

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New national alliance calls for “Government to get serious on design”

Call comes as the alliance prepares to hold a debate in London featuring Griff Rhys Jones and Max Farrell

A new alliance of national organisations aimed at raising awareness of the quality of design in the built environment will come together on April 11th at a joint event in London. The Academy of Urbanism, Civic Voice, Design Network, IHBC, Place Alliance and Urban Design Group will host a meeting to call on the Government “to get serious on design” in the draft National Planning Policy Framework.

Civic Voice President, Griff Rhys Jones said: “As an alliance, we welcome the Government’s concern to address the housing crisis in England and the recognition that the planning system has an important and positive role to play in this. But, the Government really does need to get serious on design. If communities up and down the country are to be convinced about the new housing developments that we need, then the quality of the places being created will be critical. A stronger emphasis on design can also help new and smaller developers into the market as design is the key means by which smaller developers can differentiate themselves. The meeting will bring this alliance together and debate the issues that might help make this happen. I look forward to sharing Civic Voice’s thoughts with the panel.”

Max Farrell, Partner at Farrells, Chair of Civic Voice Design Awards and author of the Farrell Review on the Built Environment said: “We always said that we wanted to avoid the Farrell Review becoming just another report to be left on the government shelf. It is events like this and organisations coming together on a shared policy issues that does just that, by continuing the conversation. We look forward to welcoming members and representatives of community groups, architects and urban designers to learn how we can collectively influence the final NPPF to ensure that design is at the heart of placemaking going forward.”

Chair of the IHBC, James Caird said: 'The IHBC is working hard to lift design higher up on the agenda of the heritage sector as a whole, especially design that, regardless of style, is both locally informed and site-specific. We are all clear that design is not the only issue in achieving sustainable development and heritage led regeneration, but a firm statement in the NPPF on the value to communities of well-informed design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of its area - historic as well as new - is critical to successful placemaking.'

Chair of Place Alliance, Matthew Carmona said: "Our overriding impression is that while the draft NPPF says much that is positive about the importance of design, overall it is too timid and does not demonstrate enough leadership in this critical area of policy. In some areas the draft text might even be interpreted as a watering down of policy from the way design was covered in the text published in 2012. We look forward to the debate and hearing from members across the country to make the case for design."

Director of the Urban Design Group, Robert Huxford said: "We need a Framework which will set a standard for quality places, and to turn the Framework into action we need professionals and politicians who understand architectural and urban design. A recent survey of local authorities conducted for the Urban Design Group and the Place Alliance has found that there is a serious shortage of design-skills: almost half of local planning authorities have no dedicated in-house design capacity at all, and only 19% of local planning authorities are regular (i.e. monthly or quarterly) users of design review. Government must show commitment to quality design by setting the policies and tackling the design-skills shortage. Without this, there is a serious risk of a new generation of substandard housing development."

The meeting will take place in The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London on April 11th 2018. Registration is required to attend. You can register your place at: <http://www.udg.org.uk/events/new-draft-nppf-consultation-meeting>

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- **Academy of Urbanism** is a politically independent, not-for-profit organisation that brings together both the current and next generation of urban leaders, thinkers and practitioners. More information at www.academyofurbanism.org.uk
- **Civic Voice** is the authoritative voice of the civic movement and represents 75,000 individual members affiliated to 275 civic groups across England. More information at www.civicvoice.org.uk
- **Design Network** is a national network developed to enable the delivery of high quality design support across England. More information <http://www.designnetwork.org.uk/>

- The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (the **IHBC**) is the UK's professional body for historic environment conservation specialists. More information at www.ihbc.org.uk
- **Place Alliance** is a movement for place quality. It is founded on the idea that through collaboration and better communication we can establish a culture whereby the quality of place becomes an everyday national and local priority. Place Alliance is open to all and brings together organisations and individuals who share the belief that the quality of our built environment has a profound influence on people's lives. www.placealliance.org.uk
- **Urban Design Group** provides a forum for architectural, design, and urban planning firms to address urban design issues www.udg.org.uk

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