

South Norfolk and Broadland Design Code Supplementary Planning Document

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. **What is a Design Code and how is it different to a Design Guide?**

A Design Code establishes clear design requirement for the physical development of a site or an area (i.e. use of the words “must” or “should”). A Design Code provides certainty around expectations for all parties and is intended to encourage developers to respond thoughtfully to the opportunities, constraints and context of a site.

Design Guides provide more generalised advice focusing on how to design in line with best practice and are more descriptive in their approach. Design guidance tends to focus on general principles and can help to inform thinking but are not able to set enforceable standards.

2. **Why is a Design Code being prepared?**

The Design Code has been prepared to raise the benchmark in design standards throughout both the Broadland District area and the South Norfolk District area. It is an aspirational document that seeks to improve overall design quality and contribute to creating successful places throughout South Norfolk and Broadland. It will provide greater certainty for developers about the expectations of the local authorities in terms of new development proposals and will also provide a framework against which planning applications can be assessed.

3. **Who has prepared the Design Code?**

The Councils secured funding from the Government's Planning Skills Fund in 2024 and, following a competitive procurement process, were able to appoint Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design Ltd to undertake this work. An officer team from Broadland and South Norfolk Councils supported the work and the three rounds of engagement that took place provided important feedback which has directly fed into the preparation of the Design Code.

4. **How does the Design Code relate to existing Local Plan documents?**

Once adopted, the Design Code will be a Supplementary Planning Document that will form part of the Local Plans for both Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council. An SPD cannot set new policy requirements however it supports existing planning policies, and the Design Code will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for relevant development proposals.

5. **Does the Design Code identify new locations for development?**

No, the Design Code does not identify new locations for development. A coding map has been developed to identify the different areas within which the design principles may be applicable. These coding areas align with the settlement hierarchy identified in the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).

6. **Is the design code different for each district?**

The content of the Design Code is set around the settlement patterns within South Norfolk and Broadland. Both districts are characterised by urban fringe settlements around Norwich, main towns, villages and dispersed rural settlements and countryside. As this settlement pattern is common across both areas, it was considered that a single primary document (i.e. the Design Code itself) would be the most suitable approach.

However, the Design Code is supported by separate Character Assessments for each district, and these documents separately address the special characteristics and attributes of each area. These Character Assessments provide a historical overview of the vernacular architecture, the specific local landscape types and the character of key historic settlements. The Character Assessments form key appendices to the Design Code and are referenced throughout the document. Developers will be expected to draw upon the wealth of information that they include when preparing schemes appropriate for their context.

7. **Will the Design Code apply to all types of development?**

No, the Design Code does not apply to all development types. The Design Code will apply to all new residential projects between 1 dwelling and 500 dwellings. Non-residential developments (e.g., employment or agricultural buildings) and householder extensions are not included in this Design Code. In accordance with the policy requirements set by Policy 2 of the GNLP, larger scale developments should be supported by their own masterplan and site specific design code.

8. **How have the coding areas been identified?**

The coding areas are based upon the settlement hierarchy identified in the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) and prior to that the Joint Core Strategy (JCS). The coding areas within the Design Code are: Norwich Fringe Settlements, Main Towns and Key Service Centres, Villages and Dispersed Settlements and Countryside. Within these coding areas, three separate character approaches have been identified and development proposals will be expected to reflect the most appropriate character for the scale and context of their proposal. The three-character approaches are: urban, semi-rural and rural.

9. **How do you use the Assessment Framework?**

The Assessment Framework sets out a series of questions directly linked to the codes in the primary document and is intended to act as a prompt for both developers and decision makers to ensure that the relevant issues have been addressed through the design proposal. It provides a tool through which any weaknesses and/or opportunities for improvement can be identified, and a basis from which targeted constructive discussions and negotiations can take place. It is not intended to be an administrative form submitted for every planning application.

10. **How do I comment during this consultation and what happens next?**

We are currently consulting on the main Design Code document which includes the Character Assessment appendices for each authority area, as well as the Assessment Framework. Supporting documents include the Strategic Environmental Assessment and

the Habitats Regulation Assessment screening, the Equalities Impact Assessment and the Interim Consultation Statement. These documents are not open for consultation.

The Council is hosting this formal consultation via its consultation portal, JDi. The consultation can be accessed via the Council's own website. The consultation webpage will be open for the submission of comments until 5pm on Monday 8th December 2025.

Following the close of this consultation period, the Council will review all comments that have been received and consider whether any changes to the Design Code are needed. The Consultation Statement will also be updated to reflect the comments received, as well as the responses of the Councils to these. The Design Code, along with its supporting documents, will then be returned to future meetings of Councillors for each authority who will decide whether or not the document should be formally adopted as part of the Local Plan for the respective Councils.

11. **Are you collecting personal information about people as part of this consultation?**
No. This survey is anonymous. We do not require any personal data or data that would identify you. Please bear this in mind when completing the free text sections of the survey.