



Historic England

By email: ldf@warrington.gov.uk

Our ref: PL00044906 /

Your ref: PL00044913

Telephone

Fax 0161 242 1423

Dear Sirs,

WARRINGTON LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above. This response details the expectations of the Local Plan for Warrington and the historic environment.

Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

Historic England has produced a number of good practice advice notes on the historic environment, in particular the Good Practice Advice Note on the Historic Environment and Local Plans (<http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa1-historic-environment-local-plans/>), which provides supporting information on good practice in plan-making, and the Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/>) may be useful in the production of your Plan.

The future Local Plan for Warrington will be expected to include a proper description, identification and assessment of the historic environment and the supporting evidence base is expected to include heritage information. The Plan will need to demonstrate how it conserves and enhances the historic environment of the area and guide how the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied locally. This includes ensuring that



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the sites, which it is proposing to put forward for development, will assist in delivering such a strategy.

Evidence base

A sound local plan should be based on an up-to-date evidence base which includes reference to the historic environment. The evidence base needs to identify:

- What contribution the historic environment makes to the character of the area, to its economic well-being and to the quality of life of its communities;
- What issues and challenges it is facing and likely to be facing in the future;
- What opportunities the historic environment offers for helping to deliver the other objectives in the Plan area.

When undertaking this exercise, it is important to bear in mind that it is not simply an exercise in listing known sites but, rather understanding their value to society (i.e. their significance). There is a need to identify the subtle qualities of the area and its local distinctiveness and character which can easily be lost. There will need to be an assessment of the likelihood of currently unidentified heritage assets including sites of historic and archaeological interest being discovered in the future. It may also be necessary to identify heritage assets outside Warrington where there are likely to be setting impacts caused by any development proposals put forward in the area. It is also important to bear in mind that some asset types are not currently well recorded. For example, the Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest in England, is thought to represent only around two thirds of sites potentially deserving inclusion. Evidence gathering can also help to identify parts of a locality that may be worthy of designation as a conservation area and identify assets that are worthy of inclusion in a local list.

Potential sources of evidence include:

- National Heritage List for England
- Historic Environment Record
- Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans
- Local Lists
- National and Local Heritage At Risk Registers
- Historic Characterisation Assessments
- World Heritage Site Management Plans
- In house and local knowledge expertise



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Where the evidence base is weak, it may be necessary to commission additional work to ensure that the historic environment is adequately dealt with and can be used to inform the Plan.

Spatial Portraits

The Plan should include a proper description and assessment of the historic environment in Warrington and the contribution it makes to the area (NPPF, Paragraph 169). The Plan needs to describe the historical growth of the area and identify its historic environment. It should also clearly identify the different places their character and identity and the contribution it makes to all aspects of life in the area.

Plan Policies

One of the twelve principal objectives of planning under the NPPF is the conservation of heritage assets for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations (NPPF, Paragraph 17). Conservation means maintaining what is important about a place and improving this where it is desirable. It is not a passive exercise. It requires a Plan for the maintenance and use of heritage assets and for the delivery of development within their setting that will make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Strategic policies

Local Plans should include strategic policies to conserve and enhance the historic environment of the area and to guide how the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied locally. It is vital to include strategic policies for the historic environment in the local plan as the plan will be the starting point for decisions on planning applications and any Neighbourhood Plans that come forward are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.

The strategic policies for the historic environment will derive from the overall strategy to deliver conservation and enjoyment of the area's heritage assets for generations to come. These may be policies that concern themselves specifically with the development of types of heritage asset. But delivery of the NPPF objective may also require strategic policies on use, design of new development, transport layout and so on. Indeed every aspect of planning, conceivably can make a contribution to conservation. Plan policies in all topics should be assessed for their impact on the strategic conservation objective.

Conservation is not a standalone exercise satisfied by standalone policies that repeat the NPPF objectives. The Plan should also consider the role which the historic environment can play in delivering other planning objectives:



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- Building a strong, competitive economy
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Supporting a prosperous rural economy
- Promoting sustainable transport
- Supporting high quality communication infrastructure
- Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
- Requiring good design
- Protecting green belt land
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

In formulating the strategy it is advisable and often necessary to consider the following factors:

- How the historic environment can assist in the delivery of the vision and the economic, social and environmental objectives for the plan area;
- How the Plan will address particular issues identified during the development of the evidence base including heritage at risk;
- The interrelationship between the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and the other Plans policies and objectives;
- The means by which new development in conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets might enhance or better reveal their significance;
- How local lists might assist in identifying and managing the conservation on non-designated heritage assets;
- How the archaeology of the Plan area might be managed;
- How CIL funding might contribute towards ensuring a sustainable future for individual assets or specific historic places and whether or not certain heritage assets might need to be identified;
- Whether masterplans or design briefs need to be prepared for significant sites where major change is proposed;
- What implementation partners need to be identified in order to deliver the positive strategy;
- What indicators should be used to monitor the effectiveness of the strategy.

Development Management Policies

In terms of development management policies, it is clear that the NPPF expects plans to include detailed policies, which will enable a decision maker to determine a planning application.



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The Local Plan should include specific policies for the historic environment in order to help inform decisions that affect it and others should where possible cross-reference heritage related issues.

Key issues to be considered are (not wholly comprehensive):

- Undesignated heritage assets (including significance of, setting, extensions, demolition, alterations, change of use, etc).
- Designated heritage assets (including significance of, setting, extensions, demolition, alterations, change of use, etc).
- Archaeology including remains of less than national importance.
- Conservation areas
- Registered parks and gardens
- Heritage at Risk
- Important views and vistas
- Landscape character
- Local character and distinctiveness
- Individual settlements
- Historic shopfronts and advertisements
- Public realm
- Design
- Information to accompany an application.

Strategic Cross Boundary Issues

Strategic cross boundary issues that affect the historic environment are issues that can only be effectively addressed at a larger than local scale and may cover the issues listed below, this is not an exclusive list and strategic issues will have to be considered on an area by area basis.

- extensive designated and non-designated heritage assets, e.g. World Heritage Sites, historic landscapes,
- major heritage based tourism attractions, the management of which may impact upon more than one Authority
- major quarries for building and roofing stone, e.g. Portland stone
- major changes to green belt which affect the preservation of the setting and character of historic towns
- major development proposals likely to affect important heritage assets in a neighbouring authority, e.g. major urban extensions, infrastructure proposals

These strategic issues will not necessarily and always be the same as the strategic policies for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment included in a Plan but are likely to be a sub-set of them. Indeed local circumstances may indicate that strategic approaches



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may not always be needed. The sustainability appraisal scoping report should help to identify what is important for a particular plan area.

Site Allocations

Historic England has produced an advice note – Site Allocations and the Historic Environment in Local Plans (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/>) which may be of help in the production of your Plan. This document is intended to offer advice to all those involved in the process, to help ensure that the historic environment plays a positive role in allocating sites for development. It offers advice on evidence gathering and site allocation policies, as well as setting out in detail a number of steps to make sure that heritage considerations are fully integrated in any site selection methodology.

The NPPF makes it clear that the significance of heritage assets can be harmed through development within their setting. There is a requirement in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that it is also the duty of the Council to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of its conservation areas and their setting. Where potential development sites appear to include non-designated assets including the possibility for archaeology, their potential should be investigated and retention/exploration should be promoted.

Consequently, before allocating any site there would need to be some evaluation of the impact, which the development might have upon those elements that contribute to the significance of a heritage asset including their setting, through undertaking a heritage impact assessment. The assessment of the sites needs to address the central issue of whether or not the principle of development and loss of any open space is acceptable. It needs to evaluate:

1. What contribution the site in its current form makes to those elements which contribute to the significance of the heritage assets. For a number of these heritage assets, it might be the case that the site makes very little or no contribution.
2. What impact the loss of the area and its subsequent development might have upon those elements which contribute to the significance of those heritage assets.
3. If it is likely to result in harm, how might that harm be removed or reduced to an acceptable level.
4. If the harm cannot be reduced or removed, what are the public benefits that outweigh the presumption in favour of the conservation of the heritage asset?



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The selection of sites for development needs to be informed by an up-to-date evidence base and the Plan should avoid allocating those sites which are likely to result in harm to the significance of the heritage assets of the Plan area. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, the Plan should consider how any harm might be mitigated. This could include measures such as a reduction of the quantum of development at a site, amending the types of development proposed or locating the development within another part of the site allocation. Such initiatives need to be fully justified and evidenced to ensure that such measures are successful in reducing identified harm.

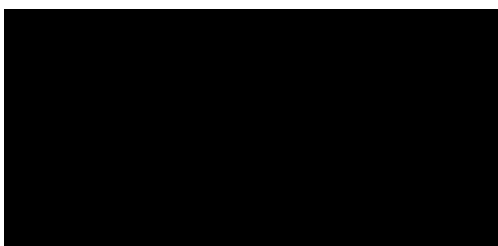
The allocation of sites for development may also present better opportunities for the historic environment. For example, new development may better reveal the significance of heritage assets or may provide an opportunity to tackle heritage at risk.

Where relevant, policies for allocated sites may need to make reference to identified historic environment attributes in order to guide how development should be delivered. For example, this might require the policy to include detailed criteria or providing supplementary information with the supporting text.

Historic England strongly advises that you engage conservation, archaeology and urban design colleagues to ensure that you are aware of all the relevant features of the historic environment and that the historic environment is effectively and efficiently considered in the strategic policies, development management policies, in the allocation of any site and in the preparation of the SEA. They are also best placed to advise on local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the HER. This will ensure that there is joined up and robust approach is undertaken to historic environment issues.

If you have any queries about the content of this letter or would like a meeting to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Emily Hrycan

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