Woolhope

Design Guidance and Codes

Final report

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Quality information

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Contents

Introduction

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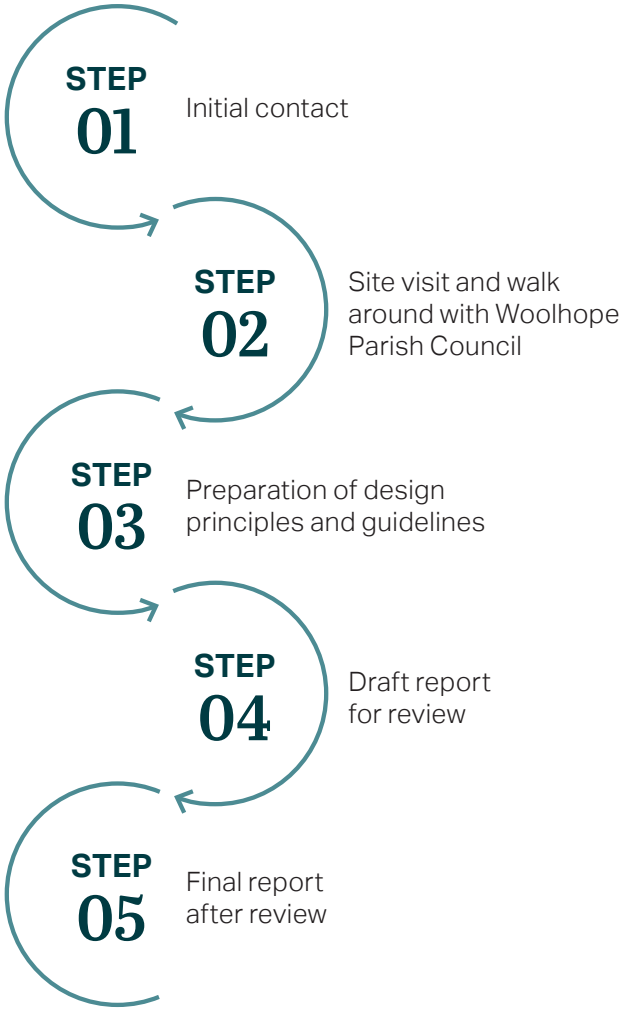
1. Introduction

Through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Neighbourhood Planning Programme led by Locality, AECOM was commissioned to provide design support to Woolhope Parish Council in support of the Woolhope Neighbourhood Plan. The support is intended to provide design guidance and codes based on the character and local qualities of the parish to help ensure future development, particularly forthcoming housing, coheres with and enhances Woolhope.

1.1 About this document

This document sets out design guidance and codes based on the existing features of Woolhope. This rural community sits within a scenic landscape and requires a sensitive approach to development which acknowledges its context.

The Design Code is intended to sit alongside the Neighbourhood Plan to provide guidance for applicants preparing proposals in the area, as a guide for the Parish Council when making comments on planning proposals and applications, and for Herefordshire Council when considering and making decisions on planning applications. It sets out the expectations for proposals and ensures that they will reflect Woolhope's key defining characteristics.



F.1

Figure 01: Steps undertaken to produce this document

F.2 **Figure 02:** Map showing the Woolhope Neighbourhood Area.

1.2 Overview of Woolhope

Woolhope is a village and civil parish located in rural Herefordshire approximately half way between Hereford and Ledbury. The population was 518 as of 2020. The village is located approximately 8 miles east of Hereford which is accessed by the B4224, and 8 miles west of Ledbury which is accessed by the A449.

The nearest train station is in Hereford and the village is connected to the A438 and the A449 by a network of minor rural roads.

Woolhope has a strong social and communal atmosphere. The village is host to two pubs, The Crown Inn and The Butchers Arms. There is also Woolhope Village Hall located by Berryfield sport and recreation area which hosts theatre productions and village events.

Figure 03: The Crown Inn.

Figure 05: Stone barns are located throughout the parish.

Figure 04: Martins Close.

Figure 06: Terraced properties in the village.

1.2.1 Layout

Woolhope has a nucleated layout at the juncture of several minor roads. This area marks the centre of the village at the Crown Inn Pub. Roads follow contours and move in gentle sweeps across the landscape. Dwellings vary from terraces to detached and are laid out with informal variations in setback.

The parish area includes the hamlets of The Nurdens to the northeast, and Broadmoor Common to the west.

The area's layout is defined by its agricultural heritage, the village is host to several grand farmhouses and orchards are visible landscape features across the parish.

1.2.2 Heritage

The Manor of Woolhope was given to the cathedral at Hereford before the Norman Conquest by Wulvia and (Lady) Godiva who were local Anglo-Saxon landowners. The village's name comes from "Wulviva's Hope" meaning "Wulviva's Valley".

Woolhope's Parish Church, The Church of St. George, dates back to the 12th century. The chancel was built in 12C, with the nave, aisles, and west tower completed in 13C. The structure was restored in 1848 and a south porch added in 1883 along with an extension to the south aisle. The building is listed Grade II*.

The parish has several other Grade II listed assets such as The Old Vicarage, The Stone House, The Court, and The Butcher's Arms. These date from C17 to C19.

Figure 08: Grade II listed Stone House.

Figure 07: Grade II listed Butcher's Arms.

Figure 09: Orchard south of Woolhope Village with sheep grazing.

1.2.3 Landscape

Woolhope Village sits atop the Woolhope Dome which is a geological formation of eroded hills and valleys created 250 million years ago. The lack of intensive farming in the region has preserved examples of ancient oak and mixed woodlands which are rich in flora and fauna.

The parish is also partially within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is home to dramatic limestone gorges, historic castles, and wildlife.

Figure 10: Typical rolling downland of the Woolhope Dome, with woods on the ridgelines and sheep grazing on hillside pastures.

1.2.4 Materials and features

Woolhope has a warm and organic material palette featuring sandstone rubble, sandstone dressings, red brick facades, timber detailing, and traditionally clay and slate tiles but pantiles are evident on newer developments. Both gabled and hipped roofs can be found across the parish.

Windows in the village core are often timber casement style, but sash windows can be seen on Victorian dwellings such as The Stone House.

20C and 21C development often features a mix of plaster and red brick finish.

Materials and features

Sandstone

Red brick

Timber frame with plaster infill

Grey slate roof

1.3 Signpost to other documents

National and local policy documents can provide valuable guidance on bringing about good design and the benefits accompanying it. Some are there to ensure adequate planning regulations are in place to ensure development is both fit for purpose and able to build sustainable, thriving communities. Other documents are more technical and offer specific design guidance which can inform design codes and masterplanning activities.

Applicants should refer to these key documents when planning future development in the Woolhope Neighbourhood Area. The following documents have informed the design guidance within this report.

NATIONAL LEVEL

2007 - Manual for Streets
Department for Transport

Development is expected to respond positively to the Manual for Streets, the Government's guidance on how to design, construct, adopt and maintain new and existing residential streets. It promotes streets and wider development that avoid car dominated layouts but that do place the needs of pedestrians and cyclists first.

2021 - National Planning Policy Framework
DLUHC

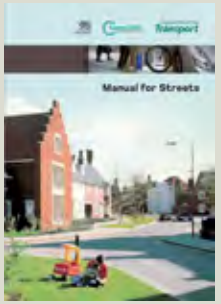
Development needs to consider national level planning policy guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). In particular, NPPF Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places stresses the creation of high-quality buildings and places.

2021 - National Design Guide
DLUHC

The National Design Guide (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2021) illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

2020 - Building for a Healthy Life
Homes England

Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) is the new (2020) name for Building for Life, the government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. The new name reflects the crucial role that the built environment has in promoting wellbeing. The BHL toolkit sets out principles to help guide discussions on planning applications and to help local planning authorities to assess the quality of proposed (and completed) developments, but can also provide useful prompts and questions for planning applicants to consider during the different stages of the design process.



DISTRICT LEVEL

2015 - Hereford Core Strategy 2011 to 2031

Herefordshire Council

The Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy represents the vision for the County to 2031 and provides the context for future work on the preparation of the Hereford Area Plan, the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and the Travellers' Sites Development Plan Document.

2018 - Herefordshire Sustainable Drainage Handbook (SuDS)

Herefordshire Council

This SuDS Handbook sets out the role of SuDS in achieving sustainable development across Herefordshire, where the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) is Herefordshire Council. Clarity is also provided on the requirements of foul drainage where adoption is not proposed.

2022 - Environmental Building Standards Supplementary Planning Document

Herefordshire Council

The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to drive up environmental standards of buildings in Herefordshire, consistent with the council's recognition of the climate and ecological emergency and our vision for a zero carbon, nature-rich Herefordshire.

EMERGING

2024 - Local Plan for Herefordshire 2021 to 2041

Herefordshire Council

The Local Plan 2021- 2041 will set out the planning framework for the county for the period to 2041 and will cover issues such as housing provision, the economy, retail and town centres, infrastructure provision and the environment.

Herefordshire Council was one of 14 local authorities selected to take part in a six month testing programme which applied the National Model Design Code to the local area. This test programme involved working with four case study parish councils in Herefordshire to create a compendium of local distinctive templates, worksheets and guidance notes[1].

1 Herefordshire Local Plan Design Guidance.

1.4 How to use this document

The Design Guidelines will be a valuable tool in securing context-driven, high quality development within Woolhope. They will be used in different ways by different actors in the planning and development process.

What follows is a list of actors and how they will use the design guidelines:

Actors	How they will use the design guidelines
Applicants, developers, & landowners	As a guide to community and Local Planning Authority expectations on design, allowing a degree of certainty – they will be expected to follow the Guidelines as planning consent is sought.
Herefordshire Council	As a reference point, embedded in policy, against which to assess planning applications. The Design Guidelines should be discussed with applicants during any pre-application discussions.
Woolhope Parish Council	As a guide when commenting on planning applications, ensuring that the Design Guidelines are complied with.
Local Woolhope organisations	As a tool to promote community-backed development and to inform comments on planning applications.
Statutory consultees	As a reference point when commenting on planning applications.
Local residents	As a reference point when exploring local planning applications or when preparing their own proposals.

Codes to promote good design in Woolhope

02

2. Codes to promote good design in Woolhope

This section outlines the positive physical, historic and contextual characteristics of Woolhope and how these features should be factored into new development or retrofit of existing buildings.

2.1 Rural Herefordshire character

Woolhope's rural character is one of its most distinctive and valuable features. The village is sited within the scenic Woolhope Dome Landscape of rolling hills and wooded ridges, and is partly located within the Wye Valley AONB. The open and undulating nature of the landscape affords the dwellings within the village views outward to the surrounding countryside.

Future developments should seek to reflect this character by adhering to the following codes:

Code	Implementation
RC.01 **Informal layout**	New developments should reflect the informal layout of the village by slightly staggering setbacks and providing generous spacing, this also retains outward viewpoints to the rural hinterland.
RC.02 **Boundary treatments**	Natural boundary treatments should be used such as hedgerows, shrubs, and trees. Existing mature hedgerows and trees must be retained where possible.
RC.03 **Hardscaping**	To prevent urbanising features and to provide more sustainable drainage, hardscape finishes on driveways such as concrete or tarmac should be avoided.

Figure 11: Woolhope's parish church St George's.

Figure 12: Lodge at entrance to former estate parklands of Wessington Court.

2.2 Distinctive local materials

The Woolhope Parish Area contains a variety of brick, sandstone and some older wood timbered and wattle and daub clad dwellings. The village has several well maintained, historic stone farmhouses and outbuildings which reflect the area's agricultural identity.

As with much of Herefordshire, red sandstone is the predominant building material. This local stone was readily available and used plentifully. Brick became more popular partly because sandstone can require extensive maintenance as a relatively soft stone. Locally made bricks would gain their rich warm colour from the use of Downtownian red marl material. Sometimes buildings would be painted with limewash, although less commonly. Most older properties are exposed stone or brick in Woolhope.

Code	Implementation
MA.01 **Facade materials**	New developments should use locally distinctive materials such as local sandstone, red brick and wood.
MA.02 **Roofing materials**	Roofing materials should consist of stone tiles, slate tiles or clay pantiles.
MA.03 **Vernacular style**	Buildings should take opportunities to reflect the humble local architectural vernacular by incorporating features such as stone mullions, bay windows, sash windows, arched windows and doorways, covered porches and pitched roofs. Standard or identikit housing models designed for urban or suburban environments should be avoided in favour of something locally distinctive and thoughtful in its design.

Figure 13: An example of stone and brick, a mix commonly seen where older buildings have been extended or modified.

Figure 14: Further examples of red brick and stone can be seen throughout the village.

2.3 Sitting within the Wye Valley and the unique Woolhope Dome landscape

Woolhope is defined by its relationship to the surrounding landscape as well as the prevalence of views into the countryside within the village core.

Development is low slung and hunkered into the landscape creating a sense of enclosure and allowing for outward views to the undulating landscape and woodlands of the Woolhope Dome. Dipped green verges and deep stone wall boundaries help to create a sense of enclosure and make the village feel settled in its location.

Woolhope's location on a ridge means that buildings are visible from a broad area of countryside and must sit sensitively within the existing composition of buildings in the landscape.

Future developments should seek to reflect this character by adhering to the following codes:

Code	Implementation
LA.01 **Height**	New development should generally not be higher than two storeys.
LA.02 **Trees and hedgerows**	New developments must retain mature trees and hedgerows wherever possible and provide new planting where appropriate.
LA.03 **Planting**	New development should integrate into its surrounding landscape through the use of planting and soft landscaping. Hedges and flower beds may be used at the property edge to mark the private domain.
LA.04 **Gardens**	New development should include provision for front and back gardens

Figure 15: The beautiful undulating countryside of the Woolhope Dome created by its unique geology.

Figure 16: Woolhope sits well within its landscape.

2.4 Infill development

Due to the generally open nature of the settlement, as well as the generous spacing of buildings, Woolhope presents numerous opportunities for infill, as well as modification and reuse. Woolhope is not a suitable location for larger housing developments as a small rural village with few services in walking distance such as a shop or primary school.

Backland development or plot infill is development on land of an existing dwelling or gap between existing dwellings. There is a risk that this sort of development could avoid respecting its context, adversely impact the historic features of the village.

Tandem development is a form of infill development where a new dwelling is placed immediately behind an existing dwelling and is serviced by the same vehicular access.

Future infill development should be controlled by the following codes:

Code	Implementation
IN.01 **Tandem development**	Tandem development which creates urban levels of density should be avoided.
IN.02 **Backland development**	Large scale backland development behind existing dwellings should be avoided to prevent disruption to the settlement pattern.
IN.03 **Setback and street edge**	Plot infill should respect the existing setback if there is a standard street edge.
IN.04 **Scale**	Infill development should not overwhelm neighbouring dwellings and should be of a similar scale and height to adjoining properties.

Figure 17: A modern extension to an existing property.

Figure 18: An example of infill in the village.

2.5 Sympathetic conversions

Woolhope's agricultural and commercial legacy is evident through the numerous historic farm buildings and industrial buildings spread across the parish area. Many of these structures will provide opportunities for modification and reuse.

There are multiple ways to create extra space within a building using different types of extensions. Extensions must be designed to an appropriate scale and be secondary to the original building. The pitch and form of a building's roof forms part of its character; therefore, extensions should respond by enhancing the existing character. The design integrity of original structures must be retained in the event of conversion or extension. The previous agricultural use of the building must also remain evident in its form and composition.

Future conversions will be controlled by the following codes:

Code	Implementation
SC.01 **External additions**	External additions should be subordinate in scale to the original or primary form of the building.
SC.02 **Materials**	Extensions should be designed to match or compliment the existing facade material of the structure.
SC.03 **Sympathetic modification**	Modifications must retain evidence of a structure's previous use where possible.
SC.04 **Appearance**	Modifications must respect or enhance the appearance of the original building and the wider scene.
SC.05 **On-plot parking**	Modifications must respect or enhance the appearance of the original building and the wider scene.

Figure 19: A stone barn sensitively converted into a property in the heart of Woolhope.

Figure 20: Medieval barn in the countryside leaving Woolhope towards The Nurdens.

Checklist

03

3. Checklist

Because the design guidelines and codes in this report cannot cover all design eventualities, this section provides a number of questions based on established good practice against which design proposals in Woolhope should be evaluated. The aim is to assess all proposals by objectively answering the questions below. Not all the questions will apply to every development.

The relevant ones, however, should provide an assessment as to whether the design proposal has taken into account the context and provided an adequate design solution. As a first step, there are a number of ideas or principles that should be present in all proposals.

These are listed under 'General design guidelines for new development'. Following these ideas and principles, a number of questions are listed for more specific topics.

1

General design guidelines for new development:

- Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity;
- Reinforce or enhance the established settlement character of streets, greens, and other spaces;
- Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
- Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long-distance views;
- Reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness;
- Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
- Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
- Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
- Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
- Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
- Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
- Positively integrate energy efficient technologies;

1 (continued)

General design guidelines for new development:

- Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours;
- Ensure that places are designed with management, maintenance and the upkeep of utilities in mind; and
- Seek to implement passive environmental design principles by, firstly, considering how the site layout can optimise beneficial solar gain and reduce energy demands (e.g. insulation), before specification of energy efficient building services and finally incorporate renewable energy sources.

2

Local green spaces, views & character:

- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Will any communal amenity space be created? If so, how this will be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?
- Is there opportunity to increase the local area biodiversity?
- Has the proposal been considered within its wider physical context?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?

3

Building line, access and boundary treatment:

- What are the characteristics of the building line?
- How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
- Has the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?
- What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between settlements?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?

4

Street grid and layout:

- Does it favour accessibility and connectivity? If not, why?
- Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists and those with disabilities?
- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern; are these reflected in the proposal?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

5

Building heights and roofline:

- What are the characteristics of the roofline?
- Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing and scale?
- If a higher than average building(s) is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?
- Will the roof structure be capable of supporting a photovoltaic or solar thermal array either now, or in the future?
- Will the inclusion of roof mounted renewable technologies be an issue from a visual or planning perspective? If so, can they be screened from view, being careful not to cause over shading?

6

Building materials & surface treatment:

- What is the distinctive material in the area?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local materials?
- Does the proposal use high-quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?
- Does the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
- Are recycled materials, or those with high recycled content proposed?
- Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.

6 (continued)

Building materials & surface treatment:

- Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?
- Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.
- Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?

7

Buildings layout and grouping:

- Subject to topography and the clustering of existing buildings, are new buildings oriented to incorporate passive solar design principles, with, for example, one of the main glazed elevations within 30° due south, whilst also minimising overheating risk?
- Can buildings with complementary energy profiles be clustered together such that a communal low carbon energy source could be used to supply multiple buildings that might require energy at different times of day or night? This is to reduce peak loads. And/or can waste heat from one building be extracted to provide cooling to that building as well as heat to another building?
- What are the typical groupings of buildings?
- How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
- Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the townscape?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?

8

Household extensions:

- Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, and does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing or overshadowing impact?
- Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
- Do the proposed materials match those of the existing dwelling?
- In case of side extensions, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
- Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
- Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
- Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?
- Does the extension offer the opportunity to retrofit energy efficiency measures to the existing building?
- Can any materials be re-used in situ to reduce waste and embodied carbon?

9

Car parking:

- What parking solutions have been considered?
- Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
- Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
- Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Have the needs of wheelchair users been considered?
- Can electric vehicle charging points be provided?
- Can secure cycle storage be provided at individual building level or through a central facility where appropriate?
- If covered car ports or cycle storage is included, can it incorporate roof mounted photovoltaic panels or a biodiverse roof in its design?

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