

Jenrick announces next steps to put beauty and design at heart of planning system

- Nicholas Boys Smith to lead expert group advising government on how to embed beauty and quality into the new, reformed planning system
- Charles O'Brien appointed as government's new heritage adviser to help communities protect their treasured historic buildings and monuments
- Appointments follow proposals to overhaul England's planning system, placing beauty and design quality at the heart of all new developments

Last month, the government [published proposals for a new, faster, simpler planning system](#) which will require local authorities to introduce their own local design codes – enhancing beauty, quality and environmental standards by giving communities control over what is built in their areas.

Today (22 September 2020) the Housing Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, has announced that he has appointed Nicholas Boys Smith to establish a new design body, tasked with driving up design standards and supporting local communities to produce design codes defining beautiful design in each community.

Nicholas will chair a new steering group that will advise government on how best to help communities set these local rules for local developments and ensure that for the first time in history beauty, design and high environmental standards are fundamental to every planning application.

The new design body will support communities in producing binding design codes for their local area, massively increase focus on design and quality in the planning process and ensure local design and architecture is recognised and conserved.

As founding director of social enterprise Create Streets and co-chair for the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission Mr Boys Smith has a wealth of experience in researching popular and healthy places.

This work marks the next step in placing beauty and design firmly at the heart of the government's new planning system and consigning 'anywhereville' developments to history.

The Housing Secretary has also announced the appointment of Charles O'Brien as the government's Listing Heritage Adviser to help conserve some of England's historic buildings as part of the most ambitious local heritage campaign for 40 years.

This is the first time such a post has been created since the 1980s and has echoes of the famous Monuments Men who battled to save historic buildings and artefacts from bulldozers during the Second World War.

As a leading architectural historian and commissioner at Historic England, Charles will spearhead work with councils to increase the number of buildings and structures of significant historical and cultural value that are locally listed, helping to protect them through the planning system.

Speaking at the Create Streets Conference, Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP will say:

For the first time in this country, we are embedding beauty, design and quality in the planning system.

The creation of a new design body will empower communities to demand developments are built to local preferences and reflect the character and identity of their communities – assigning ‘anywhereville’ developments to history.

Nicholas Boys Smith has established himself as the pre-eminent voice in the movement to create beautiful, sustainable neighbourhoods with an enduring appeal and so I have asked him to help establish the new design body that will enhance what people treasure most about their local area.

Nicholas Boys Smith, leader of the steering group, said:

New places should be the conservation areas of the future: popular, beautiful, sustainable and supportive of public health and well-being. I am delighted to be asked to help achieve that and look forward to getting stuck in.

Heritage adviser Charles O’Brien said:

I am delighted to have been appointed to advise the Secretary of State on the programme to improve and extend the Local Lists of important buildings and places in England. The best way to protect the heritage we value is to identify what matters most to our communities and share our understanding and appreciation of them.

Culture Secretary Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP said:

Historic buildings and monuments give each of our towns and cities their unique character. We’re determined to protect them for future generations, so that they appreciate all aspects of our past and enjoy beautiful places to live, work and visit.

I welcome the appointment of Charles O’Brien to help guide this work, which comes on top of the unprecedented investment we are making to support our heritage sector through the £1.57 billion

Cultural Recovery Fund.

Nicholas Boys Smith is the founding director of [Create Streets](#), and was co-chair alongside the late Sir Roger Scruton of the [Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission](#).

He is a Commissioner of Historic England and a senior research fellow at the University of Buckingham. Nicholas has written extensively on the links between design, wellbeing, value, sustainability and public support as well as leading or supporting many urban design and community co-design projects.

The planning system recognises 3 types of heritage asset – those which are of international importance, those which are of national importance and those which are important locally.

Nationally important heritage assets (for example; listed buildings, scheduled monuments etc) are identified and given statutory protection by Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (having consulted Historic England) on the basis of nationally-set selection criteria. Locally important heritage assets are identified by local planning authorities and neighbourhood plan forums based on locally-set criteria.

Historic England will work with the government's new independent local heritage adviser to promote greater awareness of the benefits of locally listing historic buildings and support people to nominate important buildings in their area, which they think should be protected.

Buildings and structures legible for local lists can include homes, cottages, cinemas, theatres and industrial heritage.

Charles O'Brien will work with Historic England to identify the 10 counties that are home to many historic buildings that are not yet protected and would most benefit from the additional listings.

Residents will be encouraged to nominate heritage assets in their area , helping to protect buildings by ensuring their significance is considered in any planning applications that affect the building and its setting. Charles O'Brien's work will be supported by experts at Historic England and £700,000 government funding.

Charles O'Brien FSA is joint editor of the Pevsner Architectural Guides and an author for several of the revised volumes in the Buildings of England series. He has worked on the research and editing of these guides for over 20 years, prior to which he was employed by the Historic Buildings Department of the National Trust. For the last 5 years he has been a Commissioner of Historic England and is the chair of its London Advisory Committee.