

New Homes Ombudsman Case Study:

Design changes, snag delays and mould



Issue

The customer complained that the property did not match their expectations. They said the fourth bedroom was too small to fit a bed, they had not received confirmation of the property boundaries, and there was outstanding snagging work and a mould issue that still needed resolving.

Relevant sections of the New Homes Quality Code

Part 1

Selling a new home

Part 3

After-sales, complaints and the NHOS

Circumstances

- The developer made design changes before the customer's reservation, reducing the size of the fourth bedroom to enlarge the bathroom, but the customer was later given outdated marketing materials showing the original layout.
- The customer reserved the home unaware of the updated layout, and later found the bedroom was too small to fit a bed, due to the stair's bulkhead.
- Multiple snagging issues were also reported post-completion, including damaged fittings and repair delays, some of which remained unresolved for an extended period.
- Mould appeared shortly after move-in; the developer eventually replaced the kitchen to address the issue after interim remediation steps.
- The customer complained about the layout mismatch, mould, and unresolved snagging. They requested an apology, compensation, and a clear plan to reduce the bulkhead.
- The developer acknowledged the outdated plans were shared in error and proposed work to reduce the bulkhead, expressing willingness to offer reasonable compensation for the disruption.

Ombudsman's decision

The Ombudsman reviewed all available evidence and concluded that the developer provided outdated marketing materials at the reservation that did not reflect internal changes, including alterations to the staircase and a reduction in the size of the fourth bedroom. The bulkhead in the bedroom was larger than shown, preventing it from being used as a functional bedroom.

The customer was not informed of these changes during the sales process, and the final layout differed significantly from what was expected. The Ombudsman found this breached the Code's requirements for fairness and transparency.

Elements of the snagging complaint were also upheld due to delays and poor communication, and while the developer responded reasonably to mould issues, the kitchen required early replacement.

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Outcome

Complaint **partially upheld**. Customer awarded £2,900 compensation.



Learnings

- Providing accurate, up-to-date information at the point of reservation is essential. Sharing outdated marketing materials misled the customer and contributed to the complaint.
- Delayed or poor communication around snagging issues and defects can escalate customer dissatisfaction, even when remedial work is eventually completed.

Recommendations for developers

Before being issued to customers, confirm that all marketing and sales materials reflect the latest approved property layout and specifications.

Strengthen after-sales processes by logging, tracking, and regularly updating customers on snagging progress, with clear timelines and accountability for resolution.

