



VACANT BUILDING CREDIT

An important national planning policy shift has taken place but many local planning authorities are not fully implementing the policy as intended by Government.

In November 2014 the Government made a number of significant changes to national planning policy, including the introduction of the 'vacant building credit'. This credit is seen as a mechanism to incentivise the delivery of housing development on brownfield sites – the credit is based on the quantum of existing vacant buildings on a site (to be re-used or redeveloped for housing) and is used to off-set local affordable housing policy requirements.

Government had become aware that in some quarters the vacant building credit was being seen as guidance rather than policy and, in response, made a clear policy statement in March 2015 – that statement was followed by specific guidance on the implementation of the vacant building credit.

The aim of the policy is to reduce viability burdens imposed by local affordable housing policy requirements where brownfield sites with vacant buildings are being re-used or redeveloped. The approach to implementing the new policy is not straightforward and the recently published guidance is intended to clarify how and when the vacant building credit will apply.

The policy will have implications for landowners and developers with interests in brownfield sites, and particularly on sites with existing vacant buildings to which the credit can be applied.

Comments from Alastair Skelton, Partner

This document contains general advice and comments only and therefore specific professional advice should be taken before reliance is placed upon it in any particular circumstances.

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