

Vision for building beautiful places set out at landmark design event

- New Office for Place to help councils and communities banish ugly developments and deliver beautiful, green homes and places using Britain's world-class design expertise
- Updated national planning policy framework (NPPF) published, putting beauty at the heart of the planning system
- Publication of the National Model Design Code (NMDC) to put communities in the driving seat of development plans and create local, binding standards

Beautiful, environmentally sustainable, and life-enhancing communities are at the centre of widespread planning changes announced by Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick today (Tuesday 20 July).

The Building Beautiful Places plan will mean good quality design will be paramount, with local communities put at the very heart of decision-making to help shape their towns and cities.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is being amended so that the Building Beautiful Places plan will mean residents and planners will find it easier to embrace beautiful, practical design while rejecting the ugly, unsustainable or poor quality.

The changes set an expectation that all councils should develop a local design code – an illustrated design guide that sets the standard for a local area – with input from local people.

The process, outlined in the NMDC, demonstrates how and when local communities can be involved in developing a design code, using digital tools and social media, as well as face-to-face workshops, roundtables and exhibitions.

With an increasingly digitised planning system, local people will also be able to better navigate and access the planning process with online map-based local plans – allowing people to visualise local plans for development and participate more fully in the planning system. [Two new web apps](#) recently launched to help homeowners improve and extend their homes.

At a landmark Building Beautiful Places event this morning, the Secretary of State is announcing a range of measures that, taken together, will revolutionise the planning industry to enshrine quality, beauty and sustainability in the heart of local decision-making across the country from city centres to rural villages.

They will help promote community spirit, improve physical and mental wellbeing and help the environment.

The measures will improve communities' infrastructure, champion neighbourhood design and support walking and cycling to boost health and wellbeing.

The government has today announced:

- The [National Model Design Code](#) – a toolkit to enable every council and community to create their own local design requirement. Guidance is provided across all aspects of new development including tree-lined streets, sustainable drainage and design to support walking and cycling.
- Updated [planning framework](#) published which will place greater emphasis on beauty, place-making, the environment, sustainable development and underlines the importance of local design codes.
- The [Office for Place](#) which will drive up design standards, testing and piloting the National Model Design Code with more than 20 local councils and communities.
- The Advisory Board, made up of industry experts and chaired by Nicholas Boys Smith, which will advise on the work of the Office for Place and options for a potential independent body.

Greater emphasis than ever before will now be placed on quality and design in the planning system. Local communities will be fully involved in how they want new developments to look and feel, with a much greater emphasis on environmental sustainability.

The changes to the National Planning Policy Framework set an expectation that good quality design should be approved, while poor quality should be rejected and includes an environmental commitment to ensure that all streets are lined with trees.

These measures mean the word “beauty” will be specifically included in planning rules for the first time since the system was created in 1947 – echoing an era when a greater emphasis was placed on delivering attractive buildings for people that installed a sense of local pride.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Today I have set out the Government's vision for a planning system that make beautiful, sustainable and life-enhancing design a necessity, rather than a luxury.

Our revised National Planning Policy Framework will ensure that communities are more meaningfully engaged in how new development happens, that local authorities are given greater confidence in

turning down schemes which do not meet locally set standards.

This is about putting communities – not developers – in the driving seat to ensure good quality design is the norm, and the return to a sense of stewardship – to building greener, enduringly popular homes and places that stand the test of time in every sense.

Nicholas Boys Smith, Chair of the Advisory Board for the Office for Place, said:

I am delighted to be Chairing the Advisory Board of the Office for Place. Britain has created and is creating some of the best developments in the world. But the quality achieved remains stubbornly inconsistent. We must do better, more often for the benefit of communities, to contribute to the economic success of our towns and cities and to look after our planet.

Our vision is to help families, neighbourhoods, councils, landowners, housebuilders and developers more easily create places in which our communities can prosper. The Office for Place aims to encourage the British design and development industries to be the best 'place-makers' in the world aided by improving data on the discoverable links between place with happiness, health, popularity and sustainability.

The Advisory Board comprises experts from the design, planning and development sector and includes members of the previous [Design Quality Steering Group](#), who have been advising government since Autumn 2021.

In addition to the Chair, Nicholas Boys Smith, the Advisory Board members are as below and are acting in their personal capacity.

- Deputy Chair – Vidhya Alakeson (CEO, Power to Change Fund)
- Robert Adam (Robert Adam Architectural Consultancy)
- Andrew Cameron (Andrew Cameron & Associates – formerly WPP & Alan Baxter)
- Rt Hon Ben Gummer (Partner in the master development business, Gummer Leathes and Blavatnik School of Government & McKinsey & Co)
- Sir John Hayes MP
- Victoria Hills (CEO, RTPI)
- Esther Kurland (Director, Urban Design London)
- Paul Monaghan (AHMM)
- Ben Page (CEO, Ipsos MORI)
- Adrian Penfold (Former Chair, Design South East)
- Anna Rose (Director, Planning Advisory Service)
- Stephen Stone (Chair, Orbit Homes, Keepmoat Homes and former executive chair, Crest Nicholson)

The purpose of the NMDC is to provide detailed guidance on the production of local design codes, guides and policies that lead to successful design. It provides advice to local planning authorities on the process for producing codes, the design parameters and issues that need to be considered and tailored to their own context when producing local design codes and guides. It includes methods to capture and reflect the views of the local community through the process.

The objective of the testing programme was to test the application of aspects of the NMDC in different types of development, location and regions across England, with the output being a local design code.

The 14 recommended bids were selected ensuring that there was a good geographical spread (at least one per English region) and a range of development types and conditions (urban to rural) and market conditions (higher to lower growth areas) to demonstrate how the code can be effectively applied in different locations and contexts.

The 190-page '[Living with Beauty](#)' report published in January 2020 which proposed a new development and planning framework, with 3 principle goals – to ask for beauty, refuse ugliness and promote stewardship.

The government launched a consultation to seek views on our proposed improvements to the National Planning Policy Framework - the template guiding local planning decisions - so local authorities and communities can shape and deliver beautiful places to live and work, with a greater emphasis on quality, design and the environment than ever before. We also sought views on the National Model Design Code at the same time.

The consultation closed on 27 March and today the government is publishing the [revised NPPF](#) and [National Model Design Code](#), alongside our [consultation response](#).

We are responding to the Commission's views that communities should be more meaningfully engaged in how new development happens, that local authorities should be given greater confidence in turning down schemes which do not match locally-set standards, and greater certainty to those schemes that do.

Our proposed policy changes will ensure the system helps to create more attractive buildings and places, while maintaining the Framework's existing strong focus on delivering the homes and other development which communities need. The changes will:

- make beauty and place-making a strategic theme in the NPPF
- set out the expectation that Local Authorities produce their own design codes and guides setting out design principles which new development in their areas should reflect
- ask for new streets to be tree-lined
- improve biodiversity and access to nature through design
- put an emphasis on approving good design as well as refusing poor quality schemes