

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

TIME FOR 'AN ATTITUDE CHANGE' OVER LISTED BUILDINGS



A Government consultation on the effectiveness of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and how the system could be improved is the perfect opportunity to press for a change of attitude to historic listed buildings.

Andrew Bays, of BCM rural property consultants in Winchester, which manages several hundred listed properties in its residential lettings and estate management portfolio, believes it is time for a radical change in attitude towards listed buildings or for them to be eliminated from the EPC system altogether, whether the property is being offered for sale or letting.

“There has always been confusion about the status of listed buildings and EPCs when it comes to property sales but the latest guidance from the Ministry of Housing is that an EPC is required before a property can be marketed, regardless of listed status. Previously, it was thought that ministerial guidance negated the need.

“When it comes to lettings, since April 1 this year the granting of a new tenancy has required the provision of an EPC. Where that falls into Band F or G, as many listed buildings will because their age makes them energy inefficient, the landlord must seek an exemption which has to be re-registered every five years.

“An exemption requires evidence in the form of a surveyor’s report stating what might or might not be achievable and a statement from the local planning authority that making changes to the listed building would introduce unacceptable alterations to show that the building cannot be improved.”

This, says Mr Bays, is the crux of the problem. The exemption has to be re-registered every five years, involving the same constant outlay of costs, possibly more than £1,000 each time. Given the pressure on planning officers to deliver new homes, seeking advice on EPC needs could be seen as less important, leading to long, and possibly expensive, delays.

“It would be far better for all concerned if one of two things could happen,” he adds. “Either listed buildings need a permanent exemption from the EPC requirement, given that most prospective buyers or tenants realise they are likely to be old and inefficient and don’t need an EPC to prove the point, or it needs to be accepted that listed buildings can be altered even if it makes changes to their appearance. Currently, planners will not accept this.



“Buildings have always evolved to keep pace with contemporary demands and many listed buildings have done so with owners making considerable changes in times gone by purely to keep pace with the fashion of their day. Surely it is not impossible that modern rules could be adapted to allow for sympathetic improvements bringing listed buildings into line with modern energy efficiency demands.

“If these buildings are set in aspic and never allowed to adapt, eventually they could become uneconomic to maintain with landlord owners avoiding the five yearly cost of registering their exemption, removing much needed homes from the lettings market and risking their deterioration. It is wasted money that could be better spent on improving the buildings to reach the best standards possible.

“The Government call for evidence about the effectiveness of EPCs and ways to improve them ends on October 19th and I would urge all owners of listed buildings to submit a call for a change to either the EPC or planning rules.”

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