

Community Land Trust Network: 2026 Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance Consultation Response

A working group of leaders representing community land trusts and community-led development partner organisations came together to draft a response to the 2026 Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance Consultation response.

These are there key points of feedback:

Community-led development could be added into this guidance in multiple areas:

- **Paragraph 22 | healthy communities** - liveable places are not just those that “optimise people’s proximity to each other”, they also create opportunities for people to join together with equity, voice and control, having a sense of influence over the place and how it evolves and is looked after. See for example a past Public Health England guide to community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing¹, a literature review of community-led housing and health², and MHCLG-commissioned research on community-led housing and loneliness³. This paragraph could therefore add reference to optimising people’s proximity, voice and control, and note models such as community-led development can help achieve this.
- **Paragraph 30 | accommodating uses for a temporary period**. This could be clarified to share whether this means commercial or community focussed temporary use. This may have some bearing on communities looking to use short-term agreements to test out community ownership of a space as part of a community asset transfer.

1

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c2f65d3e5274a6599225de9/A_guide_to_community-centred_approaches_for_health_and_wellbeing_full_report.pdf

2

<https://www.youngfoundation.org/institute-for-community-studies/repository/community-led-housing-and-health-a-comprehensive-literature-review/>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-led-housing-and-loneliness>

- **Paragraphs 32 & 34 | a mix of uses** - community hubs and other community-led spaces could be referenced within this section, and the section could include a bullet point to encourage consideration of community-led development and ownership of some facilities.
 - **Example:** Hastings Commons CLT, which is renewing a Hastings' highstreet and creating affordable homes, community hubs for arts, youthwork, leisure and learning, and work spaces
- **Point L3 | A mix of home tenures, types and sizes** community-led housing and affordable community-led housing, such as shared ownership and affordable rents could be added in as a point around tenure mix, as it was in the 2021 guidance, paragraph 118 and the "Looking Forward" checklist of the Homes & Buildings section.
- **Point L6 | Well managed and maintained** long term community stewardship of places could be namechecked as in paragraph 152 of the 2021 guidance.

Liveability is the foremost characteristic, but most of the corresponding practical design code points focus on spatial design as opposed to community engagement, community leadership, and community living through the whole process. To make sure that the community elements of liveability are included, the code could make practical points relating to these areas.

Although there is frequent reference to **community engagement**, we believe reference to a future Model Guide for this (alongside the other guides being proposed for spatial elements of a scheme) would make this clearer, more essential and more practical. This could include:

- "Engage early" - could be defined as a specific point in the development journey as well as concrete guidance of the depth and type of engagement expected
- A Community Engagement Report detailing what and how community engagement has been undertaken could be a compulsory document to submit with pre-application assessments and/or plans as you might with a design access statement

- Community engagement and involvement should be compulsory in the creation of local design statements, local character assessments, context, and identity statements, and in defining what makes places liveable
- A definition of who should be involved in community engagement work, including distinguishing between embedding private stakeholders into projects and public consultation (ie creating opportunities for the full community to weigh in equitably)
- Community engagement should be considered in the long-term maintenance and stewardship of community places, not just in the creation of places
- The opportunity for community-led development to extend beyond engagement, to give the community equitable voice and control in the process of design, development and stewardship of place.

M5i: Car parking design: car parking is often difficult to deal with for design and placemaking due to its use of space, which is exacerbated by the often small, complex sites that community-led housing groups work with. Car-parking guidance in M5i focuses heavily on each home having a corresponding attached parking space, but this could include other creative solutions, which community-led developments often use, such as car clubs or parking areas.

- **Example:** Bridport Cohousing CLT's Hazelmead site has a car parking area of their main living area, with paths between developments for walking and wheeling.



Communal space: shared communal spaces that often feature in community-led projects (such as green spaces for leisure and food growing or the internal facilities within common houses) are often incorrectly interpreted by local planning authorities as public spaces.

For example, projects like Marmalade Lane take shared amenity space and place some of this into a 'village green' space for residents, plus other shared facilities within the Common House, as extensions of the residents' domestic space within co-domestic / semi-public settings. This guidance focuses on "public spaces" or "private spaces" exclusively, but it would be helpful if co-domestic or semi-public communal spaces could be referred to in the amenity space standards. Generally, a widening of the understanding for community-led aspirations with relation to communal space could help support community-led developments through different planning negotiations.

Balance focus on urban and rural development, new build and retrofit and small, medium and large sites:

- There could be further mention of the role of retrofitting places in design and placemaking, especially considering high street renewal and the future possibility empty offices conversions to create homes or community places
- This document could make more references and draw from more rural examples. The role of community-led development could be underlined

through reference to Rural Exception Sites and Community-Led Exception Sites

- This document refers to small sites and large sites, but if the NPPF's proposed "medium sites" are approved (which many community-led developments will qualify as) the design code needs to reflect these

Climate adaptation and long term mindsets could be included further and more specifically in the design guide to make sure that homes are well built and well insulated from the get go, as it is harder for tenants or RPs to subsequently upgrade homes to future homes standards or near once they have been built.

Further logistical considerations:

- When the National Design Guide was first developed, its creators stipulated that the subject of identity and context must start the list of features with which to concern themselves so that leaders can understand the character and place as it is now. Starting with a character assessment and design statement is a key way of ensuring quality homes are able to be delivered.
- With the revised NPPF proposing getting rid of SPD and SPG and introducing supplementary plans, where will community design statements come in?
- Is there reference to or guidance for how this links together with the Future Homes Standard?

In response to the final question: "Should we produce more model codes?" We would like to see codes around:

- Rural Exception Site model code
- Parking model code
- A community engagement model code
- Rural site on the edge of a town (CLES?)

Thank you to our working group contributors

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