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## Guidelines Catch 22 for retail schemes

THE fact that the new Department of the Environment design guidelines will impact on mixed-use developments as well as purely residential schemes has been largely overlooked in the debate on this controversial issue so far. However, leading design firm Douglas Wallace Architects has helped focus attention on this aspect by calling upon local authorities to be flexible in order to promote commercially viable, sustainable urban design.

"We are hopeful that the spirit of the guidelines will be applied rather than a strictly literal interpretation," DW architect Eimear Hanly comments. "Local authorities should use their discretion to take a more holistic approach to planning policy, combined with the flexibility afforded in the document itself, to assess each submission on its own individual merits."

The architect points out that the DoE requirement for dual aspect units will lead to increased numbers of circulation cores.

"This has an effect on the viability and flexibility of retail areas on the ground floor of mixed-use developments," Ms Hanly comments. "It can also affect the commercial viability of retail units in relation to their letting potential. The new guidelines should give rise to permission for increased building heights in appropriate locations, to achieve more commercially viable and sustainable urban design in areas that are well served by public transport."

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