

Black Country Garden City: Frequently asked questions

What are the benefits of getting Garden City accreditation?

The benefits of accreditation are:

- Accreditation is a kitemark that can be used in the marketing of developments. They will be seen to be part of the Garden City. A logo is available to add to marketing materials.
- It will also enhance the reputation of developers, which may improve their relationships with local authorities, Homes England, etc.
- Specifically, the LEP will be publicising accredited schemes and their developers on its website and in the local media.
- We have found the accreditation process brings out some useful, practical learning which developers and designers can apply to future projects to raise quality and marketability at no extra cost.



How do housing schemes get accredited as Black Country Garden City developments?

Housebuilders apply to DSE who manage the Garden City Panel on behalf the Black Country LEP. There is a short submission form to be completed and plans and drawings should be submitted to DSE. They will then convene a meeting of three panel members plus a panel chair and panel manager. There will be a site visit and then the panel will work through the garden city principles to see if the scheme can be accredited.

What if our scheme does not achieve accreditation, will that result in bad publicity?

Garden City assessments are confidential and we will only publicise successful schemes. We are looking for positive examples of what can be achieved in the Black Country.

What information will you need to assess a scheme?

As well as the submission form, we will need site plans, layout plans, landscape plans and details of any planting, elevations of houses or streets. If you have produced ecology and/or heritage reports they will be helpful. Plans showing how the development connects into the wider area are always useful, as are sections across the site. If we identify additional information needed during the accreditation you can always submit it later.

At what stage in the planning process should schemes be submitted for accreditation?

Accreditation is intended for schemes that have planning permission or have been built. However, schemes can be submitted at an earlier stage to get the benefit of the expert panel's advice as to how they can achieve accreditation. If the panel agree that it should be accredited as a Black Country Garden City Development its status can be confirmed once planning permission is granted.

What is the cost of accreditation?

At the moment the accreditation process is free. Supported by the Black Country LEP.

What happens at the assessment meeting?

We ask you to guide us on a site visit of the development so that if it is built we can see what it is like, and if it is not yet built we can understand the nature of the site, its context and connections. We then meet with you and the panel talks through each of the questions in the Black Country Garden City Principles document and decides whether we can give a positive answer. If there are 25 or more yeses the scheme can achieve Garden City accreditation.

If we are designing a housing scheme in the Black Country how can we make sure it is accredited?

Have a look at the principles and try to make sure you can answer all the questions positively. Bring the scheme to the panel for some early advice. There are often small, cost-free changes that can be made to help make the scheme meet the Garden City principles, for example, by retaining some structures (such as a boundary wall) to tell the story of the site, choosing different plant species to promote biodiversity or making sure the development is connected to neighbouring streets.

This is not a real Garden City is it? Garden Cities are new towns built in the countryside.

The terms 'Garden City', 'Garden Village', 'Garden Suburb' are now used by public bodies and developers to describe all sorts of new developments. Building a new Garden community from scratch and giving it identity, character, good connections by road, rail and foot, lively neighbourhood centres and mature green spaces is very difficult. That is why it makes sense to create a garden city within an existing conurbation which already has all those assets. Adopting the term Garden City underlines the ambition of the Black Country LEP and local authorities to transform the environment of the Black Country and make it much more attractive place for people to live and work.