



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

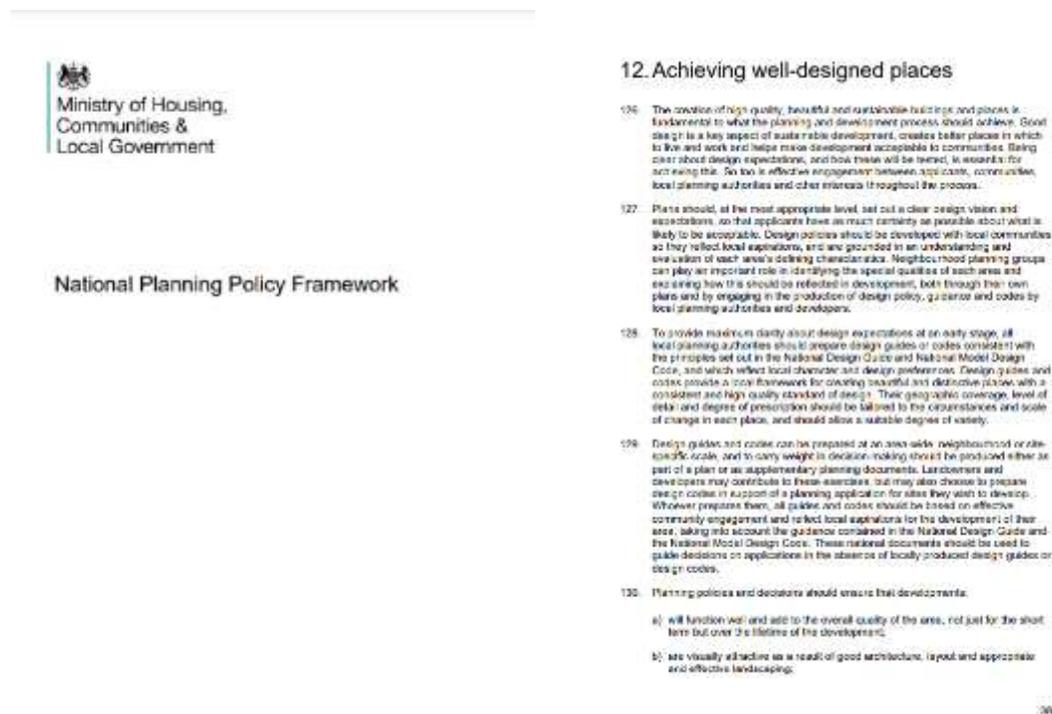
# Design codes: learning by example

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**13 October 2022**



# National Policy context

- 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**

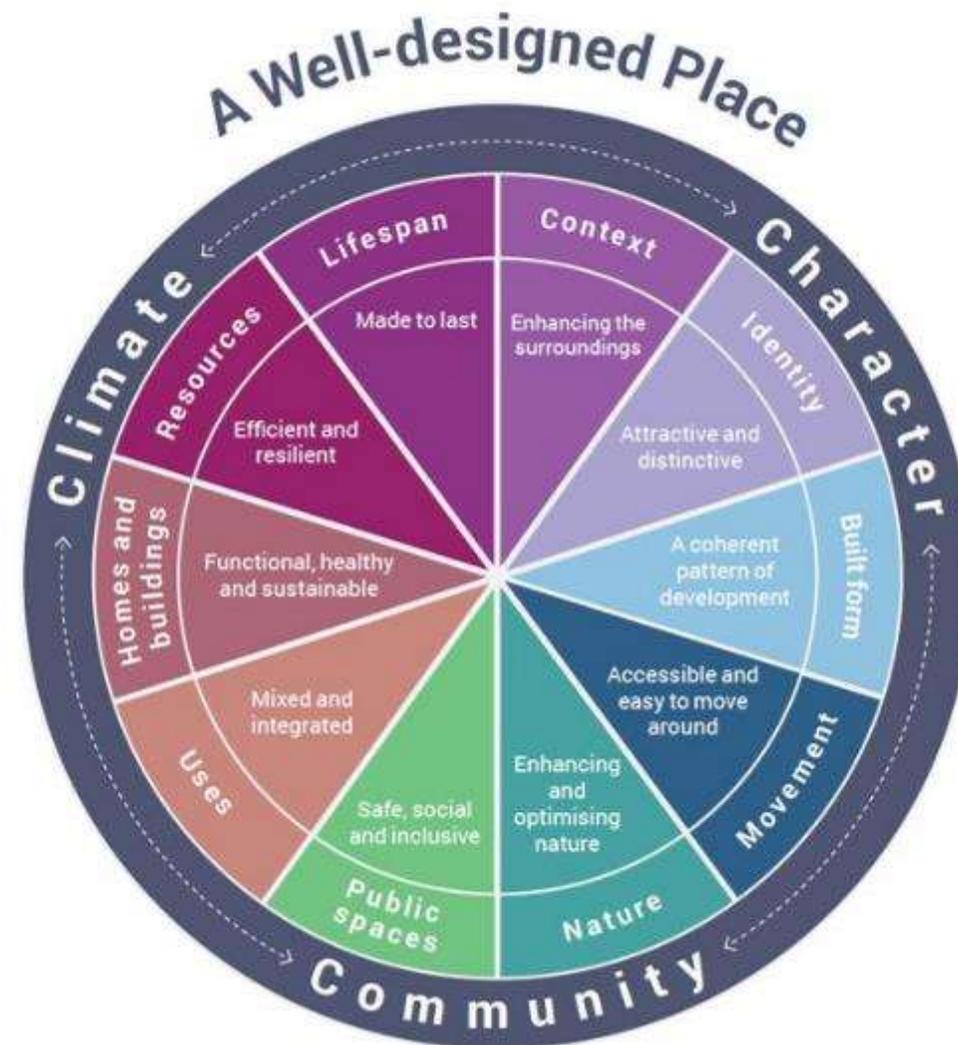




## The National Design Guide

- Sets out 10 characteristics of well-designed places (right)
- **Well-designed places** have individual characteristics which work together to create its physical Character. The ten characteristics help to nurture and sustain a sense of **Community**. They work to positively address **environmental issues** affecting Climate. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

## Planning Practice Guidance

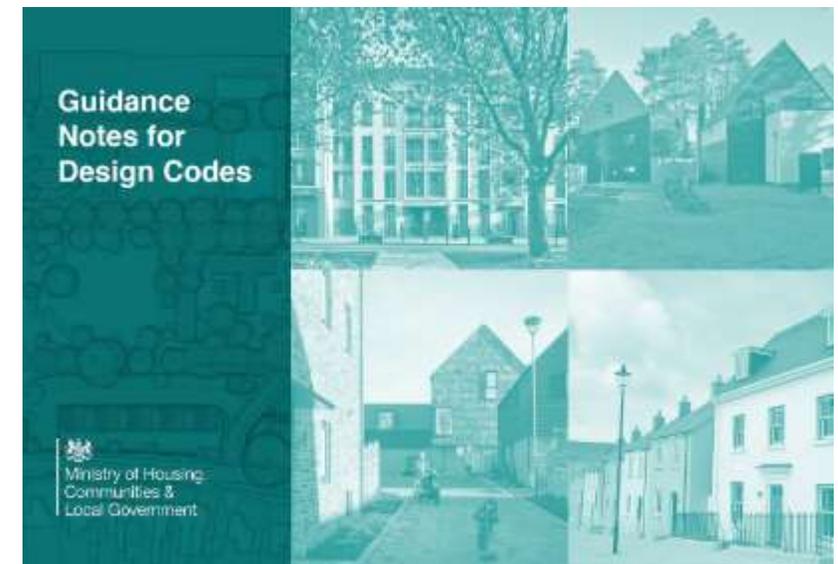
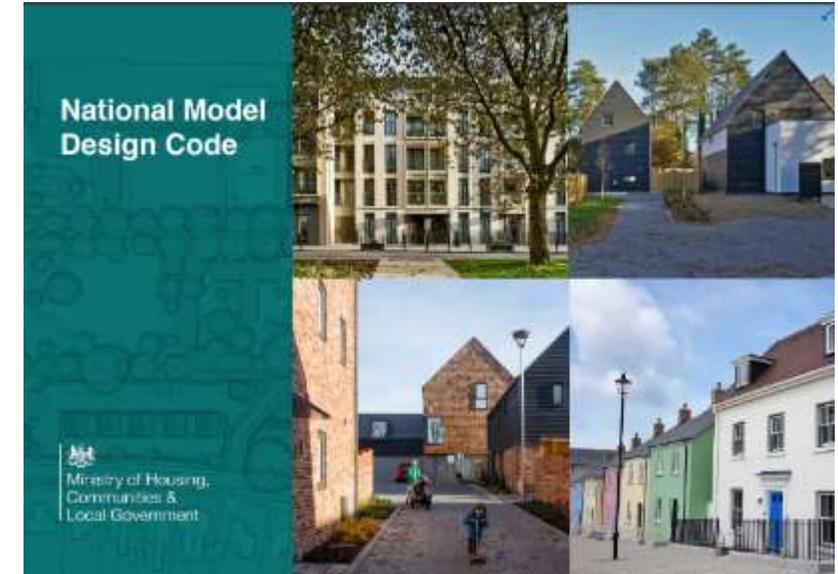




# Planning Practice Guidance

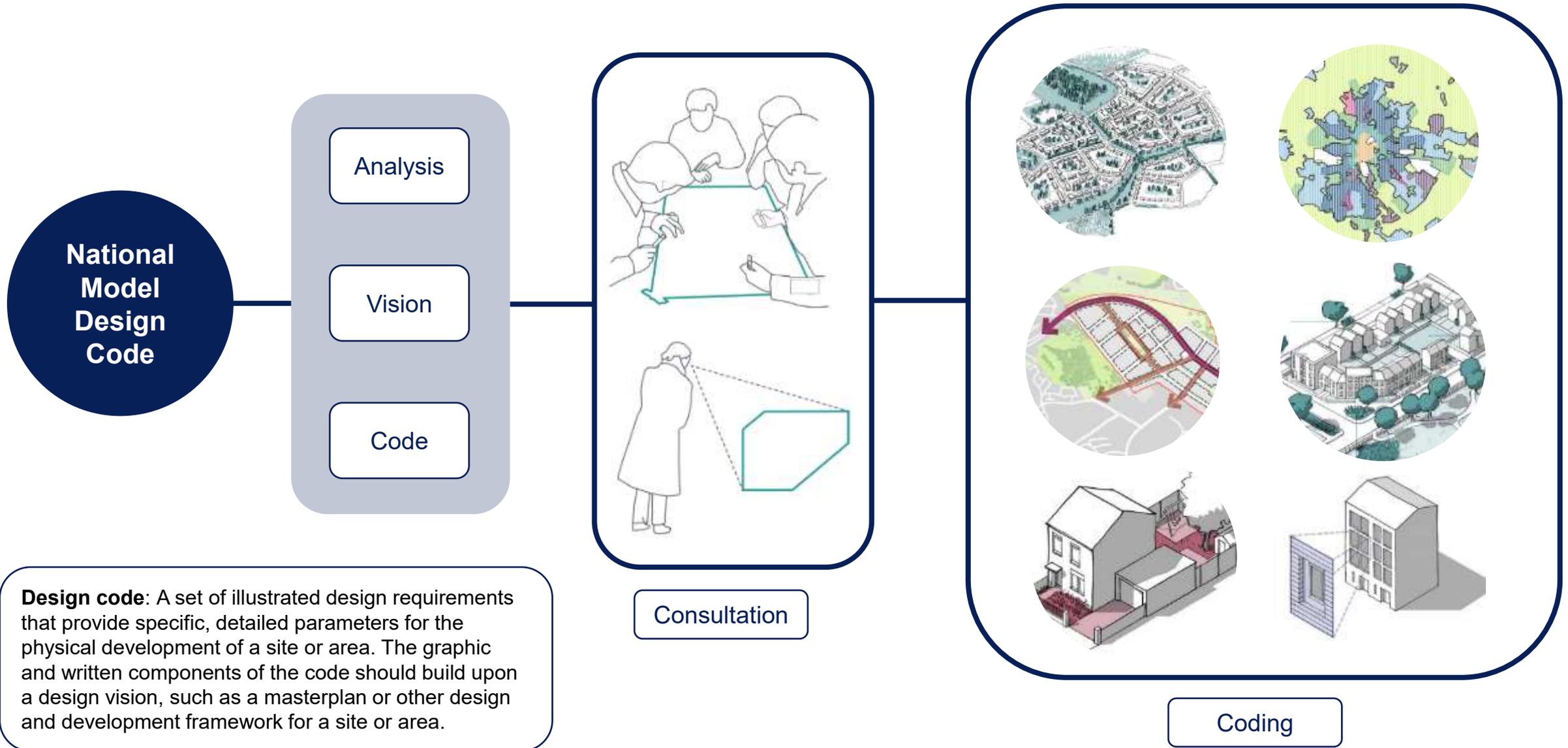
## The National Model Design Code

- **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**.





# Planning Practice Guidance

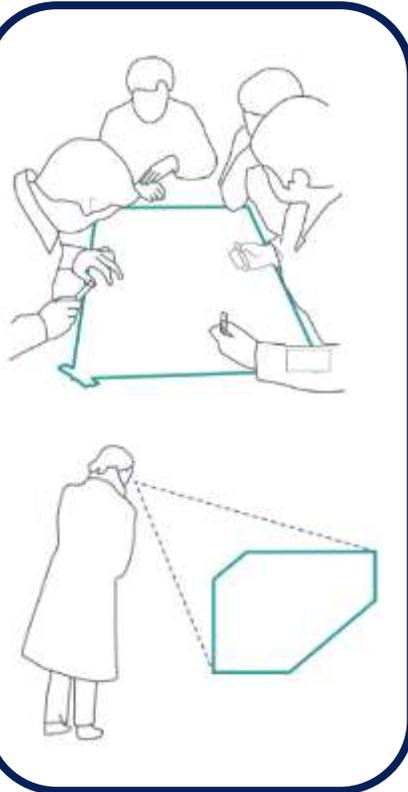


**National  
Model  
Design  
Code**

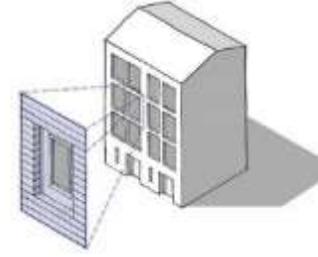
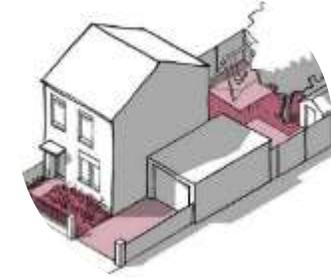
Analysis

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.



# Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

**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
<b>Context</b>				
<b>C.1.i</b>	Character Types	*	*	*
<b>C.1.ii</b>	Site Context	*	*	*
<b>C.1.iii</b>	Site Assessment	*	*	*
<b>C.2.i</b>	Historic Assessment	*	*	*
<b>C.2.ii</b>	Heritage Assets	*	*	*
<b>Movement</b>				
<b>M.1.i</b>	Street Network	*	*	*
<b>M.1.ii</b>	Public Transport	*	*	*
<b>M.1.iii</b>	Street Hierarchy	*	*	*
<b>M.2.i</b>	Walking + Cycling	*	*	*
<b>M.2.ii</b>	Junction+Crossings	*	*	*
<b>M.2.iii</b>	Inclusive Streets	*	*	*
<b>M.3.i</b>	Car Parking	*	*	*
<b>M.3.ii</b>	Cycle Parking	*	*	*
<b>M.3.iii</b>	Services + Utilities	*	*	*
<b>Nature</b>				
<b>N.1.i</b>	Network of Spaces	*	*	*
<b>N.1.ii</b>	OS Provision	*	*	*
<b>N.1.iii</b>	Design	*	*	*
<b>N.2.i</b>	Working with Water	*	*	*
<b>N.2.ii</b>	SUDS	*	*	*
<b>N.2.iii</b>	Flood Risk	*	*	*
<b>N.3.i</b>	Net Gain	*	*	*
<b>N.3.ii</b>	Biodiversity	*	*	*
<b>N.3.iii</b>	Street Trees	*	*	*

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

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



# Inside the National Model Design Code



## 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:

Reference to guidance notes →

Potential guidance →

Summary diagram →

How the settings might vary by area type →

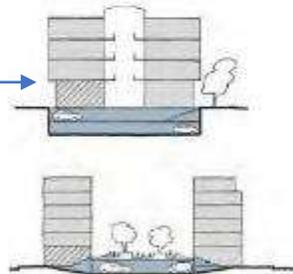
**i New Streets:** All new streets should be safe and overlooked and correspond to their role in the street hierarchy and Area Type - e.g. a primary street in an urban centre will have a different character to one in a village. See **M.1.iii - Street Hierarchy**

**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**

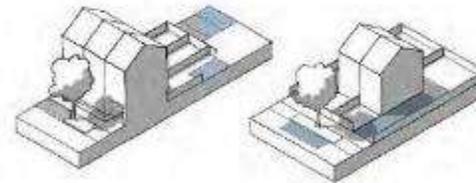
**iii Car Parking:** Standards for all uses will be set in the Local Plan but the ways in which they are accommodated will vary. See **Fig 13 and 14 and M.3.i - Car Parking**

**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**

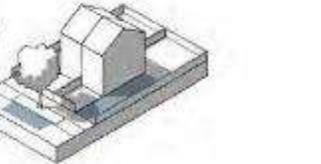
Figure 13. Parking Arrangements



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

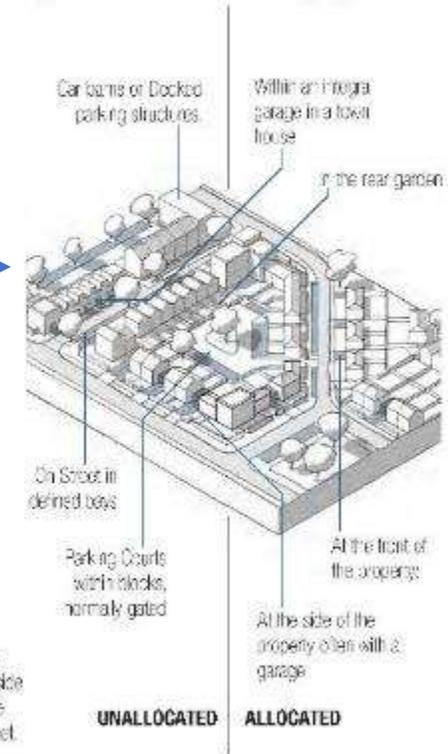


**Urban neighbourhood:** Likely to be on-street (for visitors), within the building (town house), or to the rear in gardens or parking courts.



**Suburbs:** Likely to be in carports, 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:

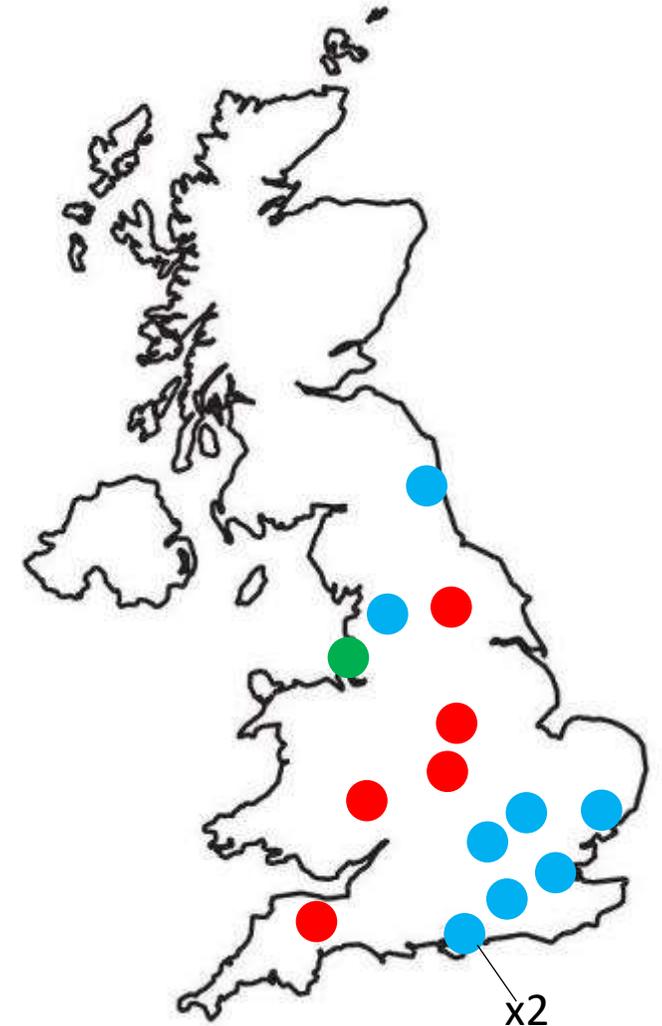




- The Testing Programme was designed to **test aspects of the draft NMDC process and content** in a range of contexts
- Secretary of State selected **14 local authority teams** due to quality of proposals and range of contexts
- 5 **authority-wide** codes/guidance, 1 **area-wide** code and 9 **site-specific** codes including dense city and town centre sites, garden communities, estate renewal and suburban sites

## NMDC Testing Programme

- 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

- Development types included new settlements, urban extensions, allocated sites, area-wide regeneration and area intensification and infill
- Various stages of design coding process were tested, from early community engagement, assessing existing design guidance, viability assessments whilst testing options
- Outputs included digital engagement apps, coding plans, bespoke area types, masterplans, draft design codes and 'how to' guides/ templates

Herefordshire: guidance for NP codes



Rural authority-wide

Hyndburn: coding for garden village



Large sites and extensions

Portsmouth: Toolkit for estate renewal



Town centres and neighbourhoods

Southwark: Coding for opportunity area



City centre regeneration

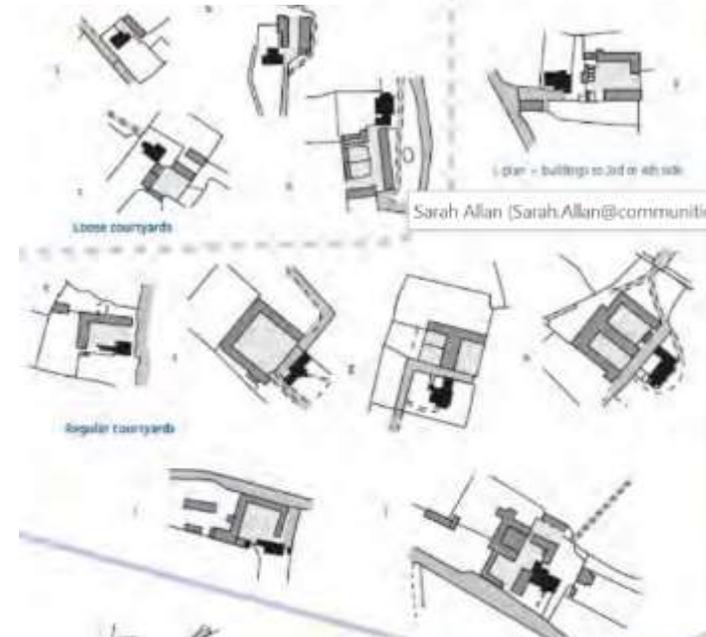


# Case study 1: Herefordshire County Council Authority-wide guidance – coding for NPGs

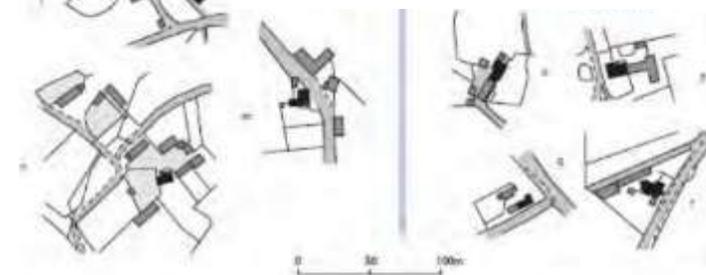
- Tested four different engagement processes in four different parishes, all with adopted neighbourhood plans
- 113 NPs in county, supported by core strategy. NPs include detailed policies, settlement boundaries and site allocations
- Developed guidance and templates for coding at the neighbourhood scale to provide more consistent design policies and more certainty on planning decisions
- In parallel, council producing material for a county wide code to cover larger scale issues

## Herefordshire settlement types

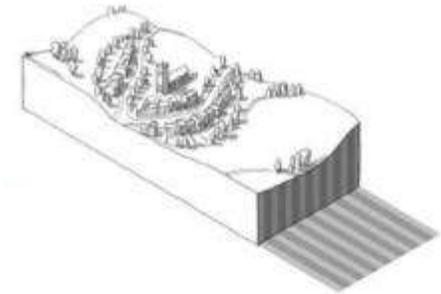
### Courtyard typologies



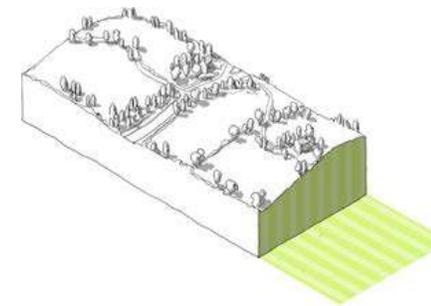
### Different types of settlement plan



## NMDC example rural area types



Villages



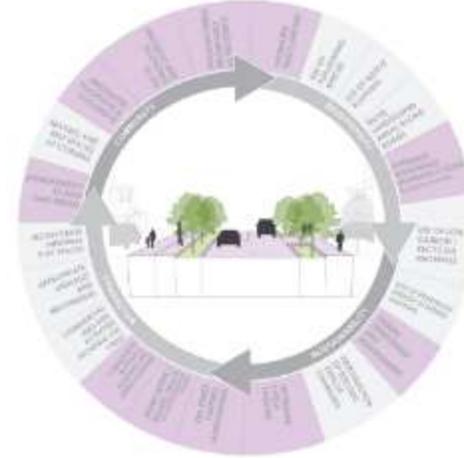
Rural settlements



# Case study 2: Hyndburn Borough Council Design code for Garden Community

- Testing on Huncoat Garden Village for 1500 homes, community uses and green spaces
- With analysis and vision stages already completed (including masterplanning), testing focused on the code stage
- Raise design quality within a low value area
- Engagement captured views & aspirations for site wide design codes
- Developed three typologies through process: house, open space, street

## Huncoat Street Principles



14.2m Secondary Street





## Case study 4: Southwark Council Coding for dense inner urban area

- Testing Hatchem and Ilderton Road area site, part of wider Old Kent Road Opportunity Area
- The draft AAP establishes the vision; testing is a continuum of the AAP setting out a greater level of detail of key design principles
- The site vision aims to transform an industrial area type to an intensified creative business use with residential above (from second floor)
- With baseline and masterplan work already completed, the draft design code focuses on a defined number of parameters in a concise report (38 pages)

Hatchem and Ilderton Road site



Illustrative grnd fl servicing plan





## Findings: Using the NMDC in practice

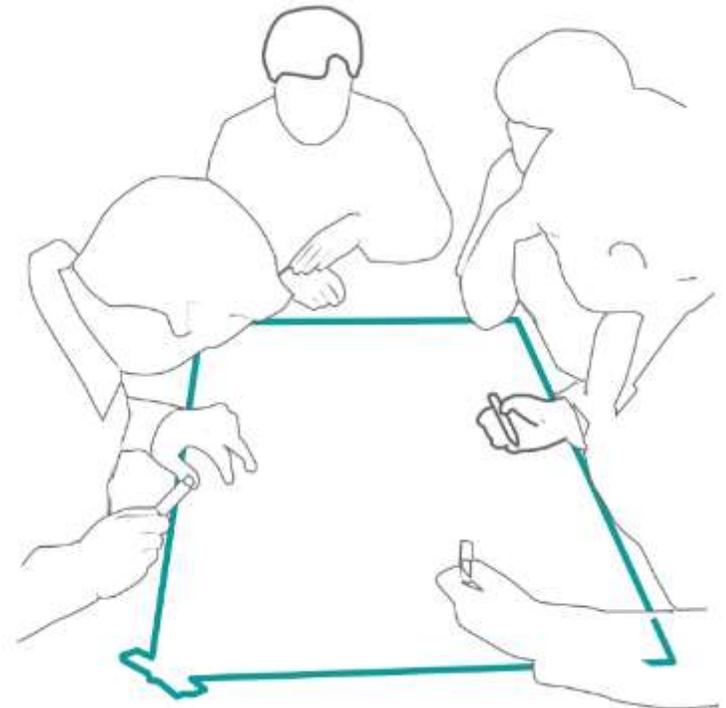
- Defined structure with clear themes, easily understandable with flexible approach that can apply to local circumstances
- Useful to structure to NDG's 10 characteristics of well-designed places
- Engagement section provides useful overview of methods and techniques
- Illustrations and diagrams are helpful communicating principles in the text
- Further guidance on using area types and terminology definitions would be useful
- Example templates and design codes would be welcomed





## Lessons identified by pilot teams

- Sending a clear message about design quality (and design coding) expectations
- It takes time, skills and resources, particularly if engagement is required
- Some places are more challenging and complex, but setting ambition is key
- Understanding viability (at the start of the process)
- Balancing creativity with certainty, must-haves with nice-to-haves
- Giving codes status
- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Clear local leadership, bringing stakeholders together
- Community knowledge is valuable but has its limits
- Different approaches needed to code at different scales



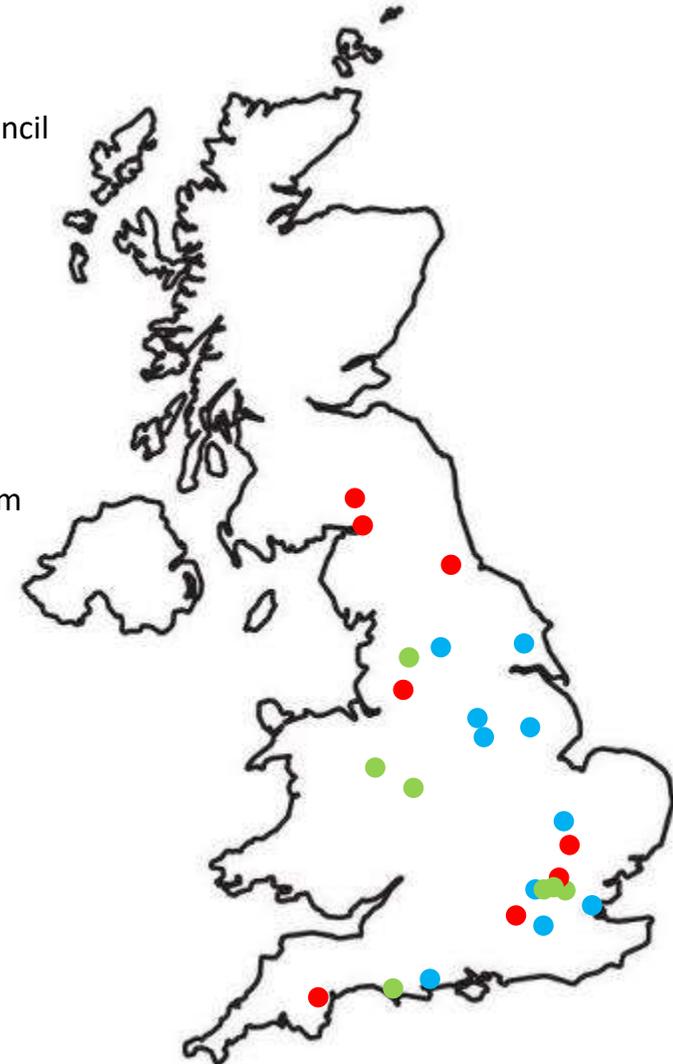


# Design Code Pathfinders

21 Local Authorities and 4 NPGs

- As part of the government’s plans to level up for communities across the country, **25 areas in England** from Bournemouth to Carlisle, have been awarded a **share of £3 million to help them set their own standards for design locally.**
- 8 **authority-wide** codes/guidance, 7 **area-wide** code and 10 **site-specific** codes including industrial regen, garden communities, estate renewal, town centre regen, a national park and suburban and rural sites.
- Cross-cutting themes include coding to encourage walking and cycling, setting carbon reduction targets/NZ, green infrastructure
- The **design codes will be used as examples** that communities across the country can draw on to produce their own, with **support from the Office for Place**

- Bacup and Stackstead Nhd Forum
- Barking and Dagenham Council
- Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council
- Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Brent Council
- Carlisle City Council
- Darlington Borough Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- East Midlands Development Company
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Epping Forest District Council
- Finsbury Park and Stroud Green Nhd Forum
- Gedling Borough Council
- Greater Cambridge shared plng service
- Lake District National Park Authority
- Mansfield District Council
- Medway Council
- Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
- Shropshire Council
- South Woodford Nhd Forum
- Surrey County Council
- Teignbridge District Council
- Trafford Council
- Uttlesford District Council
- Weymouth Nhd Forum





A blended approach to support:

- Set-up and management of design code process
- Content for design codes informed by different contexts, locations and local priorities
- Sharing learning throughout the programme

# Engagement methods

**1 Design code project plans**  
Co-production to set direction of coding work and ensure opportunities for clear project direction

**2 Collective Roundtables and Peer-to-peer support**

- Roundtable sessions covering topics related to design coding at specific scales
- Opportunity to network with other teams and build informal learning networks (invite ph1)

**3 Thematic workshops incl**

- NPG focussed sessions
- Climate change and net zero
- Green infrastructure
- Walkable neighbourhoods
- Working with landowners and developers

**4 One-to-one support**  
Provide advice on process and technical issues during programme, prioritising the early stages

**5 Design code review panel**  
Panel to review emerging design code documents and provide independent feedback

**6 Monitoring and Evaluation**  
Gathering and sharing learning during the programme as far as possible

**7 Virtual Library of programme material and other examples**

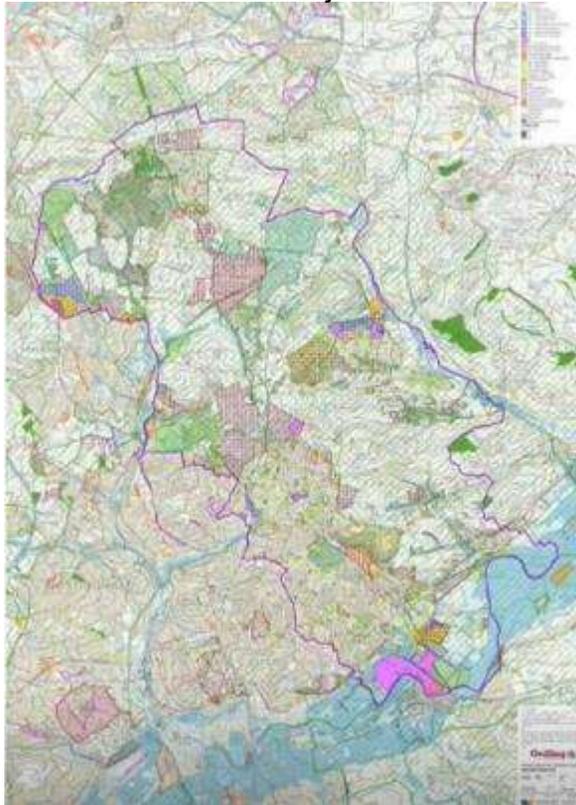
- Shared Sharepoint folder giving access to presentations and recordings
- Library of existing design codes, for pilots to download and use.



# Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

# Early examples of pathfinder priorities

Gedling – bringing distinctiveness to typical suburban context and supporting carbon reduction objectives



Authority-wide

Barking – use DC to drive coherent retrofit for Becontree Estate and support consistent public realm improvements

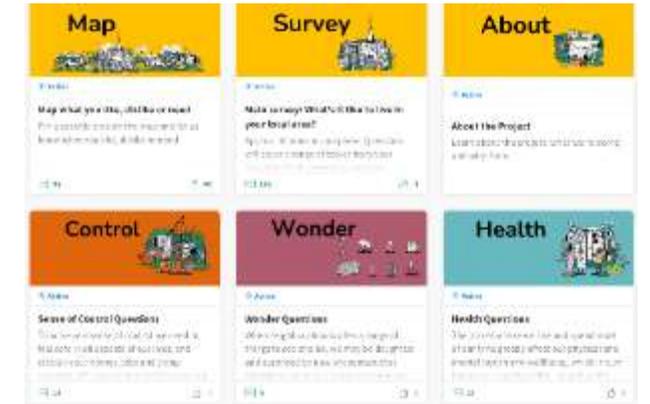


Area-wide

Epping – Focus on sustainable movement and link with digital engagement pilot findings through quality of life mapping

Movement	Local Journeys	Local
M.1.1	0.1.1	0.1.1
M.1.2	0.1.2	0.2.1
M.1.3	0.1.3	0.2.2
M.2.1	0.2.1	0.3.1
M.2.2	0.2.2	0.3.2
M.2.3	0.2.3	0.3.3
M.3.1	0.3.1	0.4.1
M.3.2	0.3.2	0.4.2
M.3.3	0.3.3	0.4.3
N.1.1	1.1.1	1.1.1
N.1.2	1.1.2	1.1.2
N.1.3	1.1.3	1.1.3
N.2.1	1.2.1	1.2.1
N.2.2	1.2.2	1.2.2
N.2.3	1.2.3	1.2.3
N.3.1	1.3.1	1.3.1
N.3.2	1.3.2	1.3.2
N.3.3	1.3.3	1.3.3

Coding for sustainable movement/ active travel  
Modal shift through best-practice design at every scale



Site-specific



# Early examples of pathfinder priorities

- Factoring in time to prepare briefs and appoint consultants
- Really good range of consultant expertise and two pathfinders preparing code in-house, Public Practice Associate presence in some in-house teams having positive impact
- Two pathfinders also part of digital engagement pilot work
- Enthusiasm with some to use digital platforms and wide use of digital engagement
- Many pathfinders are very focused on how to embed policy themes into each stage of the coding process



Finsbury Park and Stroud Green neighbourhood planning group – community workshop

