

Making the most of heritage in a neighbourhood plan: things to consider

Heritage plays an important part in shaping how we perceive and experience a place. It is often a place's distinctive heritage that makes it special. That distinctiveness gives local people a sense of belonging or identity and a feeling of pride in a place. Also it can help to attract investment to an area. Getting the right heritage-related content in a neighbourhood plan can not only contribute to a sound and legally compliant plan, it can also deliver significant local benefits.



The Denstone Neighbourhood Plan recognised the importance of the local historic environment and the need to retain and enhance heritage assets and Denstone's sense of place.

When thinking about local heritage, you may first think of the buildings or structures that are formally 'listed'. But heritage assets include more than just buildings and monuments; they also include sites, places, areas or landscapes. The unifying factor is that the asset has a degree of significance that merits consideration in planning decisions.

Heritage assets may be [designated](#) or [non-designated](#), terms that are defined in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and the Glossary of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF). Local communities can help to conserve and

enhance both types of asset. The following checklist outlines how this can be done when preparing a neighbourhood plan.

1. Have you contacted your local authority historic environment advisers (e.g. conservation officers and archaeological advisers)?
2. What heritage assets does your neighbourhood plan area contain and where are they located? Refer to the [National Heritage List for England](#) and your local Historic Environment Record. Note that assets do not need to be protected by designation to be of interest.
3. What condition are the heritage assets you have identified in and how might their significance be vulnerable to change?
4. Do you know what the community values or would like to improve in their local area?
5. Informed by the aspirations of your local community and the evidence gathered, does the plan have a clear vision for the historic environment and does that vision align with the strategic policies for your area?
6. How can your historic environment be used to help achieve your overall goals for sustainable development, without repeating strategic policy?
7. What are the opportunities for conserving or improving the heritage of your neighbourhood, or for developing a better understanding or appreciation of it?
8. Have you considered local characteristics as part of your design policies and how new development can be made locally distinctive?
9. What impact will your Plan proposals have on heritage assets or their settings or the local character? If you plan to allocate sites, more detailed assessments are usually needed. Is Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) needed?
10. Have you consulted Historic England's "Heritage at Risk Register" or any risk register held by your local authority? Can your plan proposals make any use of heritage assets on these registers?
11. Have you found out if there is a Conservation Area Appraisal or Management Plan associated with a conservation area in your neighbourhood and, if so, what are its implications and does it need to be updated?
12. Have you consulted Historic England where you consider their interests to be affected?

The underlying issues in this list are described in a new advice note from Historic England.

The advice note explores how to gather evidence on the historic environment and how to translate that evidence into policy. It includes a selection of case studies, two of which are pictured in this article, and advice on SEA.

Supplementing the advice note, which is due to be published very soon on [Historic England's website](#), are information sheets on the following aspects of policy development:

- Identifying and promoting local character
- Tackling heritage issues and identifying positive ways to make use of the historic environment
- Promoting the conservation of heritage assets
- Site allocations

Historic England plans to host a webinar on neighbourhood planning on 18 October. For more information visit its [website](#).



Newport Pagnell's Neighbourhood Plan allocated the former Aston Martin Motorcar Works site for housing development but also required the conservation and reuse of several historic factory buildings. © Simon Peart, Milton Keynes Council

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For formal Government guidance on Neighbourhood planning please visit gov.uk