



Department
for Education

Design Code for schools and colleges

Project Brief including Project Initiation Document
May 2022

DOCUMENT PROPERTIES	
Organisation	Department for Education
Name of Document	Design Code for Schools and Colleges: Project Brief including Project Initiation Document
Contents	Project brief for the scoping study, development and publication of DfE Design Code for Schools and Colleges guidance

DOCUMENT VERSION CONTROL					
Version	Comments and Amendments (<i>details to be included where relevant</i>)	Author/Reviewer	Date	Approved by	Date approved
1.0	DRAFT	AB	January 2022	CW	
2.0	FINAL	AB	May 2022	CW	

1.0 Introduction and background

- 1.1 This project brief is for the production and delivery of guidance to set out the Department for Education's (DfE) Design Code for schools and colleges. The purpose of the guidance is to help achieve a broad range of quality measures of well-designed schools and colleges in their settings, and enhance the value of schools and colleges to placemaking.
- 1.2 The brief defines two work packages of the project:
 - Scoping study
 - Development and publication of the guidance to set out the Design Code for schools and colleges ('the guidance'), as an integral part of DfE published guidance on schools and colleges premises
- 1.3 The scoping study and the development of the guidance will be procured on open tender to:
 - benefit from market engagement to achieve a better-quality outcome
 - offer the market an opportunity to contribute an innovative approach
 - represent value for money, as an effective solution to public services, following HM Government Sourcing Playbook
- 1.4 The guidance will be recognised as the department's guidance, aligning with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) (NPPF)¹ which includes the National Model Design Code (NMDC)² and guidance published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 1.5 The NMDC sets out the scale and characteristics of well-designed places, to create healthy, environmentally responsive, sustainable, and distinctive places with a consistent and high-quality standard of design.
- 1.6 The NMDC guidance³ includes a section on schools and confirms that 'Guidance on design codes for schools is to be provided by the Department for Education'. The guidance referred to in the NMDC guidance is the work subject of this project brief.
- 1.7 The final DfE guidance shall benefit the planning application and development process, as well as support educational settings in the production of school or college site masterplans or estate development plans.

¹ [Government response to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code: consultation proposals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/government-response-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code)

² [National Model Design Code \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/national-model-design-code)

³ [Guidance notes for Design Codes \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/design-codes) section U.3.i Schools

2.0 Project deliverables

- 2.1 The scoping study shall establish the approach, content, and the range of uses to inform the development of the guidance.
- 2.2 The scoping study will give confidence to the purpose of the guidance, through testing and stakeholder engagement to be relevant for the users of the guidance.
- 2.3 The scoping study shall inform the outcomes of the guidance, by:
 - Placing the long-term needs of the pupils and young people at the centre of the guidance
 - Acknowledging the current context of the design of schools and colleges in their setting, and the value of schools and colleges to placemaking. Reference will be made to design quality studies, including the department's Building in Use (BIU) studies
 - Developing best practice case studies, using national and international examples, which explore the NMDC strategic characteristics of well-designed places, relevant to schools and colleges, and similar social infrastructure settings
 - Identifying the principles from the case studies, for well-designed schools and colleges in their settings
 - Identifying how to enhance the value of schools and colleges to placemaking
 - Identifying users access and connections within context, to benefit education and community use, as part of the government's levelling up and health inequalities programmes
 - Identifying how educational settings can promote landscape character areas, focusing on their preservation and enhancement to help support Natural England's nature recovery networks⁴
 - Identifying how educational settings can address access to Natural Green Space⁵, as part of the government's levelling up and health inequalities programmes, focusing on benefits for educational development
 - Identifying users of the guidance, and establishing how it supports their needs, including through the planning and development of schools and colleges, and when considering master planning and estate development plans.
 - Identifying how the guidance is to be structured to best demonstrate its application to different building typologies and a range of settings i.e., rural through to constrained urban sites

⁴ Natural England - National Character Area Profiles - [Natural England \(nationalcharacterareas.co.uk\)](https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk)

⁵ Map (naturalengland.org.uk)

- Establishing the status of the guidance in the context of NMDC and emerging national planning and related policy
- Considering how the guidance can support the engagement of stakeholders, including educational users i.e., children and young adults, in the processes of design, construction, and care of nature around educational settings.
- Positively impact, influence and inspire communities to build knowledge and understanding by improving the sustainability in and around education settings, to help meet the ambitions of DfE's sustainability and climate change strategy⁶

2.4 The guidance shall use the organising structure identified in the scoping study, to:

- Place the long-term needs of the pupils and young people at the centre of the guidance
- Establish and promote the placemaking value of schools and colleges
- Consider the strategic characteristics of well-designed schools, colleges, and similar social infrastructure which integrates community use
- Consider the range of characteristics in themes and their inter-relationships, relevant to schools and colleges, including:
 - The movement of pupils, staff, visitors, and community, whilst prioritising the needs of children and young people
 - Recognising the importance of local movement, access points, and how this supports active travel for children and young people and families
 - A healthy places agenda, recognising health inequalities effecting children, young people, and their families
 - The natural and built environment elements, to consider the character and open spaces of a setting across the scales i.e., landscape character, townscape, urban form, streetscape, and individual site context, considering massing, the building-line, boundaries, and public transition spaces
 - Ground level public-fronting activities, site and building thresholds or entrances, safeguarding needs which reflect the range of times of use of facilities, including out-of-hours community use
 - Placemaking which prioritises connection with and access to green infrastructure, for school users to be in nature as a determinant of learning, mental health, physical activity and well-being of pupils, teachers, staff and families

⁶ [Sustainability and climate change strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exploring approaches to care of nature around educational settings, as part of children and young adults' connection with and knowledge of the natural environment
2.5	The case studies shall demonstrate the inter-relationships of the above and will use a simple diagrammatic approach including annotated illustrations, drawings, and photographs as well as text.
2.6	<p>Consider sources of relevant contextual information, including research which puts children, young people, and learners first which includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfE's school and college building standards and guidance, including Schools Output Specification (S21) 2021; Further Education (FE) Colleges Output Specification 2021 and the supporting FE Sustainable Estates Guidance, and Building in Use studies • DfE's good estate management for schools (GEMS) guidance⁷ • DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change strategy • Climate Change adaptation strategies to address the impact on the natural and built environment – as defined by the UK Climate Change Committee⁸ • Health inequalities and health equity • Other government department and agencies policy and guidance with focus on children and young people, including DEFRA, Natural England, DHSC, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, DfT, Active Travel England, DHLUC • Built Environment best practice guidance including RIBA, CIBSE, LI, RTPI, Design Council, TCPA, e.g., 20-minute neighbourhood guide⁹
2.7	The scoping study shall include an executive summary or an appropriate short-format document (2-4 pages max), with recommendations for the development of the guidance to cover content, engagement, and implementation.
2.8	The guidance will be a maximum of thirty pages of content, including written text, simple diagrammatic visuals that explain key concepts, annotated illustrations, and other appropriate information. Appendices, if required, may be additional to page count.
2.9	The guidance will form part of DfE digital strategy. It will be of appropriate quality and need to consider options of high-quality print as well as a range

⁷ [Good estate management for schools \(GEMS\) - what's new - Good estate management for schools - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/good-estate-management-for-schools-guidance)

⁸ [Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://theccc.org.uk/)

⁹ [The 20-minute neighbourhood | Town and Country Planning Association \(tcpa.org.uk\)](https://tcpa.org.uk/)

of digital formats, web-based platform. Consideration of how-to future-proof the content for the developing digital platforms is therefore part of the commission.

3.0 Issues for consideration

- 3.1 The guidance should be concise and straightforward to follow with simple diagrammatic visuals, relevant to the guidance users.
- 3.2 The focus of the guidance is to set out high level elemental principles, themes and relationships supported by case studies, rather than extensive detail. The audience may vary between laypeople and technical audiences. The structure may develop throughout the scoping study. The guidance should consider but not be limited to:
- The purpose, assumptions and definitions and relationship to NMDC
 - Context of wider strategies and users
 - The characteristics of existing well-designed schools and colleges
 - Shaping the characteristics for the design of new school and college development in their settings
 - Relevant themes and inter-relationships, why they are important, the design actions which are informed, supported by best practice case studies
 - Use and users in the application of the design code through the planning application and development process as well as in the production of school and college masterplans or estate development plans
 - Consider the status of the guidance in the context of NMDCs and emerging national planning and related policy
 - References

4.0 Appointment, programme, budget, and deliverables

- 4.1 Procurement route key programme and key milestones:
- Advertise the opportunity to open market via Contracts Finder: May 2022
 - ITT Evaluation and Contract Award: June 2022
 - Project commencement: June 2022
 - Project completion: October 2022

- 4.2 Project milestones (as a guide to 4.3):
- Work Package 1 (WP1): Scoping study duration 7 weeks
 - WP1: Scoping study mid review: July 2022
 - WP1: Scoping study final review: August 2022
 - WP2: Development of guidance duration 11 weeks
 - WP2: Development of guidance mid review: September 2022
 - WP2: Development of guidance final review: October 2022
- 4.3 Total project budget up to £50,000 including VAT
- 4.4 Response to ITT to include proposed approach and project plan to respond to this brief.
- 4.5 Requirement includes, to set a programme and manage the process, including work package milestones, workshops, reporting cycle to update DfE project team on progress, issues and/or risks to the timely completion.
- Programme to include but not be limited to:
- Project set up meeting organised and led by the contractor, including DfE project team (face-to-face)
 - In addition to regular catchups, a face-to-face interim review with DfE organised by the contractor, to review progress, make comments and provide feedback where necessary
 - A draft submission of the documents and supporting data, workshop presentations and analysis in a digital and editable format
 - A final submission of the guidance and supporting data, workshop presentations and analysis in a digital and editable format
 - The contractor shall organise a site on MS Teams for sharing information for the duration of the project, including return of all information for archival of material by DfE, at the end of the project.
- 4.6 The project is led by DfE Capital, co-produced by the Design and Planning Teams. The project may include input from advisors from other parts of DfE Capital / policy to ensure that the output reflects and delivers the project objectives.
- 4.7 The DfE project team has ongoing communication with DLUHC, and other government departments. The contractor will support this ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders, to ensure the success of the project.
- 4.8 Document organisation for scoping study and the guidance:

- The contractor should review options for structuring the guidance. The key outcome is to produce a concise scoping study and guidance, which describes 'why' and 'what', as well as 'how' this is to be achieved.
- The guidance should be concise, written in plain English with appropriate illustrations.
- The guidance is to meet web accessibility requirements.
- The naming of documents must ensure users will find them in search engines and meets the range of audience's needs.
- The guidance shall be maximum thirty pages in length. Appendices including case studies may be in addition.
- The guidance document shall be printable as an A4, PDF landscape or portrait format to suit content.
- The information for the DfE project team is to be available in editable format e.g., MS Word with any illustrations as attachments to be reformatted for future digital platforms.

4.9 DfE shall take ownership of all material and reserves the right to make changes to it. Any images subject to copyright must be noted.

5.0 Resource

5.1 The Contractor must have:

- A good understanding of national and international examples of the design of schools and colleges, including their educational and operational requirements. Experience in Higher Education is desirable.
- A good understanding and working knowledge of urban design, planning, architecture, placemaking, natural and built environment, strategic landscape, public realm, development briefs and estate development plans.
- Proven experience in implementing measures to support sustainable and healthy living principles in new-build, extension, refurbishment, and master planning projects
- Proven experience in developing user-friendly, clear, well-communicated analysis and guidance for use through the planning development process, and for use in long-term estate development plans and strategy

5.2 The contractor must also have:

- Proven ability to meet project outputs within defined timescales
- Evidence of high quality and successful engagement with users and stakeholder management across all stages of a project
- Good written and visual communication and analytical skills
- A process of quality assurance ISO 9001:2015

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Indemnity insurance for all professionals involved in the project• Business continuity arrangements to ensure consistency of personnel• Experienced personnel. CVs will be required for those in the proposed project team with professional qualifications | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6.0 Invitation to Tender: return information | | | | | | | | | | |
| <table border="1"><tr><td>6.1</td><td>Successful response to ITT questions, including fee proposal, project tasks and resource allocation per task.</td></tr><tr><td>6.2</td><td>Programme in line with dates - see Section 4.0</td></tr><tr><td>6.3</td><td>Project plan, responding to the project brief - see Section 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0</td></tr><tr><td>6.4</td><td>Personnel with description of range of experience in the education sector and high-quality built and natural environment guidance – see Section 5.0</td></tr><tr><td>6.5</td><td>Project cost, and invoicing to align with work packages and programme milestones – see Section 4.0.</td></tr></table> | 6.1 | Successful response to ITT questions, including fee proposal, project tasks and resource allocation per task. | 6.2 | Programme in line with dates - see Section 4.0 | 6.3 | Project plan, responding to the project brief - see Section 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 | 6.4 | Personnel with description of range of experience in the education sector and high-quality built and natural environment guidance – see Section 5.0 | 6.5 | Project cost, and invoicing to align with work packages and programme milestones – see Section 4.0. |
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