

North Tyneside Design Code: Commercial Buildings Out-of-Centre



North
Tyneside
Council

Commercial development outside town and local centres often takes place within business parks, retail parks and industrial estates. While these locations are typically more functional in nature, new buildings and layouts should still achieve a high standard of design that contributes positively to their surroundings. The design of out-of-centre commercial development should respond to its context, support its intended use, and create environments that are safe, accessible, and visually attractive.

Objectives

- a) High-quality commercial spaces that are well-designed and reflect local character.
- b) Ensure commercial buildings are safe, functional, and accessible.
- c) Consider future needs and design trends to ensure that commercial spaces remain relevant and adaptable.

Commercial buildings will be considered well designed when these design codes are followed. Any deviation must be supported by clear evidence showing why an alternative approach is appropriate and represents best practice for the specific proposal. Precedent is not a valid justification. Planning applications are assessed on their own merits against current planning policy and adopted guidance, which may change over time.

OOC 1

Local context

The design and layout must be informed by an appraisal of the site's context, including an analysis of existing building forms, heights, frontages, and key views. Larger buildings require particular attention to their form and massing to reduce their impact on the surroundings and support good placemaking.



The new local centre has been designed to complement the neighbouring houses.

OOC 2 Heritage impact

Large-scale, prominent or tall buildings must be carefully designed to avoid harm to the significance and setting of heritage assets. Where appropriate, proposals must be supported by a Heritage Impact Assessment which considers impacts on views, skylines and key townscape relationships.

OOC 3 Materials

Materials should be appropriate to their context and high quality. The use of contemporary materials, and materials that support sustainability and energy efficiency, is encouraged where they contribute to and are consistent with the overall design of the building and wider area.



High-quality materials and contrasting architectural detailing are used to highlight entrances and improve legibility.

OOC 4 Entrances

Building entrances should be clearly identifiable, accessible, and located in a safe and secure position.



Entrances are clearly defined through canopy features, glazing and signage, creating visible and legible access points.

OOC 5 Large buildings

Large buildings should include design features that help reduce their overall mass. This may include recesses or projections in the elevations, varied window designs, and changes in materials or detailing.

OOC 6

Accessibility

All modes of transport should be considered, and the design and layout should help avoid potential conflicts. Information must be provided to show pedestrian, wheeling, and cycle movement routes and how they connect to the surrounding area.

OOC 7

Pedestrian and wheeling routes

Pedestrian and wheeling routes should be accessible and direct, with safe and convenient crossing points. Dropped kerbs must be provided at every street-crossing point to ensure step-free movement for wheelchair users, people pushing buggies, mobility-impaired users, and others who rely on level access. Pedestrian crossing points at key junctions, including both controlled and uncontrolled crossings, should incorporate tactile paving in accordance with national guidance.



Accessible pedestrian route incorporating a step-free ramp with appropriate surfacing and clear access to shop entrance.



Defined pedestrian crossing with tactile paving and clear markings to support safe and inclusive street crossing.

OOC 8 Heavy goods vehicle route

Routes for heavy goods vehicles to enter, deliver, and leave the site should be shown on a layout plan. Where possible, these vehicles should be kept separate from areas accessed by the public.

OOC 9 Landscaping in parking areas

Parking areas with more than 20 spaces must include landscaped areas with trees, ensuring no more than 12 spaces are arranged in a single row.

OOC 10 Permeable paving

Large parking areas should use permeable paving to allow rainwater to soak into the ground and help reduce the risk of flooding.



Permeable paving allows surface water to infiltrate, reducing runoff and flood risk.



Open paving systems combine structural support with permeable surfaces and planting.

OOC 11 **Electric vehicle charge points**

Electric vehicle charge points should be made from high-quality, durable materials and should integrate well with their surroundings. The number of charge points must meet the requirements set out in the Building Regulations.

OOC 12 **Multi-storey and raised deck car park**

Where a multi-storey or raised-deck car park is proposed, opportunities should be explored to screen the structure with a decorative architectural façade. This may include perforated metal panels, sculptural twisted or woven metal fins, or green walls. These options keep the car park open and well-ventilated internally while providing a more visually attractive appearance externally.



Green walls soften the visual impact of large car park structures and enhance biodiversity.



Architectural screening (e.g. metal fins) reduces visual bulk while maintaining natural ventilation.

OOC 13 **Loading bays**

Where required, loading bays must be integrated into the overall layout and clearly shown on the application plans.

OOC 14 Waste and recycling

A suitable area for communal waste and recycling must be shown on the site plan. Where located within a building, it must be accessed externally. Where provided externally, it should be screened from public view within a built structure and, where appropriate, supported by landscaping. Waste and recycling stores must be separate from cycle stores.

OOC 15 External equipment

External equipment (including heating, ventilation and air conditioning) should be screened from public view or located at the rear of a building. In appropriate locations, equipment could be located on the roof.

OOC 16 Cycle parking

Cycle parking should be provided in a convenient and secure location close to the main entrance. Cycle stores must be kept separate from waste storage areas.



Covered cycle storage provides weather protection and encourages regular use, with simple, functional design that integrates with the building and surrounding environment.

OOC 17 Open space

Large commercial sites should provide outdoor areas where users can socialise and relax in a safe, green environment. Where this is required, further advice will be provided during the application process.



Landscaped open space with seating provides a safe and attractive area for users to rest and socialise, contributing to the quality and usability of large commercial developments.

OOC 18 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

For large-footprint buildings, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should be carried out to identify the effects of the development on views and the surrounding landscape. This will help determine where the building needs to be screened, usually through tree planting and other vegetation. The planning authority will advise applicants when such an assessment is required.

OOC 19 Landscape management

Management and long-term maintenance of landscaped areas must be agreed either before submission of a full planning application or secured by condition to ensure the continued presence and quality of green space.

OOC 20 Signage

Signage must be appropriate in scale and dimensions to the host building and surroundings.

OOC 21 Boundary treatments

The position, height, and design of boundary treatments should be carefully considered to minimise their impact on the visual amenity of the area and contribute positively to the character of the street.

Where secure enclosure is required, boundary treatments should be of a high-quality design and appropriate to the context. Open or visually permeable solutions are generally preferred and should maintain natural surveillance and avoid creating inactive or hostile frontages.



High-quality, visually permeable boundary treatment that provides security without compromising natural surveillance or street character.

OOC 22 Biodiversity

Commercial developments must meet mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements unless they fall below the threshold. Development must

demonstrate a minimum of 10% net increase in biodiversity compared to the baseline prior to development, in accordance with statutory biodiversity net gain legislation. Measures should be designed to deliver a range of good quality and well-connected habitats for wildlife whilst also providing attractive, resilient and healthy environments for residents.

Checklist

The Design Code is a key consideration when planning applications are assessed. The Design Code Compliance Checklist is a simple tool to help applicants explain how their proposals respond to these requirements. While completing the checklist is not mandatory, submitting it with your application can make the process clearer, quicker and more robust.

Why complete the checklist?

- It clearly shows how your proposal meets the Design Code.
- It reduces the likelihood of follow-up questions from the Council.
- It helps avoid delays in the determination of your application.
- It strengthens your case if an application is refused and appealed.

Submitting a completed checklist at the point of application is the simplest way to demonstrate compliance with the Design Code and support a timely decision.

Code number and title	Key points to address	Applicant Response
OOC 1 – Local context	Design informed by context, scale, views and massing	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOC 2 – Heritage impact	Avoid harm, provide Heritage Impact Assessment	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOC 3 – Materials	High quality, context appropriate, sustainable	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

OOO 4 – Entrances	Clear, visible and secure entrances	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 5 – Large buildings	Break up massing with articulation	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 6 – Accessibility	Provide inclusive movement routes and connections	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 7 – Pedestrian and wheeling routes	Accessible, direct, safe crossings	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 8 – HGV routes	Separate service and public routes	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 9 – Landscaping in parking areas	Include trees, max 12 spaces per row	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 10 – Permeable paving	Use permeable surfaces	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 11 – EV charge points	Provide compliant and integrated charging points	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 12 – Multi-storey and raised-deck car park	Screen multi-storey structures	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

OOO 13 – Loading bays	Integrate into layout	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 14 – Waste and recycling	Provide screened storage	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 15 – External equipment	Screen or locate discretely	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 16 – Cycle parking	Provide secure, convenient storage	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 17 – Open space	Provide usable green areas	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 18 – LVIA	Provide assessment where needed	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 19 – Landscape management	Agree ongoing maintenance	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 20 – Signage	Appropriate scale and design	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
OOO 21 – Boundary treatments	High quality and context appropriate	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

OOC 22 – Biodiversity	Deliver minimum 10% net gain	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
Further information in support of your answers		

North Tyneside Design Code

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