

# National Design Guide

Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



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# Part 1:

## The purpose of the National Design Guide



# The purpose of the National Design Guide



1 Places affect us all – they are where we live, work and spend our leisure time. Well-designed places influence the quality of our experience as we spend time in them and move around them. We enjoy them, as occupants or users but also as passers-by and visitors. They can lift our spirits by making us feel at home, giving us a buzz of excitement or creating a sense of delight. They have been shown to affect our health and well-being, our feelings of safety, security, inclusion and belonging, and our sense of community cohesion.

2 They function well, accommodating businesses, homes and a range of other uses and activities that support our everyday lives. Well-designed places can last for many years.

3 **The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. This National Design Guide, and the National Model Design Code and Guidance Notes for Design Codes illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government’s collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.**



## Introduction

4 The long-standing, fundamental principles for good design are that it is: fit for purpose; durable; and brings delight<sup>1</sup>. It is relatively straightforward to define and assess these qualities for a building. We can identify its activities and users, the quality of detail, materials, construction and its potential flexibility. We can also make judgements about its beauty.

5 A place is more complex and multi-faceted than a building:

- it is a setting for a diverse range of uses and activities, and is experienced by many people in many different ways;
- it is made up of buildings, and also landscape and infrastructure, which are likely to endure longer than the buildings themselves;
- most places evolve over a long period of time once they have been established, with many incremental changes that can affect their quality;
- the quality of 'delight' includes a richness of experience gained from all of our senses, not only the visual; and
- beauty in a place may range from a long view down to the detail of a building or landscape.

6 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that achieving high quality places and buildings is fundamental to the planning and development process. It also leads to improvements in the quality of existing environments. The National Planning Policy Framework expands upon the fundamental principles of good design to define what is expected for well-designed places and explain how planning policies and decisions should support this.

7 The National Planning Policy Framework is supported by a suite of planning practice guidance that is relevant to both design quality and quality in delivery. See **Part 3: References**.

8 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. This includes people who use a place for various purposes such as:

- to live, work, shop, for leisure and recreation, and to move around between these activities; and
- those who visit or pass through.

It also includes people at different stages of life and with different abilities – children, young people, adults, families and older people, both able-bodied and disabled.

9 The National Design Guide addresses the question of how we recognise well-designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government's priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics. See

**Part 2: The ten characteristics**.

## Definitions

**Inclusion:** Making sure that all individuals have equal access, opportunity and dignity in the use of the built environment.

**Community cohesion:** A sense of belonging for all communities, with connections and trust between them. Diversity is valued and people of different backgrounds have the opportunity to develop positive relationships with one another.

**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.

**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.

<sup>1</sup> Originally from Vitruvius

10 It is based on national planning policy, practice guidance and objectives for good design as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Specific, detailed and measurable criteria for good design are most appropriately set out at the local level. They may take the form of local design policies, design guides or design codes, prepared either by local authorities, or applicants to accompany planning applications.

### How to use this design guide

11 The focus of this design guide is on good design in the planning system, so it is primarily for:

- local authority planning officers, who prepare local planning policy and guidance and assess the quality of planning applications;
- councillors, who make planning decisions;
- applicants and their design teams, who prepare applications for planning permission; and
- people in local communities and their representatives.

12 The terminology used here avoids jargon where possible. Definitions are provided where particular technical language is needed for clarity and precision.

The planning application process refers to key components of design. Together with related terms, these are defined on p.6. Otherwise definitions can generally be found in the section where the term is used for the first time.

13 In a well-designed place, an integrated design process brings the ten characteristics together in a mutually supporting way. They interact to create an overall character of place. Good design considers how a development proposal can make a contribution towards all of them.

This applies to proposals of all sizes, including small scale incremental changes (such as highway works), new buildings, infill developments, major developments and larger scale developments such as urban extensions, new neighbourhoods, new settlements and infrastructure.

14 At an early stage of the design process, the relative priority for different characteristics may be discussed and agreed. The most relevant characteristics will be determined by a number of considerations:

- locally identified priorities and concerns;
- the strategic priorities of the local authority;
- the priorities of a particular user group;
- the scale of proposal;

- its site and location; and/or
- the design process, including whether it is at a strategic or detailed stage.

15 As well as helping to inform development proposals and their assessment by local planning authorities, this design guide supports paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. The statements in this guide provide a series of tests for assessing whether a place is well-designed or not. If they are not met, then it can be concluded that it is not well-designed.

16 Well-designed places and buildings come about when there is a clearly expressed 'story' for the design concept and how it has evolved into a design proposal. This explains how the concept influences the layout, form, appearance and details of the proposed development. It may draw its inspiration from the site, its surroundings or a wider context. It may also introduce new approaches to contrast with, or complement, its context. This 'story' will inform and address all ten characteristics. It is set out in a Design and Access Statement that accompanies a planning application.



17 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. The design-related chapters of the planning practice guidance explain these and other design processes.

### Definitions

**Design concept:** The basic design ideas on which a proposal will be based, often expressed in a combination of words and visual material.

**Design and Access Statement:** A short report accompanying and supporting a planning application. It provides a framework for applicants to explain how a proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users.

### Looking forward

18 This guide has been prepared in the context of social, economic and environmental change. Technological change is rapid, with developments in digital, artificial intelligence and machine learning affecting our lives at all scales, both inside and outside the home. Demographics are also driving change, with an ageing population. Younger people's expectations are changing too. This is leading to new lifestyles and new models of home ownership. It includes more communal forms of living, such as cohousing. New models of development are also emerging, driven by advanced technologies. These include new off-site production methods, the use of digital technologies for production and customisation, and an increase in self- and custom-build.

19 We expect continuing change as a consequence of climate change, changing home ownership models and technological changes. It is likely to emerge and embed in society rapidly. It will influence the planning, design and construction of new homes and places. So, for each of the ten characteristics, a Looking Forward box identifies some issues to consider as we are thinking ahead about our places. Both local planning policies and the design process need to take these into account.

### Components for good design

20 Buildings are an important component of places and proposals for built development are a focus of the development management system. However good design involves careful attention to other important components of places. These include:

- the context for places and buildings;
- hard and soft landscape;
- technical infrastructure – transport, utilities, services such as drainage; and
- social infrastructure – social, commercial, leisure uses and activities.

21 A well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including:

- the layout (or masterplan);
- the form and scale of buildings;
- their appearance;
- landscape;
- materials; and
- their detailing.

These components are defined overleaf.

22 All developments are made up of these components put together in a particular way. The choices made in the design process contribute towards achieving the ten characteristics and shape the character of a place.

## **Layout**

23 A layout shows how routes and blocks of development are arranged and relate to one another to create streets, open spaces and buildings. It defines:

- the structure or settlement pattern;
- the grain - the pattern of development blocks and plots; and
- the broad distribution of different uses, and their densities or building heights.

## **Form**

24 Form is the three-dimensional shape and modelling of buildings and the spaces they define. Buildings and spaces can take many forms, depending upon their:

- size and shape in plan;
- height;
- bulk - their volume;
- massing - how bulk is shaped into a form;
- building lines - the alignment of building frontages along a street; and
- relationship to the plot boundary - and whether they share party walls or not.

In the case of spaces, their form is influenced by the buildings around them.

25 The form of a building or a space has a relationship with the uses and activities it accommodates, and also with the form of the wider place where it is sited.

## **Scale**

26 Scale is the height, width and length of each building proposed within a development in relation to its surroundings. This relates both to the overall size and massing of individual buildings and spaces in relation to their surroundings, and to the scale of their parts. It affects how a space can be used and how it is experienced. The relationships between the different dimensions of a building or component are known as its proportions.

27 Enclosure is the relationship between the height of the buildings across a space, and the dimension of the space itself. Taller building heights and a more built up building line both increase the enclosure. Different degrees of enclosure influence how people use different spaces, by creating differences in character that suit different activities.

## **Appearance**

28 Appearance is the aspects of a building or space within the development which determine the visual impression the building or space makes, including the external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture. In the case of a space, its landscape also influences its appearance.

## **Landscape**

29 Landscape is the treatment of land (other than buildings) for the purpose of enhancing or protecting the amenities of the site, the area in which it is situated and the natural environment. Landscape includes landform and drainage, hard landscape such as surfacing, boundary treatments, street furniture and play equipment. It also includes soft landscape – trees, shrubs and other planting.

## **Materials**

30 The materials used for a building or landscape affect how well it functions and lasts over time. They also influence how it relates to what is around it and how it is experienced. The scale, form and appearance of a building influence what materials may be appropriate for its construction. Materials should be practical, durable, affordable and attractive. Choosing the right materials can greatly help new development to fit harmoniously with its surroundings.

31 Innovative materials and construction techniques are being developed all the time. Modern methods of construction are becoming more common, whether in the form of mass production for modular construction, or off-site bespoke construction for self- or custom-build.

### **Detailing**

32 The details of a building are the individual components and how they are put together. Some are a deliberate part of the appearance of a building, including doors, windows and their surrounds, porches, decorative features and ironmongery. Others are functional, although they can also contribute to the appearance of a building. These include lighting, flues and ventilation, gutters, pipes and other rainwater details.

33 Detailing affects the appearance of a building or space and how it is experienced. It also affects how well it weathers and lasts over time.

### **The relationship between the National Design Guide and local design guides**

34 This document is set out in four parts:

- this part, Part 1, outlines the purpose of the National Design Guide;
- Part 2 sets out the ten characteristics of beautiful, enduring and successful places; and
- Part 3 provides sources of reference relevant to Part 2, including to other guidance and the good practice examples featured, as well as cross references to the National Planning Policy Framework and planning practice guidance.

The National Design Guide should be read alongside the National Model Design Code and Guidance Notes for Design Codes, which sets out detailed guidance that needs to be considered in the production of local design codes, guides and other design policies. It expands on the ten characteristics of good design set out in this document, which reflect the Government's priorities and provide a common overarching framework for design.

35 The National Design Guide provides a structure that can be used for the content of local design policies, guides and codes, and addresses issues that are important for design codes where these are applied to large scale development on single or multiple sites. The ten characteristics reflect the Government's priorities and provide a common overarching framework. More specific guidance in the form of design policies, guides and codes can then be locally formulated to meet the priorities of local communities. All local design policies, design guides and codes will need to set out a baseline understanding of the local context and an analysis of local character and identity. This may include (but not be limited to) the contribution made by the following:

- the relationship between the natural environment and built development;
- the typical patterns of built form that contribute positively to local character;
- the street pattern, their proportions and landscape features;
- the proportions of buildings framing spaces and streets;
- the local vernacular, other architecture and architectural features that contribute to local character.

## Introducing the ten characteristics

36 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.

37 The ten characteristics set out in Part 2 are:

- **Context** – enhances the surroundings.
- **Identity** – attractive and distinctive.
- **Built form** – a coherent pattern of development.
- **Movement** – accessible and easy to move around.
- **Nature** – enhanced and optimised.
- **Public spaces** – safe, social and inclusive.
- **Uses** – mixed and integrated.
- **Homes and buildings** – functional, healthy and sustainable.
- **Resources** – efficient and resilient.
- **Lifespan** – made to last.



*The ten characteristics of well-designed places*



# Part 2:

## The ten characteristics



# Context

Enhances the surroundings



38 **Context** is the location of the development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings.

39 An understanding of the context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region influences the location, siting and design of new developments. It means they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion.

40 Well-designed places are:

- based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design;
- integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them;
- influenced by and influence their context positively; and
- responsive to local history, culture and heritage.

*The topography, landscape character, cultural history and built form all define the context for **Ilkley, West Yorkshire**.*



## C1 Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context

41 Well-designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It enhances positive qualities and improves negative ones. Some features are physical, including:

- the existing built development, including layout, form, scale, appearance, details, and materials;
- local heritage – see below – and local character – see **Identity**;
- landform, topography, geography and ground conditions;
- landscape character, waterways, drainage and flood risk, biodiversity and ecology;
- access, movement and accessibility;
- environment – including landscape and visual impact, microclimate, orientation, flood risk, noise, air and water quality;
- views inwards and outwards;
- the pattern of uses and activities, including community facilities and local services; and
- how it functions.

Others are non-physical, such as:

- social characteristics, including demographics;
- economic factors; and
- the aspirations, concerns and perceptions of local communities.

42 Well-designed development proposals are shaped by an understanding of the context that identifies opportunities for design as well as constraints upon it. This is proportionate to the nature, size and sensitivity of the site and proposal. A simple analysis may be appropriate for a small scale proposal. Baseline studies covering a wide range of topics are likely to be required for a larger scale development.

43 Well-designed new development is integrated into its wider surroundings, physically, socially and visually. It is carefully sited and designed, and is demonstrably based on an understanding of the existing situation, including:

- the landscape character and how places or developments sit within the landscape, to influence the siting of new development and how natural features are retained or incorporated into it;
- patterns of built form, including local precedents for routes and spaces and the built form around them, to inform the layout, grain, form and scale – see **Built form**;
- the architecture prevalent in the area, including the local vernacular and other precedents that contribute to local character, to inform the form, scale, appearance, details and materials of new development – see **Identity**.



Identifying the existing features of the site and the wider area highlights opportunities for the design of new developments to link well into their context and enhance these features for the benefit of new and existing residents.

## Context

- uses and facilities, including identifying local needs and demands that well-located new facilities may satisfy; and
- public spaces, including their characteristic landscape design and details, both hard and soft.

44 However, well-designed places do not need to copy their surroundings in every way. It is appropriate to introduce elements that reflect how we live today, to include innovation or change such as increased densities, and to incorporate new sustainable features or systems.

45 To communicate the benefits of a scheme, it is important to explain how the design of a development relates to context and local character.

### C2 Value heritage, local history and culture

46 When determining how a site may be developed, it is important to understand the history of how the place has evolved. The local sense of place and identity are shaped by local history, culture and heritage, and how these have influenced the built environment and wider landscape.

47 Sensitive re-use or adaptation adds to the richness and variety of a scheme and to its diversity of activities and users. It helps to integrate heritage into proposals in an environmentally sustainable way.

48 Well-designed places and buildings are influenced positively by:

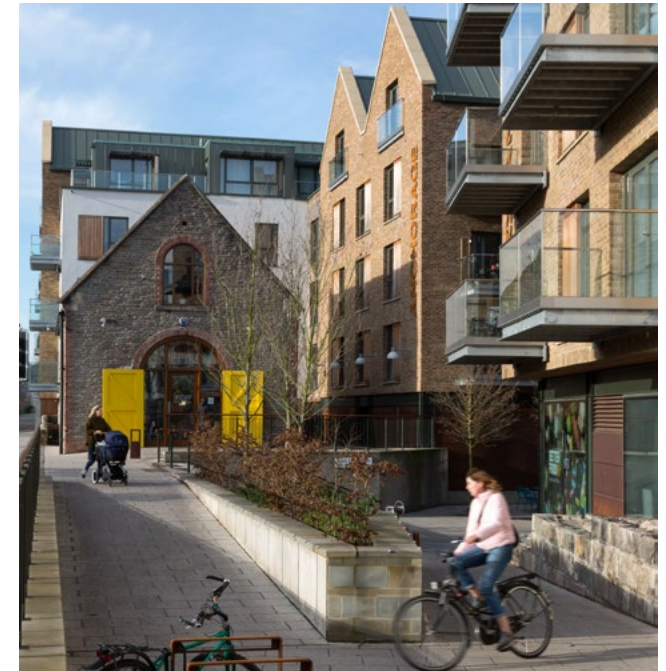
- the history and heritage of the site, its surroundings and the wider area, including cultural influences;
- the significance and setting of heritage assets and any other specific features that merit conserving and enhancing;
- the local vernacular, including historical building typologies such as the terrace, town house, mews, villa or mansion block, the treatment of façades, characteristic materials and details – see **Identity**.

49 Today's new developments extend the history of the context. The best of them will become valued as tomorrow's heritage, representing the architecture and placemaking of the early 21st century.

### Definitions

**Baseline studies:** Descriptions of the conditions as existing or committed (e.g. environmental), against which changes arising from a proposed development are predicted and assessed.

**Local vernacular:** An indigenous building style using local materials and traditional methods of construction and ornament, especially as distinguished from academic or historical architectural styles.

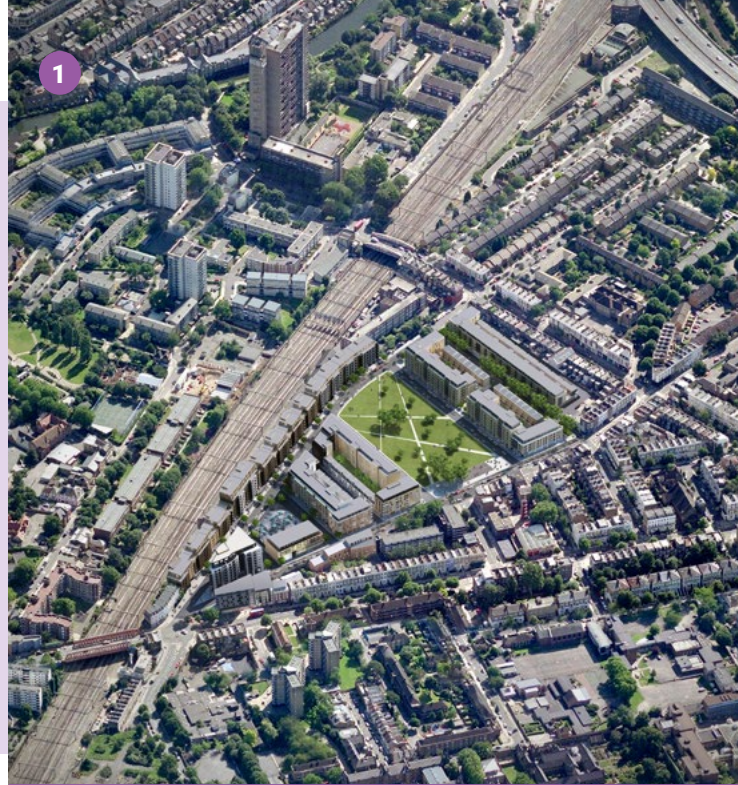


*New development relates well to Grade II listed buildings in an historic harbour-side conservation area. Residential buildings are designed as courtyard blocks with familiar roof forms around new pedestrian and cycle-focused streets. **Wapping Wharf, Bristol***



## Good practice examples

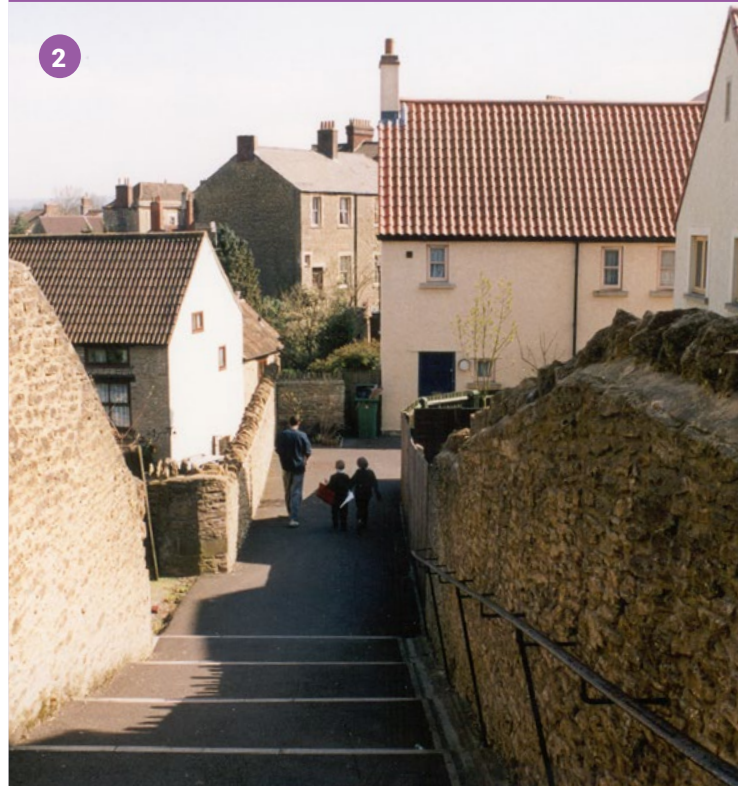
- 1 This development relates well to its context in terms of its layout, scale and massing as well as the location of open space and infrastructure. It respects the existing urban grain to create new streets and a new London square, a familiar type of open space in this west London context. **Portobello Square, Kensington, London.**
- 2 New homes relate positively to their historic town setting. The proportions of buildings, their openings and their materials all complement and enhance the context. **The Piggeries, Frome, Somerset.**
- 3 Historic streets are reintroduced to create permeable and well-sized urban blocks. The new housing creates a positive setting for several listed buildings. **Timekeepers Square, Salford.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How climate and environmental change influences your understanding of context?
- Are there opportunities for flood alleviation? Net environmental gain? Absorption of CO<sub>2</sub>? Reducing embodied carbon by retaining existing buildings?
- How emerging modes of transport and infrastructure may influence accessibility?
- How heritage may be incorporated into proposals so it is inclusive and accessible to all?





# Identity

Attractive and distinctive



50 The **identity** or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, streets and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings or how a place looks, but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive and memorable and helps people to find their way around. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.

51 Well-designed places, buildings and spaces:

- have a positive and coherent identity that everyone can identify with, including residents and local communities, so contributing towards health and well-being, inclusion and cohesion;
- have a character that suits the context, its history, how we live today and how we are likely to live in the future; and
- are visually attractive, to delight their occupants and other users.

*The distinctive character of the buildings and landscape helps to create an identity for this new development. Its design has a strong narrative and clear precedents. **Derwenthorpe, York.***

## 11 Respond to existing local character and identity

52 Local identity is made up of typical characteristics such as the pattern of housing, and special features that are distinct from their surroundings. These special features can be distinguished by their uses and activity, their social and cultural importance, and/or their physical form and design. Most places have some positive elements of character, particularly for their users. These can help to inform the character of a new development.

53 Well-designed new development is influenced by:

- an appreciation and understanding of vernacular, local or regional character, including existing built form, landscape and local architectural precedents;
- the characteristics of the existing built form – see **Built form**;
- the elements of a place or local places that make it distinctive; and
- other features of the context that are particular to the area – see **Context**.

This includes considering:

- the composition of street scenes, individual buildings and their elements;
- the height, scale, massing and relationships between buildings;
- views, vistas and landmarks;

- legibility - how easy it is for people to find their way around;
- roofscapes;
- the scale and proportions of buildings;
- façade design, such as the degree of symmetry, variety, the pattern and proportions of windows and doors, and their details;
- the scale and proportions of streets and spaces;
- hard landscape and street furniture;
- soft landscape, landscape setting and backdrop;
- nature and wildlife, including water;
- light, shade, sunshine and shadows; and
- colours, textures, shapes and patterns.

## 12 Well-designed, high quality and attractive places and buildings

54 Well-designed places and buildings are visually attractive and aim to delight their occupants and passers-by. They cater for a diverse range of residents and other users. All design approaches and architectural styles are visually attractive when designed well.

55 Well-designed places appeal to all our senses. The way a place looks, feels, sounds, and even smells, affects its enduring distinctiveness, attractiveness and beauty.



*This neighbourhood in a semi-rural setting draws on local historical precedents to create a distinctive character. It is defined by the height and massing of buildings, variation in roof forms and material selection. Gables are paired to create a focal point and mark the entrance to a street. **Trowse Newton, Norfolk.***



56 Well-designed places contribute to local distinctiveness. This may include:

- adopting typical building forms, composition, articulation, proportions, features, materials, details, patterns and colours of an area;
- drawing upon the architectural precedents that are prevalent in the local area, including the proportions of buildings and their openings;
- using local building, landscape or topographical features, materials or planting types;
- introducing built form and appearance that adds new character and difference to places, with particular attention to how buildings meet the ground and sky;
- creating a positive and coherent identity that residents and local communities can identify with.

57 Materials, construction details and planting are selected with care for their context. They are attractive but also practical, durable and affordable. They contribute to visual appeal and local distinctiveness. In well-designed buildings, the materials and details suit the design concept and they are consistently followed through the construction process to completion.

### 13 Create character and identity

58 Design decisions at all levels and scales shape the character of a new place or building and help to create a memorable sense of place. Character starts to be determined by the siting of development in the wider landscape, then by the layout and grain – the pattern of streets, landscape and spaces, the movement network and the arrangement of development blocks. It continues to be created by the form, scale, proportions, design, materials, details, patterns and colours of buildings and landscape. In this way, it creates a coherent identity for residents and communities to identify with.

59 Where the scale or density of new development is very different to the existing place, it may be more appropriate to create a new identity rather than to scale up the character of an existing place in its context. New character may also arise from a response to how today's lifestyles could evolve in the future, or to the proposed method of development and construction. Larger scale new developments, such as garden villages or urban extensions, may benefit from a variety of characters so that different areas or neighbourhoods each have their own identity.

60 Where the character of an existing place has limited or few positive qualities, then a new and positive character will enhance its identity.



*A wide street with house frontages stepping down along its length. Their simple forms, considered roof detailing, and colourful façades create a strong identity appropriate to the local and wider context of **Nansledan, Newquay**.*

#### Definitions

**Street scene:** The appearance of all of the elements of a street, including the carriageway, pavement, street furniture, planting, and the buildings or structures along its edges, particularly the composition of buildings on each side of the street.

**Roofscape:** A view of roofs, particularly in terms of its aesthetic appeal.

**Legibility:** How easy it is for people to understand and find their way around a place and how memorable it is.



## Good practice examples

① Apartments designed in a traditional style in response to the local identity. The frontage of the development is designed as a series of façades to create a vertical rhythm along the street and this is reinforced by the composition and proportions of openings. **Highbury Gardens, Islington, London.**

② Timber cladding, gable ends, a pedestrian-focused public realm and generous planting all give an informal, rural character to this neighbourhood at **Abode, Great Kneighton, Cambridge.**

③ The use of brick cladding on this tall building gives it a character that fits well into its historic surroundings, and a texture that is human scale and tactile where the building meets the ground. **Blackfriars Circus, Southwark, London.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How the identity suits the proposed approach to development such as construction technologies, diversity of procurement or ownership models?
- How the proposed character responds to climate change?
- How natural features such as tree planting, wetlands or other sustainable drainage systems can contribute to a positive character and perform a multifunctional role?



# Built form

A coherent pattern of development



61 **Built form** is the three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings and open spaces. It is the interrelationship between all these elements that creates an attractive place to live, work and visit, rather than their individual characteristics. Together they create the built environment and contribute to its character and sense of place.

62 It is relevant to city and town centres, suburbs, villages and rural settlements. It creates a coherent framework that forms a basis for the design of individual developments within a place.

63 Well-designed places have:

- compact forms of development that are walkable, contributing positively to well-being and placemaking;
- accessible local public transport, services and facilities, to ensure sustainable development;
- recognisable streets and other spaces with their edges defined by buildings, making it easy for anyone to find their way around, and promoting safety and accessibility; and
- memorable features or groupings of buildings, spaces, uses or activities that create a sense of place, promoting inclusion and cohesion.

*The built form of this urban block is oriented to make the most of views towards the river. It steps to create a varied roof line, so that it sits sensitively in the wider historic industrial context. This helps to manage the levels of a sloping site. It also provides attractive roof terraces for residents. **The Malings, Ouseburn.***

## B1 Compact form of development

64 Compact forms of development bring people together to support local public transport, facilities and local services. They make destinations easily accessible by walking or cycling wherever this is practical. This helps to reduce dependency upon the private car.

65 Well-designed new development makes efficient use of land with an amount and mix of development and open space that optimises density. It also relates well to and enhances the existing character and context.

66 Built form is determined by good urban design principles that combine layout, form and scale in a way that responds positively to the context. The appropriate density will result from the context, accessibility, the proposed building types, form and character of the development.

## B2 Appropriate building types and forms

67 Well-designed places use the right mix of building types, forms and scale of buildings and public spaces for the context and the proposed density, to create a coherent form of development that people enjoy. They also adopt strategies for parking and amenity that support the overall quality of the place.

68 The built form of well-designed places relates well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;
- the lifestyles of occupants and other users; and
- resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation. See

### Resources.

69 Built form defines a pattern of streets and development blocks. Streets are places for people as well as for movement. Street types will depend on:

- their width, relating to their use;
- the height of buildings and the consistency of their building line in relation to the street itself, and the sense of enclosure that results;
- how built up they are along their length including whether or not buildings share party walls, and the structure of blocks and routes that this creates;
- the relationship between building fronts and backs, with successful streets characterised by buildings facing the street to provide interest, overlooking and active frontages at ground level - see

### Public spaces;



*Considering the layout, grain and scale of buildings and spaces in different situations, and drawing inspiration from traditional street patterns, helps to create new developments that fit well into the surrounding context.*



## Built form

- establishing an appropriate relationship with the pattern, sizes and proportions of existing streets in the local area; and
- how they create a clear distinction between public and private spaces.

70 Well-designed tall buildings play a positive urban design role in the built form. They act as landmarks, emphasising important places and making a positive contribution to views and the skyline.

71 Proposals for tall buildings (and other buildings with a significantly larger scale or bulk than their surroundings) require special consideration. This includes their location and siting; relationship to context; impact on local character, views and sight lines; composition - how they meet the ground and the sky; and environmental impacts, such as sunlight, daylight, overshadowing and wind. These need to be resolved satisfactorily in relation to the context and local character.

### B3 Destinations

72 Destinations provide opportunities for people to meet, share experiences and come together as a community - see also **Uses**. By bringing existing and new together, destinations become a place for everyone.

73 They create valuable opportunities for the built form to strengthen the local character of a place. The choice of site, layout, form and scale of built form, together with good design and well-considered materials, all help to add to local distinctiveness and create a sense of community.

74 In this way, local destinations become recognisable features that help people find their way around and feel a sense of identity. Involving potential users in the design process also helps to achieve this.

### Definitions

**Accessibility:** The ability of people to move around an area and reach places and facilities, including older and disabled people, those with young children and those carrying luggage or shopping.

**Compact form of development:** Development that is planned with a relatively high residential density and an urban layout. Community facilities are closer to one another and their users, preserves more open landscape, and makes efficient use of land and resources.

**Walkable:** Local facilities are within walking distance, generally considered to be no more than a 10 minute walk (800m radius).

**Destinations:** Places or facilities that people want to visit. In a neighbourhood these may be transport hubs, open spaces, local services such as schools, shops, healthcare or community facilities.



*The form of these new homes draws from local rural typologies, with a contemporary interpretation.*  
**Carrowbreck Meadow, Norfolk**



*Flats are used to turn the corner of this urban block. Stepped bay windows and a large chimney stack to create a positive and interesting facade treatment on a prominent corner.*  
**Pottergate, Alnwick, Northumberland**



## Good practice examples

- 1 This development is designed around a clear street hierarchy, a mix of open spaces and an associated variety of building types and sizes. **Great Western Park, Didcot.**
- 2 A network of streets and courts frame open spaces that allow views out to the hillside and coastline for existing and new residents. The built form adopts a, contemporary approach to traditional typologies. **Officers Field, Weymouth.**
- 3 This higher density, urban development uses the size and location of open spaces, layout, orientation and stepping façades and roofs to break up the form. **St. Andrews Block B, Bromley-by-Bow, London.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How the built form reduces reliance upon the car by promoting walking and cycling to local destinations, and prioritising public transport routes?
- How it can support evolving lifestyles? Working remotely or from home? Intergenerational living? Cohousing?
- How the layout, form and scale are a suitable starting point for an appropriate character?



# Movement

Accessible and easy to move around



*Cycle and pedestrian movement that is well-overlooked and attractive.*  
**Packington Estate, Islington, London.**

75 Patterns of **movement** for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. They contribute to making high quality places for people to enjoy. They also form a crucial component of urban character. Their success is measured by how they contribute to the quality and character of the place, not only how well they function.

76 Successful development depends upon a movement network that makes connections to destinations, places and communities, both within the site and beyond its boundaries.

77 A well-designed movement network defines a clear pattern of streets that:

- is safe and accessible for all;
- functions efficiently to get everyone around, takes account of the diverse needs of all its potential users and provides a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes;
- limits the impacts of car use by prioritising and encouraging walking, cycling and public transport, mitigating impacts and identifying opportunities to improve air quality;
- promotes activity and social interaction, contributing to health, well-being, accessibility and inclusion; and
- incorporates green infrastructure, including street trees to soften the impact of car parking, help improve air quality and contribute to biodiversity.

## M1 A connected network of routes for all modes of transport

78 A well-designed and connected network gives people the maximum choice in how to make their journeys. This includes by rail, other public transport, walking, cycling and by car.

79 In a well-designed place, all modes of transport are positively designed into the built form. They are integrated into public spaces with character that people enjoy using. People move around in attractive streets and other public spaces - parks, natural open spaces and green corridors. Well-designed streets create attractive public spaces with character, through their layout, landscape, including street trees, lighting, street furniture and materials - see **Public spaces**.

80 A clear layout and hierarchy of streets and other routes helps people to find their way around so that journeys are easy to make. Wider, more generous spaces are well-suited to busier streets, including streets served by public transport. They have enough space to create an attractive place for all users. Narrower streets are more suitable where there is limited vehicle movement and speeds are low. Mews, courtyards and culs-de-sac will generally only be appropriate at the most local level where there is little vehicular movement.

81 Higher densities are dependent upon accessibility to public transport and essential facilities. To optimise density, it may be necessary to provide public transport infrastructure or to improve existing local transport services. A transport hub may represent an opportunity for a local increase in density, where appropriate to local context and character.

## M2 Active travel

82 Priority is given to pedestrian and cycle movements, subject to location and the potential to create connections. Prioritising pedestrians and cyclists mean creating routes that are safe, direct, convenient and accessible for people of all abilities. These are designed as part of attractive spaces with good sightlines, and well chosen junctions and crossings, so that people want to use them. Public rights of way are protected, enhanced and well-linked into the wider network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

83 In well-designed places, people should not need to rely on the car for everyday journeys, including getting to workplaces, shops, schools and other facilities, open spaces or the natural environment. Safe and direct routes with visible destinations or clear signposting encourage people to walk and cycle.



*Well-designed places have a hierarchy of well-connected routes, such as boulevards, streets, roads, avenues, mews and courts. New developments help to reinforce or extend the movement network. For pedestrians and cyclists, direct links create good connections to public transport and promote active travel, particularly where they are along routes with low levels of vehicular traffic.*



### M3 Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users

84 Parking standards are set locally and vary in response to local conditions. How parking is arranged has a fundamental effect on the quality of a place or development.

85 Well-designed car and cycle parking at home and at other destinations is conveniently sited so that it is well used. This could be off-street to avoid on-street problems such as pavement parking or congested streets. It is safe and meets the needs of different users including occupants, visitors and people with disabilities. It may be accommodated in a variety of ways, in terms of location, allocation and design.

86 Well-designed parking is attractive, well-landscaped and sensitively integrated into the built form so that it does not dominate the development or the street scene. It incorporates green infrastructure, including trees, to soften the visual impact of cars, help improve air quality and contribute to biodiversity. Its arrangement and positioning relative to buildings limit its impacts, whilst ensuring it is secure and overlooked.

87 Electric vehicle spaces and charging points need to be considered, so they are suitably located, sited and designed to avoid street clutter.

88 Access for servicing is also well-integrated into developments, including for refuse collection, deliveries and removals. Bin stores are carefully integrated so that bins are not visible from the street (see

**Homes and Buildings** ).

89 Utilities services and infrastructure include water supply, sewerage, drainage, gas, electricity, full fibre broadband, digital infrastructure and telephones. Their siting and layout take into account:

- their space requirements and visual impact;
- convenient maintenance while not impeding the planting of street trees; and
- implications for foreseeable future changes in demand.



*A guided busway with dedicated pedestrian and cycle paths provides fast and direct links to connect new and existing neighbourhoods with employment and services in **Cambridgeshire**.*

### Definitions

**Movement network:** The linked routes and connections for people and vehicles to go and move through places and spaces. Specific consideration is given to the needs of each of the different users of the network, including pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, cars and service vehicles.

**Sustainable transport mode:** Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

**Green corridor:** Uninterrupted network of natural features within an urban area that acts as a linkage for wildlife, and potentially for people.

**Street clutter:** Street furniture and landscape arranged so that streets are difficult to move through, use or are unattractive.



## Good practice examples

- 1 A dedicated pedestrian and cycle Quietway route separates pedestrians and cyclists from vehicles in **Walthamstow, London**.
- 2 Streets are places for people as well as cars. **Poundbury, Dorchester**.
- 3 The street is designed with parking located in front of homes and screened with robust shrub planting and small trees. Planting is kept low to maintain visibility along the street and towards front doors. **Horsted Park, Kent**.



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How to reduce reliance upon the private car? Moving away from car use for short journeys? Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport?
- How changing technology will continue to affect movement? Electric vehicles (cars and e-bikes) and their charging requirements? Private hire/driverless vehicles in terms of parking provision?
- How to improve air quality? Restrictions/charging for certain types of vehicles? Natural features such as trees, hedges or water?



# Nature

Enhanced and optimised



90 **Nature** contributes to the quality of a place, and to people's quality of life, and it is a critical component of well-designed places. Natural features are integrated into well-designed development. They include natural and designed landscapes, high quality public open spaces, street trees, and other trees, grass, planting and water.

91 Well-designed places:

- integrate existing, and incorporate new natural features into a multifunctional network that supports quality of place, biodiversity and water management, and addresses climate change mitigation and resilience;
- prioritise nature so that diverse ecosystems can flourish to ensure a healthy natural environment that supports and enhances biodiversity;
- provide attractive open spaces in locations that are easy to access, with activities for all to enjoy, such as play, food production, recreation and sport, so as to encourage physical activity and promote health, well-being and social inclusion.

*Informal doorstep play is located along a pedestrian route among planting and trees, well-overlooked by neighbouring homes. **South Gardens, Elephant Park, London.***



**N1 Provide a network of high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities, including play**

92 Well-designed places provide usable green spaces, taking into account:

- the wider and local context, including existing landscape and ecology;
- access;
- how spaces are connected;
- the balance between public and private open spaces – see **Public spaces** ;
- their potential to contribute to a strategic green infrastructure system, and to water management – see below;

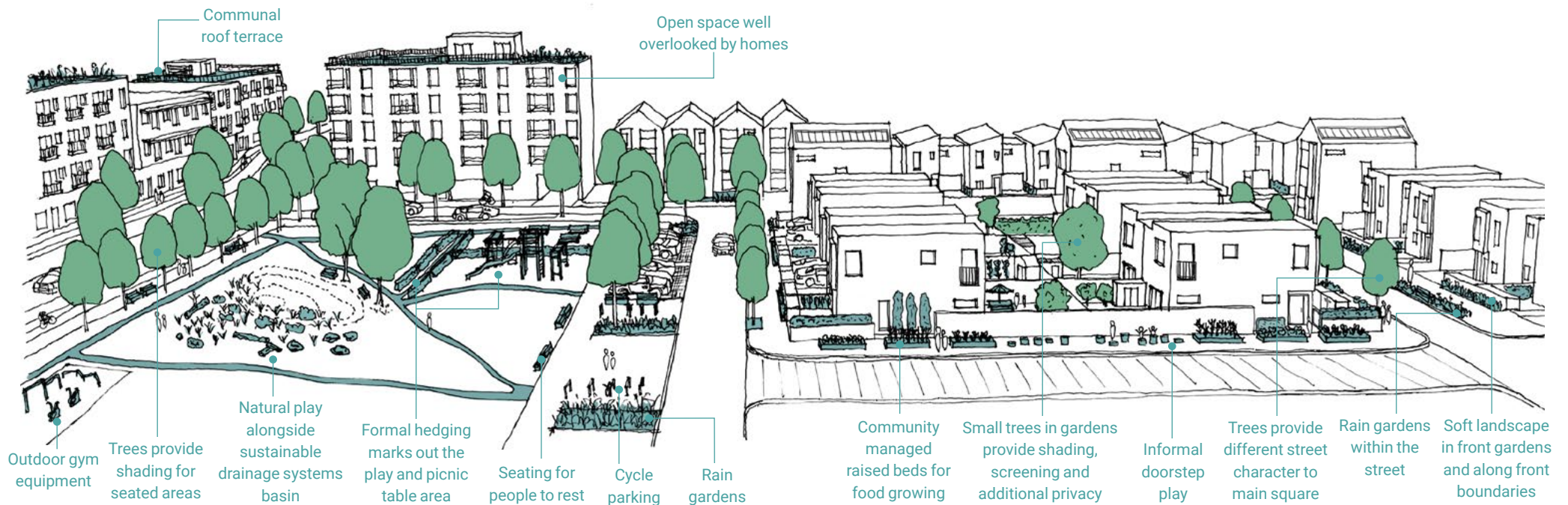
- their ability to support a range of activities and provide amenity value; and
- how they are to be managed and maintained.

93 Open spaces are designed to be high quality, robust and adaptable over time so that they remain fit for purpose and are managed and maintained for continual use.

94 Open spaces include public, shared and private outdoor spaces with:

- a range of sizes and locations;

- a variety of natural and designed landscapes for everyone, with different functions to suit a diverse range of needs;
- opportunities for formal and informal play, exercise and rest that are accessible to all and with no segregation;
- well-integrated drainage, ecology, shading, recreation and food production that achieve a biodiversity net gain as required by the 25-year Environment Plan; and
- well-considered maintenance and management regimes based on an understanding of the costs for occupants or users.





95 Public open spaces are open to all. They provide opportunities for comfort, relaxation, stimulation and social interaction in a safe environment. To encourage interaction in an open space, its location and structure need careful consideration along with its activities, versatility, and how it can be used and accessed by all groups of people.

### **N2 Improve and enhance water management**

96 Water management maintains healthy water systems and is important for effective sustainable drainage systems. In well-designed places, water features form part of an integrated system of landscape, biodiversity and drainage. This includes new water features that manage drainage and also existing watercourses. Together with green and brown roofs, swales, rain gardens, rain capture and other drainage, water features create multifunctional 'green' sustainable drainage systems. They also enhance the attractiveness of open spaces and provide opportunities for play, interaction and relaxation.

97 Alternatively, places or developments may be designed to adapt to flood conditions. Examples may include a terraced open space where lower levels may become a water feature, or homes with habitable rooms lifted above flood level.



*Introducing planting softens and greens the city centre and provides pocket parks, so enhancing the quality of the public realm. **Grey to Green, Sheffield.***

### **N3 Support rich and varied biodiversity**

98 Well-designed developments include site-specific enhancements to achieve biodiversity net gains at neighbourhood, street and household level. Green corridors can be used to extend and enhance existing ecosystems. Existing areas of valuable biodiversity are protected and enhanced. Priority is given to rare or critical habitats and species.

### **Definitions**

**Net gain for biodiversity:** Biodiversity net gain delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures. See the Natural Environment planning practice guidance for more detail.

**Green infrastructure:** A network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

**Sustainable drainage systems:** Features designed to reduce flood risk, which are built to receive surface water run-off, such as constructed wetlands, permeable surfaces, retention ponds, green roofs and swales.



## Good practice examples

1 Sustainable drainage systems and trees are incorporated into streets, creating a high quality, green setting for new homes and contributing to the character of the neighbourhood. **Upton, Northampton.**

2 Ponds are used as a key part of the sustainable drainage systems strategy to manage drainage and provide an attractive rural outlook from neighbouring homes. **Houlton, Rugby.**

3 New landscape in the courtyards of these existing homes promotes well-being and social interaction. It includes abundant planting with trees and wild flower meadows, new paths and seating, and carefully integrated parking. **Maritime Streets, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How to achieve a net gain in biodiversity?
- The impact of climate change on biodiversity?
- How natural features can contribute to quality, while addressing technical issues? Wetlands/ ponds?
- How natural features contribute to climate change mitigation or adaptation? Tree planting for CO<sub>2</sub> absorption and/ or shade?



# Public spaces

Safe, social and inclusive



99 The quality of the spaces between buildings is as important as the buildings themselves. **Public spaces** are streets, squares, and other spaces that are open to all. They are the setting for most movement. The design of a public space encompasses its siting and integration into the wider network of routes as well as its various elements. These include areas allocated to different users – cars, cyclists and pedestrians – for different purposes such as movement or parking, hard and soft surfaces, street furniture, lighting, signage and public art.

100 Well-designed places:

- include well-located public spaces that support a wide variety of activities and encourage social interaction, to promote health, well-being, social and civic inclusion;
- have a hierarchy of spaces that range from large and strategic to small and local spaces, including parks, squares, greens and pocket parks;
- have public spaces that feel safe, secure and attractive for all to use; and
- have trees and other planting within public spaces for people to enjoy, whilst also providing shading, and air quality and climate change mitigation.

*High quality public space at the heart of the city centre, designed as a flexible space with water features for play and animation. **City Park, Bradford.***

## P1 Create well-located, high quality and attractive public spaces

101 Well-designed public spaces, particularly streets, are designed to support an active life for everyone, and are maintained for continual use. It is important to design them to include all of the users who may wish to use them for activities such as socialising, informal doorstep play, resting and movement. Their success depends on them being fit for purpose, attractive places that people enjoy using.

102 In well-designed places, streets are public spaces that are open to all. They encourage people to walk and cycle rather than to depend upon cars, particularly for short, local journeys. They are accessible to all and designed to meet the needs of their most vulnerable users. They are places where the design of shared space schemes, that remove or reduce the distinction between the pavement and carriageway, takes into consideration the needs of people with disabilities particularly visual impairment.

103 High quality public spaces include natural elements such as tree planting or water. These may be sited within the space itself, associated with the buildings around its edges or in the backdrop of views (See **Nature**). The design of landscape influences the microclimate and can promote a sense of tranquillity.

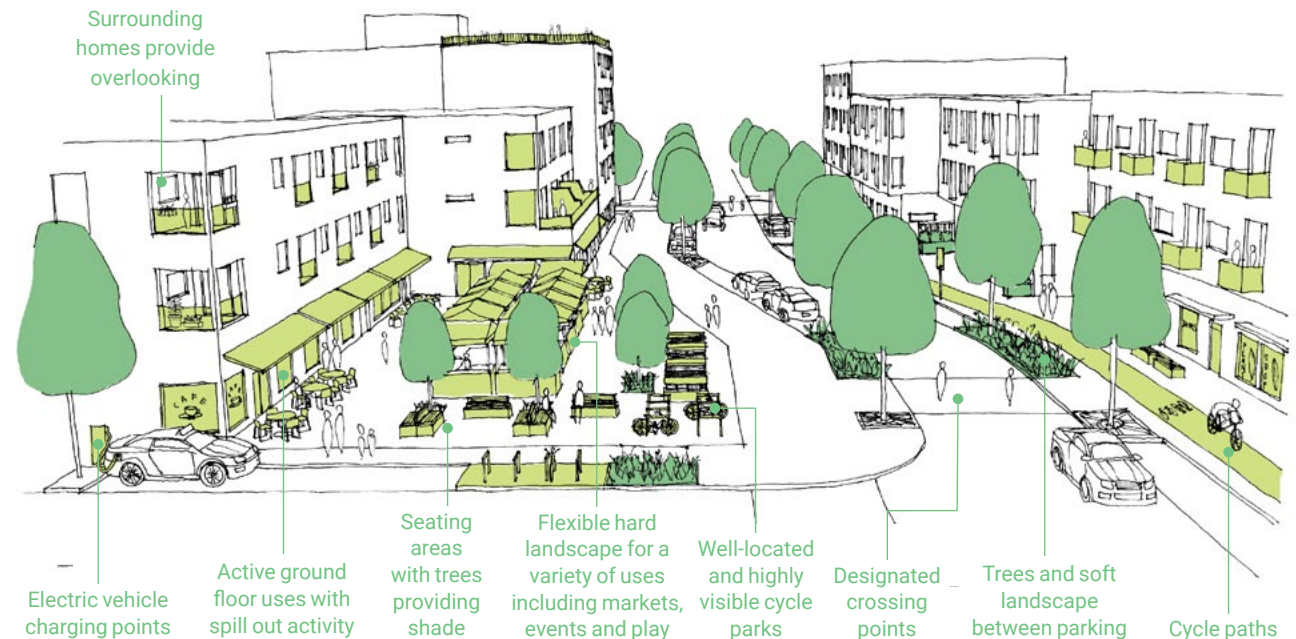
## P2 Provide well-designed spaces that are safe

104 Well-designed public and shared amenity spaces feel safe for people who occupy the buildings around them, and also for visitors and passers-by. They help to overcome crime and the fear of crime.

105 Careful planning and design create the right conditions for people to feel safe and secure, without the need for additional security measures.



*New public space that accommodates a range of activities, with a mix of uses around its edges, including a supermarket and housing. **The Russells, Broadway, Worcestershire.***





## Public spaces

These include:

- buildings around the edges of a space;
- active frontages along its edges, provided by entrances onto the space and windows overlooking it, so that people come and go at different times;
- natural surveillance from inside buildings provided by windows and balconies, so that users of the space feel they might be overlooked by people from inside;
- reasons for people to enter into the space, for an activity or destination or because it is on a natural line of direction of travel;
- risk assessment and mitigation at an early stage of the design process, so security measures can be integrated into positive design features.

### P3 Make sure public spaces support social interaction

106 Well-designed public spaces are social spaces, providing meeting places, and opportunities for comfort, relaxation and stimulation for all, regardless of the type or tenure of the homes around them. They have widespread appeal, are able to accommodate people with different needs and can help combat social isolation and loneliness. See

**Built form**.



High quality green public spaces provide key pedestrian links to local facilities, a range of outdoor amenity including play areas, and a net gain in biodiversity. **Beaulieu, Chelmsford.**

107 A well-designed public space that encourages social interaction is sited so that it is open and accessible to all local communities. It is connected into the movement network, preferably so that people naturally pass through it as they move around. It appeals to different groups. This is influenced by the range of activities that can happen within the space and who they are for. It is also influenced by the versatility and accessibility of its design. The uses around its edges reinforce its appeal and help make it into a destination.

### Definitions

**Active frontage:** The front of a buildings with openings onto the space that generate activity and engagement between the building interior and the space outside, particularly entrances.

**Natural surveillance:** When buildings around a space are designed with features that are likely to lead to people overlooking the space. These may be windows, balconies, front gardens or entrances.



## Good practice examples

- 1 The street is designed to prioritise pedestrians with a focus on social interaction, such as play, communal gatherings and places to sit with neighbours. **Marmalade Lane, Cambridge.**
- 2 Central urban public space with tree planting and grass provides a peaceful space to meet and interact in the city. **West Smithfield, The City of London.**
- 3 Central pedestrianised street activated with cafés and shops spilling out, and strategically located trees, benches and bike stands to separate the external space of shop units from a central zone for movement. **Castle Street, Kingston upon Thames.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How the design of public spaces can mitigate the 'heat island' effect? By planting trees? Introducing water into spaces?
- How to accommodate different users to prioritise walking and cycling? Using segregated spaces? Traffic calming measures?
- How public spaces meet the needs of the most vulnerable users – both young and old?



# Uses

Mixed and integrated



108 Sustainable places include a mix of **uses** that support everyday activities, including to live, work and play.

109 Well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use.

110 Where there is rapid social and economic change, such as sustainable growth or diversification in rural communities or town centres, well-designed buildings and places are able to accommodate a variety of uses over time.

111 Well-designed places have:

- a mix of uses including local services and facilities to support daily life;
- an integrated mix of housing tenures and types to suit people at all stages of life; and
- well-integrated housing and other facilities that are designed to be tenure neutral and socially inclusive.

*A high quality, mixed-use development with active frontages rejuvenates a town centre. **Dickens Yard, Ealing, London.***

## U1 A mix of uses

112 Successful communities require a range and variety of local services and community facilities including schools, nurseries, workplaces, healthcare, spiritual, recreational, civic and commercial uses. These:

- represent the varied needs and aspirations of the existing and future local community, including all ages and abilities;
- support everyday life and encourage sustainable lifestyles;
- are convenient and within walking or cycling distance on accessible routes to local homes and other facilities; and
- are located to complement rather than conflict with neighbouring uses in terms of noise, servicing and ventilation.

113 Mixed-use development creates an active and vibrant place with an intensity that feels like a centre or destination - see **Built form**. Typically, it is appropriate in urban locations and the centres of larger scale developments.

114 In well-designed mixed-use development, the interrelationship between different uses is designed to cater well for all users. Particular attention is paid to:

- the arrangement of ground floor uses, to ensure they are occupied successfully;
- the access arrangements to upper floors, especially to homes.

## U2 A mix of home tenures, types and sizes

115 Well-designed neighbourhoods provide a variety and choice of home to suit all needs and ages. This includes people who require affordable housing or other rental homes, families, extended families, older people, students, and people with physical disabilities or mental health needs.

116 Where different tenures are provided, they are well-integrated and designed to the same high quality to create tenure neutral homes and spaces, where no tenure is disadvantaged.

117 Well-designed places include a variety of homes to meet the needs of older people, including retirement villages, care homes, extra-care housing, sheltered housing, independent living and age-restricted general market housing. They are integrated into new settlements with good access to public transport and local facilities.

118 Well-designed larger scale developments include a range of tenures. They also promote a variety of development models, such as community-led development, self- and custom-build and build to rent. This supports a diversity of delivery, by small as well as large developers. It also helps to create rich, diverse settlements.



*Estate regeneration including new mixed tenure homes, a community centre and a Multi-Use Games Area for social and physical well-being. **Bourne Estate, Holborn, London.***



*A large mixed-use canal-side development with a range of mixed uses including commercial and residential around a central square. The square is designed to accommodate a variety of uses and events. It has many access points and is well-overlooked by neighbouring buildings. **Brindleyplace, Birmingham.***



### U3 Socially inclusive

119 Good design promotes social inclusion by:

- contributing to creating balanced and mixed neighbourhoods that are suitable and accessible for all;
- maximising the potential for social integration in the layout, form and appearance of types of development;
- avoiding features that could create actual or perceived barriers, or contribute to segregation, both within the development and with its surroundings;
- providing a consistent level of design quality across tenures, to support social integration; and
- using local resources such as schools, nurseries, community facilities, parks, other open spaces, health, and religious or cultural facilities as destinations in layouts to promote social interaction and integration, and help combat loneliness. See [Built form](#) and [Public spaces](#).



*Multiple tenures including private ownership, rent, shared ownership and specialist housing groups, with no visual distinction in the facade or difference to communal entrances from the front. **Buccleuch House, Clapton, London.***

#### Definitions

**Tenure neutral:** Housing where no group of residents is disadvantaged as a result of the tenure of their homes. There is no segregation or difference in quality between tenures by siting, accessibility, environmental conditions, external facade or materials. Homes of all tenures are represented in equally attractive and beneficial locations, and there is no differentiation in the positions of entrances. Shared open or play spaces are accessible to all residents around them, regardless of tenure.

**Mixed-use development:** Provision of a mix of complementary uses, such as residential, community and leisure uses, on a site or in close proximity within a particular area.



## Good practice examples

1 A village square is the focus of the community, faced by a mix of uses including a primary school with community centre, a nursery, shops, offices and flats and extra-care housing with a public cafe, shops, offices and flats. It creates a popular, flexible space for community activities. **Lightmoor, Telford.**

2 A mix of house types and tenures for a range of housing needs are visually integrated, creating a mixed neighbourhood that faces onto a tree-lined avenue in a Conservation Area. **The Avenue, Saffron Walden.**

3 A new church, cafe and community space is integrated in a new residential development. **Frampton Park Baptist Church, Hackney, London.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How to introduce or promote a broad mix of uses to bring vibrancy to neighbourhood or other centres, including high streets?
- Will buildings be able to adapt to evolving uses, as changing technology affects patterns of work, shopping and leisure?
- How the use of community buildings and other facilities could be shared?
- How to make sure that developments are tenure neutral and do not disadvantage any group of residents?



# Homes & buildings

Functional, healthy and sustainable



120 Well-designed **homes and buildings** are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them.

121 They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time.

122 Successful buildings also provide attractive, stimulating and positive places for all, whether for activity, interaction, retreat, or simply passing by.

123 Well-designed homes and buildings:

- provide good quality internal and external environments for their users, promoting health and well-being;
- relate positively to the private, shared and public spaces around them, contributing to social interaction and inclusion; and
- resolve the details of operation and servicing so that they are unobtrusive and well-integrated into their neighbourhoods.

*A balcony has space for sitting and growing plants. It faces out to the public realm, but maintains a sense of enclosure and privacy. **Prince Charles House, St Austell.***

## H1 Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment

124 Good design promotes quality of life for the occupants and users of buildings. This includes function – buildings should be easy to use. It also includes comfort, safety, security, amenity, privacy, accessibility and adaptability.

125 Well designed homes and buildings are efficient and cost effective to run. They help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by incorporating features that encourage sustainable lifestyles. They have good ventilation, avoid overheating, minimise sound pollution and have good air quality, while providing comfort and personal control for their users.

126 Well-designed homes and communal areas within buildings provide a good standard and quality of internal space. This includes room sizes, floor-to-ceiling heights, internal and external storage, sunlight, daylight and ventilation. The quality of internal space needs careful consideration in higher-density developments, particularly for family accommodation, where access, privacy, daylight and external amenity space are also important.

127 Where a need is identified, Local Plans may adopt the Nationally Described Space Standards and those for accessibility and water.

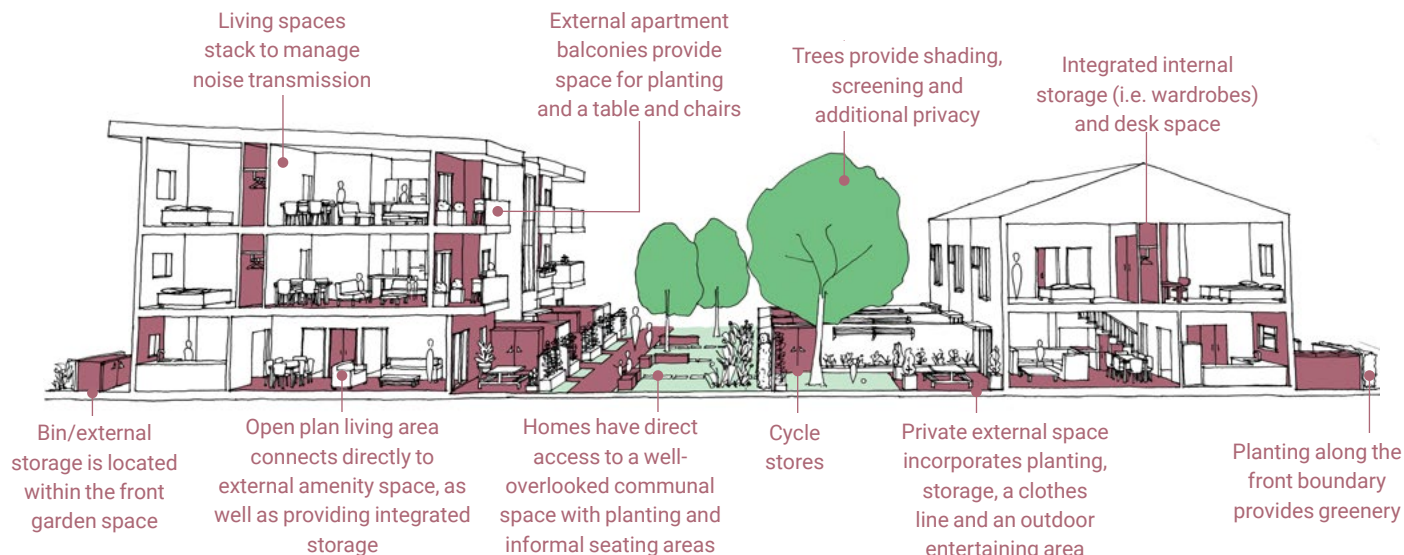
128 Well-designed buildings have building safety requirements under other legislation in mind from the outset to provide a safe and secure environment for occupants and users. They allow ease of access for emergency services, and facilities for the safe access to and from buildings in the need for evacuation.

## H2 Well-related to external amenity and public spaces

129 Well-designed buildings are carefully integrated with their surrounding external space. All private and shared external spaces including parking (see **Movement**), are high quality, convenient and function well. Amenity spaces have a reasonable degree of privacy. External spaces are designed to respond to local character, as appropriate solutions will vary by the context, for example whether it is a town centre or suburb.

130 Well-designed private or shared external spaces are fit for purpose and incorporate planting wherever possible. The appropriate size, shape and position for an external amenity space can be defined by considering:

- how the associated building sits in the wider context, including access to public and open spaces;
- how the amenity space will be used, what for, and by whom;





- environmental factors that may affect its usability, such as sunlight and shade, noise or pollution;
- wider environmental factors affecting its quality or sustainability, such as a green corridor or drainage.

131 Well-designed shared amenity spaces feel safe and secure for their users. They are social spaces providing opportunities for comfort, relaxation and stimulation - including play - for residents, regardless of the type or tenure of homes. They are well-overlooked and all of the residents who share them can access them easily.

132 Private amenity spaces including both gardens and balconies enhance visual and outdoor amenity. They can also provide a degree of privacy and separation for living areas from adjoining public space. Front gardens may incorporate planting to add to natural features within the public space.

133 Well-designed buildings relate well to the public spaces around them. The interface between building and public space is carefully designed so that it is positive and appropriate to its context (see also **Context**, **Identity** and **Public spaces**) and to the occupants and passers-by who use them.

### H3 Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities

134 Well-designed places include a clear attention to detail. This considers how buildings operate in practice and how people access and use them on a day-to-day basis, both now and in future. They include:

- Local waste storage, management and pick up: Refuse bins for all the different types of collection, including landfill, recycling and food waste. They are accessible and well-integrated into the design of streets, spaces and buildings, to minimise visual impact, unsightliness and avoid clutter. Where refuse bins are required to be on a street frontage or in a location that is visible from a street, they are sited within well-designed refuse stores that are easy for occupants to use.
- Services including utilities and window cleaning: Simple electric, lighting and water systems are discreet and well-designed. They are easy to access, clean and maintain.
- Exterior details: Drainpipes, gutters and meter boxes are integrated into the wider design to avoid a cluttered appearance.
- Cycle storage: Conveniently positioned and sensitively integrated into public spaces, amenity space or buildings.



*Well-designed and naturally lit internal spaces with views out. **Hortsley, Seaford.***

#### Definitions

**Amenity space:** The outside space associated with a home or homes. It may be private or shared, depending on the building it serves.



## Good practice examples

① House frontages are carefully designed with generous windows from habitable rooms, visible and attractive front doors and planting to act as buffer between the pavement and window. **Caudale, Camden, London.**

② Affordable housing with simple design is well-integrated into a mixed tenure development. **Derwenthorpe, York.**

③ Internal habitable rooms have high levels of natural daylight and connect well to gardens and terraces. **Accordia, Cambridge.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How the design and development of homes addresses different lifestyles, abilities and stages of life, including an ageing population?
- How it enables a variety of different development models? Community-led development? Cohousing?
- How the design of homes is adaptable to meet the future needs of residents? Whole life approaches?



# Resources

Efficient and resilient



*Low energy housing with passive solar design, including shading to prevent overheating in summer, and highly insulated thermal mass construction.*  
**Great Bow Yard, Langport, Somerset**

135 Well-designed places and buildings conserve natural **resources** including land, water, energy and materials. Their design responds to the impacts of climate change by being energy efficient and minimising carbon emissions to meet net zero by 2050. It identifies measures to achieve:

- mitigation, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimising embodied energy; and
- adaptation to anticipated events, such as rising temperatures and the increasing risk of flooding.

136 A compact and walkable neighbourhood with a mix of uses and facilities reduces demand for energy and supports health and well-being. It uses land efficiently so helps adaptation by increasing the ability for CO<sub>2</sub> absorption, sustaining natural ecosystems, minimising flood risk and the potential impact of flooding, and reducing overheating and air pollution.

137 Well-designed places:

- have a layout, form and mix of uses that reduces their resource requirement, including for land, energy and water;
- are fit for purpose and adaptable over time, reducing the need for redevelopment and unnecessary waste;
- use materials and adopt technologies to minimise their environmental impact.

## R1 Follow the energy hierarchy

138 Well-designed places and buildings follow the energy hierarchy of:

- reducing the need for energy through passive measures including form, orientation and fabric;
- using energy efficient mechanical and electrical systems, including heat pumps, heat recovery and LED lights; and
- maximising renewable energy especially through decentralised sources, including on-site generation and community-led initiatives.

139 They maximise the contributions of natural resources such as sun, ground, wind, and vegetation.

140 They make use of potential for renewable energy infrastructures at neighbourhood and building level. These include photovoltaic arrays, heat pumps and district heating systems, to reduce demand for non-sustainable energy sources. IT advances and app-based solutions allow users to take ownership or to manage these systems so as to use them most efficiently.

141 They follow the principles of whole life carbon assessment and the circular economy, reducing embodied carbon and waste and maximising reuse and recycling.

142 Good developments minimise the cost of running buildings and are easy and affordable for occupants to use and manage.

## R2 Careful selection of materials and construction techniques

143 The selection of materials and the type of construction influence how energy efficient a building or place can be and how much embodied carbon it contains.

144 Well-designed proposals for new development use materials carefully to reduce their environmental impact. This may be achieved in many different ways, for instance through materials that are locally sourced, high thermal or solar performance; or designs based on the typical dimensions of materials to reduce waste.

145 A well-designed place is durable and adaptable, so that it works well over time and reduces long-term resource needs. The re-use and adaptation of existing buildings reduces the consumption of resources and contributes to local character and context.

146 New construction techniques may contribute towards improving efficiency, productivity and the quality of new homes and buildings. These include the off-site manufacture of buildings and components using innovative and smart technologies, supported by digital infrastructure. They offer the potential to reduce whole life costs and for users to customise the products. Careful consideration needs to be given to placemaking, local distinctiveness and the character of new homes and buildings.



*A community self-build project with a range of house types and a commitment by residents to support and live to environmental values. Ashley Vale, Self-build, Bristol.*



### R3 Maximise resilience

147 Well-designed places are robust and take account of local environmental conditions, both prevailing and forecast. They contribute to community resilience and climate adaptation by addressing the potential effects of temperature extremes in summer and winter, increased flood risk, and more intense weather events such as rainstorms.

148 Well-designed public and open spaces incorporate planting, structures and water for comfort. They create shade and shelter for their users, improve air quality and mitigate the effects of pollution. Deciduous trees provide shade to buildings, helping to manage solar gain when needed in summer months. These landscape features also contribute to reducing the 'heat island' effect whereby the temperatures in built up areas are significantly higher than outside them.

149 Well-designed places have sustainable drainage systems to manage surface water, flood risk and significant changes in rainfall. Urban environments make use of 'green' sustainable drainage systems and natural flood resilience wherever possible (see [Nature](#)). Homes and buildings also incorporate flood resistance and resilience measures where necessary and conserve water through water saving measures and by harnessing rainfall or grey water for re-use on-site.



An old chocolate factory has been converted to apartments with new housing alongside the original buildings. This compact development is located close to a train station and local facilities. **The Chocolate Quarter, Keynsham**

150 Well-designed buildings make the most of passive design strategies to minimise overheating and achieve internal comfort. These include:

- the layout and aspect of internal spaces;
- insulation of the external envelope and thermal mass;
- management of solar gain; and
- good ventilation to reduce overheating.

They are supported by other measures where necessary, such as mechanical ventilation with heat recovery for efficient ventilation in winter.

### Definitions

**Climate change mitigation:** Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Climate change adaptation:** Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change, to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

**Circular economy:** A circular economy is based on three principles: designing out waste and pollution; keeping products and materials in use; and regenerating natural systems.



## Good practice examples

- 1 A communal winter garden, events space and artist's residence were created from two derelict terraced houses for the benefit of the local community. **Granby Winter Garden, Liverpool.**
- 2 A social housing development that sits well in the local urban context and meets high environmental standards. **Goldsmith Street, Norwich.**
- 3 Modular homes improve quality through factory production and minimise on-site construction time. **New Islington, Manchester.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How the design of developments can mitigate or adapt to extreme weather events?
- How changing energy technologies, including electrical storage, will influence places?
- How design, procurement and construction can take up new opportunities and future trends to minimise the use of resources? For example, in digital, construction and energy technologies and infrastructure?



# Lifespan

Made to last



151 Well-designed places sustain their beauty over the long term. They add to the quality of life of their users and as a result, people are more likely to care for them over their **lifespan**. They have an emphasis on quality and simplicity.

152 Well-designed places, buildings and spaces are:

- designed and planned for long-term stewardship by landowners, communities and local authorities from the earliest stages;
- robust, easy to use and look after, and enable their users to establish a sense of ownership and belonging, ensuring places and buildings age gracefully;
- adaptable to their users' changing needs and evolving technologies; and
- well-managed and maintained by their users, owners, landlords and public agencies.

*Garden City principles include community ownership of land, long-term stewardship of assets and community engagement in management.*  
**Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire.**



## L1 Well-managed and maintained

153 Good management contributes to the resilience, attractiveness and beauty of a place. Well-designed places are robust, durable and easy to look after. They are designed so management and maintenance responsibilities are clearly defined for all parts of a development.

154 Well-designed places consider management and maintenance regimes from the early stages of the design process and set them out in a management plan. They take into account potential impacts on communities such as in the form of service charges or where management will pass into their control. Management of local waste, cleaning, parking, internal common spaces, shared spaces and public spaces are all considered from the outset. These include play areas, open spaces, streets and other public spaces.

155 Community management systems are designed in from the start, with users and stakeholders involved during the design process, so that they are fit for purpose.

156 High density urban developments, including tall buildings also consider long-term management requirements, such as for the renewal of cladding systems.

## L2 Adaptable to changing needs and evolving technologies

157 While public places are inclusive to all, well-designed private places, such as homes and gardens, are designed to be flexible to adapt to the changing needs of their users over time. This includes changes in the health and mobility of the user, as well as potential changes in lifestyle due to developing technologies, such as use of electric vehicles, remote working and general changes to the way in which people live.

158 Well-designed places also have high-speed digital connectivity in order to provide options and information for education, health, leisure, social interaction, businesses and home working.



*Affordable housing for local people developed by a Community Land Trust in **Brambleside, St Teath**.*



*A cohousing scheme built around a large communal courtyard provides an alternative, community-focused housing option, where residents were involved in the design process throughout. **New Ground Cohousing, Barnet, London**.*



### L3 A sense of ownership

159 Well-designed places enable their users to develop a sense of ownership and belonging over time, while also feeling welcoming to visitors and passers-by. Community participation in design processes can start to establish a sense of ownership .

160 Community management and maintenance of shared amenities - such as halls and gardens - is more likely to be a success when the future community is involved in the design process from the start.

161 Well-designed places clearly define the boundaries for private, shared and public spaces, making it more likely that occupants will use, value and take ownership of them.

162 They include features that encourage users to really care for them. For example, well-sized apartment balconies with enough space for people to enjoy sitting out and personalising them with a degree of privacy. Shared spaces are visible and easy to get to, so they feel accessible to their intended users. They are also flexible so can be used for a variety of activities.



A communal terrace is provided for all residents to enjoy in this community-led estate regeneration scheme. **Marklake Court, Southwark, London.**

### Definitions

**Community management:** The communal management of a shared resource or facility by an organisation controlled by the community who it benefits.



## Good practice examples

① A corner house with an annexe provides options for multi-generation living. It is a positive response to a corner site in a terraced housing layout. **Chobham Manor, Stratford, London.**

② A communal green, overlooked by neighbouring homes, is a place for the local community to come together. **The Triangle, Swindon.**

③ A large site has been allocated for self- and custom-build, with affordable plots providing new options for housing delivery, as well as affordable homes and some apartments for sale. This embeds homeowners into the design process from the start and ensures the homes are fit for their needs. **Graven Hill, Bicester.**



## Looking forward

Have you considered:

- How management and stewardship may evolve with digital technologies and management systems?
- How new and flexible working practices may affect places?
- How changing home ownership and rental patterns will affect places?
- How changing construction technologies will influence management and maintenance?



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# Part 3:

## References





# References



- 171 The ten characteristics in this National Design Guide are based on the objectives for design set out in Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 172 There are many other guides to good design and placemaking. They provide more detailed guidance and examples of best practice on particular topics to inform local authority officers and councillors, applicants and their design teams, and also local communities.
- 173 The following is a list of key references that provide further information to the guidance set out within the National Design Guide.
- 174 Part 3 also provides details for the good practice examples that illustrate the ten characteristics, and image credits, in Table 1.
- 175 Other chapters of the National Planning Policy Framework and the planning practice guidance provide more detail on the Government's policy in relation to some of the ten characteristics, as set out in Tables 2 and 3.

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**Table 1: Good practice examples and image credits**

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p.49, image 3	Graven Hill, Bicester	Graven Hill Development Company / Cherwell District Council	Various architects	Cherwell District Council	© Graven Hill

**Other images:**

p.4, p.11, p.19, p.23, p.27, p.31, p.39 - © Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design



**Table 2: National Planning Policy Framework chapters and planning practice guidance relevant to the National Planning Policy Framework objectives for good design**

<i>National Planning Policy Framework objective for good design</i>	<i>National Planning Policy Framework chapter</i>	<i>Planning practice guidance</i>
Promote safety and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Healthy and safe communities
Health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Healthy and safe communities
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes</li> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Housing for older and disabled people Healthy and safe communities
Address the needs of an ageing population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes</li> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> </ul>	Housing for older and disabled people Healthy and safe communities
Community cohesion and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Healthy and safe communities
Creating mixed and balanced communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes</li> </ul>	Housing needs of different groups
Help to make development acceptable to communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Design
Visually attractive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Design
Sympathetic to local character/ local history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> <li>16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment</li> </ul>	Historic environment Light pollution Noise
Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 Building a strong, competitive economy</li> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>9 Promoting sustainable transport</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Sustainable transport and accessibility Healthy and safe communities
With a high standard of amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space Advertisements Historic environment Natural environment

<i>National Planning Policy Framework objective for good design</i>	<i>National Planning Policy Framework chapter</i>	<i>Planning practice guidance</i>
<b>Well-functioning</b>	12 Achieving well-designed places	Design
<b>Supported by local facilities and transport networks</b>	5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities 9 Promoting sustainable transport 12 Achieving well-designed places 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.	Sustainable transport and accessibility
<b>Last a lifetime</b>	9 Promoting sustainable transport 12 Achieving well-designed places 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change	Climate change Flood risk and coastal change Design Sustainable transport and accessibility
<b>Optimise the potential of a site</b>	11 Making effective use of land 12 Achieving well-designed places	Effective use of land
<b>Addressing climate change, including resource and energy efficiency and risk of flooding</b>	14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change	Renewable and low carbon energy Climate change Water supply, waste water and water quality Flood risk and coastal change
<b>Promoting sustainable transport</b>	9 Promoting sustainable transport	Sustainable transport and accessibility Air quality
<b>Responding to technological change</b>	9 Promoting sustainable transport 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change	Sustainable transport and accessibility Climate change Renewable and low carbon energy



**Table 3: National Planning Policy Framework chapters and planning practice guidance relevant to the ten characteristics**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>National Planning Policy Framework chapter</i>	<i>Planning practice guidance</i>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> <li>14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change</li> <li>15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</li> <li>16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design</li> <li>Historic environment</li> <li>Natural environment</li> <li>Healthy and safe communities</li> <li>Flood risk and coastal change</li> <li>Climate change</li> </ul>
<b>Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> <li>15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</li> <li>16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design</li> <li>Healthy and safe communities</li> <li>Natural environment</li> <li>Historic environment</li> </ul>
<b>Built form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>9 Promoting sustainable transport</li> <li>11 Making effective use of land</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design</li> <li>Healthy and safe communities</li> <li>Sustainable transport and accessibility</li> <li>Effective use of land</li> </ul>
<b>Movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>9 Promoting sustainable transport</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design</li> <li>Healthy and safe communities</li> <li>Sustainable transport and accessibility</li> <li>Open space, sports and recreations facilities, public rights of way and local green space</li> </ul>
<b>Nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> <li>14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change</li> <li>15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design</li> <li>Healthy and safe communities</li> <li>Climate change</li> <li>Natural environment</li> <li>Flood risk and coastal change</li> <li>Open space, sports and recreations facilities, public rights of way and local green space</li> </ul>

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>National Planning Policy Framework chapter</i>	<i>Planning practice guidance</i>
<b>Public spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>9 Promoting sustainable transport</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Design Healthy and safe communities Sustainable transport and accessibility Open space, sports and recreations facilities, public rights of way and local green space
<b>Uses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Achieving sustainable development</li> <li>5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes</li> <li>6 Building a strong, competitive economy</li> <li>7 Ensuring the vitality of town centres</li> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Design Housing for older and disable people Healthy and safe communities Town centres and retail Effective use of land
<b>Homes &amp; buildings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Promoting healthy and safe communities</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Design Healthy and safe communities Effective use of land Housing for older and disabled people Noise
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> <li>14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change</li> </ul>	Design Climate change Flood risk and coastal change Renewable and low carbon energy
<b>Lifespan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 Supporting high quality communications</li> <li>12 Achieving well-designed places</li> </ul>	Design Renewable and low carbon energy



