

Appendix B: Gedling Borough Council's response to the National Model Design Codes

General comments

- The New Model Design Code guidance is a welcome and comprehensive document.
- It is a lengthy document with additional supporting guidance notes and quite prescriptive in places. It would appear that the guidance would be generally applicable to most geographical areas across the Country especially urban areas. The commentary that states that 'in the absence of more local area based design codes local planning authorities should use the National Model Design Code' is welcomed as the code is considered sufficient for most locations across Gedling Borough.
- The document could helpfully stress that it is incumbent on local authorities to prepare more local area type design codes where it is strictly necessary to achieve local distinctiveness. In Gedling Borough, for example, we would anticipate that area type design codes are more likely to be justified in certain rural settlements with locally distinct characteristics and also in the case of large urban extensions. In this context, we have concerns about the resource implications for local planning authorities and the need to have as few tiers of planning policy guidance as possible.
- The relationship between design codes and the local plan including neighbourhood plans is touched upon in the guidance. The document could be more clear in that both the national design code and locally prepared design codes should supplement the broader based policies set out in the local plan or neighbourhood plan.
- At the time of writing, the Government is consulting on a new local plans system, there is a potential move to more zonal based planning, streamlined, and GIS based plans. The document could anticipate the changes, emphasise the importance of new plans in setting a broad planning framework, and specify the locations, which should be subject to more detailed design codes. This has the advantage of setting a requirement in the development plan, which is subject to public scrutiny.
- Viability is a key consideration in planning decisions and the document is somewhat lacking in this respect. The document is rightly aspirational but could recognise that achieving the highest quality designs in some parts of the country may make development unviable and should recognise a balance may need to be struck. In such circumstances, the document could perhaps differentiate which elements of good design are essential and which elements are more aspirational.
- We do have concerns about the general ability of local planning authorities to resource the preparation of area based design codes and the lack of specialist design skills in house. If there is an expectation on local authorities

to produce these local codes then they should be adequately resourced for this task

- There is also a risk that community aspirations could be difficult to manage with pressure to prepare numerous small area design type codes that will be difficult to manage in terms of local resources including the need to undertake resource intensive consultation
- There is a risk that too many local codes would add unnecessary tiers of planning guidance for developers.
- There are references to “beautiful” design within the document, which is highly subjective and not defined anywhere.
- There is a lack of commentary on how the use of area type design codes and their success or not in terms of achieving good design would be monitored and measured.

More detailed comments

Objectives – pages 2-3

- General support for the objectives set out in this section.
- Para 10 supported. The National Model Design Code sets a baseline standard of quality and practice which local planning authorities are expected to take into account when developing local design codes and guides and when determining planning applications.

Application – page 4

- Paras 17 and 18 should clarify which documents are being referred to here - the National Model Design Code and the accompanying guidance notes?
- Para 17 – says it uses information that should be readily available to the local authority – what is “it”? It would be helpful if the document set out the sort of information needed and its sources.
- Para 18 – supports a coding plan needed to show the area covered by the code or guide for example local authority area, area type, development site or plot. Reference could also be made to the neighbourhood plan area in this context.
- Para 18 – 19 - whilst community involvement is welcomed. The design guidance should emphasise that the option to use area types should be limited to those areas where separate design codes are deemed by the local planning authority to be necessary in order to manage resource implications and community aspirations and avoid over complicating the planning policy regime for specific areas.
- Para 18 – would benefit from a more specific cross reference to where in Part 2 the commentary and checklist can be found.
- Para 19 – agrees that design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations. The importance of securing buy

in from the wider community in particular hard to reach groups ought to be emphasised. The guidance should recognise that there are likely to be conflicts of interest between, developers, local authorities and local communities and set out practical guidance on how to manage such potential conflicts.

1 Analysis – pages 6-9

- Parag 27 refers to design codes including reference to the number of homes. Given that design codes are likely to be prepared early on in the process prior to detailed site analysis, this may need to be expressed as a numerical range of homes.
- Para 27 – this depends on what the design code is for – if it is for the whole Borough then this would be difficult to cover.
- Para 28 and Figure 2 – the design code coverage as shown on Figure 2 is helpful in order to be clear on what the design code will cover as part of the consultation.
- Page 7 (Consultation) – Paragraph 19 states that - developers and landowners may also choose to prepare their own design code as part of a planning application. How would the guidance on page 7 be applied to this situation? Would the code be consulted alongside the planning application or separately?
- Para 30 – agree that local authority will have or can gather most information needed. However, there are resource implications for local authorities including presenting this information in a format suitable for the design codes which will take time to prepare.

2A Vision pages 10-11

- Paragraph 33 refers to the need for visions to be aspirational but it is also important to be realistic as to what is likely to be achieved on certain more difficult sites in order to manage expectation when there is no likelihood of an aspirational vision being delivered.
- It may be that one design code could apply to several parts of a local authority area (for example all low density rural settlements).
- It will be important to take a pragmatic approach as there will be some matters that can be addressed by planning policy (eg parking standards) which will apply on a consistent basis across the Borough.
- Whilst the importance of community consultation is recognised, it will be important to balance this against the need to adopt design codes in a timely manner so that they can inform development proposals in areas of rapid change.

2B Coding Plan pages 12-13

- The advantages of categorising a local authority area into one of 10 area types are noted. However, some area types will need to be further refined. For example, the village area type for Gedling Borough would include higher density former mining settlements and lower density rural settlements.
- The reference to densities for each area type listed on page 13 is noted. The suggested densities are considered to be high for areas outside of all but the largest cities. For example, in Gedling Borough only the outer suburbs area type (with densities of 20-40 dph) is likely to be relevant

2C Masterplanning) pages 14-15

- Para 43 notes that these development sites will usually have been allocated in the local plan and as such there is scope for the local authority to work closely with the developer to prepare the masterplan as part of the design coding exercise and to consult on this in tandem with the local plan preparation process. The reference to this in paragraph 44 is welcomed.
- Para 45 suggests that the level of detail of a masterplan will vary depending on whether the authority or developer is preparing the site. The authority should set the level of detail that is required for a site, whether or not they have a role in preparing the masterplan, and a developer may then choose to provide a greater level of detail as part of the pre-application process.
- The level of detail included in a masterplan prepared by the developer may depend on the degree of certainty that a site will be allocated for development. Promoters of more difficult sites that require extensive site analysis of ground conditions may be unwilling to fund costly surveys if there is a possibility that the site will not be allocated.
- It is unclear how viability considerations will be taken into account. Many design requirements are likely to have a significant impact on viability.

3A area types pages 16-27

- Reference to densities as above – seem very high and would only apply to the largest cities.

3B authority wide pages 28-33

- Para 60 notes that most of the guidance will apply to all area types and as such should be included within planning policy.
- The requirement for new green space should take account of existing provision.
- It may be that there are standard references for each area type, so the guidance is provided on an area basis, but a consistent approach is applied across the local authority area. The guidance should clarify where a standard approach is being taken and where an area specific approach is being taken.

- Particularly welcome is the guidance on Resources and summarised in R1 Energy (including energy efficiency standards and energy efficient design) and R2 sustainable construction, which deals with embodied carbon a hitherto neglected aspect of sustainable construction and design policy. We would point out that the reference to the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards is particularly helpful but there are also other standards that relevant in setting high standards for sustainable design and construction such as passivhaus and these can provide developers a choice of how to achieve sustainable design.