

Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance.

City of Durham Trust Consultation Response

This consultation seeks views on the usability of our proposed consolidation of the of the Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance.

Scope of the consultation

This draft Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is intended to support the application of policies in the [draft National Planning Policy Framework \(https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-frameworkproposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-frameworkproposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system) (NPPF) 2025, which is currently being consulted upon. It outlines and illustrates the government's priorities for well-designed places, and how planning policies and decisions should support this.

Four existing guidance documents have been consolidated into a single streamlined resource, now called the draft Design and Placemaking PPG.

The 4 existing documents are:

- *National design guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nationaldesign-guide>)*
- *Design process and tools planning practice guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/design>)*
- *National Model Design Code part 1 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>)*
- *National Model Design Code part 2 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>)*

The aim is to make design guidance clearer, more accessible, and easier to apply in practice.

Introduction

The draft Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance illustrates how well-designed places that are healthy, resilient, green, beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It will form a key part of the government's collection of planning practice guidance.

This draft guidance offers practical advice on creating high-quality places and buildings. Its aim is to outline and illustrate the government's design priorities providing advice on the seven features of well-designed places, design quality in the planning process, and setting effective design codes. The draft guidance is formed of 3 parts.

Part 1: Seven features of well-designed places

Sets out seven features of well-designed places and their intended design and placemaking outcomes.

Explains how design principles for each feature should inform the preparation of plans, design policies, guidance and proposals for new development.

Informs planning decisions where relevant, including in the absence of local design policies, design guides or design codes, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Part 2: Design quality in the planning process

Explains how design quality can be integrated throughout the plan-making process.

Provides guidance on design tools and processes within the planning system, including masterplans, local design codes, and design guidance. Explains how design can be effectively integrated and considered in decision-making.

Part 3: Setting effective design codes

Explains how local design codes can set technical requirements for different design issues to support the creation of liveable places.

Provides guidance on applying design codes appropriately across different scales and contexts.

MHCLG intends to publish a series of Model Design Codes. The Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance should be read alongside these once they are published. The Model Design Codes will be expanded over time to create a catalogue of template design codes which local planning Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance: consultation do... authorities can apply or adapt to their local context.

Usability of the draft design and placemaking PPG

The draft Design and Placemaking PPG has been published to support the implementation of the draft NPPF which is currently being consulted on.

The draft PPG consolidates the 4 existing guidance documents (National Design Guide, Design Process and Tools Planning Practice Guidance, National Model Design Code Parts 1 and 2) into a single streamlined resource.

This approach has been informed by user feedback and the design code pathfinder programme. The aim is to make design guidance clearer, more accessible, and easier to apply in practice.

We are seeking views on whether this consolidated approach improves usability and supports preparation of effective design and placemaking policies, tools and processes.

Question 6

Do you agree that the usability and effectiveness of the draft Design and Placemaking PPG has improved?

Yes, agreed. The reduction of the various previous design guidance documents into one is a useful change. The clarity of the guidance is good, the methodology is well explained, and this should aid usability and effectiveness. However, useful as it is for professionals familiar with urban design there remains a substantial gulf in reaching all those involved in the development process. This applies to volume house builders sites in the North East and those that the City of Durham Trust assesses in Durham in particular.

Question 7

Are there any aspects where clarity, accessibility, or practical application could be improved to better support design and placemaking outcomes?

There needs to be accompanying more basic explanation targeted at local authority staff, councillors involved in regeneration and planning and volume house building technical teams that demonstrates the benefits of adopting the principles in the guidance. This especially applies to design coding (see answers to Questions 10 and 11). The design code by necessity needs to cover a wide range of potential development and this makes it more difficult for professionals with less urban design experience to relate to.

Inclusivity of the draft Design and Placemaking PPG

Following the proposed approach to incorporate policies relating to traveller sites in the relevant chapters of the draft NPPF, we are seeking views on whether the draft Design and Placemaking PPG is suitable to ensure it supports inclusive design for all.

The draft guidance sets out principles for creating well-designed places that are inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to diverse community needs. However, it is important to ensure that these principles also reflect the specific cultural, social, and practical requirements of traveller sites where there can be distinct patterns of living, site layout requirements and infrastructure needs.

Question 8

Do you agree that the principles set out in the draft Design and Placemaking PPG adequately address the needs and requirements of traveller sites?

The City of Durham Trust has not dealt with traveller sites.

Question 9

What additional considerations or clarifications might be necessary to ensure planning practice guidance supports inclusive and culturally appropriate design and placemaking?

N/A

Effectiveness of tools within the draft Design and Placemaking PPG

Tools such as Model Design Codes can play a crucial role in accelerating the preparation of local design guidance. By providing a clear, nationally consistent framework and templates, they reduce the need for authorities to start from scratch, saving time and resources while ensuring alignment with good practice.

Model Design Codes will offer a structured approach that can be adapted to local context, helping to streamline engagement, improve clarity for stakeholders, and support faster implementation of design standards. This can lead to more efficient plan-making and greater certainty for developers and communities.

MHCLG intends to publish a series of Model Design Codes. These will be

template design codes for common development types such as large house builder led sites and small urban sites, helping local planning authorities save time and resources by avoiding the need to create local design codes for repeatable development types. For example, Model Design Codes for small urban sites will provide clarity on what design is acceptable, creating certainty for SME housebuilders and promoting the efficient use of plot types that are common across different local planning authorities. This will make it simpler for local planning authorities to determine design matters on the smallest sites, freeing up resource to focus on large and complex applications.

The Design and Placemaking PPG should be read alongside the Model Design Codes once they are published. We intend to monitor their use and, if successful, create a catalogue of template design codes which local context.

Question 10

Do you agree that tools, such as model design codes, could speed up the preparation of local design codes?

Yes, they are essential in achieving wider understanding of the process and how to adapt it to specific sites. Monitoring code use could prove invaluable in helping to raise the standard of those submitted. The problem that the City of Durham Trust sees when assessing major housing proposals is that the submitted design code is very limited in impact and scope. They are mostly simple and random collections of samples of surrounding houses and catalogue only small changes in standard house types with clusters of slightly different materials choices. In reality, the output is exactly the same as has been the standard for the past forty years or more. The choice of samples is often of nearby new standardised developments and older traditional estates of undistinctive design offering no aspiration for better design.

Question 11

What other tools would support this?

Sample design codes are essential, and the choice needs to include edge of settlement developments and those abutting development with little or no distinctive character. The particular circumstance of financial constraints in the north east (and probably other areas), as an example, also need to guide sample codes. These should be capable of being used where developers remain sceptical about design aspiration clashing with their perception of the local housing market.