

# Councils given funding boost to develop new local design guide for housing development

- 14 councils across England given £50,000 each to develop new design codes
- Codes will set out design principles for new development in local areas
- Local design codes will be expected to enhance the character of the local area – for example by using honey-coloured stone in the Cotswolds or red brick in the Midlands
- Selected areas will test how to give communities a real say in the layout, design and appearance of buildings in their area – helping the country Build Back Better

A new national design code meaning areas are beautiful, well-designed and locally-led is being tested across 14 areas in England, Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher has announced today (21 May 2021).

The code will ensure future developments are beautiful and fit in with local character.

It gives local planning authorities a toolkit of design principles to consider for new developments, such as street character, building type and façade as well as environmental, heritage and wellbeing factors

The shortlisted councils will take part in a 6-month testing programme to apply the [National Model Design Code \(NMDC\)](#) in their area and help Britain Build Back Better, by making sure current and new residents alike will benefit from beautiful homes in well-designed neighbourhoods.

It is intended to provide councils with the guidance and parameters to shape new developments in a way which reflects what their communities truly want.

The measures mean the word “beauty” will be prioritised in planning rules for the first time since the system was created in 1947 – going back to a previous time when there was a greater emphasis on whether a building was considered attractive to local people. The government recently consulted on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework to take this forward, alongside the draft NMDC.

Following a consultation period, more than 70 Expression of Interest

submissions were received to test the NMDC, with representation from every region of England.

The final 14 applicants were then shortlisted to ensure a geographical spread and a range of development types, including an urban conservation area with industrial heritage, town centres, new neighbourhoods, rural settlements and urban regeneration sites. Each pilot receives a £50,000 grant to carry out the project.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

We should aspire to enhance the beauty of our local areas and pass our cultural heritage onto our successors, enriched not diminished.

In order to do that, we need to bring about a profound and lasting change in the buildings that we build, which is one of the reasons we are placing a greater emphasis on locally popular design, quality and access to nature, through our national planning policies and introducing the National Model Design Code.

These will enable local people to set the rules for what developments in their area should look like, ensuring that they reflect and enhance their surroundings and preserve our local character and identity.

Instead of developers forcing plans on locals, they will need to adapt to proposals from local people, ensuring that current and new residents alike will benefit from beautiful homes in well-designed neighbourhoods.

Anna Rose, Head of the Planning Advisory Service said:

It is really exciting to see the National Model Design Code being tested by local councils across the country. The outcomes from this first set of pilots will help to build the capacity and collective learning that we need across the sector. I am looking forward to seeing what councils can achieve with their communities by using this new code.

The testing programme is a step towards this aim and the findings will help inform potential further developments to the NMDC and the use of design coding in the planning system.

Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods and Transport, Cllr Ged Bell, said:

Newcastle City Council is delighted to have been chosen by MHCLG to take part in the pilot programme for proposed new design codes.

They are all about ensuring that developments are designed to the

highest quality which is fundamentally important for communities who live and work in them. The Ouseburn is recognised nationally for successful city centre regeneration in a historical setting, and we are determined to maintain those high standards.

Nicholas Boys Smith, founding director of social enterprise Create Streets and co-chair for the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission, said:

The pilots are a very important first step as councils start to grapple again with how they can define visions for development in their areas which are popularly-beautiful, profoundly locally based and will support lives which are happy, healthy and sustainable.

The 14 successful applicants are:

<b>Local authority</b>	<b>Region</b>
Colchester Borough Council, Tendring District Council and Essex County Council	East
Guildford Borough Council	South East
Herefordshire Council	West Midlands
Leeds City Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Mid Devon Council	South West
Newcastle City Council	North East
Dacorum Borough Council	East
Portsmouth City Council	South East
Sefton Council	North West
Southwark Council	London
Hyndburn Borough Council	North West
North West Leicestershire District Council	East Midlands
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	West Midlands
Buckinghamshire Council	South East

The purpose of the NMDC is to provide detailed guidance on the production of local design codes, guides and policies that lead to successful design. It provides advice to local planning authorities on the process for producing codes, the design parameters and issues that need to be considered and tailored to their own context when producing local design codes and guides. It includes methods to capture and reflect the views of the local community through the process.

The objective of the pilot is to test the application of aspects of the NMDC in different types of development, location and regions across England, with the output being a local design code.

A total of 71 applications were received with representation from every region of England. The applications demonstrated a wide variety of types of development, including rural infill, village expansion, garden villages,

suburban and urban intensification, town centre, central urban development and areas where low land values are an issue.

The 14 recommended bids were selected ensuring that there was a good geographical spread (at least one per English region) and a range of development types and conditions (urban to rural) and market conditions (higher to lower growth areas) to demonstrate how the code can be effectively applied in different locations and contexts.

The NMDC is part of a wider strategy as outlined in the 190-page '[Living with Beauty](#)' report published in January 2020 which proposed a new development and planning framework, with 3 principle goals – to ask for beauty, refuse ugliness and promote stewardship.

The government has launched a consultation to seek views on our proposed improvements to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – the template guiding local planning decisions – so local authorities and communities can shape and deliver beautiful places to live and work, with a greater emphasis on quality, design and the environment than ever before.

The consultation closed on 27 March and we're in the process of analysing responses. The government will publish its response to the consultation in due course.

Our proposed policy changes will ensure the system helps to create more attractive buildings and places, while maintaining the Framework's existing strong focus on delivering the homes and other development which communities need. The changes will:

- Make beauty and place-making a strategic theme in the NPPF
- Set out the expectation that local authorities produce their own design codes and guides setting out design principles which new development in their areas should reflect
- Ask for new streets to be tree-lined
- Improve biodiversity and access to nature through design
- Put an emphasis on approving good design as well as refusing poor quality schemes