



## ***Respecting the past, shaping the future***

*Press release from  
Suffolk Preservation Society  
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### **Fears council could make “mockery” of consultation on housing plans**

Campaigners fear a borough council’s ‘defensive’ attitude could weaken a consultation process over huge housing plans in west Suffolk.

Both the Suffolk Preservation Society (SPS) and the Bury St Edmunds Society have opposed plans by St Edmundsbury Borough Council to build 530 extra homes a year until 2031.

The campaigners fear such a level of development would be unsustainable, destroying the area’s unique character and intruding on green field space.

However, in responding to the criticism Terry Clements, the council’s portfolio holder for transport and planning, said: “Our figures are based on the requirements of the draft of the East of England plan which has used robust evidence to assess long term needs and are set as a minimum.”

Another St Edmundsbury spokesman said: “Other communities, for example Haverhill, have responded positively to being centres of growth.”

Richard Ward, Director of SPS, said: “I am becoming quite concerned at the defensive comments coming back from the council over the concerns we have raised.

“As part of the consultation process we have been asked to make comments, which we have done. We expect our comments to be taken seriously and be given full consideration, and we can’t understand why the authority is coming out with such defensive remarks. At this stage I would have hoped for both societies to be able to enter into a positive dialogue with the council. However, these comments suggest that might be a waste of time. We hope the council can persuade us otherwise.”

Mr Ward added: "The council needs to be careful as the comments being made could devalue the whole consultation process and it could appear to be a simple box ticking exercise rather than a genuine consultation where views are given real and proper consideration.

"It could be argued that the council seems to have made its preferences public already, so what is the point of the consultation."

Simon Pott, Chairman of the Bury Society, added: "One of the major challenges to be faced is the preponderance of housing to be added to towns on the basis that this is somehow sustainable, and that villages should have very little or no development. This could have a dramatic effect on Bury St Edmunds and destroy a major part of what we are trying to preserve. We are all for rational, organic growth but Suffolk villages could and should be playing a part in this process and sharing the gain which can be achieved."

## **Ends**

### **Note to editors:**

SPS, founded in 1929, originally worked to protect the county's buildings and landscape. Today, the society has broadened its focus to help shape Suffolk's future, largely campaigning for sensitive and appropriate development, more and better quality affordable homes and to ensure sustainable infrastructures are in place to support the county's communities.

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