

**BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS' MEDIA
RELEASE**

**Time to make our listed buildings
ready for the future?**

For immediate release: 7 November, 2023

Owners of listed buildings could find it easier to make sensitive energy efficiency improvements under new plans being considered by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

Both districts have thousands of listed properties, but these often suffer from poor energy performance due to factors such as limited insulation, poorly fitting windows and single glazing – which are costly to both the environment and owners.

Currently, property owners must apply for Listed Building Consent to make any changes. But the councils could now become the first rural councils to introduce Local Listed Building Consent Orders (LLBCO).

In specific areas, these would still safeguard valuable heritage assets but streamline the process for approving balanced and sensitive energy efficiency improvements. Technical specifications would be set out, and there would still be council oversight.

On Tuesday, 7 November, both council cabinets agreed to launch a consultation asking for people's views on the new measures.

Cllr Deborah Saw, Babergh District Council deputy leader, said: "Listed buildings give our area its unique character and are one of its greatest assets. We must conserve this rich heritage, but at the same time this initiative could cut needless red tape for energy efficiency upgrades which are balanced and sensitively designed.

"The current system is burdensome in terms of time and cost, creating a barrier for homeowners. This new, forward-thinking approach would encourage them to get work done, such as better insulation.

"This would help reduce energy bills, protect buildings from climate change and cut carbon emissions. We would like to identify solutions to these critical issues which both meet the needs of our residents who live in these important buildings whilst protecting what is special about our district."

Cllr Andrew Stringer, Mid Suffolk cabinet member for heritage, planning and infrastructure, said: “This would be a big step forward and not one that other rural local authorities are doing.

“Our district’s wonderful heritage will not be compromised – but we can, at the same time, make it easier for people to make listed properties more energy efficient in a sympathetic and sensitive way.

“We welcome the views of our residents, along with conservation and heritage organisations, and I would encourage everyone to take a look at this proposal and have their say.”

Historic England has stated that retrofitting historic buildings will be fundamental in achieving net zero. A report commissioned by the National Trust, Historic England and leading property organisations says that improving the energy efficiency of historic buildings built before 1919 would reduce carbon emissions from all UK buildings by 5% every year.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils declared a climate emergency in 2019 and this initiative aligns with the commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 while also safeguarding valuable heritage within both districts.

Opening for comments on 10 November 2023, the consultation will run until 29 December.

You can take part in the consultation through the Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council’s website: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/MUEQAA/>