



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 March 2026

Report of Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet
Member for Planning

South Kesteven Design Code Statutory Consultation

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to recommend that Cabinet reviews the draft South Kesteven Design Code and agrees to carry out a public consultation.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1. Approve the draft South Kesteven Design Code for the purpose of public consultation, available at Appendix 4.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Planning & Growth, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to make any minor changes to the appearance, format and text of the Design Code SPD, in the interests of clarify and accuracy prior to its publication for consultation.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Sustainable South Kesteven Enabling economic opportunities Housing Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

- 1.1 Taking into consideration implications relating to climate change, ecological impact, financial services, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity, inclusion and safeguarding, and community safety the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.2 The costs associated with Code have been covered by funding from MHCLG as part of the Design Code Pathfinder Fund, the Council has been awarded £80,000 to develop the Code.

Completed by: *David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 officer*

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 Local Planning Authorities are required to have a Design Code (or Codes) by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) (15F in Schedule 7) and they will carry full weight in making decisions on new development proposals. Design Codes should follow the principles set out in the National Design Guide and the guidance in the National Model Design Code (NMDC).

Completed by: *James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager*

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.4 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken (Appendix 2) and the outcomes found that no major change to the report was needed. The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or for negative impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken into consideration as

the Code seeks to ensure that all members of the community are able to engage with planning matters.

There are no safeguarding implications arising from the report

Completed by: the report author and shared with Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

Climate and ecological impact implications

- 1.5 The Design Code includes a vision focusing on Sustainable Development (renewable energy and climate resilience); Greener Communities (green and blue infrastructure); Transport and Accessibility (promoting walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport). Each of these themes will support high quality development which considers environment and sustainability aspects. The Design Code includes three levels of prescription: Must, Should and Can to enforce expectations for new developments in line with those themes.

Completed by: Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The South Kesteven Design Code aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan objectives of Connecting Communities, Sustainable South Kesteven and Housing. The aim of the Code is to raise the design quality of new development in the District.
- 2.2 Local Planning Authorities are required to have a Design Code (or Codes) by the [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) (15F in Schedule 7) and they will carry full weight in making decisions on new development proposals. Design Codes should follow the principles set out in the [National Design Guide](#) and the guidance in the [National Model Design Code](#) (NMDC).
- 2.3 The Council has been fortunate in receiving funding to help produce the Design Code from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Design Code Pathfinder programme.
- 2.4 It is intended that the Code will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and it will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.
- 2.5 Design Codes are different to Design Guides and should be more precise and prescriptive and have stronger wording, such as 'must'. It is intended that the Design Code for South Kesteven and any future Design Codes produced will eventually supersede the Design Guidelines for Rutland and South Kesteven (Design Guide SPD) (2021), but at present the Code will sit alongside the Design Guide SPD, until a point in time when all its contents have been covered by codes (for example, we intend to code the Householder Extensions section).

- 2.6 As advised by the NMDC and the NPPF, extensive engagement has been undertaken in the production of the Code. Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of this engagement.
- 2.7 In response to the engagement in Appendix 3, a second draft code was produced. In November and December 2025, further engagement and testing was undertaken, involving Parish Councils, Members, Officers, developers and statutory consultees. The headline takeaways from the 20 written responses, 1 workshop and 2 meetings were that the code needed to be more concise and quicker to assess schemes with, have clear references to the Local Plan and there were many comments related to more detailed elements of the Code. This feedback was taken on board, and the Code was cut back and made more concise, with 'musts' reduced to ensure requirements are sought where appropriate, references to the Local Plan added and many elements were re-worded or changed to reflect the comments made.
- 2.8 Taking account of the Council's aspirations for quality of design, the Design Code sets out requirements for developers, applicants and Council officers to ensure that new development is of the highest possible design quality. It outlines the design process and principles which will be encouraged across sites of all scales, and which should underpin design at all stages, from site-wide masterplanning to the design of blocks, buildings and streets.
- 2.9 Good design matters as it frames the places in which we live, work, socialise and do business. From the orientation of a rear garden to the amount of sunlight reaching a public square to how welcoming streets are to pedestrians, research has consistently demonstrated the link between design and people's physical and mental wellbeing.
- 2.10 Places that are designed well, function well and meet the needs of a wide range of uses and activities and can last for generations. In recognition of the challenges we are facing by our changing climate, it will also be essential to ensure that new development seeks to reduce its carbon footprint, in terms of its design, construction and use.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The guidance should be used by applicants, designers and officers working in collaboration. The Design Code is intended to be used by:
- Applicants and their design teams preparing development proposals.
 - Planning officers, to negotiate with applicants/agents as proposals are developed, to offer pre-application advice at the outline and reserved matters stage, and to assess the quality of development proposals when determining planning applications.
 - Elected Councillors when assessing development proposals in advance of and at committee.
 - Statutory consultees providing commentary on applications.

- The South Kesteven Design PAD when reviewing development proposals at pre-application and application stage;
 - Local communities as they are consulted on applications.
- 3.2 The Design Code follows the themes set out in the National design Guide – having the chapters of Nature, Movement, Built Form, Public Spaces and Identity.
- 3.3 The Code follows the NMDC in using Area Types to provide some area specific guidance (Town Centres, Local Centres, Urban Neighbourhoods, Suburbs, Villages).
- 3.4 In addition to the Code, District Characterisation work has been undertaken to set out the vision for the Area Types, this is an Appendix to the Code. Characterisation sheets have used a set template, with a sheet for each Area Type (Town Centres, Local Centres, Urban Neighbourhoods, Suburbs, Villages). There is a sheet for each of the towns and also the larger villages to capture variation in character. This will be published as supporting evidence alongside the consultation of the Design Code.

Proposed amendments to the Design Code

- 3.5 The responses and feedback received from the previous engagement can be found in Appendix 3 to this report.
- 3.6 In response to the previous engagement, a second draft code was produced. In November and December 2025, further engagement and testing was undertaken, involving Parish Councils, Members, Officers, developers and statutory consultees. The headline takeaways from the 20 written responses, 1 workshop and 2 meetings were that the code needed to be more concise and quicker to assess schemes with, have clear references to the Local Plan and there were many comments related to more detailed elements of the Code.

Consultation

- 3.7 A formal public consultation is required where the Council is intending to adopt a document as a Supplementary Planning Document. This consultation must be carried out in accordance with the requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulation 2012. The requirements are that the Council must carry out a public consultation for a minimum of four weeks although the method of that consultation is at the discretion of the Council.
- 3.8 The following consultation methods will be used:
- Publish the draft design code on the Council's website and consultation portal
 - Hard copies of the document along with consultation forms will be available at the Council offices

- The consultation will be promoted via the Council's social media channels
- Notification emails will be sent to all stakeholders (individuals, organisations or bodies) including Parish and Town Councils.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 To not produce a Code and continue to use the existing Guide. However, the existing Guide is not a Code and therefore does not reflect current requirements set out in legislation or regulations - [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) (LURA) (15F in Schedule 7).
- 4.2 No other alternative options have therefore been considered.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The Council is part of number of pilot Local Planning Authorities Design Code Pathfinder Fund. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet reviews the Design Code and agrees that it is consulted on to enable good quality designed development are permitted within the District.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 The next steps are:
- To publish the Draft Code for a 4-week consultation.
 - Once consultation is complete, prepare a Consultation Statement detailing comments received and the Council's response, including how the consultation comments will be considered.
 - Publish a Consultation Statement on the Council's website.
 - In June 2026, seek the approval of Cabinet and Full Council to adopt the Code.
 - The Code would be placed on the South Kesteven website.

7. Background Papers

- Link to current adopted SKDC SCI- [Statement of Community Involvement | South Kesteven District Council](#)
- National Planning Policy Framework- <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>
- Corporate Plan 2024-2027- [South Kesteven District Council Corporate Plan - 2024 to 2027.pdf](#)
- National design Guide: [National Design Guide](#)
- National Model Design Code: [National Model Design Code](#)
- [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) (LURA) (15F in Schedule 7)

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Stage 1 Equality Analysis

Appendix 2: Engagement summary report

Appendix 3: Screening Opinion

Appendix 4 - SCI link