

Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan: Heritage Impact Assessment for the Fiddlers Ferry Allocation

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Introduction

1. Scope of the study

- 1.1 To support the Local Plan Review, Warrington Borough Council (WBC) has identified the former Fiddlers Ferry Power Station (herein after referred to as 'the site') as one of the areas of growth within the Proposed Submission Version Local Plan. The site is capable of delivering around 1,800 homes and 101 hectares of employment land, bringing significant potential benefits through the re-development of a large vacant brown field site, with some enabling development through Green Belt release to the south and east of the site.
- 1.2 The Council has recognised that if the site is allocated for development it may have the potential to impact on the Historic Environment. As such, this report provides an appraisal of the potential impacts of the proposed allocation of the site upon the significance of the Historic Environment and, where necessary, advice on any mitigation measures which may be required. The site is not located within a Conservation Area nor in close proximity to a Conservation Area (including in the adjacent Borough of Halton) and there are no statutory or locally listed buildings located within the site boundary.

Methodology

2. General Approach

- 2.1 The methodology for assessment is based on Historic England's guidance contained in 'The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans – Historic England Advice Note 3' (2015)¹. The guidance recommends that impacts on heritage assets should be assessed by undertaking the five steps identified below:

1. Identify which heritage assets are affected by the potential site allocation
2. Understand what contribution the site (in its current form) makes to the significance of the heritage asset(s)
3. Identify what impact the allocation of the site might have on that significance
4. Consider maximising enhancements and avoiding harm
5. Determine whether the proposed site allocation is appropriate in light of the NPPF's tests of soundness

Assessment of the five steps will be undertaken utilising the guidance contained within the following documents published by Historic England:

- 'Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management for the historic environment'² (2008); and

¹ Available at <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/heag074-he-and-site-allocation-local-plans.pdf/>

² Available at <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/conservationprinciplespoliciesguidanceapr08web.pdf/>

- 'The Setting of Heritage Assets – Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3'³ Second Edition (2017).

2.2 *Step 1: Identifying the heritage asset(s)*

Identification of heritage assets within the site and those within the surrounding area that have the potential to be affected if the site is allocated for development within the Council's emerging Local Plan.

2.3 *Step 2: Understand what contribution the site (in its current form) makes to the significance of the heritage asset(s)*

Assessment of the nature and extent of the site's contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) and its setting. The level of contribution the site makes to the significance of the heritage asset and its setting will be graded and defined as follows:

Negligible	The site provides little or no contribution to the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.
Slight	The site provides limited contribution to the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.
Moderate	The site is important to the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.
Considerable	The site is very important to the significance of the asset and its setting.
High	The site is essential to our understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.

2.4 *Step 3: Identify what impact the allocation might have on that significance*

An assessment of the degree of harm to be had on the asset and its setting as a result of potential allocation of the site for development. The level of harm will be graded and defined as follows:

Negligible	The site allocation will result in insignificant or no harm to the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.
Slight	The site allocation will result in low harm to the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.
Moderate	The site allocation will result in some harm to the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.
Considerable	The site allocation will result in considerable but less than substantial harm to the heritage asset and its setting.
High	The site allocation will result in substantial harm to the heritage asset and its setting.

³ Available at <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets.pdf/>

2.5 *Step 4: Consider maximising enhancements and avoiding harm*

Consider enhancements that can be achieved to the historic environment through the potential site allocation and/or ways to mitigate any harm to the significance of the heritage asset through the potential site allocation.

2.6 *Step 5: Determine whether the proposed site allocation is appropriate in light of the NPPF's tests of soundness*

Following on from the assessment based on the steps 1 to 4 noted above, a conclusion will then be reached on whether potential site allocation would reflect national policy along with any recommendations for enhancement and/mitigating harm to the heritage asset and its setting.

3. Glossary

3.1 *Conservation Area:-*

'An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance', designated under what is now s69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

3.2 *Designated Heritage Asset(s):-*

A World heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

3.3 *Non-designated Heritage Asset(s):-*

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape which is identified by the local planning authority as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions due to its heritage interest. This can include a local listing.

3.4 *Setting of a heritage asset:-*

The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Assessment

4. Site Area

4.1 The site comprising circa 324 ha, is a former electricity generating Power Station and associated Lagoons. It is located on the south side of the A562 (Widnes Road) to the south west of Warrington's administrative area, adjacent to the Borough boundary with Halton. The site is formed by two distinct parcels of land, north and south of the St Helens Canal and Warrington to Widnes Railway Line. To the north the site comprises the existing Power Station buildings and Cooling Towers and to the east of the former power station is an area of open undeveloped land comprising some rough, unmanaged pasture, field boundaries

and woodland. Whilst, to the south of the railway line and canal the land consists of a number of large lagoons which were associated with cooling operation of the power station and for storage of fly ash deposits. The western section of this area contains the former fly ash storage which is raised above the surrounding ground levels, whilst eastern section contains the remaining lagoons. The Mersey Estuary lies to the south of these lagoons. To the west is an established industrial estate. To the east beyond the rough pasture land/woodland is a golf course with the eastern suburbs of Warrington beyond this. Whilst, to the north there is open flat agricultural land. There are no heritage assets within the site boundary, which is illustrated in Appendix 1.

5. Screening

- 5.1 An initial screening of heritage assets likely to be affected by the potential allocation of the site for development in line with Step 1 was undertaken. All heritage assets within 200m of the site were considered and are assessed within this report. The 200m buffer and nearby historic assets are identified at Appendix 1. Other significant assets which were beyond the 200m buffer but considered to have the potential to be affected by development of the site have also been assessed.

6. Locally Listed Buildings

1 BACK LANE, CUERDLEY	
Heritage Asset	Detached single storey dwelling constructed of brick with a slate roof, window header detailing and a single chimney stack. The property has been extended on its northern side gable elevation.
Contribution the site makes to the heritage asset	The site lies immediately to the south of the asset on the opposite side of Widnes Road (A562). It is approximately 25m away at its nearest point. The asset is at the southern edge of a small cluster of dwellings that are surrounded by open agricultural land on the north side of Widnes Road. The proposed allocation site lies immediately opposite this and the massive cooling towers and generating hall of the Power Station dominate the landscape on the south side of the road. Due to the scale of the facility the site is very important to the significance of the setting of the asset.
Impact allocation may have on significance	At present the main structures on the proposed allocation site are set some distance from the asset (200m) and the site boundary has substantial landscaping. Allocation of the site for development may result in harm to the immediate setting of the asset if this landscaping is removed and development brought close to the northern boundary of the site. However, the removal of the cooling towers and other buildings from the site is likely to improve the wider setting of the asset provided that the replacement development is not of the same scale and the boundary landscaping is maintained/enhanced. Therefore, its allocation is likely to result in a fairly significant improvement to the setting of the asset.
Maximising enhancements and mitigating harm	If the site is allocated for development, harm to the heritage asset can be mitigated by ensuring that the existing established woodland landscaping along the northern boundary of the allocation site, between Taylor's Lane and the site entrance, is maintained and the adjacent development is not of the same scale as the existing facility.
Conclusion and recommendations	The site allocation may result in slight harm to the significance of the asset and its setting. With the measures outlined above this harm can be fully mitigated.

1 BACK LANE, CUERDLEY	
FOWL FARMHOUSE, BACK LANE, CUERDLEY	
Heritage Asset	Detached two storey farmhouse, constructed of brick with a slate roof and two chimney stacks.
Contribution the site makes to the heritage asset	The allocation site lies to the south of the asset. It is approximately 310m away at its nearest point. The asset is located at the junction of Back Lane and Mowcroft Lane with no other properties in its immediate vicinity. It is in a rural setting surrounded by cultivated agricultural land. However, the proposed allocation site lies just to the south and its massive cooling towers and generating hall of the Power Station dominate the landscape on the south side of Widnes Road. Due to the scale of the facility the site is important to the significance of the wider setting of the asset.
Impact allocation may have on significance	At present the main structures on the proposed allocation site are set some distance from the asset (approximately 500m) and the site boundary has substantial landscaping. Whilst, they do not impact on the immediate setting of the asset they dominate the wider setting and are prominent and clearly visible from the asset. Allocation of the site for development is unlikely to result in harm to the immediate setting of the asset and the removal of the cooling towers and other buildings from the site is likely to improve the wider setting of the asset provided that the replacement development is not of the same scale. Therefore, its allocation is likely to result in a fairly significant improvement to the setting of the asset.
Maximising enhancements and mitigating harm	None required.
Conclusion and recommendations	The site allocation is likely to result in a fairly significant improvement to the setting of the asset.

CROSS LANE FARMHOUSE, WIDNES ROAD, CUERDLEY	
Heritage Asset	Detached two storey farmhouse, rendered and painted off-white with a slate roof and two chimney stacks. The property has an extension to its eastern side gable elevation.
Contribution the site makes to the heritage asset	The allocation site lies to the west of the asset. It is approximately 185m away at its nearest point. The asset is located within a complex of converted farm buildings that sit within a golf course on the south side of Widnes Road (A562). There are no other properties nearby. However, the proposed allocation site lies just to the west and its massive cooling towers and generating hall of the Power Station dominate the landscape on the south side of Widnes Road. Due to the scale of the facility the site is important to the significance of the wider setting of the asset.
Impact allocation may have on significance	At present the main structures on the proposed allocation site are set some distance from the asset (approximately 700m) and the site boundary has substantial landscaping. Whilst, they do not impact on the immediate setting of the asset they dominate the wider setting and are prominent and clearly visible from the asset. Allocation of the site for development is unlikely to result in harm to the immediate setting of the asset and the removal of the cooling towers and other buildings from the site is likely to improve the wider setting of the asset provided that the replacement development is not of the same scale. Therefore, its allocation is likely to result in a fairly significant improvement to the setting of the asset.
Maximising enhancements and mitigating harm	None required.

CROSS LANE FARMHOUSE, WIDNES ROAD, CUERDLEY	
Conclusion and recommendations	The site allocation is likely to result in a fairly significant improvement to the setting of the asset.
FERRY INN, FIDDLERS FERRY, PENKETH	
Heritage Asset	Detached two storey public house, rendered and painted white with a slate roof and two chimney stacks. The property has an extension to its northern rear elevation. The surrounding garden is used as an outside seating area.
Contribution the site makes to the heritage asset	The allocation site lies to the west of the asset. It is approximately 200m away at its nearest point. The asset is located in a fairly isolated position on a thin strip of land between the Sankey Canal and the River Mersey, just to the south of the suburb of Penketh. There are no other properties in its immediate vicinity although Fiddlers Ferry Sailing Club lies just to the west. The proposed allocation site lies to the west and its massive cooling towers and the generating hall of the Power Station dominate the landscape in views looking west. Due to the scale of the facility the site is important to the significance of the wider setting of the asset.
Impact allocation may have on significance	At present the main structures on the proposed allocation site are set some distance from the asset (approximately 1,600m) and there is a golf course with substantial landscaping in between the main part of the proposed allocation site and the asset. Whilst, the existing structures of the power station do not impact on the immediate setting of the asset they dominate the wider setting and are prominent and clearly visible from the asset. Allocation of the site for development is unlikely to result in harm to the immediate setting of the asset and the removal of the cooling towers and other buildings from the site is likely to improve the wider setting of the asset provided that the replacement development is not of the same scale. Therefore, its allocation is likely to result in a fairly significant improvement to the setting of the asset.
Maximising enhancements and mitigating harm	None required.
Conclusion and recommendations	The site allocation is likely to result in a fairly significant improvement to the setting of the asset.

7. Conservation Areas

VICTORIA SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA (Halton)	
Heritage Asset	Victoria Square Conservation area comprises several historic assets including two Listed Buildings.
Contribution the site makes to the heritage asset	The allocation site is largely separated from the Victoria Square Conservation Area. It is situated approximately 2.2km from the proposed allocation site at its nearest point. The land separating the two sites heavily urbanised, comprises a mixture of industrial and residential development. The site provides no key views to the conservation area or heritage assets within it. It also does not contribute to its setting. As such, the site is considered to have negligible contribution to the Victoria Square

VICTORIA SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA (Halton)	
	Conservation Area.
Impact allocation may have on significance	Allocation of the site for development will have a negligible impact on the significance of Victoria Square Conservation Area and the heritage assets contained within it as it situated over 2km away and would not interrupt any key views to the historic environment.
Maximising enhancements and Mitigating harm	None required.
Conclusion and recommendations	The site makes no contribution to Victoria Square Conservation Area and its allocation for development is unlikely to result in harm to the significance of the asset.

Appendix 1

Fiddlers Ferry Power Station Site Boundary and nearby Heritage Assets

