

London-wide Small Site Design Code brief for Consultancy Services

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Organisational overview – Greater London Authority (GLA)

The GLA was established by the GLA Act 1999. Based at City Hall, it consists of a directly elected Mayor of London; 24 directly elected members of the London Assembly; and the GLA staff body, who support all of these elected members.

The Mayor of London is responsible for making London a better place for everyone who visits, or lives or works in, the city. He is also responsible for providing citywide leadership; setting an overall vision for London; and creating plans and policies to achieve it. The London Assembly holds the Mayor to account, ensuring he delivers on promises to Londoners.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/>

1. Introduction

The GLA (the client) would like to commission suitably qualified consultants to advise upon, and then develop, a potential London-wide Small Site Design Code. A design code would be aimed at providing clarity on acceptable design responses for a range of site contexts across London. A consultant is required to lead on the development of a potential design code, which could result in a London-wide Small Site Design Code document to be published within or alongside the next London Plan.

2. Background and policy context

The next London Plan will have an annual housing need of 88,000 homes. As a result, the London Plan team is exploring a range of housing delivery models and types of sites – including small sites.

The Mayor of London recently consulted on [Towards a New London Plan](#) (TNLP). This set out possible pathways towards the next London Plan (the spatial development strategy for London, used to guide and shape London's development in the years ahead). This document outlined an option to develop a London-wide small site design code. Such a code would aim to support small house builders, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in developing more small sites across London and to optimise the use of land in London.

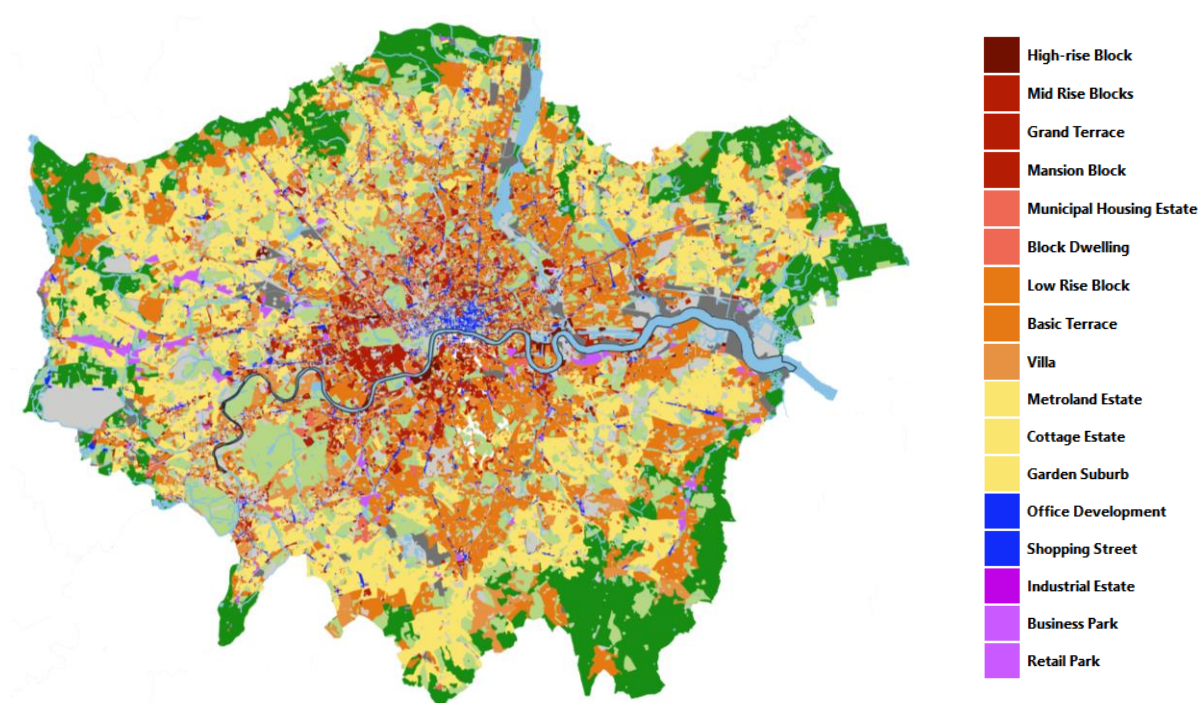
Small sites are defined within the London Plan (2021) as being below 0.25 ha. However, irrespective of the scale of development on those sites, a London-wide Small Site Design Code would focus predominantly on the redevelopment of sites in London's residential areas. While this includes areas of inner London, there would need to be a particular focus on suburban London – with the aim to densify these areas. A London-wide Small Site Design Code would be developed using a similar methodology to that set out in the [Small Site Design Code London Plan Guidance \(LPG\)](#). This LPG was aimed at London boroughs; however, a London-wide Small Site Design Code would use this methodology for applicable site contexts across London as a whole i.e. a London-wide design code.

London's characterisation mapping

Historic England, via its consultants LUC, has recently completed characterisation mapping of the whole of London. This work identifies the character types set out in the [London Historic Character Thesaurus](#), resulting in the map at Figure 1, below.¹ These character types, the basic unit of characterisation, are the building types or typologies within an area. Types are generic; they can occur across London, and in more than one location in the borough.

Some of the most common character types are highlighted in Figure 2, below. If advantageous, this mapping could be used to support a London-wide small site design code.²

Figure 1: London-wide characterisation mapping



¹ This map is a simplified version showing the most common character types in London. A more comprehensive map is contained [here](#).

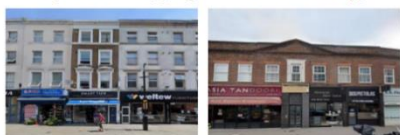
² A decision on the use of the London-wide mapping is yet to be made.

Figure 2: Common character types defined in the London Historic Character Thesaurus

Examples of Block Dwellings character type:



Examples of Shopping Street character type:



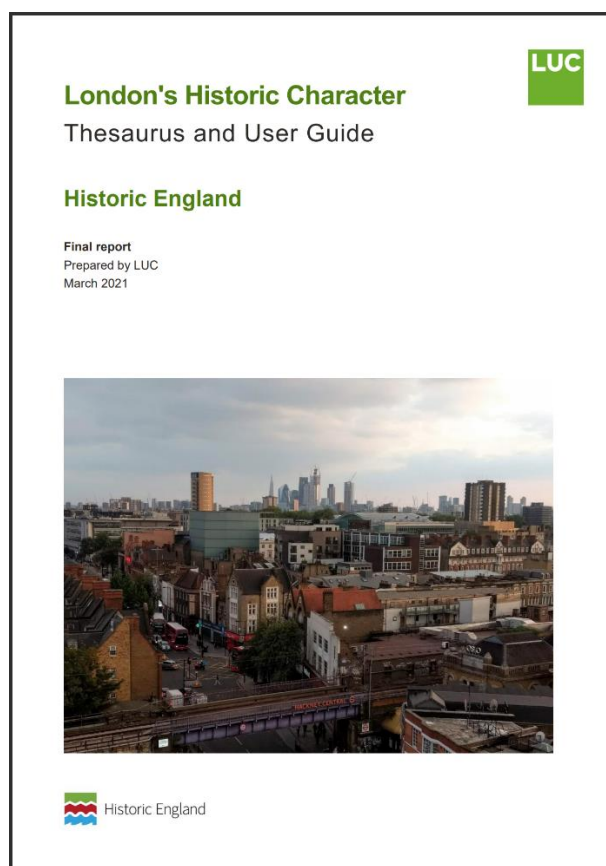
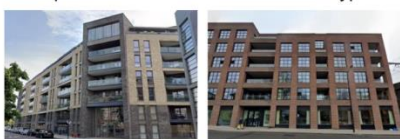
Examples of Metroland Estate character type:



Examples of Basic Terrace character type:



Examples of Mid-Rise Block character type:



Small Site Design Code – methodology

The development of a London-wide Small Site Design Code will follow a process similar to that set out in the [Small Site Design Code LPG](#). This document outlines a series of small site conditions or contexts, such as:

- 'street-facing contexts' (site with direct access to the street)
- 'high street contexts' (site situated on or near a shopping street)
- 'backland contexts' (site behind development, commonly underused rear land)
- residential extensions (extension of an existing development or dwelling to provide additional residential accommodation).

A London-wide Small Site Design Code should also explore the redevelopment of existing dwellings into flatted development. This process should also identify key barriers or challenges to redevelopment or delivery in different site contexts.

It is envisioned that this work would identify the common site contexts within each of the different character types (see Figure 2); and provide a design code for each one. These design codes would predominantly be a set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements. These would be visual and numerical, wherever possible, to

provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of that site context (

Figure 4, below, shows the types of parameters that could be coded for). To be successful, the consultants would need to have expertise in producing similar graphical material.

Figure 3: Illustrative examples of opportunities for incremental housing intensification within terraced, linear block and semi-detached contexts

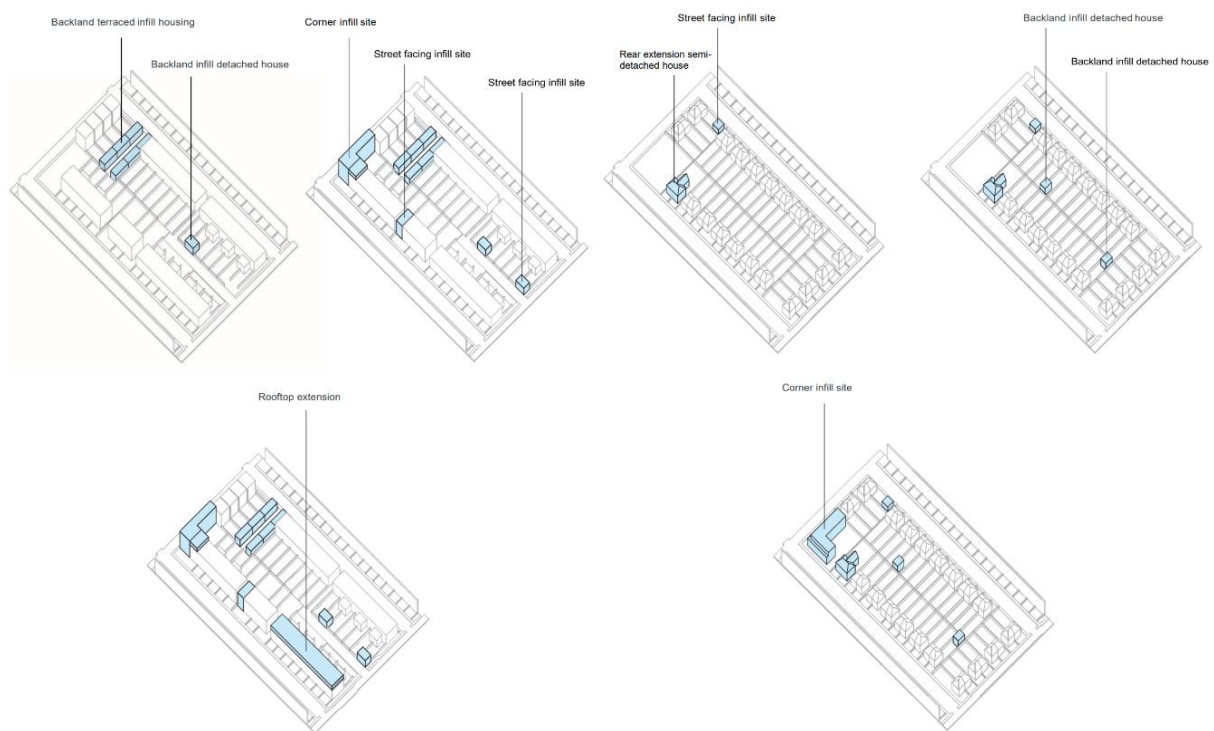


Figure 4: Examples of the types of parameters that a London-wide design code could cover



3. Project outputs

The commission of this work should be split into four phases, each comprising several stages. These are as follows:

Phase name	Outputs
Phase one Technical analysis of the types of sites that a London-wide Small Site Design Code could cover.	1. Identify and produce a list of potential 'site contexts and/or typologies' that a London-wide Small Site Design Code could include. For each site context a set of thresholds should be defined, to identify the feasibility of such contexts. This should lead to a set of detailed recommendations.
	2. The GLA will agree a final list of site contexts to be included in a potential London-wide Small Site Design Code. This should be supported by a high-level analysis to estimate the number of sites for each site context across London including mapping which applies the categorisation to the whole of Greater London. This analysis should support the identification of an amount (area) of each context, and count of each site type.

	This stage will include agreement on what design parameters should be coded for, for each site context.
	3. Provide advice/recommendations on the optimal process and functioning of a London-wide small site design code. This should include recommendations on which type of site context is more suitable to greater/lesser levels of prescription (such as a more prescriptive 'pattern book' approach which could apply to sites which meet a set of criteria versus a less prescriptive high-level design code).
Phase two Targeted engagement with architects and SMEs	4. Carry out targeted engagement with a small group of London boroughs, architects and SMEs, to discuss and develop a series of possible/desirable site responses/designs for each site context identified in Output 1. This should involve workshops with key stakeholders to discuss the possible responses to each site context. It's expected that a range of site responses/designs will be discussed; these will vary depending on the site context. For some site contexts, there may only be a limited number of desired responses/designs; for others, there may be many more. This range will influence how prescriptive a London-wide design code is for each site context. This optioneering should consider the potential equality impacts of each of the design responses and/or future codes. Where appropriate, mitigations should be identified and put in place.
Phase three Technical analysis into the approximate capacity for each type of site context, including viability and deliverability considerations.	5. An analysis should be carried out on the design responses that are selected for each site context. This should be integrated with a viability and deliverability analysis so that this is considered as part of the optioneering around different design responses. The consultant should provide an estimate of current costs for a set of design responses under consideration. This should be accompanied by an approximate capacity for each type of site context – providing a set of high-level design response/assumption for what could be developed on each of the site contexts.
Phase four Development of a London-wide Small Site Design Code	6. Produce a draft London-wide Small Site Design Code. It will have a short introduction explaining how the design code works; and giving a list of site contexts (which could (if preferred) be identified using the London-wide characterisation mapping – developed separately). The rest of the document should focus on the individual design codes for each character type and site context.

	7. Each design code for the relevant character type and site context should include a typical site plan; illustrations; and photos of the typical site context. The design code for each site context is expected to be concise, using images to illustrate key design parameters (no more than a couple pages for each).
	8. Carry out a short engagement exercise with stakeholders, to identify any changes that should be made to the emerging design code.
	9. The different components should be combined into one document.
Phase five Post London Plan consultation amendments	10. A potential London-wide Small Site Design Code will need to be completed before the public consultation on the next London Plan (scheduled for spring 2026). This consultation could include the London-wide Small Site Design Code alongside (or within) the next London Plan. Following this public consultation, the consultants would be asked to amend the document, to reflect the agreed position (to be decided upon once the consultation has ended). This work may include amending individual design parameters for each site context; and/or making other changes to the document.
	11. A final London-wide Small Site Design Code should be prepared and submitted electronically to the GLA. This should be mainly made up of graphics; it should not contain a significant amount of text, or be overly long.
Phase six Web version of the London-wide Small Site Design Code	12. The GLA's web and GIS teams should be collaborated with on a web version of the potential London-wide Small Site Design Code. This could, if agreed, allow users to zoom into an interactive map on London.gov.uk, and understand which design code would likely be applicable for which area and what type of site context.

4. Approach

This project should be led as a single commission. However, a lead consultant may wish to sub-contract parts of the project to other specialist sub-contractors. The lead consultant will be responsible for managing the entire project. This includes managing the sub-contractors.

The project output should be one single document – namely a London-wide Small Site Design Code. This should be submitted electronically alongside any other relevant information and material (illustrations, maps, photos etc).

5. Project management

The project will be steered by a small steering group of GLA officers. The project will be managed by Alan Smithies, Principal Strategic Planner, London Plan Team, GLA.

The successful consultant for the project will need to attend at least the following meetings:

- inception meeting
- phase one: review meeting to discuss final list of site contexts that have been agreed
- phase two: pre-workshop meeting to agree approach
- phase two: meeting to discuss the desired level of prescription for each site context
- phase three: presentation of London-wide Small Site Design Code.

The GLA may request that the findings are presented to GLA officers and GLA-invited stakeholders before finalising the report. The lead officer will also need to be kept up to date regularly via email and a fortnightly online meeting. During these meetings, GLA officers may ask for amendments to be made to the design code; and/or for illustrations/drawings/photos to be produced. As a result, the successful consultant should be open to amending these where necessary.

A final version of the potential London-wide Small Site Design Code, which includes the outputs listed within the project outputs section above, should be submitted to the GLA. This should be in digital format (on USB or by email/file transfer) in InDesign, or another agreed digital format; and in print-ready format, where required. All photography, illustrations, figures and maps should be provided in digital formats that the GLA can edit (in GIS or Illustrator/Photoshop files).

6. Quality assurance

Any written reports (including the final project report) should be concise and proofread; and avoid the use of jargon as far as possible.

The GLA will review the work at each stage. The consultant should be prepared to revise the document if required by the GLA.

7. Key performance indicators

The GLA's Operational Contract Manager, Alan Smithies, will measure the performance and quality of the Supplier's service via the key performance indicators

shown in the table below. These will be assessed on a monthly basis, and shall apply throughout the contract term.

Addressing poor performance

As a minimum, the GLA expects good performance from its service providers.

General performance will be managed against individual lots using a weak/poor performance-scoring system. Where weak or poor performance is identified, appropriate steps shall be taken to address and mitigate any issues. The service provider's Account Manager will be invited to attend a meeting with the GLA's Contract Manager to discuss feedback and issues identified. A mitigation plan will be agreed and put in place with the service provider to jointly monitor and measure performance. Suitable evidence will be provided and discussed, as appropriate, to demonstrate that mitigating actions have been satisfied.

If the service provider achieves a score of '2' or below against any of the definitions shown in the table above, and fails to satisfy any mitigation plan put in place, the GLA shall escalate the performance issues.

		Definition		
Score	Alias	Time	Budget	Quality
1	Poor	Major delays due to circumstances within the service provider's control.	Significant increases to budget required due to circumstances within the service provider's control.	Major concerns with the level of quality received. Outputs not signed off.
2	Weak	Minor delays due to circumstances within the service provider's control.	Minor increases to budget required due to circumstances within the service provider's control.	Minor concerns with the level of quality received due to circumstances within the service provider's control.
3	Good	The service provider met the timescales proposed, save for any factors outside their control.	The service provider delivered the work to budget, save for any factors outside their control.	The GLA granted approval of final outputs with minor, if any, changes.
4	Excellent	The service provider realised efficiencies with regards to time and delivered ahead of schedule.	The service provider realised cost savings for GLA and delivered under budget.	The service provider added value to the project.

Escalation route for weak or poor performance

In the event of continued weak/poor performance, and an unsuccessful mitigation plan, a senior representative from the GLA and the service provider will intervene and meet to reach agreement on how to resolve the poor performance. An action plan will then be produced within five working days; this will be monitored by GLA and the service provider. It is important that a speedy resolution is put in place to remedy and address the poor performance, and build a positive relationship.

8. Timetable of delivery

The timetable below gives an *indicative* timetable for the delivery of the different project outputs. A final delivery timetable will need to be agreed at the project inception meeting.

The key dates are as follows:

Activity	Timeline
Phase one: outputs 1-2	October 2025
Phase two: output 3	October/November 2025
Phase three: outputs 4-7	November – January 2026
Phase four: output 8-9	August – October 2026
Phase five: output 10	November 26 – January 2027

9. Project affordability threshold and payment schedule

The affordability threshold for this commission is up to £55,000 (excluding VAT but including expenses). Payment will be made in accordance with the GLA's terms and conditions of contract (included with invitation to quote documents).

The payment schedule is 100 per cent upon satisfactory completion of each phase.