



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Design Quality Agenda

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Design Quality

Department for
Levelling Up,
Housing
and Communities

Purpose:

Responsible for **promoting design quality, placemaking and beautiful development** through planning policy and reform, supporting the wider sector and embedding design quality and placemaking in government housing programmes

Policy and delivery priorities:

- **Embedding design quality** in national planning policy and associated guidance, including publication of the National Model Design Code.
- Running pilots of the new National Model Design Code with local authorities
- Establishing a new Office for Place
- Supporting design in Government housing and economic growth programmes including the Levelling Up agenda



- The importance of **quality**, as well as the **quantity** of homes was set out in the Housing White Paper in 2017.
- Design quality has been strengthened in the **National Planning Policy Framework** and associated guidance, including the **National Design Guide** and recently published **National Model Design Code**.
- The Secretary of State convened the **Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission** in 2019 and has announced the creation of an **Office for Place**, which will pioneer design and beauty within the planning system.



Design quality is a key aspect in planning reforms.

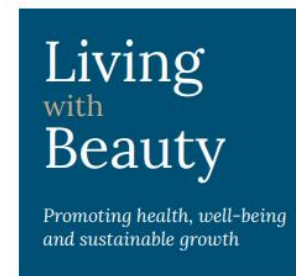
- The Planning for the Future White Paper proposed to **prioritise and emphasise design quality**, to achieve beautiful, sustainable places and communities and improve design quality by setting clear and predictable design standards using design codes prepared in collaboration with local communities.
- In achieving well-designed places, the **National Planning Policy Framework** highlights that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, **creates better places in which to live and work** and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- The **National Design Guide** and the **National Model Design Code** emphasise the underlying purpose for design quality and the quality of new development at all scales is to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities.





Commissions

- **Building Better Building Beautiful Commission (BBBBC)**
– set up following Policy Exchange report, co-chaired by Nicholas Boys Smith and the late Sir Roger Scruton.
- The recommendations seek to **embed beauty and high-quality design in the planning system.**
- Government is **taking forward the majority of their recommendations**, including revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework, the publication of the National Model Design Code and establishment of an Office for Place.



The report of the
Building Better,
Building Beautiful
Commission

JANUARY 2020



- Updates to the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.
- Updates to the NPPF **provide greater emphasis on granting permission for well-designed development and refusing it for poor quality schemes.**
- Chapter 12 focuses on *Achieving well-designed places*.
- Other updates to the NPPF reflect design quality and beauty, for example making beauty and placemaking a strategic objective of the planning system and **an expectation that local authorities will produce design codes or guides**

National Policy context



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

National Planning Policy Framework

12. Achieving well-designed places

126. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.
127. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.
128. To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences. Design guides and codes provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design. Their geographic coverage, level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety.
129. Design guides and codes can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale, and to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents. Landowners and developers may contribute to these exercises, but may also choose to prepare design codes in support of a planning application for sites they wish to develop. Whoever prepares them, all guides and codes should be based on effective community engagement and reflect local aspirations for the development of their area, taking into account the guidance contained in the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. These national documents should be used to guide decisions on applications in the absence of locally produced design guides or design codes.
130. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;



National Policy and Guidance context

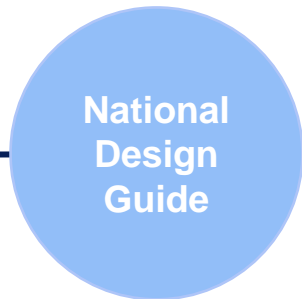


POLICY –

- The National Planning Policy Framework **sets out** the Government’s **planning policies** for England and how these should be applied
- Sets out **how planning policies** and decisions should ensure that developments **are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping**
- Provides **a framework** within which locally-prepared plans can be produced and proposes that local plans should take strategic approaches **to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure**

GUIDANCE –

- Provides **detailed guidance** on the production of design codes and guides with emphasis on setting detailed parameters **for the physical development of a site** including factors to be considered
- Emphasises that **creating more beautiful places requires a greener approach** that supports progress towards our national environmental goals
- Highlights that **well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable**



Context
Enhances the surroundings

Public spaces
Safe, social and exclusive



Movement
Accessible & easy to move around

Uses
Mixed and integrated

Nature
Enhanced and optimised

Homes & buildings
Functional, healthy and sustainable



Built Form
Coherent pattern of development

Resources
Efficient and resilient



Identity
Attractive and distinctive

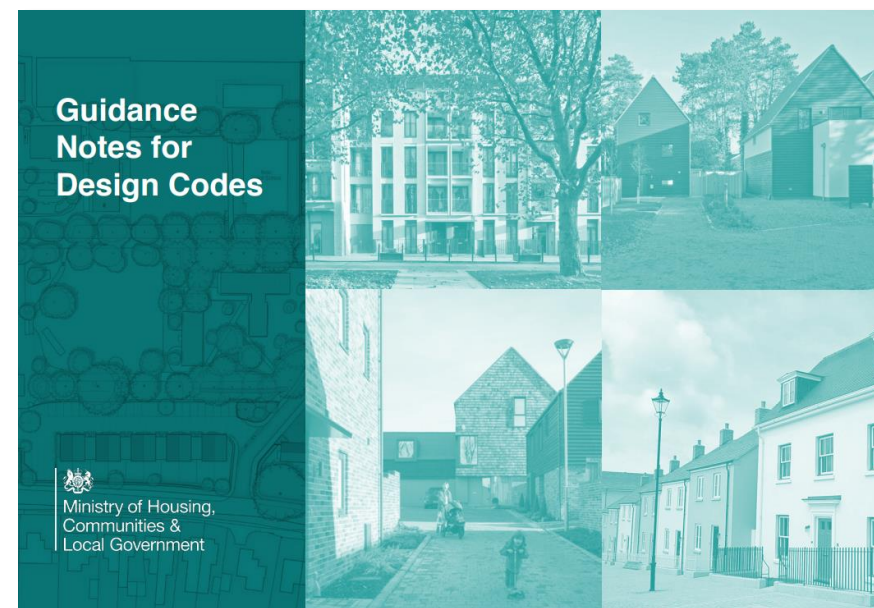
Lifespan
Made to last

Design guide: A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice, often produced by a local authority



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

- **10 characteristics** of well-designed places.
- **Process for developing local design codes** that set the rules for the design of new development which reflect local context and community preferences.
- Toolkit for **local councils to develop their own design codes**, to shape and deliver beautiful places for communities.
- Based on **genuine community involvement**.



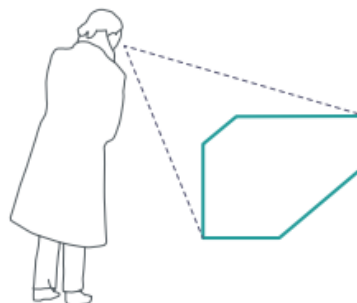


**National
Model
Design
Code**

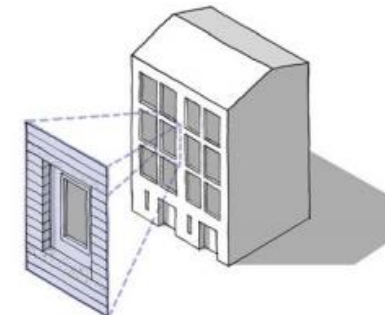
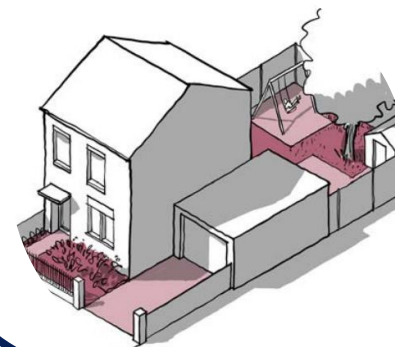
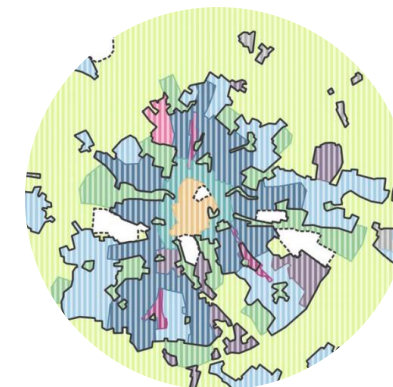
Analysis

Vision

Code



Consultation



Coding

Design code: A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.



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Context
Enhances the surroundings

Public spaces
Safe, social and exclusive

Movement
Accessible & easy to move around

Uses
Mixed and integrated

Nature
Enhanced and optimised

Homes & buildings
Functional, healthy and sustainable

Built Form
Coherent pattern of development

Resources
Efficient and resilient

Identity
Attractive and distinctive

Lifespan
Made to last

If the design code covers...		URBAN EXTN.	INFILL SITE	SMALL SITES
Context				
C.1.i	Character Types	*	*	*
C.1.ii	Site Context	*	*	*
C.1.iii	Site Assessment	*	*	*
C.2.i	Historic Assessment	*	*	*
C.2.ii	Heritage Assets	*	*	*
Movement				
M.1.i	Street Network	*	*	*
M.1.ii	Public Transport	*	*	*
M.1.iii	Street Hierarchy	*	*	*
M.2.i	Walking + Cycling	*	*	*
M.2.ii	Junction+Crossings	*	*	*
M.2.iii	Inclusive Streets	*	*	*
M.3.i	Car Parking	*	*	*
M.3.ii	Cycle Parking	*	*	*
M.3.iii	Services + Utilities	*	*	*
Nature				
N.1.i	Network of Spaces	*	*	*
N.1.ii	OS Provision	*	*	*
N.1.iii	Design	*	*	*
N.2.i	Working with Water	*	*	*
N.2.ii	SUDS	*	*	*
N.2.iii	Flood Risk	*	*	*
N.3.i	Net Gain	*	*	*
N.3.ii	Biodiversity	*	*	*
N.3.iii	Street Trees	*	*	*

If the design code covers...		URBAN EXTN.	INFILL SITE	SMALL SITES
Built Form				
B.1.i	Density	*	*	*
B.1.ii	Whether Buildings Join	*	*	*
B.1.iii	Types and Forms	*	*	*
B.2.i	Blocks	*	*	*
B.2.ii	Building Line	*	*	*
B.2.iii	Height	*	*	*
Identity				
I.1.i	Local Character	*	*	*
I.1.ii	Legibility	*	*	*
I.1.iii	Masterplanning	*	*	*
I.2.i	Design of buildings	*	*	*
Public Space				
P.1.i	Primary	*	*	*
P.1.ii	Local+Secondary	*	*	*
P.1.iii	Tertiary	*	*	*
P.2.i	Meeting Places	*	*	*
P.2.ii	Multi-functional	*	*	*
P.2.iii	Home Zones	*	*	*
P.3.i	Secured by Design	*	*	*
P.3.ii	Counter Terrorism	*	*	*
Uses				
U.1.i	Efficient Land Use	+	+	+
U.1.ii	Mix	*	*	+
U.1.iii	Active Frontage	*	*	*
U.2.i	Housing for All	+	+	+

If the design code covers...		URBAN EXTN.	INFILL SITE	SMALL SITES
U.2.ii	Type	+	+	+
U.3.i	Schools	*	+	+
U.3.ii	Community Facilities	*	+	+
U.3.iii	Local Services	*	+	+
Homes and Buildings				
H.1.i	Space Standards	+	+	+
H.1.ii	Accessibility	+	+	+
H.2.i	Light, Aspect, Priv.	+	+	+
H.2.ii	Security	+	+	+
H.2.iii	Gardens+Balconies	+	+	+
Resources				
R.1.i	Energy Hierarchy	+	+	+
R.1.ii	Energy Efficiency	+	+	+
R.1.iii	N'hood Energy	+	+	+
R.2.i	Embodied Energy	+	+	+
R.2.ii	Construction	+	+	+
R.2.iii	MMC	+	+	+
R.2.iv	Water	+	+	+
Lifespan				
L.1.i	Management Plan	+	+	+
L.1.ii	Participation	+	+	+
L.1.iii	Community	+	+	+

* Issues that you would expect to be covered in a code

+ Issues that may be covered elsewhere and so not included in the code



National Model Design Code

Reference to guidance notes →

Potential guidance →

Summary diagram →

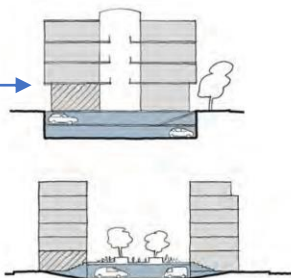
How the settings might vary by area type →

Movement

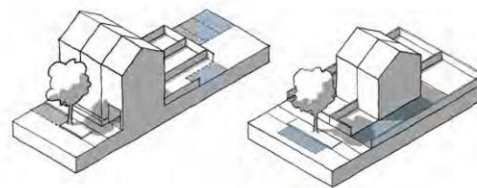
50. Well designed places should be accessible and easy to move around. This can be achieved through a connected network of streets, good public transport, the promotion of walking and cycling and well-considered parking and servicing. Detailed information is provided in **Guidance Note Code Content: Movement**. The following might require Area Type specific guidance:

- i New Streets:** All new streets should be safe and overlooked and correspond to their role in the street hierarchy and Area Type - e.g. a primary street in an urban centre will have a different character to one in a village **See M.1.iii - Street Hierarchy**
- ii New Junctions:** Guides might specify traffic signalled junctions on high streets and less formal, unmarked junctions on local streets. **See M.2.ii - Junctions and Crossings**
- iii Car Parking:** Standards for all uses will be set in the Local Plan but the ways in which they are accommodated will vary. **See Fig 13 and 14 and M.3.i - Car Parking**
- iv Cycle Parking:** Standards will be set in the Local Plan and specified in codes according to context. e.g. public cycle parking on a high street or private cycle storage in a dwelling. **See M.3.ii - Cycle Parking**

Figure 13. Parking Arrangements



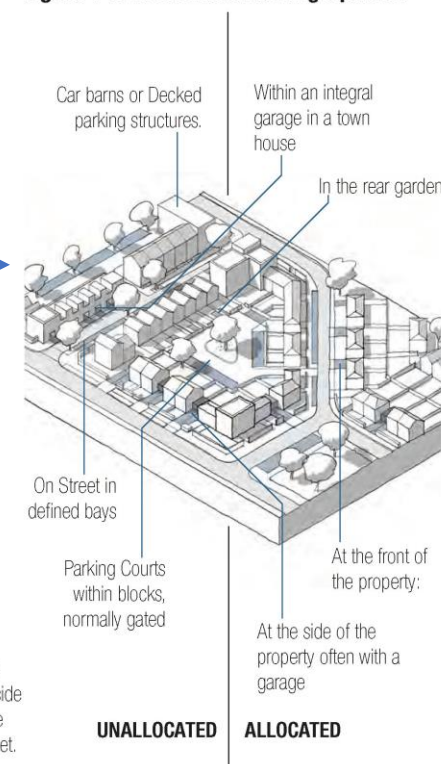
Town Centre: New provision should be at basement, semi basement or decked. New Surface parking might be prohibited.



Urban neighbourhood: Likely to be on-street (for visitors), within the building (town house), or to the rear in gardens or parking courts.

Suburbs: Likely to be in-curtlage, at the front (with suitable landscaping) or to the side of the property, so cars don't dominate the street. Visitor parking is likely to be on street.

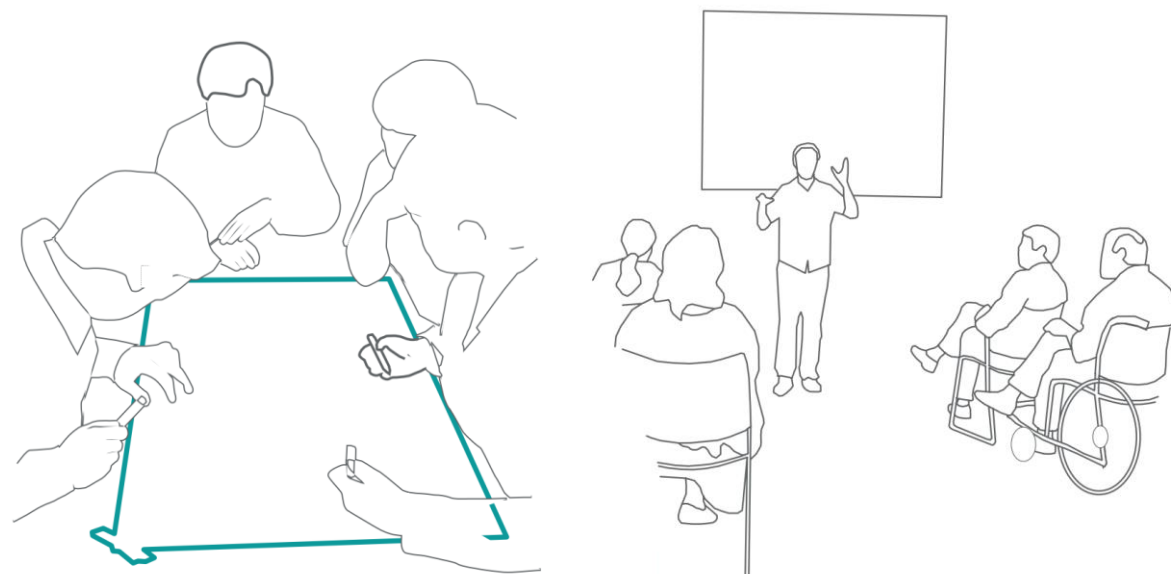
Figure 14. Residential Parking Options:





Community Engagement

- **Local communities can play a vital role in achieving well-designed places** and buildings and making sure there is a relationship between the built environment and quality of life.
- Communities can be **involved in design processes through approaches such as co-design, design workshops and other engagement techniques, so that places and buildings reflect local community preferences, improve their quality of life** and fit well into their surroundings.
- When **preparing design codes and guides, communities need to be involved in the process in order to gain measurable community support** that is appropriate for the scale and location of new development.





'The response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's report, along with the reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Design Code, the intention to establish the Office for Place and our wider proposals to reform the planning system, will ensure that for the first time design is established as a core pillar of the planning process.'

- Draw on Britain's world-class design **expertise to pioneer design and beauty within the planning system.**
- **Support local councils** to work with communities to set locally popular design standards for new development in their areas.
- Advised by board of experts, chaired by Nicholas Boys Smith.

Office for Place





NMDC Testing Programme – Phase 1

- The Testing Programme was **designed to test aspects of the process and content of the NMDC in a range of contexts**
- Over 70 EOIs were submitted to test the application of the NMDC in practice in local areas
- The Secretary of State **selected 14 local authority teams** across the nine English regions
- Scale ranged from authority-wide to specific site testing

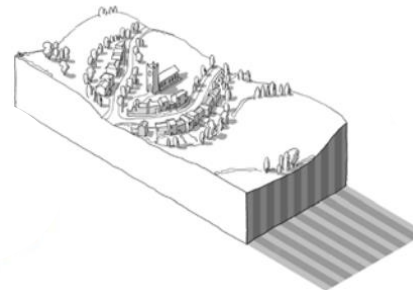
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Colchester Borough Council
- Dacorum Borough Council
- Guildford Borough Council
- Herefordshire Council,
- Hyndburn Borough Council
- Leeds City Council
- Mid Devon District Council
- Newcastle City Council
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
- Southwark Council



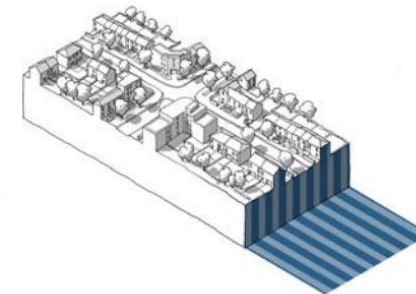


NMDC Testing Programme – Phase 1

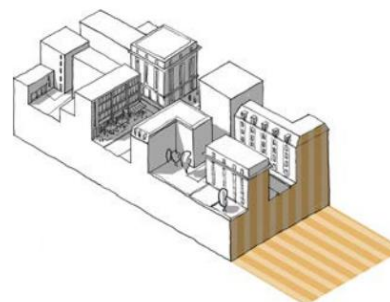
- **Testing covers rural, suburban, town and city contexts**
- Development types include new settlements, urban extensions, allocated sites, area-wide regeneration and area intensification and infill
- Various stages of design coding were tested, from early community engagement to assessing existing design guidance
- Outputs include coding plans, bespoke area types, masterplans, draft design codes and 'how to' guides



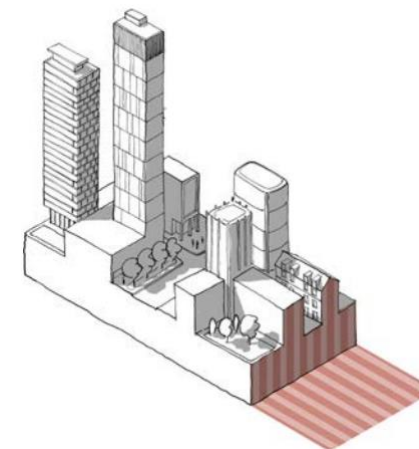
Rural and area-wide



Large sites and extensions



Town centres and neighbourhoods



City centre regeneration



NMDC Testing Programme – Phase 2

- Expression of interest for **Phase 2 of the NMDC Testing Programme** closed in September and submissions are currently being assessed
- Sought interest from local authorities, from county to district scales, and designated neighbourhood planning groups
- Successful teams will **work with their communities and the *Office for Place* to develop best practice design codes and processes to serve as exemplars for others**



