

Press Release
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Design Council empowers local authorities with new design coding resources

Local authorities in England can now access a new set of practical resources from the Design Council to enhance their design code development. These free, downloadable materials provide step-by-step guidance to help councils create and implement design codes that reflect local character, foster community engagement, and support government priorities like home building and economic growth.

Design codes help to shape places in keeping with their local character and needs, to foster community involvement, to facilitate the building of more and better homes and public spaces, and to accelerate decision-making. By simplifying the planning processes and introducing greater certainty for all involved, they are also crucial in supporting government priorities such as home building and economic growth.

The newly released resources have been produced by the Design Council as part of the latest stage of the Design Codes Pathfinder Programme, run by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. This programme aims to help 25 organisations produce local design codes in line with the Government's National Model Design Code. The set of latest resources complement an earlier set the Design Council produced in the Pathfinder Programme, forming a comprehensive suite of guidance.

The Design Code Pathfinder Programme is helping councils create attractive, functional, sustainable places where people are proud to live, work, study and invest. The Design Council is responsible for overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the programme, focusing on the pathfinders' experience of producing design codes and the support they need.

Local authorities on the programme continue to draw lessons from the design coding process, particularly as many of them begin to adopt and implement their codes. The newly released materials explore these aspects of the process and how best to lay the foundations for effective implementation. They offer detailed guidance from the pathfinders to help councils develop strategies for success.

Key topics covered in the new materials include:

- **Laying the Groundwork:** Ensuring effective design code implementation.
- **From Planning to Execution:** Achieving resource efficiencies.

- **Bridging Siloed Working:** The importance of collaboration in design code development.
- **From Policy to Practice:** The role of development management officers.

Joanna Averley, Chief Planner at the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, said: *“The Government wants to see high-quality, well-designed and sustainable homes and places brought forward. We believe that design codes, as well as up-to-date local plans, masterplans and other design guides, will play an important role in delivering this, enabling local areas to establish a shared vision for change and clearly set out what high-quality and good design means for them. We’re incredibly grateful to the pathfinders for all their efforts as part of the programme. Sharing their experiences will ensure other areas are in the best possible position to prepare and implement their own local design codes and make their visions a reality.”*

Chloe Swift, Strategy Planner at the Lake District National Park Authority, commented: *“These new learning resources from the Design Council will benefit future design code development by sharing insights and lessons learned from those of us participating in the Pathfinder Programme. By highlighting the challenges and successes, I hope they will help our colleagues in other local authorities to replicate the effective approaches we applied at each stage.*

“As an example, our experience confirms the importance of early collaboration as, by involving a partner steering group and the Development Management Team from the outset, we were able to develop an effective design code more quickly. The keys to success in creating a collaborative process are set out in the new materials.”

Pathfinder Programme participant Amandeep Singh Kalra, Associate Director at Be First, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham regeneration company, said: *“The starting point for our design code was sustainability as we worked on a retrofit -led initiative for the Becontree Estate, which comprises 40% of our borough. As 80% of the houses that will be here in 2050 are already built, it’s important to incentivise and enable their decarbonisation.*

“Our design code reflects this and could easily be replicated and adapted by other boroughs with an inter-war garden city. There’s really no need for every council to start from scratch. Sharing our knowledge and experience accelerates the process which is essential to ensure we all meet our 2050 net zero targets.”

Edward Hobson, Director of Partnerships at the Design Council, explained: *“Design codes are a critical tool to achieve the new government’s manifesto pledge to create 1.5 million ‘high-quality, well-designed and sustainable homes and places that increase climate resilience and promote nature recovery’. Used well, design codes can increase the quality of proposals being brought forward to planning, helping local authorities meet their housing targets while supporting vibrant, healthy communities. And, by moving community engagement upstream in the development process, they give local people a genuine stake in shaping how new homes and development add to their locality.”*

He added: *“The Pathfinder Programme has highlighted the challenges faced by local authorities in creating design codes, so our new learning materials help make the process as easy, effective and relatable as possible for planning teams. As the UK’s National Strategic Advisor on design, the Design Council is committed to supporting local and national government to solve the challenge of creating the homes the UK needs within the country’s climate commitments.”*

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About the Design Council

The Design Council is the UK’s national strategic advisor for design, championing design and its ability to make life better for all. It is an independent and not for profit organisation incorporated by Royal Charter. The Design Council uniquely works across all design sectors and delivers programmes with business, government, public bodies and the third sector. The work encompasses thought leadership, tools and resources, showcasing excellence, and research to evidence the value of design and influence policy. Their Design for Planet mission was introduced in 2021 to galvanise and support the 1.97 million people who work in the UK’s design economy to help achieve net zero and beyond.

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