



***Protecting the past, shaping the future***

Press release from  
Suffolk Preservation Society  
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## **“Don’t ignore our views”**

“Fundamentally flawed” proposals to reorganise local government in Suffolk have resulted in nothing more than self-promoting councils attempting to position themselves as front-runner in a race to head a new unitary authority, a leading campaign group has warned.

In a hard-hitting objection to the Boundary Committee’s proposals for the future of local government in the county, the Suffolk Preservation Society (SPS) also said the voices of town and parish councils had been lost during a “sham consultation” which left little or no time for meaningful debate.

The society, which has 1,800 members across the county, including one third of Suffolk’s town and parish councils, says many have been excluded from the discussion due to the short consultation timetable. In addition, the SPS feels that the louder voices of the county’s larger authorities have consistently drowned out the views of those at a grassroots level – which are arguably the opinions which matter the most.

“Our town and parish councils play a pivotal role in local government but, because of the short timetable, many have been unable to comment on these proposals,” said Richard Ward, SPS director.

“These councils are of profound importance as they are the voices of their communities at grassroots level – yet they have not been allowed to be a part of the process in shaping their own future.

“We feel the review is approaching local government reorganisation in the wrong way, as any new structure should be built up from ground level and involve those people who most fully understand the needs and desires of Suffolk’s communities.

“Indeed it is wrong to rely on the views of those who represent the current structure of local government who may perhaps have their own agenda when making suggestions or comments.”

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The society said the review had done nothing to address shortcomings in the county's current three-tier structure, while the option to improve it and deliver more streamlined local government had not been considered.

Mr Ward said: "It is quite simply unrealistic to undertake a review without discussing all of the possible options and solutions.

"Indeed, we would suggest the review needs to start from a different point altogether. Communities should be asked if they want change and given a full range of options. They then need time to formulate responses to what is a critical decision.

"Quick consultations are not necessary, desirable or likely to secure the best way forward for ensuring that people feel ownership of any local government structure.

"In fact, if this review imposes a structure which is supported by some existing local authorities but not by the majority of Suffolk's communities, there is a real risk that the outcome will be even deeper dissatisfaction with local government. Suffolk communities should have the structure they want and need, not what others want them to have."

## **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 contact:**

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