

A New School of Architecture pedagogically aligned to ‘Fitting’ and a situated engagement with Place

Lorraine Farrelly

University of York, York School of Architecture

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By moving away from the mandate of perpetual novelty and innovation, architecture can reaffirm itself as a cultural and artistic discipline, deeply engaged with the enduring questions of beauty, sustainability, and the collective human experience.

Central to this reframing is the concept of ‘Fitting’. In a world defined by limits to consumption—of energy, land, materials—”Fitting” replaces the aggressive imposition of form. It is a paradigm for a more modest, yet more precise, architectural response. In places that are facing economic challenges, declining populations, the goal is no longer to build more but to find the right solution to problems of inhabitation. This requires a radical departure from standardised solutions in favour of a situated engagement with place.

These themes have informed the idea of a new School of Architecture – The York School of Architecture (YSA) which welcomed its first students in September 2025, is responding to the University of York and its alignment to public good. The new School is a professional education for public good. To put human experience first, considering the collective impact of architecture and placemaking on community and to consider the idea of sustainability as the first question for every design decision.

Architecture education in York directly mirrors the “Fitting” paradigm by using the city’s unique heritage fabric as a living laboratory for sustainable, socially responsible design. YSA explicitly frames its pedagogy around redefining the architect’s role within historic and environmental constraints.

The research and teaching are being designed around three key pillars, sustainability, heritage and community. This includes considering sustainability as a wicked problem – recognising the interconnected nature of this problem related to social, economic and natural systems. Also to consider the heritage context and how adaptive re-use and retrofitting can preserve the heritage context but also provide more sustainable architectural solutions.