



New commission to guarantee new-builds are beautiful

Words: Laura Edgar



Housing secretary James Brokenshire has launched a commission to promote better design and style of homes.

It will develop practical measures to make sure that new developments meet the needs and expectations of communities so that they are more likely to be welcomed than resisted.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) includes measures to strengthen design quality and community engagement, with the character of the area to be given more consideration.

The government said the 'Building Better, Building Beautiful' Commission will take these measures further. It will expand on the ways the planning system can encourage and incentivise a greater emphasis on design, style and community consent.

The commission has three aims:

1. To promote better design and style of homes, villages, towns and high streets, to reflect what communities want, building on the knowledge and tradition of what they know works for their area.

2. To explore how new settlements can be developed with greater community consent.
3. To make the planning system work in support of better design and style, not against it.

Although conceding that new homes are needed, Brokenshire said many people feel that new homes in their area aren't "up to scratch".

"Part of making the housing market work for everyone is helping to ensure that what we build is built to last. That it respects the integrity of our existing towns, villages and cities.

"This will become increasingly important as we look to create a number of new settlements across the country and invest in the infrastructure and technology they will need to be thriving and successful places.

"This commission will kick-start a debate about the importance of design and style, helping develop practical ways of ensuring new developments gain the consent of communities, helping grow a sense of place, not undermine it."

Sir Roger Scruton will chair the commission.

Victoria Hills, chief executive at the RTPI, told *The Planner*: "The Royal Town Planning Institute looks forward to contributing to the discussions raised by the Building Better Commission when we meet with the Minister for Housing and Planning next week."

Martin Bellinger, executive chairman at Guildmore, said appointing Scruton is a step forward in ensuring great design is delivered.

"As developers, we hope that the commission will bring back considerations of good design and aesthetics into conversations about development, buildings, urban landscape and architecture. For too long we have focused on the number of homes we build, while losing sight of what value they create for people in local communities and how they reflect the heritage and history of the surrounding places."

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