

DISTINCTIVELY LOCAL
IN SUMMARY



Distinctively local in summary

Beyond the practical needs of comfort and convenience, people aspire to live in places which promote health, happiness and, that elusive concept, community. We also value a sense of place: that our neighbourhood, village, town or city has some special and positive characteristics that make it different from others. This is how it can be achieved:

By creating places which respond to their context

- **Understand the context** – good neighbourhood design should begin with an analysis and understanding of the physical, historical and cultural contexts, including topography, built fabric and landscape patterns.
- **Interpret the context** – understand vernacular forms and the characteristic grain of regional settlements to inspire new contextual masterplans and create a strong narrative of place.
- **Respect boundaries** – existing and new settlement edges and boundaries should be understood and clearly defined to prevent urban sprawl.
- **Celebrate thresholds** – use architecture and landscape to mark the transition between distinctive character areas.
- **Reinvent traditional building forms** – take inspiration from the local vernacular where appropriate while inventing contemporary typologies for modern lifestyles.

By designing people-friendly streets and open spaces

- **Make it green and keep it green** – allow plants, trees and landscape to permeate streets and open spaces. Planting provides shade, improves air quality and enhances the visual appeal of our streets, especially through seasonal change.
- **Create connected neighbourhoods** – accessible neighbourhoods, with connections to local footpaths and cycle routes, enable easier access to local facilities and open spaces, promoting healthier less car-dependent lifestyles.
- **Recapture the streets for people, not just cars** – create safe appealing spaces where planting, trees, neighbourly interaction and doorstep play can flourish, and where natural surveillance will deter anti-social behaviour.
- **Banish the clutter** – provide discrete and convenient places for car parking, cycle and refuse storage, mechanical and electrical kit, preferably on-plot and away from the street front.
- **Use open space as a community focus** – locate shared parks and gardens at the heart of a neighbourhood and encourage people to participate in their design and management.
- **Plan for the long-term to foster a sense of community** – use robust materials and planting that can survive and flourish. Create spaces that people enjoy and care about – that way, they will treat them better.

By crafting modern houses that feel like home

- **Create homes that ‘feel like home’** – the moment they cross the threshold people should imagine themselves happily living in a new home.
- **Maximise light and space** – emulate the best of popular period properties with generous floor to ceiling heights and large windows, combined with modern comfort and energy efficiency.
- **Design for flexible living** – layouts should reflect 21st century lifestyles and accommodate changing demographics including the boomerang generation, home-working and caring for the elderly.
- **Embrace modernity while learning from the past** – new homes should adopt modern ways of making and digital crafts, while taking cues from our collective memory of ‘home’: so, traditional materials, domestic roof forms and a welcoming threshold.

By offering choice and diversity

- **Embrace diversity** – greater choice for consumers helps create popular, inclusive and sustainable places. Choice can arise from a wider range of pre-designed homes, and from programmes of custom build, self-build and micro-development.
- **Seed communities with specialist housing** – for example, integrating co-housing and downsizer homes into large developments helps to build that elusive sense of community.
- **Balance variety and uniformity** – beautiful places combine visual richness with calm uniformity. Great places emerge from a creative response to context and diversity in the range of homes, not from a scattering of random styles.
- **Design places which can mature over time and manage them accordingly** – the old places we love have evolved over generations of growth and change. Don't try to emulate that overnight.
- **Share a vision** – large developments benefit from a diversity of developers and design teams, working towards a shared vision and within an agreed framework, not striving for 'look-at-me' difference out of fear of sameness.
- **Use design codes with caution** – design codes can promote quality and deter mediocrity, but only committed developers and talented design teams will create excellence, and only then with the support of local people and their elected representatives.