

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	Thursday, 18 July 2024
Title:	Uttlesford Design Code		
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor John Evans, Portfolio Holder for Planning		
Report Author:	Nick Phillips, Principal Urban Design Officer NPhillips@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision:	No

Summary

1. Once adopted, The Uttlesford Design Code will be a practical and useable document for all parties involved in the design and planning of development in Uttlesford. It will set out a series of rules and guidelines that, when followed, will ensure that all new development is designed and built to the highest quality and respects the unique Uttlesford context.
2. Uttlesford District Council was selected for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) Design Code 'Pathfinder' Scheme, following a successful application bid in Spring 2022. This scheme awarded the Council full funding to develop an *exemplary* District Wide Design Code, guided by the National Model Design Code (which is a national guidance document for producing codes).
3. In 2024, further funding was received from DLUHC to refine and edit the code following public consultation and feedback. No future funds are required to enable the Design Code to now be adopted and utilised.
4. Once adopted, the code will become a Supplementary Planning Document and a material consideration in the consideration of planning applications.

Recommendation

5. That Cabinet adopts the Design Code for use by the LPA as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Financial Implications

6. This project has been funded in whole by DLUHC. No budget impacts are envisaged.

Background Papers

7. The following documents were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:

- Uttlesford Design Code.
- Appendix A – Uttlesford Places.

Impact

8.

Communication/Consultation	A statutory 6-week consultation has taken place, and the Design Code has been reviewed by DLUHC. The final Code has been prepared in response to this feedback.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	This document helps to meet the sustainability objectives of the Council.
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

9. The NPPF para. 128 states '*all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes*'. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, section 15F 'Design Codes' states '*A local planning authority must ensure that, for every part of their area, the development plan includes requirements with respect to design that relate to development, or development of a particular description*'. In summary therefore, higher level policy requires authorities to produce design codes, and this requirement is on course to be strengthened.
10. Uttlesford is one of the first districts in the country to have produced a district wide design code.
11. The Design Code contains an appendix, Character Study (Appendix A - Uttlesford Places) which documents the existing and historic character of Uttlesford including building types, settlement types and layouts, materials and detailing, landscape types, street types, and public space types including layout and details. This Character Study is written in a way that documents the existing

situation and then suggests how this can be used to inform new designs that are distinctive and inspired by the local vernacular.

12. Community engagement is a key requirement of the National Model Design Code, and a broad programme of engagement was undertaken, over and above the usual processes for a document of this kind. This included stakeholder mapping to understand demographics, a dedicated engagement website, pop-up stalls in markets and high streets, engagement with the existing Community Stakeholder Forum, in-person workshops and exhibitions, walking and coach tours, bespoke workshops with Scouts and Beavers, online workshops, social media sharing, posters and flyers, and a district wide youth art competition (the winners of which feature in the Design Code).

Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ That no such design code is developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 - the NPPF advises to address design quality and produce authority specific guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 - no district specific design guidance would result in defaulting to less specific national guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The accompanying Design Code can be used by the planning department to inform design considerations in the negotiation and decision-making process

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.