

Welcome to the third edition of the Civic Trust policy update. We intend this to be a regular email keeping you updated on Civic Trust campaigns and policy priorities as well as government policy developments that affect our built environment.

If you have any friends and colleagues who would also be interested in receiving this e-alert please send their contact details and Civic Society (if they are a member) to Hannah Mummery at hmummery@civictrust.org.uk

UPDATE ON PREVIOUS ISSUES

Protection of Private Gardens (Housing Development) Bill

In the first issue of policy update (13th June 2006) we raised the worrying issue of the designation of private gardens as brown field land and subsequent development of these gardens (for a detailed explanation of this please see Policy Update number 1) Along with many of our members, the Civic Trust is concerned that the classification of all gardens as brownfield land could lead to speculative builders buying up old houses with large gardens and replacing these with poorly situated flats that could in time substantially change the nature of an area. This could also put strain on existing services and deprive communities of the valuable amenity of gardens that provide pleasure for the owners and enhance the entire area.

This issue is causing a lot of concern, not only amongst organisations such as the Civic Trust and the Royal Horticultural Society, but also to many MP's from all parties.

To tackle this issue a private members bill has been introduced by Greg Clark MP. This bill, the Protection of Private Gardens (Housing Development) Bill, seeks to stop the practice of designating private gardens as brownfield sites for planning purposes. The bill, which can be seen here:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200506/protection_of_private_gardens_housing_development.htm will have its second reading on October 20th 2006.

We urge all our members to write to their MP's in support of this bill.

Heritage Link – VAT Campaign

The Civic Trust supports the campaign by Heritage Link for VAT to be reduced on building repair. The campaign continues to grow and new signatories include the Empty Homes Foundation and the new economics foundation. The following letter was sent to the Times on Saturday 16th September timed to coincide with the finale of BBC2's Restoration Village the following day.

'To save their slices of British heritage the 21 projects need over £23million in all - £4million of which could be swallowed by VAT payable on building costs. The 'lucky' winner will have their restoration bill met, but, with the exception of the four Listed Places of Worship, the others will have to raise the funds to meet the VAT bill themselves. Money raised by these groups for restoration is being skimmed off by the Treasury.' The published letter is posted on the Heritage Link website www.heritagelink.org.uk

If you have examples or views on how VAT at 17.5% on repair and maintenance limits the scale and scope of voluntary bodies' heritage activities, please send them to Hannah Mummery at hummery@civictrust.org.uk and we will pass them onto Heritage Link.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND POSITION STATEMENTS

Summer is generally a quiet time for government consultations and campaigns. However over the last two months the Civic Trust Policy team has responded to the following government consultation papers:

Listed Buildings Casework (DCLG)

In general, we consider that the reforms proposed in this consultation would be acceptable and would be unlikely to have any adverse impact on the way in which Grade I and II* Listed Building applications are processed.

Householder Development Consents Review (DCLG)

The Civic Trust supports the report's basic aims to simplify the planning system, and many of the suggestions for achieving this through legislative and procedural changes. However, we are disappointed by its response to a range of concerns expressed at the Stakeholders' meetings and in our formal response to the consultation. In particular, it focuses on speed and reduction of the number of applications being decided, rather than improvement in the quality of decisions *and* applications – which should be the basic aim of good planning. We believe that, as worded, it could in fact weaken planners' ability to secure good development.

Control of Advertisement Regulations (2006)

In general, we strongly welcome this revised circular and its improved provisions for advertisement control – and in particular the new provisions relating to advertisements in telephone kiosks in protected areas, which the Civic Trust urged the Government to adopt following many expressions of concern from our membership.

All Civic Trust consultation responses can be seen at:

<http://www.civictrust.org.uk/policy%20and%20campaigns/responses/responses.shtml>

FUTURE CAMPAIGNS

Nightvision

The Civic Trust is about to publish the results of a three year research report titled Nightvision: Town Centres for All which identifies ten principles to help improve the management and development of town centres at night to create well managed and diverse town centres that provide leisure activities for people of all ages and backgrounds. If you would like a free copy of the report please contact Hannah Mummery on hummery@civictrust.org.uk

The Civic Trust is aware that for many years our town centres have been badly run at night with little to offer many sections of society and with residents plagued by

drunken noise, disorder and litter. To help tackle these issues we are creating a Nightvision Campaign based on the findings of our research. This campaign will consist of practical pilots and research projects to develop, with residents, local authorities and businesses, good practice standards to enable all areas to develop the kind of town centres at night that everyone would like to see. If you are interested getting involved in this work or would like to know more please contact Hannah Mummery on hummery@civictrust.org.uk

INFORMATION

Labourspace.com

The Labour party have launched a new initiative called Labourspace.com. This website gives organisations, charities and community groups to post campaigns on the website. Each month there will be a different theme, these are:

- 25th September – 15th November 2006 – Health
- 16th November – 16th December 2006 – Creating sustainable communities
- 17th December – 31st December 2006 – Crime, justice, citizenship and equalities
- 2nd January – 31st January 2007 – Education and skills
- 1st February – 28th February 2007 – Britain in the world
- 1st March – 31st March 2007 – Prosperity and work

At the end of the six months campaigns and issues raised on the website will be reported on to relevant Labour ministers and feed into Labour policies.

We see this as a valuable tool in the Civic Trust's ongoing work to represent the views and concerns of our membership to all of the three major political parties. We are currently looking at identifying two or three major issues we could post in this website. If there is a campaign or issue of major importance that your society would like to see brought to national attention please contact Hannah Mummery on hummery@civictrust.org.uk or telephone 020 7539 7908.

Action Plan: Review of Community Assets

The Secretary of State for Culture has announced a review of existing powers and policies that allow the transfer of the ownership or management of local public assets. It will consider how these powers could be better used and what further powers and policy changes may be required.

Further details of the review are not yet known but any opportunities for consultation will be publicised through Heritage Link Update.

For further background on this initiative, The Civil Renewal Unit's Report published by DCLG in July 2006 *Community Assets: The benefits and costs of community management and ownership* can be found at <http://www.togetherwecan.info/files/downloads/pdf/latest/Community%20Assets%20Report.pdf>

Transforming our Streets

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has updated its 2002 publication *Paving the Way*. This sets out the problems faced with the design, regulation, management and maintenance of UK streets leading to a report giving clear recommendations for change. Much remains to be done, however. This new briefing sets out progress so far and the vital next steps that are still needed to be taken to create a genuine transformation of UK streets. The document can be downloaded from the CABE website at <http://www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=1458>

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

The Civic Trust is currently responding to the following consultations. If you would like your comments to be included in our responses please email Michael Hammerson at mhammerson@civictrust.org.uk

General Permitted Development Order 1995 (DCLG) - The purpose of the consultation is to invite comments on proposed amendments to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. It also invites comments on the proposed repeal of the Town and Country Planning (Demolition – Description of Buildings) Direction 1995, and the issuing of a replacement direction. Copies of the consultation can be seen at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501905>

EVENTS

'21 century development in the historic urban environment' – Discount for Civic Trust members

Civic Trust members are entitled to a 12% discount on fees to the English Historic Towns Forum annual conference. The conference will be held at Bury St Edmunds on 18th - 20th October 2006.

The conference will explore elements which contribute to create sustainable communities, examining many examples of good practice in managing - **the public realm - local identity - retail development - urban design - streetscape - transport.**

To book phone 0117 9750459 or email ehf@uwe.ac.uk

Raising residential densities - An evening conference of the London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies

The London Forum will be holding a conference on Wednesday October 18th 2006 to look at the issue of raising residential densities in London.

There are over 40 opportunity and intensification areas in the capital, detailed in the London Plan. The larger ones have targets for new homes that range from 3,000 to 33,000. There are other areas for regeneration adjacent to the development areas and proposals in parts of the Central Activities Zone for maximising density in accordance with the design policies of the London Plan. Many of the development areas will need family housing, particularly in the

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inner city suburbs. There is the chance now for boroughs to devise planning frameworks for mixed dwelling types at optimum densities for compact communities with jobs and facilities within easy reach. Sir Richard MacCormac, Chairman of MacCormac Jameson Prichard Limited, has been conducting recent research on this subject. He will give a talk on the planning and architectural approaches for housing types and layouts that can be used to achieve the aims for walkable communities.

There will be a Panel of representatives from leading organisations in this field to discuss opportunities and to answer questions from those attending.

The event will be held at the New London Architecture gallery at The Building Centre, 26 Store Street WC1E 7BT (nearest Underground stations Tottenham Court Road and Goodge Street). The meeting will commence at 6:45pm, preceded by a London Forum AGM from 6pm. Refreshments will be available from 5:30pm and those attending are invited to arrive earlier to see the exhibition of a scale model of Central London, surrounded by a display showing a cross section of current building projects and summarising the policies of boroughs. There will be also displays and a public consultation by the Central London Partnership and Transport for London on 'Legible London - the walking city'.

To book a place email or telephone with details to Peter Pickering of the London Forum at pe.pickering@virgin.net 020 8445 2807