



Fact sheet 6: The role of design and placemaking in new homes and communities

This fact sheet explains the principles of good design, what is meant by placemaking and how communities can be involved in the design of new homes in local areas. If you are reading this online, please click on the hyperlinks for further information. See the full New Homes Fact Sheets series [here](#).

What makes a 'well-designed' place?

The design quality of new homes has become a national policy priority in recent years.

The Government's [National Design Guide](#) identifies 10 characteristics of well-designed places which are further built upon within the [National Model Design Code](#). The characteristics are based around three main themes:

- **Character:** how a new development will interact with the existing environment and how the unique traits of a local area can be maintained and enhanced
- **Community:** how existing and future residents will be able to use and enjoy places, and how a development can support and sustain a sense of community
- **Climate:** how the design and construction of developments can be environmentally sustainable

[The National Design Guide:](#) [10 characteristics of well-designed places](#)



For further information on how new homes can support social and environmental objectives, please refer to [Fact sheet 8: The economic, social and environmental benefits of new homes](#).

How does placemaking fit into good design?

Good design also includes placemaking. Placemaking is the process of involving communities in establishing what good design means to them through consultation and engagement. Placemaking can empower communities to have a sense of belonging and pride in their local area as places change over time. This can help to create healthier neighbourhoods, as demonstrated by the Town and Country Planning Association resources on [Healthy Placemaking](#). Further resources are available at the [Housing Information Hub](#).

Did you know? Placemaking is at the core of Homes England's [Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2028](#) and the Government has launched the [Office for Place](#) to help councils create beautiful, successful and enduring places.



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How do local authorities consider design in regeneration and housing developments?

The [Levelling Up and Regeneration Act](#) came into force in 2023 and requires every local planning authority to produce a Design Code for its area. The concepts and characteristics of well-designed places as set out in the National Design Guide aim to guide locally specific Design Codes. This means that local areas will have their own framework for creating well-designed and inclusive places in keeping with local context, character and preference.



Local authority area



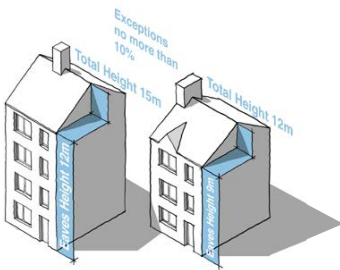
A neighbourhood



A specific housing scheme

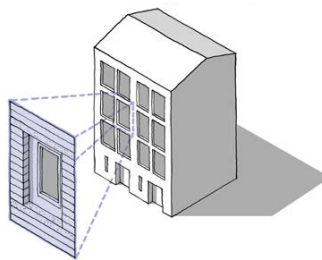
[Design Codes](#) can be created for a local authority area, for an individual neighbourhood, or in some instances, Design Codes might be prepared for individual development sites. In this scenario, a developer may lead the preparation of the Design Code.

Local Design Guides and Codes consider a range of design elements such as:



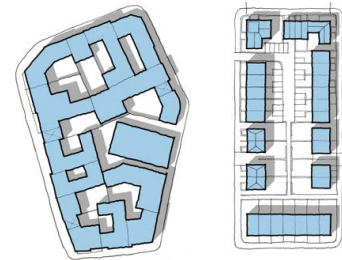
Building height

This might include the number of floors and the heights of eaves.



Appearance and detailing

Guidance may be provided on the use of colour, quality of materials and detailing, for example the types of bricks to be used.

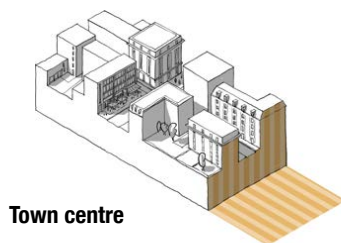


Layout

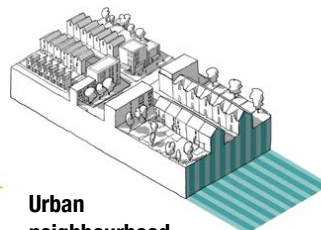
This can include where homes and infrastructure are placed throughout a development.

Density

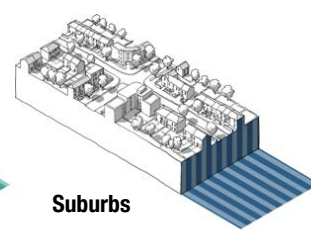
This considers the number of homes per hectare. When the amount of land for new homes is constrained, for instance in an urban location, high density development may be considered appropriate. The use of multi-storey apartment buildings mean that land can be retained for other uses which sustain a community such as shops and green spaces. Different types of density suit [different areas](#), as shown below:



Town centre



Urban neighbourhood



Suburbs

How can communities be involved in developing Design Codes?

When creating a new Design Code, community engagement is mandatory, regardless of whether it is prepared by a local authority or a developer. To find out more on how and when communities can get involved, see the Office for Place's [guidance on community engagement in Design Codes](#).