

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** Tuesday, 14  
April 2026

**Title:** Design Code (SPD) Review and public  
consultation

**Portfolio  
holder:** Councillor John Evans,  
Portfolio Holder for Planning

**Report  
Author:** Nick Phillips – Principal Design Officer

**Key Decision:** No

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## Introduction

1. The Uttlesford District-Wide Design Code was formally adopted as an SPD in July 2024. The SPD consists of two documents: the Design Code and the appendix 'Uttlesford Places'. Both documents have now been in use for some time as a benchmark for design quality and are used to assess proposed schemes during determination.
2. As a result of post-adoption usage, and the new Local Plan, revisions are now proposed. These are primarily for the purposes of improved clarity of meaning and in some cases new codes are proposed to mitigate previous omission.
3. The in-practice assessment of the code, amendments and revisions are proposed to align it with the new and emerging Local Plan. The Code and code compliance are now mandated within Core Policy 52 and Core Policy 52A. The revised document is required to go out for four weeks public consultation, which may prompt further amendment.

## Recommendation

4. Recommend that Cabinet approves the revised Design Code to go out to public consultation (4 weeks), with the aim to adopt as a new SPD under the new Local Plan in the future.

## Financial Implications

5. Within existing budgets

## Background Papers

6. Current Design Code [District-wide Design Code](#)

## **Situation**

### *The structure of the Design Code*

7. The code was written using the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code as core reference documents. The 10 characteristics of a well-designed place set out within the NDG and the NMDC formed the basis for the structuring of the code. At the time of writing, MHCLG are consulting on the Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance document that suggests replacing the 10 characteristics of a well-designed place with 7 features of a well-designed place. However, for the purposes of the Uttlesford Design Code we are proposing to retain the original structure and believe that the 10 characteristics still form a valid and relevant way of assessing the quality of design and placemaking.

### *Summary of Changes*

8. There are approximately 100 changes proposed to the code the majority of which fall into one (or more) of the below categories:
  - Re-wording of existing codes to improve clarity of meaning or clarity of expected requirement or outcome.
  - Re-wording of existing codes to align or refer to new Local Plan policy requirements.
  - Editing of supporting or introductory text to align with the new Local Plan, including referencing of Core Policies, where relevant.
  - Omission of references to the National Design Guide at the beginning of each chapter (as the NDG 10 characteristics under which the code was structured are likely to be revised, see note above).
  - Explanatory note on the revised edition of the code, setting out revisions and noting structural changes to government guidance, as above.
  - Omission of duplicated codes, or codes worded very similarly.
  - Typographical errors.

### *Next Steps*

9. Following 4 weeks public consultation, the responses will be reviewed and any necessary amendments made. It will then be brought back to cabinet for adoption.

## **Risk Analysis**

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
UDC does not update the Code and it is challenged in planning appeals as being out of date / not aligned with Local Plan	1	3	Process in place for review as per this report.
UDC misses the deadline for adoption of SPDs set by government	2	2	Process in place and secondary plan to adopt as non-statutory guidance if deadline missed.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

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

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required