

South Norfolk and Broadland Design Code SPD

Interim Consultation Statement

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Interim Consultation Statement sets out the early stages of engagement undertaken to inform the preparation of the South Norfolk and Broadland Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.2. This Consultation Statement is being prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 to support the preparation and adoption of the South Norfolk and Broadland Design Code SPD. It is intended to be a 'live' document which will be updated following the formal public consultation at the end of 2025.
- 1.3. In accordance with the Regulations, the final Consultation Statement will set out:
 - Who was consulted during the preparation of the SPD
 - How they were consulted
 - A summary of the main issues raised during the consultation
 - How those issues have been addressed in the adopted SPD
- 1.4. This Interim Consultation Statement sets out the stages of engagement undertaken prior to the formal consultation, as well as a summary of the key issues raised and how these have been considered in the draft Design Code.

2. Background

- 2.1. South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils secured funding from the Government's Planning Skills Fund in 2024. Following a competitive procurement process Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design Ltd secured the contract to undertake work to prepare the Design Code. The contract with Tibbalds included preparation of a Design Code, a new document reviewing the existing traditional character of Broadland, updates to an equivalent document for South Norfolk that was first published in 2011, and an Assessment Framework for built environment professionals and officers to use alongside the Design Code.
- 2.2. The South Norfolk and Broadland Design Code SPD will improve the consistency and quality of residential design across both the South Norfolk District and the Broadland District areas. It will apply to all new residential development on sites of between 1 unit and 500 units. As a Supplementary Planning Document, the Design Code does not set new policy; rather, it informs the implementation of existing planning policies such as those in the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

3. Early engagement

- 3.1. Prior to formal consultation on the South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils Design Code SPD, there have been three separate periods of public engagement to inform the development of the coding. At all of these stages the views of local residents, community representatives and interested stakeholders and statutory consultees were invited.

Stage 1 Engagement: July-September 2024

- 3.2. This stage of engagement sought to understand the context within which the Design Code was to be prepared. This included:
- How the existing design guidance is used;
 - What local people think makes South Norfolk and Broadland distinctive places;
 - The challenges to achieving high quality residential design; and
 - The priorities that a design code should cover.
- 3.3. To encourage engagement by a wide group of participants, these discussions included both a six-week online engagement platform (hosted on the Placechangers website) and six online workshops delivered to Council officers, Local Members, Parish and Town Councils, stakeholders, and local developers, agents and architects.
- 3.4. The key issues and themes emerging were identified following the close of this period of engagement and are set out in the [Stage 1 Engagement Summary](#). Key priorities noted as being of particular interest included: the density and location of development, the character of new development (including matters such as architecture, materials, layout, compatibility with the existing context), parking and cycling/ walking infrastructure, nature and the landscape and climate change and sustainability of new development.
- 3.5. An emphasis was placed on a need for the Design Code to be clear and accessible, and for it to be easy to navigate by the end user. It was also a recurring theme that the Design Code should be ‘future-proof’ and avoid being too prescriptive in its content.
- 3.6. This feedback provided an important context for the next steps in the preparation of the Design Code.

Stage 2 Engagement: September-November 2024

- 3.7. In response to the Stage 1 engagement, Tibbalds worked alongside Council Officers to prepare a draft Vision and set of key design priorities for the Design Code, as well as to identify draft coding areas. The different issues and opportunities within each of these coding areas were also identified and the Stage 2 engagement provided an opportunity to engage on all of these matters. The [Stage 2 Engagement Summary](#) sets out a summary of feedback and responses received at this stage.

- 3.8. In common with the Stage 1 engagement, this period was marked by both a six-week online engagement platform (Placechangers) and a series of online workshops with stakeholders.
- 3.9. Overall, there was general support for the vision, the key design priorities and the approach towards identifying the different coding areas. There was some disagreement about the hierarchy within which particular settlements would be considered, as well as a recognition of the importance of protecting the special character of the different settlements was a clear theme. Nature, the local landscape and addressing climate change emerged as key environmental themes, as did the need to ensure the delivery of sustainable development across the Districts. Connectivity of sites was a key topic of discussion, as was the scale and character of new development and its relationship with existing communities.
- 3.10. The varying interpretations of ‘sustainable development’ highlighted one of the key challenges that the Design Code needed to address in order to be a successful addition to the local planning guidance.
- 3.11. The detailed responses and discussions at this stage provided useful feedback for the next stage in the preparation of the Design Code.

Stage 3 Engagement: May-June 2025

- 3.12. The draft Design Code and associated appendices documents were the subject of the final engagement period which comprised hosting an online engagement platform for six weeks (Placechangers) and online meetings with key stakeholders and statutory consultees (Norfolk County Council’s Lead Local Flood Authority and Highways team, and Historic England).
- 3.13. In addition to the above, a number of developers and planning agents known to be active throughout both Districts were also invited to ‘test’ the Design Code and provide feedback, and a focus group of Development Management Officers also ‘tested’ the draft Design Code against a range of current planning applications, providing their detailed feedback via both written response and in an online setting.
- 3.14. Generally, there was support for the draft Design Code with the format, style and content of the document being well received. A summary of the [Stage 3 Engagement](#) responses is available via the Council’s website. The majority of responses received focused on the Design Code, with very few respondents commenting on either the Broadland Character Assessment or the supporting Assessment Framework.
- 3.15. Key themes that emerged from the responses received via the online platform included comments relating to the focus on nature and biodiversity throughout the document, as well as questions relating to the mechanisms for implementation of the design codes.

- 3.16. The Stage 3 Engagement Summary reflects the range of comments received across the different chapters within the draft Design Code from the different stakeholders. Discussions with key stakeholders highlighted the need to avoid conflicting requirements, both between the individual design codes and with existing guidance and best practice. Amendments to the draft Design Code have sought to address these concerns wherever practicable.
- 3.17. Analysis of the feedback received via the different routes also highlighted a need to review the scale of development expected to come forward in the different coding areas. This has been reviewed prior to formal consultation on the draft SPD. Overall, the Stage 3 engagement responses have been significant in strengthening detailed wording throughout the coding and identifying areas for improvement.

4. Consultation on the SEA and HRA Screening

- 4.1. In addition, an assessment of the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) was needed. Consultation on a Screening Statement took place between 8th July 2025 and 1st August 2025.
- 4.2. The Council notified the following specified bodies of the SEA screening statement by email inviting comments in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes regulations 2004:
- Environment Agency
 - Historic England
 - Natural England
- 4.3. Responses were received from all three of the consulted bodies. A full summary of the responses received for the SEA consultation can be seen in the SEA Determination Statement.
- 4.4. The responses received confirmed the Council's position that a SEA was not required as the SPD will not change or introduce new planning policy over and above the Local Plan.

5. Next steps

- 5.1. The Council will update this Interim Consultation Statement following the close of the formal consultation period with a summary of the representations received, the Council's response and any proposed changes to the SPD arising.