



conserving buildings of historic interest

28 September 2020

Changes to the current planning system Consultation
Ministry of Housing, Communication and Local Government
3rd floor, South East Fry Building
2 Marsham street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

Dear Sir or Madam

Changes to the current planning system consultation

Bury St Edmunds Town Trust - object

BTT is a charitable company founded in 1979. The trust operates a 'revolving fund' that is used for the conservation of historic buildings in the town including where appropriate the construction of new dwellings. It also works with and sponsors West Suffolk College in the training of building trade students in conservation techniques.

Question 17

Do you agree with the proposed approach to raise the small sites threshold for a time-limited period?

Response

The fact that this possibly short-term matter has been included in the White Paper proposals (para. 5.4) which examine long-term change indicates the importance that Government attaches to these proposals. The difficulty that this proposed relaxation poses is that, if approved, while it may only be a temporary expedient the losses incurred over the period of its operation will be permanent and will materially worsen an already serious position. As the government itself cites in the Introduction to the White Paper "The shortage of affordable homes in and close to the most productive urban centres is a major drag on national productivity" (WP p.10).

Many medium size towns such as Bury St Edmunds are already struggling to provide sufficient affordable housing to meet their needs. It is particularly important that development sites within the historic town boundary, nearly all of which are under the proposed temporary threshold, continue to provide their share of affordable housing. Without such provision local councils will not be able to meet their affordable housing requirements. Conservation of historic towns is not just about preserving buildings, it is also about properly providing for the needs of the people that live in and around them. The paper refers to affordable housing which "existing communities require" including the young and the elderly who cannot afford to buy their own houses and need to live close to the town in rented accommodation as they have no transport. It is just as important to retain a properly balanced community as well as restoring its buildings if we are to conserve the town for the future. If therefore a decision is made temporarily to relax mandatory affordable housing provision it is important that such a dispensation is not applied within the main boundary of towns such as Buy St Edmunds.

Yours faithfully

Peter Riddington
Chair BTT