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# Flexible interpretation of guides needed for innovation, says DWA

A FLEXIBLE interpretation of apartment design guidelines should be required of authorities if the recommendations themselves are not to detract from the quality of living in new developments. That's the view of Irish firm Douglas Wallace Architects (DWA) who warn that insisting on a literal interpretation may have the effect of limiting innovation. The design guidelines were brought into effect last September.

"The new guidelines are definitely a step in the right direction," says DWA architect Eimear Hanly. "However, there is a caveat, in that meeting them does not mean that a development will actually offer better quality living spaces. The guidelines could simply become a 'ticking the box' exercise and lead to 'design with a calculator'.

"We must avoid repeating the previous situation where minimum standards had become targets for some developers whose sole focus is maximising return. The adoption of a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to the design of apartment units should be encouraged."

"It would not be our intention to adopt a tick the box approach to the implementation of the guidelines," a spokesperson for Dublin City Council said. "We will consider each proposal on its merits and include a qualitative assessment of issues like open space provision. It should be pointed out that the guidelines stress flexibility and the need to be open to innovative design solutions. At the end of the day, the critical test is 'Does the

proposed scheme deliver quality apartment homes?'"