

# Make “places not just homes” and transform retail parks into thriving communities, says Commission

- Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission publishes interim report.
- Retail parks and supermarkets could be turned into new ‘mixed’ developments for communities, says report.
- Calls for great weight on securing beauty in the planning system, for communities to be given an early and more effective voice in the planning process to help end identikit homes and ‘boxland’ developments.
- Public should have a more effective say in their area’s housing plans – rather than just fighting planning applications, Commission says.

Town halls should encourage the redevelopment of retail parks and large supermarkets into communities that include homes, shops and businesses, a wide-ranging report for the government has found.

The new “mixed use” communities should be supported by new public transport to reduce reliance on cars – and are part of plans to revisit these ‘boxland’ developments.

The proposals are contained in the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission’s interim report, [‘Creating space for beauty’](#), which has been published today (9 July 2019).

The report examines the fundamental reasons for ugly developments and public mistrust, and also calls for communities to be given an earlier say in the development process, encouraging greater use of master-planning – rather than communities engaging in town “planning by appeal”.

Interim Chairman of the Commission, Nicholas Boys Smith said:

Redeveloping abandoned out of town retail parks and ugly old supermarkets would deliver something much more beautiful in the form of thriving new communities where people can raise a family, work or settle down.

Our initial report sets many ways we can make our country more beautiful while fulfilling the needs of future generations who will need a roof over their head.

We need to move the democracy up-stream from development control to plan-making.

Beauty should not be just a property of the old buildings or protected landscapes but something we expect from new buildings, places and settlements. We need to deliver beauty for everyone, not

just the wealthy. This will require, ultimately, some fundamental changes. Hopefully our report will start part of that important debate with the public and the professions.

These are draft proposals at this stage, and we would welcome further feedback before we put a final report to the government in the coming months.

Other interim recommendations to the government include:

- Councils to have confidence in “saying no to ugliness” – with authorities celebrating examples of bad schemes they have turned down and used as examples to encourage beautiful design.
- Any financial support from Homes England and local councils for a development should ‘aim for beauty’ with more work required to understand how this might be achieved and measured.
- Improved and earlier public and stakeholder engagement in the design standards councils set developers in local plans so they can demand better quality.
- High streets should be beautiful, walkable, well-connected places for people to live and work with a greater mix of buildings that includes smaller shops, businesses and homes.
- Urging different layers of local government to come together and set out a vision for development which reflects the local geography, culture and economic priorities.

Responding to the interim report, Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

I am determined to reach our target of building 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s, but it’s right that we do not do this at any expense – what is built must stand the test of time.

We owe it to the next generation to not just build more homes, but to build communities people can be proud of.

As a country, we should not shy away from talking about what building beautifully means – and this report is an important contribution to that discussion.

The Commission praises beautiful developments, including The Malings in

Newcastle, which is a riverside development of 76 new homes built on brownfield land and in keeping with traditional terraced properties in the area.

The interim report has been published today and the commission intend to submit a final report to the government before the end of the year.

Commissioners want to receive further comments and evidence which will help them to prepare a final report.

A final report is due to be published by the end of the year (2019). Further comments and evidence can be submitted to commissioners by email:

[BBBBCommission@communities.gov.uk](mailto:BBBBCommission@communities.gov.uk).

Established in November, the [Commission](#) has taken evidence from over 120 stakeholders involved in the delivery of homes, experts, residents and home buyer organisations. It has made 7 regional visits and held 9 evidence sessions and roundtables. It has also received evidence from over 70 bodies and individuals including members of the public.

The Commission was established in November 2018 by the Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP.

The Commission is led by the interim-chairman Nicholas Boys-Smith (founding director of Create Streets), along with Gail Mayhew (advisor to Urban Catalyst and property consultant) and Mary Parsons (chair and trustee of the Town and Country Planning Association).

Experienced parliamentarian Sir John Hayes MP has also supported the Commission as have a wide range of advisors with many views, from many parts of the development and design professions.