

Heritage Statement / Statement of Significance

Guidance notes on preparing a heritage statement (also called heritage impact statements or statement of significance)

When submitting an application for planning permission and / or listed building consent to carry out development that would affect a heritage asset, for example a listed building, a conservation area or other historic structure, there is normally a requirement to provide a heritage statement or statement of significance.

The National Planning Policy Framework (extracts at Appendix 1) paragraph 128 says

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”

A heritage statement enables the significance and special character of an historic place to be understood and should demonstrate that consideration has been given to its protection. Such a statement will form part of the justification for the proposal. Such statements should normally include:-

- A summary of the site’s historical development.
- The context of the particular feature(s) or part(s) of the site. This could include the plan form or layout of a building, or street pattern, the presence of features related to an existing or former use of the site eg machinery or equipment, or the number or configuration of openings.
- The current character and use of the site
- The current state of repair
- The historic and/or archaeological and /or cultural and /or artistic/aesthetic and/ or architectural significance of the site as a whole and (if applicable) of the particular part of the site.

There should be an analysis of the proposed works and how these would impact on the building, site or the wider setting. Where the impact would have a negative or detrimental impact through for example loss of historic fabric of whatever scale, loss of historic layout or features, this will need justification in the form of clearly identified public benefits (See paragraphs 133 and 134 at Appendix 1 and Mid Devon Local Plan Part 3 Policy DM27).

Sources of information

Depending on the type of heritage asset affected and the range of works proposed you should consider employing the services of a conservation specialist to produce a heritage statement. A list of contractors known to undertake this type of work can be provided by the Local Planning Authority. Provision of this list is for guidance and should not be construed as a recommendation for any firm or individual included on the list.

For those applicants wishing to draw up their own heritage statement, there are various sources of information both national and local that can assist in establishing the significance of the particular heritage asset. The follow list is not exhaustive and not all will be relevant to your particular case.

- Listing descriptions for listed buildings. These can be accessed through the Historic England website. The descriptions can be brief and will often only described the exterior of the principal; however you should be aware that the interior of a building is also covered by the listing as are curtilage structures such as garden walls, gates, outbuildings including barns.
- Non designated heritage assets. A register of these has been compiled by the Local Planning Authority and can be found on the Council's website.
- Historic England register of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens and Historic Battlefields.
- Conservation Area Appraisals. These have been prepared for several of the conservation areas in the district and can be found on the Council's website under Planning / Conservation.
- Tithe maps, OS maps, and photographs including aerial photographs held at Devon Heritage Centre (Devon Archives and Local Studies) Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter EX2 7NL Tel 0192 384253 e mail devrec@devon.gov.uk
- Devon County Historic Environment Record holds information including about archaeology historic buildings and historic landscapes in the County. Devon County Council, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 4QD Tel 01392 382246 e mail archaeol@devon.gov.uk

There are publications on particular building types, architectural styles and local building materials which may also be useful to both understand the heritage asset and also to formulate appropriate and sympathetic proposals. Some publications are produced by specialist amenity bodies such as the Georgian Group, The Victorian Society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; books on local architecture include The Buildings of England Devon by Bridget Cherry and Nickolaus Pevsner; Devon Building by Peter Beacham

Definitions

- **Heritage assets** are buildings, monuments, sites area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. They can include **designated assets** such as listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens, world heritage sites and battlefields and **non- designated** heritage assets (normally identified on a register compiled by the Local Planning Authority)
- **Significance** is the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest can relate to both the asset itself and its setting.
- **Setting** is the surrounding context of a heritage asset and varies in scale according to the scale of the heritage asset whose setting is being considered and may change over time as its surrounds evolve. Setting can be made up of neighbouring buildings and spaces in the case of an individual building to the wider landscape within which a conservation area is set. The elements making up the setting of a heritage asset may make a positive or a negative contribution and may affect the ability to appreciate the significance of that asset.

APPENDIX 1

National Planning Policy Framework

128. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

129. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

130. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of or damage to a heritage asset the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

131. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

132. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

133. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

134. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Mid Devon Local Plan Part 3

Policy DM27 Development affecting heritage assets

Heritage assets and their settings are an irreplaceable resource. Accordingly the Council will:

- a) Apply a presumption in favour of preservation in situ in respect of the most important heritage assets
- b) Require development proposals likely to affect heritage assets and their settings, including new buildings, alterations, extensions, changes of use and demolitions, to consider their significance, character, setting and local distinctiveness, and the opportunities to enhance them.
- c) Only approve proposals that would be likely to substantially harm heritage assets and their settings if substantial public benefit outweighs that harm or the requirements of paragraph 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework are met.
- d) Where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, that harm will be weighed against any public benefit, including securing optimum viable use.
- e) Require developers to make a proportionate but systematic assessment of the impact on setting as set down in the guidance from English Heritage: “The Setting of Heritage Assets”