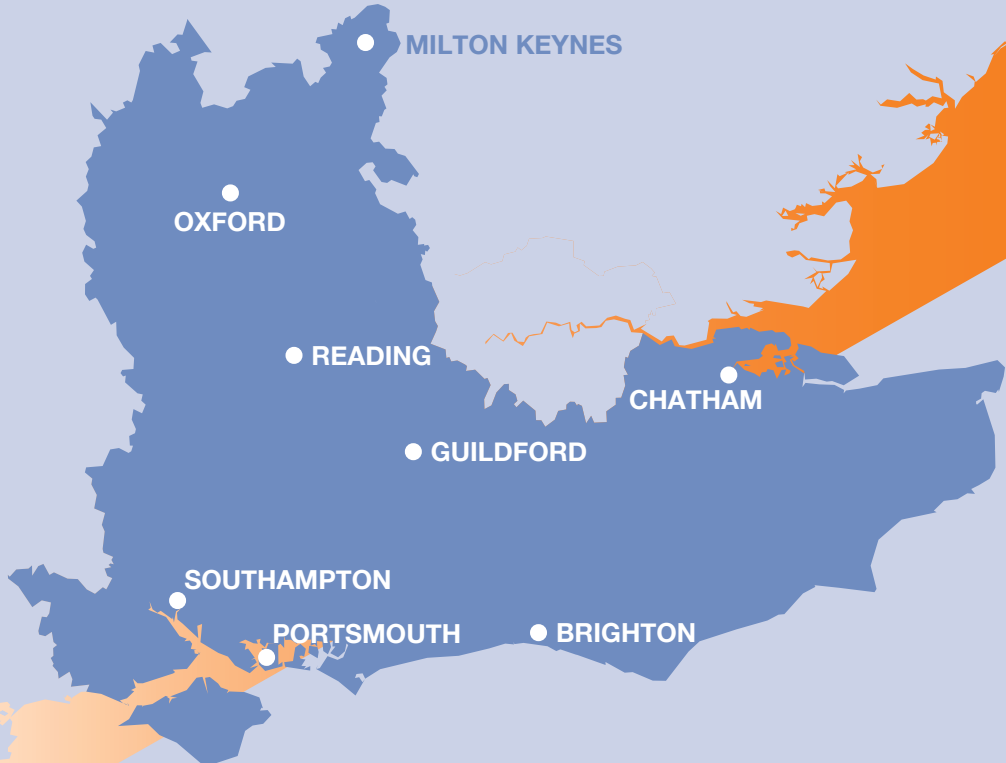


# Serdip

**South east regional design panel**  
appraising designs for  
the built environment





expert

**The best Design Panel  
I have presented to**

Piers Gough, CZWG Architects

# independent

The South East Regional Design Panel (SERDP) provides independent, expert appraisals on the quality of design proposals for the built environment.

In establishing SERDP in 2002, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) was the first regional development agency to fund a Design Panel as an independent and free-to-use resource across the whole Government region. This model is now being adopted across the country.

The Panel's remit stretches from Milton Keynes to Margate and brings the insights of leading architects and other professionals to bear on projects of significance for the economic and social development of the South East. SERDP bridges the gap between the first-hand knowledge of local panels and the national perspective of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE).

Since 2002 the Panel has held more than 350 reviews and is becoming increasingly busy as awareness of its value-adding process and significant body of work continues to grow.

This brief summary indicates the range of the Panel's influence and shows how it both raises expectations and facilitates the delivery of design quality across South East England.

**A subtle tool  
- not threatening  
but powerful**

Sevenoaks District Council

# experienced

It has been my privilege and pleasure to chair the South East Regional Design Panel since its inception in 2002. During this time I have seen SERDP mature from quiet beginnings into a confident and highly respected organisation assessing projects and plans on a regional basis.

This owes much to two factors. First, the imaginative and continuing support of SEEDA. Secondly, SERDP has been able to draw on the skills and experience of leading practitioners. As a result we offer our users independent and objective advice of a calibre that few could achieve, or perhaps afford, on their own.

Often the binding agent that holds a good project together is an enlightened local authority, confident enough to set and expect high standards both for itself and for those applying for planning permission. I see an important part of our work as building that confidence and thus enabling planning committees and planners to demand the best.

We can be proud of what has been achieved but there is no room for complacency - the quality of design could and should be better than it is. The South East is required to accommodate more development than any other region and the SERDP is in a strong position to further raise the standard of that development.

**Paul Koralek**  
Chairman, South East Regional Design Panel

# creative

## Panel Members 2002 – 2008

Panel members are recruited by open advertisement and include some of the South East's most prominent architects, planners, landscape designers, transport consultants and urban designers. Their job is to communicate the strengths of design proposals and, where needed, suggest areas for further work by design teams.

<b>Paul Acton</b>	<b>Paul Hartmann</b>	<b>Neil Parkyn</b>
<b>Brian Avery</b>	<b>Graham Haworth</b>	<b>Richard Portchmouth</b>
<b>Timothy Brittain-Catlin</b>	<b>Judy Hillman</b>	<b>Jane Priestman</b>
<b>Jeremy Caulton</b>	<b>John Hopkins</b>	<b>Esther Rolinson</b>
<b>Neil Choudhury</b>	<b>Paul Hudson</b>	<b>Hilary Satchwell</b>
<b>Will Cousins</b>	<b>Tony Ingram</b>	<b>Anne Sawyer</b>
<b>Thomas Croft</b>	<b>Mansell Jagger</b>	<b>Bridget Sawyers</b>
<b>Edward Dawson</b>	<b>Shane Jell</b>	<b>Barry Shaw</b>
<b>Ian Deans</b>	<b>Graham King</b>	<b>Wendy Shillam</b>
<b>Alana Dixon</b>	<b>Paul Koralek (Chair)</b>	<b>Michael Squire</b>
<b>Nick Ewbank</b>	<b>Richard Lavington</b>	<b>Tim Stonor</b>
<b>Lorraine Farrelly</b>	<b>Vivien Lovell</b>	<b>Paul Truman</b>
<b>Kathryn Findlay</b>	<b>Caroline Lwin</b>	<b>Lakshmi Varma</b>
<b>Adrian Gale</b>	<b>Sue Manley</b>	<b>Louise Waite</b>
<b>Tim Gale</b>	<b>James McCosh</b>	<b>James Webb</b>
<b>Don Gray</b>	<b>Walter Menteth</b>	<b>David West</b>
<b>Nigel Green</b>	<b>Vivek Nanda</b>	<b>Sarah Whittaker</b>
<b>Mike Gwilliam</b>	<b>Steven Nice</b>	<b>Roger Zogolovitch</b>
<b>Bill Hanway</b>	<b>Lora Nicolaou</b>	



# free-to-use

The Design Panel was created with the Kent Architecture Centre at Chatham, which continues to operate it on SEEDA's behalf.

All schemes are referred to the Design Panel voluntarily from a variety of sources, including architects, local authorities, developers, community groups and CABE.

SERDP advises on around 70 schemes each year, either in formal presentation meetings or in sessions with Panel staff. Selection is made on the basis of regional significance, concentrating on novel proposals or those in sensitive locations, as well as those of a substantial scale or with a complex design challenge. In addition to individual buildings, Reviews are also undertaken of development and planning briefs, area strategies, masterplan proposals and design guides.

The Panel is able to add the greatest value if it is brought in at an early stage of a project, when plans are still fluid.

SERDP conducts regular surveys of its users. The latest survey reveals that:

-  **85%** find Design Review to be "very or fairly useful"
-  **65%** said they spoke "highly" about Design Review to others
-  **7%** were critical
-  **83%** agreed that "Design Review is a vital source of informed opinion for all major developments."

# resourceful

Design Panels cover all building types and any form of design or development challenge. The list of Reviews below is typical of both the geographical spread of site visits and the range of project types considered over an 18-month period:

**MASTERPLANNING** Oxford, Ashford, Chatham, Reading, Bognor Regis, Milton Keynes, Farnham, Lewes, Chichester, Margate  
**TOWN CENTRE RETAIL** Windsor, Milton Keynes, Chatham, Camberley, Farnham  
**HOUSING** Chinnor, South Oxfordshire, Reading, Windsor, Aylesbury, Gravesend, Eastleigh, Hove, Durrington, Tunbridge Wells, Brighton, Bracknell, Hastings, St Leonards, Shoreham, Dartford, Bognor Regis  
**COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL** Brighton, Reading, Andover  
**MIXED USE** Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks, Worthing, Brighton, Folkestone  
**CIVIC** Reading, Ashford, Maidstone  
**EDUCATION** Oxford, Brighton, Worthing  
**RURAL HOUSING** Hampshire, Surrey, Oxfordshire  
**TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE** Ashford  
**CULTURE, SPORT AND LEISURE** Chichester, Maidstone, Hastings, Eastleigh  
**CONVERSION AND RE-USE** Canterbury, Chichester, St Leonards

Panel meetings are the focus of the service, but they could not operate effectively without the SEEDA-funded resource of 3 staff members at Kent Architecture Centre who support the Panel's deliberations behind the scenes.

The Architecture Centre's role in selecting schemes and Panel members, researching issues, communicating findings and monitoring follow-through has been fundamental to the success story.

# influential

“The presentation by the developers was followed by rigorous questioning by a well-informed Panel”

**Swale Borough Council**

“The Panel’s comments added considerable weight to the Council’s concerns about the original proposals for the site”

**Lynda Middlemiss,  
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

“It confirmed the weaknesses we were aware of ourselves but came up with useful ways of addressing the issue”

**Dennis Pope,  
Planning Consultant**

“Very useful, it gave credence to our own opinions about the design quality of the scheme and has prompted the developer to withdraw the scheme and start again with a new design team”

**Planning Officer,  
West Sussex**

“It was a very worthwhile experience involving SERDP, and helped Officers and Members reach a balanced conclusion”

**Ruth Harding,  
Eastleigh Borough Council**

“The advice of the Panel was straightforward and clear, and has been very helpful in reinforcing the Council’s rejection of poor design”

**Andrew Jeffers,  
Swale Borough Council**

“The Panel had a very positive involvement at an early stage and helped us produce the best design for the site”

**James Appleton,  
Worthing District Council**

“It is a privilege to be able to use Design Review to stand back and listen to an independent view”

**Wycombe District Council**

# growing

SERDP has established itself as a ‘subtle and powerful tool’ for raising design aspirations and standards in South East England. It has also made an important contribution to the development of Design Panels in the UK.

Looking ahead, SERDP sees a number of ways in which its model can be strengthened.

**Thematic Review Panels.** Irrespective of geography, common problems often reappear across particular forms of development or building types, such as new housing, schools, design of the public realm and developments in areas of flood risk. Thematic Panels, with particular expertise in each specialist area, could be deployed to tackle these issues wherever they occur.

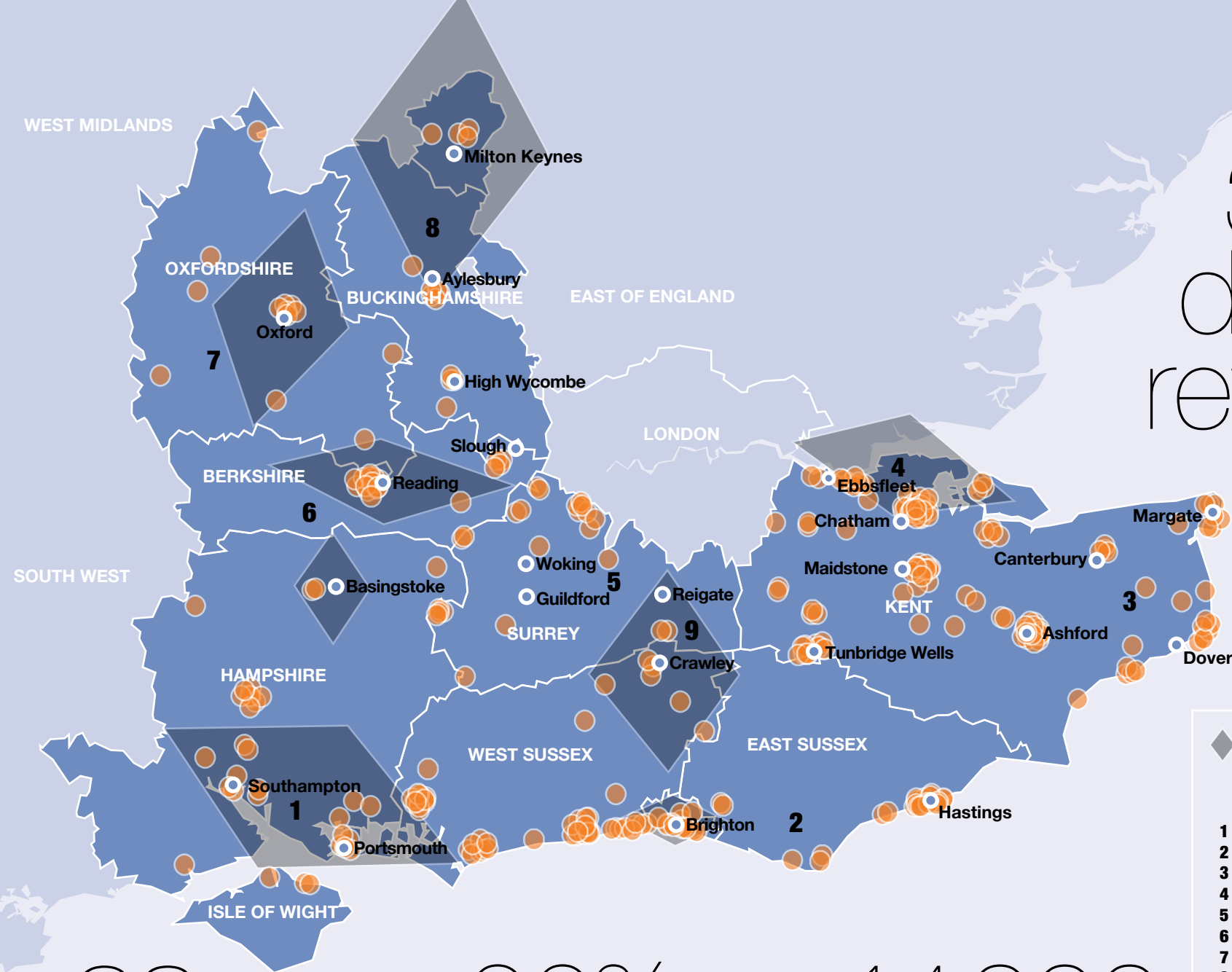
**Project Support.** If Panels see a way forward they will say so, but they also try and avoid being prescriptive or do the job of the designer during Reviews. However, key projects could benefit from additional support to work through problems in greater depth after a formal Review.

**Area Reviews** at selected regeneration or growth points, as well as **Brief Writing** and **Policy Development Support** could also add value in the future.

**Improvement is continuous.** The mantra that good urban design adds value is seeping into the national consciousness. At the same time local authorities are becoming more pro-active in demanding higher standards, recognising that good design stimulates investment and civic pride.

Design Reviews will always be central to this raising of standards.

# 350+ design reviews



38

panel meeting locations

66%

wholly or partly residential

14,000

new homes reviewed (2006/07)

- ◆ **Regional Economic Strategy Investment & Growth Areas**
- South East Plan Sub-Regional Strategy Areas**
- 1 South Hampshire
- 2 Sussex Coast
- 3 East Kent & Ashford
- 4 Kent Thames Gateway
- 5 London Fringe
- 6 Western Corridor & Blackwater Valley
- 7 Central Oxfordshire
- 8 Milton Keynes & Aylesbury Vale
- 9 Gatwick Area
- **South East Plan Regional Hubs**
- **Design Reviews**



## Progressive design animates former industrial site

**CHECKENDON - Starworks.** This live-work development in a rural setting was brought to the Panel by its architect, who was seeking the Panel's advice on the novel form of the scheme. Panel members were impressed by the integrity of the design, including the quality of the accommodation and the care taken over the detail and landscaping. The proposal is on an existing employment site and the need to retain an employment function in the long-term is key to its success. The live-work scheme would support more sustainable transport patterns in a relatively remote location.

**SERDP offers a fantastically supportive service to help good design through the planning system**

John Pardey, John Pardey Architects



## Bold new buildings transform threshold to town centre

**WORTHING - Teville Gate.** Scarred by ill-considered development from the 1960s, this part of the town is ripe for redevelopment. At the first of two Reviews, the Panel supported the broad ambitions of the scheme but felt that a wide residential slab block would be too forceful for its surroundings and invited the architect to consider alternative massing and plan forms, without necessarily relinquishing the height.

A revised scheme has pared the mass into two towers - a more appropriate response to the context as well as a more satisfactory architectural composition – and also re-established a direct diagonal path from the station to the town centre.

**Taking a project to the Panel is a good discipline – the result is a more exciting and impressive building**

Russ Drage, Russ Drage Architects



## A blueprint for linking two communities

**ISLE OF SHEPPEY - Queenborough & Rushenden.** These neighbouring but distinct settlements on the Isle of Sheppey are separated by a former industrial area where SEEDA is the main landowner. The masterplan aimed to redevelop the former industrial land for a variety of uses and unite the two communities.

The Panel was struck by the way the proposals had grown out of a genuine understanding of the local area and built on its natural assets such as its ecology, landscape and the heritage of Queenborough. Given the leading edge nature of the project, members challenged the relatively orthodox zoning of residential and employment areas. They also felt that Rushenden and the land to the south of it needed a strong draw - perhaps cultural, leisure based or ecological - to integrate it fully with Queenborough and overcome its current isolation.

**The Panel was exactly and correctly formulated, and quick to understand the proposal with a clear grasp of the overall issues**

Robert Rummey, Rummey Design Associates



## Vibrant mixed-use redevelopment in a historic town

**LEWES - Phoenix Quarter.** The Panel first visited the site in 2006 and reviewed the masterplan for a substantial mixed-use development with around 770 homes as well as commercial, retail and a multi-storey car park. Whilst strongly supportive of the approach being adopted the Panel identified areas for improvement. The scheme has now been amended by changing the massing and reducing the heights of the former 'tower' elements to a maximum of six storeys.

**They take a rounded view, drawing out the benefits of a design for planners and stakeholders to appreciate - whilst also helping designers to think about any aspects that could be improved**

Piers Gough, CZWG Architects





## A contemporary museum on a historic site

**CHICHESTER - Regional Museum.** Because of its dual role as client and planning authority, Chichester District Council was keen to have an independent and expert view of the scheme within the city's historic core. Panel members felt that the architects had struck an effective balance between an expressive new design and a respectful contribution to Chichester's exceptional townscape.

Many local authority planning committees find it difficult to assess contemporary architecture. On this occasion the Panel's "independent, objective and expert" advice gave the Council renewed confidence in Keith Williams' designs. Planning consent was granted in 2009 and a start on site is anticipated early in 2010.

**The Panel was most important in that it gave an independent assessment of design and urban quality which was significant in the planning committee's eventual decision**

Keith Williams, Keith Williams Architects



## New housing integrated with industrial heritage

**SEVENOAKS - Horton Kirby Paper Mill.** The Panel was glad to see a proposal to bring a complex of historic buildings back into use but had a number of concerns about the initial design, and suggested a number of ways to strengthen integration with the existing community. The site access, originally proposed as a roundabout on the main street through the village, has now been rethought in response to the Panel comments.

A large square is to be created at the centre of the site but the success of this will depend upon the activities around the edge and the integration of car parking. The Panel stressed the need for simple and robust landscaping throughout, using materials of high-quality.

**It was a very positive, interactive and productive process**

Gilbert Gehrman, Formation Architects



before



after

## Sustainable remodelling of outworn Council HQ

**WINCHESTER - Hampshire County Council.** As planning authority for its own HQ complex, Hampshire County Council needed expert opinion on the appropriateness of proposals for its transformation. Typical of the 60's, it had an aggressive external presence and was conspicuous in long views. The complete remodelling, retaining the concrete frame, integrated an approach to the townscape with engineering of natural ventilation through the building.

The Panel had concerns about the retention of some car parking underground, but endorsed the reconnection to the street, setting back of the top floor and the creation of a finer-grained, vertical rhythm to the façade - using vertical ducts and wind troughs to create suction and drive the ventilation. It felt the design, which would enhance the skyline, was well founded and welcomed the commitment to energy efficiency.

**The Panel is very supportive, but doesn't hold back on big issues - they made me stop and think, and we changed the design as a result**

Julian Lipscombe, Bennetts Associates



## Striking new architecture enlivens town centre

**HIGH WYCOMBE - Buckinghamshire New University.** Because of the prominence of the site, Wycombe District Council wanted reassurance that it would be suitable for a landmark of the kind proposed. The Panel welcomed this project which heralded wider changes such as removing the gyratory road, restoring the River Wye and uniting the campus with the town.

They commended the architects' design, finding the height of the new building 'perfectly acceptable' given its location below the old town. However, they recommended a full examination of the performance, weathering and appearance of the proposed cladding in a variety of light conditions.

**The Panel reinforced the critical nature of the cladding decision and, as a result, the client funded a much deeper analysis of the options**

Murdoch Cameron, RMJM

If you have a project that could benefit from a Design Review,  
please contact the Panel Co-ordinator at:

The Kent Architecture Centre  
The Admiral's Office  
Historic Dockyard  
Chatham  
Kent ME4 4TZ

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[buildingcommunications.com](http://buildingcommunications.com)



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