

Joanna Averley, Chief Planner, Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - Supplementary Written Evidence (LUE0003)

With regards to the additional information, please find further information below.

The revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework in July 2021 place a greater emphasis on achieving beauty, place-making and good design through the planning system. The Framework asks all local councils to prepare their own design guidance consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, or NMDC, which reflects local character and design preferences. The National Design Guide sets out ten characteristics of well-designed places and how these can be achieved in practice, through local planning policy and guidance, and decisions on planning applications. The NMDC builds on this and provides a toolkit for local councils to develop their own design codes, based on effective engagement with their local communities. The NMDC is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Design codes are simple, concise, illustrated design documents that set the standard of design for a local area, providing clarity about design expectations at an early stage in the planning process. A design code combines text and diagrams and can be prepared to cover the physical development of a specific site or a whole local authority area. Design codes can set standards on a range of different things including the layout of new development, facades of buildings, local character and materials. They can also bring together different policy agendas by specifying how new development should enhance health and wellbeing, biodiversity, landscape, and green infrastructure, as well as the environmental performance of places and buildings and their contribution to net zero targets.

On 11 March, we announced the 25 areas in England that will join the second phase of the design code pathfinders programme. Places in every region of the country are taking part, from Bournemouth to Carlisle, with a share of £3 million to help them set their own standards for design locally. Last year phase one of the programme supported 14 local councils and communities to set standards for design in their area, using the National Model Design Code.

Now a further 25 pathfinders are producing local design codes which will ensure that communities will benefit from beautiful homes in well-designed neighbourhoods. The 12-month programme will involve peer to peer support to allow local authorities to work together and learn from each other in the process of developing design codes, while also providing direct design support and resource to local planning authorities and neighbourhood planning groups.

The design codes and processes adopted through the programme will serve as exemplars, with the evaluation, lessons learned and outcomes of the programme being made available to all local councils and neighbourhood planning groups across the country.

Lastly, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is reviewing potential changes to the planning system, ahead of announcing next

steps in due course. We are clear nonetheless that the government is committed to making changes to the planning system so it can achieve its potential and deliver better outcomes for communities, as well as the wider economy. The additional £65m announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for planning transformation in the Autumn 2021 Budget will help support these changes.

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March 2022