

MHCLG consultation on Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance

About you questions

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Question 4: What type of organisation are you representing? Other

Question 5: If you answered 'other', please provide further details. Housing association

Usability of the draft design and placemaking PPG

Question 6: Do you agree that the usability and effectiveness of the draft Design and Placemaking PPG has improved?

Yes, the consolidation of the National Design Guide, Design Process and Tools PPG, and the National Model Design Code Parts 1 and 2 into a single document represents a positive step forward in usability. Bringing guidance into one streamlined resource eases navigation, reduces duplication and makes Government's design expectations clearer for practitioners, local planning authorities and applicants alike.

From a housing association and delivery perspective, clarity and consistency are critical in enabling schemes to progress efficiently through planning while maintaining design quality.

The structured approach, particularly the clear articulation of the seven features of well-designed places and the emphasis on embedding design quality throughout the planning process, supports a more coherent understanding of how policy expectations translate into practical delivery. However, the effectiveness of the guidance will ultimately depend on how consistently it is interpreted and applied by local planning authorities, and how clearly it links to viability and delivery considerations.

Question 7: Are there any aspects where clarity, accessibility, or practical application could be improved to better support design and placemaking outcomes?

While the consolidated guidance is helpful, several areas could be strengthened to improve practical application:

Stronger alignment with viability and deliverability

The guidance would benefit from clearer acknowledgement of the relationship between

design quality, buildability and scheme viability. For housing associations and institutional investors, delivery certainty and financial sustainability are essential to unlocking development. The PPG should explicitly recognise that well-designed places must also be deliverable within realistic cost parameters. Including practical examples that demonstrate how high design standards can be achieved cost-effectively would support implementation.

Greater emphasis on buildability and technical coordination

The document could more clearly address:

- Early engagement between planners, architects and technical disciplines
- The importance of simple, repeatable construction typologies where appropriate
- Designing with modern methods of construction (MMC) and standardised components in mind.

Clearer reference to buildability would strengthen outcomes and reduce redesign during later RIBA stages.

Clearer expectations around proportionality

The guidance would benefit from clearer advice on proportionality, particularly for:

- Small urban infill sites
- Estate regeneration
- Affordable housing-led schemes

Overly complex coding or documentation requirements can disproportionately affect SME builders and affordable housing providers, potentially slowing delivery.

More practical case studies

Additional case studies addressing the issues below would be helpful:

- How model design codes have reduced planning determination times
- How design coding has improved certainty for investors
- How quality outcomes were balanced with cost and density

This would improve confidence in practical application.

Inclusivity of the draft Design and Placemaking PPG

Question 8: Do you agree that the principles set out in the draft Design and Placemaking PPG adequately address the needs and requirements of traveller sites?

The overarching principles of well-designed places - inclusivity, health, resilience and good layout - are broadly applicable to traveller sites. However, the draft guidance does not appear to provide sufficiently specific clarity on how these principles should be interpreted in the context of traveller accommodation.

Traveller sites often have distinct spatial, servicing and community requirements that differ from conventional housing layouts. Without clearer tailored guidance, there is a risk of inconsistent interpretation at local level. Further clarity would support better outcomes and reduce planning uncertainty.

Question 9: What additional considerations or clarifications might be necessary to ensure planning practice guidance supports inclusive and culturally appropriate design and placemaking?

To ensure inclusive and culturally appropriate design, the guidance could:

- Provide clearer spatial guidance for traveller sites, including:
 - Plot sizes and layout flexibility
 - Servicing arrangements
 - Space for extended family living patterns
 - Storage and vehicle accommodation
- Clarify expectations around community integration while respecting cultural autonomy
- Encourage early engagement with traveller communities during plan-making and site design
- Provide examples of successful schemes demonstrating culturally appropriate layouts.

More broadly, inclusive design guidance should also consider:

- Intergenerational living
- Accessible and adaptable homes
- Affordable tenure mix integration
- Safety and overlooked public spaces without over-securitisation.

To be effective, inclusion must be embedded in both spatial design and delivery mechanisms.

Effectiveness of tools within the draft Design and Placemaking PPG

Question 10: Do you agree that tools, such as model design codes, could speed up the preparation of local design codes?

Yes, model design codes have strong potential to speed up preparation of local design codes, particularly where they provide a clear and adaptable framework for common development typologies.

From a delivery perspective, nationally consistent templates can:

- Reduce duplication of effort
- Provide greater certainty for applicants
- Improve consistency between authorities
- Accelerate decision-making.

This is particularly beneficial for:

- Affordable housing providers
- SME housebuilders
- Institutional investors seeking predictable design parameters.

However, this benefit will only be realised if model codes are:

- Clearly written
- Technically robust
- Proportionate in requirements
- Easily adaptable to local context.

Overly prescriptive codes could risk reducing architectural quality or constraining innovation.

Question 11: What other tools would support this?

In addition to model design codes, the following tools would support effective implementation:

1. **Standardised viability and design balance guidance**
Clearer national guidance on how LPAs should balance design requirements with viability evidence.
2. **Template parameter plans and coding matrices**
Simple, editable templates that can be quickly adapted locally.
3. **Digital coding platforms**
Interactive digital tools that allow codes to be visualised spatially rather than relying solely on written documents.
4. **Buildability and technical checklists**
Standardised checklists ensuring:
 - Fire strategy alignment
 - Servicing strategy integration
 - Drainage and utilities coordination
 - Maintenance considerations.
5. **Post-occupancy evaluation frameworks**
Encouraging learning from completed schemes to refine future design coding.
6. **Clear guidance on proportionality thresholds**
Clarifying when full coding is required versus lighter-touch design guidance.