



CODES AND COMMUNITIES: GUIDANCE FOR PROFESSIONALS

PART A: GEARING UP



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INTRODUCTION

It is now accepted that communities must be provided with a role to play in the creation of all forms of Design Code, Guide or Statement. This guidance aims to set professionals on their way to design, manage and use the results from enjoyable, informative and productive activities with communities in preparing and using design codes.

The guidance has been prepared mainly by Jeff Bishop of Place Studio, supported by his colleagues. The guidance builds in particular on Jeff's very long and wide experience as well as that more recently of the Place Studio team (see the Appendix for more information).

The trigger to producing this guidance was the publication in 2021 by the English government of the **National Model Design Code** (NMDC), also linked to the **National Design Guide** (NDG). Although the NMDC focuses mainly on authority-wide codes, it also introduces the principle of engagement at all other scales and for other codes

The Guide is in two parts:

Part A: Gearing Up which covers:

- An explanation of the **Varied Formats** within the single word 'Code'.
- This is followed by a section entitled **Why Engage People?**
- **Before You Start** outlines key things to be aware of when working with communities on aspects of design.
- Next we list practical things to consider in **Getting Ready** for design engagement.
- Once any Code is complete, this next short section is about the often-overlooked aspect of **Using Codes**.
- The final short section is titled **Help** and offers exactly that.

for neighbourhoods, masterplans and specific sites. The NMDC also builds from experience over many years of local authorities producing **Design Guides**, if rarely with any community engagement,

Community engagement on design guidance is not new; there is a history across almost 30 years of various community-led formats (see the first main section below). These can be given the generic name **Community Design Statements** (CDSs) and a further potential setting for their use emerged in 2011 with the introduction of **Neighbourhood Development Plans** (NDPs).

Part B: Methods and Programme

This is extremely practical. It comprises a list of all sorts of **methods** that can be used to engage people in code-making with some suggestions about where and how they might best be used. It also draws from this list to suggest how to select from the available methods to develop a coherent **programme** of engagement activity.

But, before that, some key points overleaf:

ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL - READ THIS FIRST!

A few key points must be made about the NMDC before continuing. This is because they affect several important aspects of consultation and engagement. All of these points are addressed again in the main parts of this Guide.

Confusing Terms

Part 1 of the National Model Design Code (NMDC) is extremely clear that 'consultation' and 'engagement' are 'required'. Consultation is then mentioned 22 times and engagement 15 times, while the final section of Part 2 is titled "Community Engagement".

Unfortunately, the NMDC uses 'consultation' and 'engagement' far too casually as if they are interchangeable. They are not; they are very different. Those who, like us, approach consultation and engagement professionally, regard **consultation** as a limited process of occasional, ad hoc and

minimal contact with people – we think of it as fairly shallow work **in-breadth**, i.e. potentially accessing 'everybody'. **Engagement** is a far more thorough and balanced process between (in this case) a design team and local people (often also 'stakeholders') working genuinely together – we think of that as work **in-depth**. Both are needed and appropriate and can apply throughout coding work, although some approaches are more relevant to different stages as explained later. *(To avoid endless repetition of two terms, we will stick from here on mainly to our preferred term and approach of 'engagement'.)*

Stages for Engagement

Although the NMDC argues for working with the local community "from the outset, and at each stage in the process", Part 1 really only makes serious mention of engagement on the Strategy and Vision stages with just a very brief mention of "input from the community" for the Baseline characterisation stage. Rather confusingly, the final section in Part 2 entitled "Community Engagement" starts off by failing to mention engagement in characterisation but then includes a possible 'Area Type Worksheet' for doing exactly that!

This is a serious missed opportunity in two ways. First, because characterisation provides the absolute bedrock on which any code can be built. More importantly in relation to engagement, **it is that initial stage of characterisation that – as we will explain - provides by far the most significant opportunity to engage local people and hence maximise the chances of getting them engaged in the more challenging and otherwise potentially off-putting stages of Vision and Strategy.**

Area Types

The NMDC places great importance on the use of "Area Types ... areas of character that will be used to set common parameters in the code". It then adds that "many places will include a number of different area types" and also argues for each area type having a single design code. The NMDC uses a term "Urban Neighbourhood" which presumably relates to what in Bristol,

for example, the City Council terms an 'Inner Urban Area'. Such terminology is based – broadly - on density, building heights, age, mix (or not) of uses, access to transport and so forth. **It is not based on character and hence design.** Even the example included in the NMDC (p.12) is for little more than a few very similar style blocks when Bristol's Inner

Urban Area probably includes dozens, maybe hundreds of these.

Taking this further, there are many parts of Bristol where older settlements have been incorporated into the city at different times and which include areas of all of what the NMDC terms “Urban Neighbourhood Inner Suburb ... Local Centres Outer Suburb” and even, at a push “Village”! And, rather obviously, all those small areas are different; an issue picked up again in section A3 below and then in Part B.

There is also one further point to make about the Area Types approach. The example diagram about this on p.13 of the NMDC shows “*the existing built-up area to be*

Maximising Resources

The other benefit of engaging people in early characterisation is about resources. As the results of the first Coding Pathfinder projects showed, coding is expensive and time-consuming, and particularly so for engagement work. Resources are a challenging issue for all authorities but particularly for smaller authorities, many of which also do not have their own in-house expertise on design. There is now a long history of the successful engagement of people – on a strictly voluntary basis – in characterisation work through forms of CDS.

The Coding Stage

One other stage in preparing a code at any level, but certainly at more local level or for a site, is that of drafting. This is not mentioned at all in the NMDC, perhaps because it is often assumed to be an entirely technical/professional stage. Taking engagement in its fullest meaning of in-depth work, **there is real value in engaging key stakeholders in drafting**, not only to ensure that the drafting takes proper account of what has emerged to that point,

covered by the code” surrounded by an area titled “Rural”. There is no further mention of ‘rural’ despite the fact that, for many cities, towns and villages, developments will very often take place on the periphery in that rural area and **any code must therefore say something about the landscape context of any “existing built-up area”**. The NMDC says nothing at all about landscape or landscape context; it should. To take this further, the diagram seems to imply a flat landscape – e.g. Lincolnshire – and that, and how it should be dealt with, would necessarily be very different in an authority in the Pennines for example.

Research by Defra (now lost) suggested that each CDS generated around 4,500 hours of voluntary time. In one authority, 34 CDSs have been produced. Even at a sweat equity rate of just £10 per hour, that added in effect the staggering figure of around £1,530,000 to that authority’s budget at very minimal cost to the authority! **This seems to be an unmissable opportunity, especially if it provides the characterisation bedrock for any code and engages people so fully from the very start.**

but also because that engagement can significantly increase the chances of the eventual result being widely accepted and then used because stakeholder bodies as a whole have access, via their membership to perhaps thousands of local people .

PRODUCING AND USING CODES THROUGH ENAGAGEMENT

A1 VARYING FORMATS

There are several formats that address some or even all of what is implied in the word 'code'. All have their place.

Some formats are just **Character Appraisals** or **Assessments**, stopping short of offering any guidance or code. These can be for a whole authority area, neighbourhood, masterplan area or site and can be done by/for a planning authority or by a community. Such assessments can normally be given status as a '**material consideration**' and may not need to go through any formal consultation process. They are also often done by/for developers but only rarely are these given any formal status.

Then there are **Design Statements**, originally rooted in strong community engagement, but some are now done by/for planning authorities. These were started initially by Jeff and a colleague as Village Design Statements then Town Design Statements. Having now also been adapted to urban settings, they are probably now best termed **Community Design Statements** (CDS). Though mainly focused on character appraisal of an area (neighbourhood or parish), they typically also include some design guidance. A CDS can become a **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** following formal consultation.

Next there are authority-wide **Design Guides**, a format dating back to the famous Essex Design Guide of 1973. Though very rarely based on thorough, localised character appraisal or community engagement, they are an important transition because they always include some design guidance. That guidance sometimes goes into a level of strict and very detailed requirements close to what is now sought by the NMDC. Design Guides usually become **SPD** following a formal consultation stage.

The current approach is, of course, **Design Codes** and the NMDC is very strong in relation to the need to develop codes with community engagement, for example:

"When preparing design codes and guides, communities need to be involved in the process in order to gain measurable community support that is appropriate for the scale and location of new development. Design codes should be prepared in light of information about what is popular locally, on the basis of evidence".

Codes are also more precise and constraining about what is appropriate than most CDSs or Design Guides. Design Codes can become **SPD** following a formal consultation stage.

It is now essential to mention **Neighbourhood Development Plans** (NDPs). These can cover a very wide range of topics not particularly linked to design, but they can also include design as in the NMDC. (One of the first NDPs was nothing more than a CDS for a London neighbourhood!) However, some NDPs do not mention design at all, while almost all others only mention it minimally; for example with a policy stating, almost uselessly, that "*development must respect local character*"! In Place Studio's NDP work we almost always work closely with communities to produce detailed policies based on thorough character assessment and including guidance (now slowly picking up on NMDC formats). Once these NDPs are 'made', the material on design has full status within a **Local Development Framework**. NDPs require **two stages of formal consultation, examination and referendum**. Community engagement is mandatory; a NDP must be shown to be a "*shared vision*".

Why mention other Formats?

There are two fundamentally important reasons why this Guide suggests the use of community-led formats as well as those developed and led by planning authorities.

First, as hinted earlier, **no authority-wide code can ever get into the crucial local distinctiveness of each neighbourhood, area, village or town in its statutory area.** That would be a monumentally long and ridiculously expensive task with a monumentally long eventual Code! As explained later, people often feel most strongly, and quite rightly, about design at a very local level – they value truly local distinctiveness - and only community-led formats or those produced with genuine community engagement can ever produce that.

Secondly, **producing any form of Code, especially for a whole large authority area, is a massively resource-intensive task,** something almost beyond many smaller or cash-strapped authorities. As suggested earlier, community-led approaches can be developed **almost for free**, though this is not really that simple. Planning authorities are required by the NMDC to produce some form of Code; for communities any NDP/CDS is optional, so not all will ever do it. At the same time some 2,500 communities have already produced CDSs and over 2,400 are currently making or have made NDPs. Funding is available to planning authorities to help communities produce and to review NDPs, and most NDP groups can access grant aid to help with such work.

As mentioned earlier, promoting community-level work on character appraisal in particular is **extraordinary value for money.** There **is** some funding needed from authorities to make it happen but that can

be very minimal as the following example shows:

Jeff was asked by a planning authority's Chief Planning Officer to help them because of the over-heavy call on officer time for help on CDSs. He set up three one day training sessions, each hosted by a willing Town/Parish Council and to which any other PCs/TCs could send two or three people (there were typically c.40 people per course). The courses were highly active and practical. The core of each day (after a short opening presentation) involved mixed groups going out and about in the host village, each undertaking a specific character assessment task. On their return people shifted onto summarising their results and suggesting key points of guidance, before a big plenary sharing and discussion final session. One result was that, in exchange for providing the venue, the host parish/town got a huge amount of its CDS done just in that one day! Everybody brought refreshments (other than tea/coffee) so only a small charge per person (from memory just £30) was made to the attending local council members.

Overall, this was almost entirely self-funding and the Chief Planning Officer said later that it had significantly reduced the call on his officers' time as well as stimulating more CDSs. This also meant that all but the smallest local council and smallest local authority could afford the small amount of support time they then needed to help them complete their CDS task.

The only caution to this is that, although communities can currently access funding for their NDPs and even extra funding or technical help on design issues, no funding is currently available for CDSs.

We strongly encourage you to think carefully about these other formats before setting off into solely professionally-led and potentially very expensive approaches.

A2 WHY ENGAGE PEOPLE AT ALL?

Quite remarkably, we still hear comments from professionals along the lines of 'talking to people about design is a waste of time', 'they all have fixed views' and 'all they want is for new buildings to look like old ones' ... or even 'I am trained so I know best'! So it is no surprise that we also hear local people comment that, whatever they say, you - the professionals - won't take any notice, so why should they bother to contribute.

So why should you engage people?

Local people don't have the best answers on design issues but then neither do professionals. It is not an either/or situation. Making genuinely supported progress on design is always about drawing in a wide range of perspectives and that means that all parties have something to contribute but also something to learn.

Learning for **local people** is about aspects of character and design that they think or say they don't know about or understand. But it is our constant experience that local people will understand, and enjoy doing so, when you as professionals ask them in the right way, help them to look and help them to engage in enjoyable and active rather than formal ways. (The latter point is why it can be so valuable to get people actively engaged on characterisation.)

And this goes the other way. It is also about **professionals** learning about how and why local people feel as they do about their place and about design, but that only works well if you as professionals are genuinely open to listening and show that you have done so. Do all this properly and it is our experience that local people can provide you with invaluable insights, information and advice even if there are some 'interesting' debates along the way!

And it is also worth remembering that engaging people in aspects of planning – in this case on design - is not a recent idea. Some may recall the so-called Skeffington report from the 1960s but, more recently, the 2004 Planning Act introduced various requirements about engagement, including Statements of Community Involvement.

Even more recently, the 2021 NPPF states that "*applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community*" and the 'Living with Beauty' report from the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (that laid the ground for the National Design Guide and then the NMDC) states that "*local councils need radically and profoundly to re-invent the ambition, depth and breadth with which they engage with neighbourhoods*".

Most directly relevantly and as above, the NMDC **requires** engagement at all stages and at all levels from authority-wide codes to masterplans for large areas, down to individual sites.

PS. It is no longer an option; you HAVE to do it!

A3 BEFORE YOU START

Before you start, there are three things to be aware of to get the most out of any engagement work.

What Is 'Design'?

To most people, design is usually seen as solely about 'how buildings look'. For an area of (mainly) housing, people may think a little more widely about gardens, roads, parking, paths and perhaps whether or not

there is any open space. But 'how buildings look' is just one aspect, albeit a critically important one, of the current agenda as in the National Design Guide and the NMDC. They both address the same 10 aspects:

**Context – Movement – Nature - Built Form - Public Space
Identity - Uses - Homes and Buildings - Resources - Lifespan**

Though that list picks up on issues about 'how buildings look', it is better thought of as an **urban design** agenda applicable more to a local authority area or a large neighbourhood. But there is a necessary caution here about what to cover in some codes: 'mixed uses' or 'public space' will probably not be relevant to small and even some medium sized sites.

It is entirely appropriate, in fact a good thing, to widen people's notions of design and almost everybody will grasp the point quite quickly if it is explained. But explaining this **at the outset** is crucial in order to avoid – professional and community talking at cross purposes. And no prizes for guessing whose ideas win out if you don't explain this properly and early.

Shared Attitudes to Design?

Design is not exclusively visual, so not only about 'how buildings look'. For many people, there are also issues around the meanings and values attached to buildings and to places, their history and experiences and also some economic/financial issues.

Ignore these at your peril. Your views and your preferences are NOT necessarily the same as those of 'ordinary people'.

Working on a pilot CDS, the architect leading it was extolling to some residents the virtues of the intricacy, variety, interest etc. of the older centre of their town, but many residents argued not just that their 'suburban' estates offered them better value with large gardens, plenty of green space, no through traffic, places for children to play safely etc., but also that they could

sell their houses more easily than those 'intricate and varied' ones!

And if design is not just about visual aspects, also be aware that, even if reaching agreement about what should be on a list of factors may be possible, the really key point is **how people weigh up one factor against another** – variety against saleability for example – and that is likely to be very different between 'you' and 'them'.

We faced this in a small town that is almost 90% suburban estates. Rather than dismissing what those people valued, we had to listen hard, look hard, work closely with them and find a way to produce a code to bring together professional and lay ideas into a code. We therefore focused on issues such as verges, trees in streets, gateways and junctions, views out and linking to the strong pattern of snickets (alleyways) threaded through the town.

At what level do people think about design?

What is also clear is that when people think about character and design they do so at a local level – they value **truly local distinctiveness**.

Just by way of example, the centre of Colerne in Wiltshire (photo left below) is classic urban design territory: narrow streets lined with joined-up buildings. But the centre of the immediately adjacent village of Biddestone (photo right) could hardly be more different if also classic, being based around a large green surrounded by individual buildings. And there are around 250 villages in Wiltshire!

A second example is Jeff Bishop's own neighbourhood in Bristol. As community-based assessment showed, that neighbourhood comprises 5 or 6 very different character areas. Bristol as a whole has around 80 community-defined neighbourhoods so perhaps over 400 character areas just in Jeff's area.

As mentioned earlier, the NMDC argues for having a single design code for sites in a single "Area Type" but that raises a hugely important challenge – how can a single code be appropriate for such variety?

Producing 250/300 codes is clearly impossible but what if even just 30%, perhaps 50% of communities could be persuaded to produce their own CDS or NDP, almost at no cost to you as explained on p.3?

This is a fundamental challenge for design coding; how to avoid imposing inappropriate codes on highly distinctive places. Once again, the answer to this is to encourage local communities to undertake their own local characterisation work and then use that to moderate and localise any blunt Area Type code.

In Bristol's case, the different character areas in Jeff's neighbourhood have been described in a local CDS which has 'material consideration' status. This has enabled the community to ensure that what is in that CDS takes priority when any application is being considered for their specific area.

However, perhaps the really key point about differing professional and lay ideas about design is that **finding a genuinely agreed resolution can never be achieved if professional standards are imposed from above**. This is a worrying circle that we must all find a way to break.

Colerne



Biddestone



A4 GETTING READY

**According to one expert in engagement, 80% of any success comes from the preparation!
This section covers four aspects of preparation and ends with a small caution.**

Team and Organisation Preparation

Trawl through material about codes and it is immediately obvious that most is about city or very large town locations. That implies authorities with access to a level of resources only in the dreams of many smaller or less wealthy authorities. In addition, few authorities today have in-house design skills, so it is often necessary to consider engaging consultants. To balance this, effective approaches can be developed even with limited resources, as with the community-led approaches mentioned above.

So, ask yourselves:

1. Do you have or have access to the appropriate **Skills**: technical skills on design, characterisation, planning, graphic presentation etc. **and** skills in communicating design to lay people **and** skills in engagement. **All three are essential.** Such skills rarely reside in one person, so drawing on skills elsewhere in your authority is important, or you could draw on skills in related organisations; for example, most Councils of Voluntary Service have people with good engagement and facilitation skills. Using consultants (resources permitting) is an obvious way to fill any gaps but always check whether they really do offer **all three** of the above skill sets.

Who to engage?

We will avoid getting tied into the debate about what is a community, generally, preferring the term 'local people' because the 'ownership' of the character of a place belongs primarily to those who live there. At the same time, for example with a town centre, it can be valuable to give consideration to those who work in an area or even those who visit it. For the

2. The next issue is **People Resources**. You may have the people with appropriate skills but can they be brought in to work on code engagement and, if so, what is the resource impact of that, are they available full time or just ad hoc etc.? If you have a core team (even if just one person), think about others from within the Planning department – or other departments e.g. Highways - whose time (and costs) you may need to draw on. If consultants are to be commissioned, what do they cost (check the small print!) and do they have space in their work regime? Very basically, this all needs to have an attributed budget.

3. The third issue – **Other Resources** - is too often overlooked and includes very practical issues with potentially significant cost implications. That includes things such as website and social media links (and staff to use them), venues to hold events, equipment to run events, ways to distribute leaflets, travel time and costs, insurances, data protection requirements etc. etc. This is almost impossible to plan in detail but think it through early and ensure some contingency in the budget.

And, once again, don't overlook the **free time** available by engaging communities at all key stages.

Ross-on-Wye NDP, the interviews with visitors were extremely informative about what it was about the character of that town that drew people there and why they enjoyed it.

Earlier on we introduced the idea of consultation in-breadth and engagement in-depth and made it clear that both have their place in any sensible strategy, even the most minimal one. This will provide some sort

of opportunity for 'everybody' to contribute, as well as opportunities for mixed groups to sit together to discuss, debate and share etc.

Here are the basic options on 'who':

- **Random or self-selected individuals**, i.e. whoever happens to turn up at some sort of event or go online. Be aware that it is not always easy to get enough information to enable you to be sure you have got to a good mix of people.
- **Random small groups**. This could be an individual and a couple of invited neighbours or friends undertaking a task either at someone's home or out and about and either on their own or with you. This can give you more control over the mix and balance if, for example, the person working with some mates is someone from an amenity society or local council.
- **Carefully selected groups** is about that awful thing 'stakeholders'. They can be contacted separately and asked to do something or brought together in some form of workshop. Someone in your authority should be able to provide you with a list of appropriate stakeholders. One of the key reasons for doing this is because, as a classic example, you will get very different views from a cyclists' group and a car drivers' group, a local history society and young people – but that's the whole point of it. And if you hope to bring lots of them together, that is where facilitation skills are absolutely essential or light blue tough paper and retire immediately!
- **Workshop groups** can be either of the above or a bit of each – a random mix or a carefully selected mix. Whoever happens to come and/or particular invitees.

Finally, be attentive to the focus of your coding work. Your approach to who to engage would be different for an authority-wide project, a neighbourhood project or a site project.

All this now leads to a very tough question: how many people engaged constitutes 'enough' to draw conclusions about an overall community view on design? Despite considerable efforts, a recent exercise we managed in a small District – population c.85,000 – secured different forms of input (survey, workshops etc.) from only around 200 people. The results from the first round of Pathfinder projects suggested similar numbers but, for areas far, far larger, the 'rule of thumb' is that the larger the target population, the lower the percentage responding. (NB. Avoid noting just the numbers of comments made; many people make more than one comment.)

A common approach, used in several Pathfinder projects, was a mix of some form of survey open to all and a stakeholder workshop or two. Given comments above about people's feelings about local distinctiveness, results from such work can probably never be considered to be appropriately 'representative', but large area work – particularly authority-wide – can be enormously resource-intensive in order to get beyond this limited coverage.

Apologies, but all we can do here is to raise the question and hope that it gets discussed when you are drawing overall conclusions.

Getting People Engaged

It is obviously good to use the notes above to generate your own long list, but how do you actually get them **engaged**? This differs considerably according to the scale of your initiative:

- For a **site** that's far too easy. What you will probably just get is the immediate protesting neighbours and the usual area-wide protest groups. That must be dealt with to get a proper balance of views, by proactively targeting others, notably from your list of potential stakeholder groups.
- For an **area or neighbourhood** it is usually fairly easy to get people engaged by not trying to do it yourself but by working through key contacts such as a local councillor, local schools and local voluntary and community groups - in other words, work the local 'mafia' and let them do the work with your help.
- Engaging people for an **overall authority** exercise on design will be both easy and difficult. As above, a survey and a stakeholder approach will probably get some groups engaged fairly easily but probably just those such as civic societies. Any of this needs real work to try to get both decent numbers and a decent balance. Even then, however, the question remains about whether what emerges is genuinely "*what is popular locally*" as in the NMDC.

Getting beyond '**the usual suspects**' is important but never easy. It is likely to be a problem on a topic as 'specialist' as design, so be aware of it and try to find ways to address it if it seems to be happening. Good strong promotion to what might be thought of as less usual suspects can help. On one occasion, the local football club members

did a character assessment task when out doing their fitness training, on another occasion a photography group got engaged by providing key photos, and another time we persuaded a scout group that doing a certain task would help all their scouts get a badge!

The so-called '**hard to reach**', the opposite of 'the usual suspects', are also often mentioned, and quite rightly. However, we also add the term '**hard to engage**' because some groups - e.g. older people - are easy to reach but hard to engage. Addressing this is a very tough task and we have only key piece of advice from long experience: do not imagine that you can tackle it on your own; contact and work through those (youth worker, disabilities adviser etc.) who actually have the necessary contacts and skills.

One other key group must now be mentioned - **children and young people**. They are the next generation (what's the average age of those at your workshops?) and are almost always more open to ideas. Working through schools or youth groups is possible as some of our Part B methods show (take advice before starting, they are hard to reach), but there is also an added benefit from working with young people - you can, if careful, get to their parents through them, and busy parents are a classic hard to reach group!

While certainly not a 'community', engaging **major local landowners, developers and consultants** is also extremely important at some point in almost all Code production work. And this is mentioned because it is extremely likely that they or their representatives will be present, without you knowing, at or contributing to any open, public events or surveys that you do. That needs watching very carefully!

A small warning!

However well you prepare for engagement work, it is possible – we might even say almost certain – that **things will not turn out as you plan!** People may say they'll get involved but then don't. Your team may change as other calls emerge on someone's time. Venues for events may close. Some really keen people you'd never thought of may come forward. Interesting new issues will emerge but we won't go on.

And all that is no reason not to prepare. In fact, the opposite is true – a key reason for preparing carefully is precisely to help you know how to respond quickly and effectively to things that just happen.

A5 USING CODES ETC.

It is easy to assume that, once your Code (at whatever scale it is for) is finally finished it will – almost automatically - be used as intended. That is not necessarily true. Just by way of example, our own research on NDPs highlighted examples where, quite remarkably, Parish and Town Councils failed to refer to their own made CDS or NDP when commenting on applications!

Ensuring that any Code is used by all of those who ought to use it is not an automatic process; **it needs to be proactively managed**. With this in mind, there are three key groups to contact to ensure any Code is used as well as possible:

- **Your Councillors** – and not just those on any Planning Committee. For an authority-wide Code, or perhaps a masterplan code or one for an urban extension, some form of practical, probably case-based training session (or two) for your councillors about using any Code is strongly recommended.
- **Key Local Societies**, notably Civic Societies and Amenity Groups. These are likely to have been involved to some degree in Code preparation but, as with councillors, they will still need some sort of case-based training session (or two) about how to use the Code in responding to applications or, ideally pre-application engagement.
- **Local People Generally**: If there has been good engagement on production of an authority-wide Code, some but still not many local people will already be aware of that Code, though briefing on its use can still be valuable. For those people who have been involved with or have actually produced a neighbourhood or site level Code (or CDS/NDP), some briefing is again essential. Making the community as a whole genuinely aware of and able to use any Code is extremely difficult but articles in newspaper and journals and via social media can help, as can enjoyable and active workshops. (On one occasion Jeff ran a very successful series of adult education classes on design.)

A6 HELP!

For those unfamiliar with working on design issues with communities, which probably includes almost 'everybody' when thinking about authority-wide Codes, but also for those with some experience who wish to expand and check or add to that experience, **PLACE STUDIO** can offer support in various ways:

- An introductory, **one hour, on-line training session** for an authority team or a larger consultancy.
- A **two hour, on-line training session** for an authority team or a larger consultancy **to include some active, practical work** to develop some methods and/or consider an overall programme. This is best done with a single organisation to be able to target it to a specific area or site.

**To contact Place Studio: use:
info@placestudio.com**

- **Ad hoc support**, for example:
 - To advise on **who to engage** and how best to engage them.
 - To help to prepare an **overall programme**, e.g. for an authority-wide code or large masterplan area.
 - To consider a **specific issue** such as engaging older people.
 - To develop and/or check **locally developed methods**, or
 - To **advise during a programme of work**, for example to address an emerging local issue.

APPENDIX: JEFF BISHOP AND PLACE STUDIO

The following illustrates Jeff Bishop's very long-term involvement on character, design and communities:

- Producing a 'Design for Non-Designers' action pack for planners and elected members, with a parallel one for schools.
- Running courses on design for planning officers and elected members from planning committees, often as a member of the national Planning Advisory Service (PAS) team.
- Leading the government's first ever research on community involvement, followed by a major national training programme for planners, councillors and communities.
- Managing events as part of the national RIBA and RTPI 'Design Initiative'.
- Inventing, with a colleague, Village Design Statements (VDSs) then Town Design Statements (TDSs) on behalf of the Countryside Commission.
- Preparing guidance material on the production of VDS/TDSs and running a large number of training courses for planners and communities in England; also in Wales, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia and the USA.
- Being part of the national team promoting and supporting Parish and Town Plans.
- Member of the national PAS training team for Neighbourhood Plans.
- Producing, for the RTPI, their standard book on community engagement: 'The Craft of Collaborative Planning'.

The following relates to Place Studio's work:

- Running training courses on Neighbourhood Plans for many Parish and Town Councils.
- Supporting communities in preparing Neighbourhood Plans, all including detailed character assessment and design guidance. Some have received national and regional awards.
- Drafting guidance for the Welsh Government and Conwy County Borough Council on character and design with Planning Aid Wales for communities and planners for use in preparing Place Plans (the Welsh equivalent of Neighbourhood Plans).