

The Building with Nature (BwN) Design Award is used to accredit projects at an early stage of design, including, as is the case with Langarth, at outline planning application stage.

This can then be followed by a BwN Full Award which is used to accredit projects at a more detailed stage of design and includes a post construction check to ensure that the development has met the BwN standards.

The Langarth BwN Design Award assessment is being carried out by Jenny Stuart, a principal ecologist, who also works for Cornwall Environmental Consultants Ltd.

Once completed later this year, her report will be reviewed by Dr Jerome and the Building with Nature team who will decide whether the Council scheme has met the required standards and, if so, confirm the accreditation.

“Research shows that by putting nature at the heart of development, we can build better for wildlife, better for our climate and better for people's health” said Dr Jerome. **“We are delighted that Cornwall Council is using our Building with Nature Standards to develop a great scheme at Langarth and look forward to working with them to ensure that their plans meet the standards needed to achieve accreditation and see their exciting and ambitious vision become reality.”**

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