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## New design guidelines should give rise to increased density

A flexible interpretation of apartment design guidelines should be required of local authorities in future if the guidelines themselves are not to detract from the quality of living in new developments. Eimear Hanly of Douglas Wallace Architects said that the new design guidelines present significant challenges to the private sector. "The new design guidelines are definitely a step in the right direction in the effort to create better quality and sustainable living environments," said 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'. All designs should instead be assessed on a case by case basis because a literal interpretation of the guidelines may have the effect of limiting innovation."

"Designers and developers should now be more innovative in the types of scheme suggested but if they are, then the local authorities, the planning process and the general public will need to be tolerant and open to this requirement. The new design guidelines should also give rise to permissions for increased density in appropriate locations so as to achieve more commercially viable and sustainable urban design."

"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."