

# Rescue

The British Archaeological Trust

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Office hours: Tuesday and Friday mornings.  
Otherwise please leave a message on the  
answerphone.

[rescue@rescue-archaeology.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:rescue@rescue-archaeology.freeserve.co.uk)

13<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Dear Mr Osborne,

I am writing to you on behalf of RESCUE – The British Archaeological Trust to seek clarification of some issues connected with your proposal to remove the requirement for planning permission to build on brownfield sites as set out in your document *Fixing the Foundations* (July 2015).

RESCUE is an entirely independent organisation which exists to campaign for archaeology in Britain and throughout the world; [www.rescue-archaeology.org.uk](http://www.rescue-archaeology.org.uk).

While RESCUE recognises the importance of taking practical steps to address the current shortage of affordable housing in the UK, we are concerned that the proposals as framed do not take sufficient account of the potential heritage value of some, perhaps many, of the brownfield sites which are to be identified as suitable for 'automatic permission in principle' (paragraph 9.15). It would be useful to know how suitable sites will be defined and to what extent individuals with a comprehensive local knowledge of the sites will be involved in their designation.

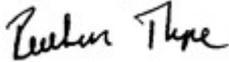
Given the potential archaeological and historical significance of some of these sites, we would expect that both Historic England and archaeologists employed by local planning authorities will be involved in the designation of the brownfield zones within which planning permission will be granted *en bloc*. Are you able to confirm that this will be the case and if not, could you outline the alternative structures which will be put in place to ensure that the impact of development on Conservation Areas, Listed and historic standing buildings and buried archaeology will be mitigated in line with the policies within, and the principles which underlie, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)?

Under the coalition government, localism was identified as a significant element within the planning process. If the present government still holds that this principle is of importance, will community groups, including local heritage groups and national groups with local representation, have any input into the designation of the brownfield zones? Will the structure of designation allow a voice for such groups prior to designation?

The existing planning system, based on the NPPF ensures that all sites are properly investigated prior to development and that archaeological remains and historic buildings are safeguarded from, or recorded before, destruction. This process is one that is well understood by planning authorities and developers alike and is of particular value to developers as it does not significantly impede house-building or other development while ensuring an appropriate level of investigation and the mitigation of the negative effects of development on our national heritage.

RESCUE believes that the planning system serves an essential social and economic purpose in ensuring that our heritage is properly safeguarded while facilitating required development. We hope that you will confirm that this necessary and important regulatory framework will be retained, given the fact that, unregulated, the development industry has the capacity to destroy our natural, built and archaeological heritage without regard for the future. We look to you, and the relevant government departments, to clarify the recent statement, to clearly define the types of site that will be affected and to make it clear that development will not take place without informed consideration of the implications for our national heritage of this new, and potentially highly destructive, policy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reuben Thorpe". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Reuben Thorpe  
Chair  
Rescue, The British Archaeological Trust

Copies to:

John Whittingdale MP (DCMS)  
Brandon Lewis MP (DCLG)  
Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn  
Heritage Alliance