



Respecting the past, shaping the future

Press release from
Suffolk Preservation Society
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Society's plea for a consultation-free Christmas

A leading campaign group has appealed to local authorities to hand out an "extremely welcome Christmas present" by declaring the festive season a consultation-free zone.

Suffolk Preservation Society (SPS) said councils across the county had issued an increasing number of lengthy and complex consultation documents in the run-up to this Christmas – making it extremely difficult to give a meaningful response.

Richard Ward, society director, has now appealed for December to be declared a "consultation-free zone". Postponing consultations until January, he said, would ensure more people could reply – in turn making the results more representative of the community's true feelings.

"These serious and important consultations tend to come thick and fast at this time of year, when everyone's mind is on other things," said Mr Ward.

"This makes life extremely difficult for organisations such as ourselves, let alone the general public. Do local authorities think that we will all drop our Christmas lunches on December 25 so that we can find the time to complete them?"

"It would seem that local authority planners either don't have a Christmas break or are keen to clear their desks of these documents in good time to wrap their presents.

"Either way, it doesn't appear to us that carrying out these important consultations at a time when people are extremely busy with other matters is the best way to ensure a full and representative response."

In the past few weeks, the society has received consultation documents on a number of key issues, including possible locations for an incinerator for Suffolk, St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Local Development Framework and the amended Tesco proposal for Hadleigh.

In addition, Suffolk County Council has also been consulting on its regional spatial strategy – which has major implications for the provision of housing in the future.

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“Each of these consultation documents has between 20 and 30 detailed questions and take a significant amount of time to digest and consider,” added Mr Ward. “Wouldn't it be smarter to produce a shorter version at this time of year, or to postpone the whole process until January?”

“We seem to be facing seasonal consultation overload, and would like to remind those in authority that there is a life beyond consultation.

“Declaring the whole of December to be a consultation-free period seems the most sensible solution. That would be an extremely welcome Christmas present for everyone.”

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.

For more information please contact:

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