

ENGLISH HERITAGE GUIDANCE ON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Community planning has in various forms had a long history and with the passing of the Localism Act its role has been enhanced by enabling local groups to take part in neighbourhood planning and produce a Neighbourhood Plan for their area.

English Heritage wants to encourage community groups to consider their local heritage and the historic environment's role in neighbourhood planning. The historic environment is the physical legacy of thousands of years of human activity in England, in the form of buildings, monuments, sites and landscapes. It gives every place its character and identity. A Neighbourhood Plan may help to guide how heritage can be conserved whilst adapting it to modern needs.

WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

A Neighbourhood Development Plan to give it its full title, sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in the defined neighbourhood area. It is drafted by local people who have been recognised by their council as the representative group for their neighbourhood. The proposed Plan must be publicised and consulted on. It is then submitted to the local planning authority and an independent examiner. If it satisfies certain basic conditions then it must be put to a referendum. If more than half of those voting vote in favour then the document must be adopted as the Neighbourhood Development Plan (Neighbourhood Plan) for that area. It also forms part of the Local Statutory Development Plan (Local Plan) against which planning decisions are considered. The Neighbourhood Plan takes precedence over the local authority's Local Plan on matters in the neighbourhood area that are not of strategic importance to the local authority's area.

Further information on neighbourhood planning can be found in the English Heritage [Guide to Heritage Protection](#).

CONSULTATION WITH ENGLISH HERITAGE

Under the Regulations covering neighbourhood planning, before submitting the proposed Neighbourhood Plan to the local planning authority, the group needs to consider if various organisations (statutory consultees) need be consulted about the proposals, because they affect the natural or historic environment. These statutory consultees include English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency amongst others whose interests may be affected.

The statutory consultees have jointly produced [guidance](#) on the natural and historic environment in neighbourhood planning.



A Placecheck in progress

WHY ARE THE BENEFITS OF INCLUDING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING?

It is often a place's heritage that makes it special. That distinctiveness not only gives local people a sense of belonging or identity and a feeling of pride in a place, but it can help to attract investment to an area. Heritage can also be a powerful tool for delivering regeneration and providing space for business, community facilities and other activities.

By its very nature this local heritage is valued by its community and therefore it is important for it to be protected at the most local level by those who treasure it most.

Including heritage in your Neighbourhood Plan can help protect those areas which are valued locally and ensure that they remain in productive use where appropriate. It may help to ensure that potential new development is properly integrated with what is already there and does not result in the loss of local distinctiveness. It can also identify opportunities for improvement and the challenges that will need to be faced.

Addressing how best to integrate new development into an existing place can encourage people to be innovative. Taking into account what is special about a place often demonstrates that off-the-shelf design and construction might not be appropriate. It encourages sensitive development of historic buildings and places that can invigorate an area, stimulating investment, entrepreneurship, tourism and employment.

WHAT INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL HERITAGE SHOULD GO INTO A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

Any policies you include in the Neighbourhood Plan should therefore be based on sound evidence, and information on how a place has developed and evolved is often a key element. This could include a description of the historic character of the area,

as well as identifying any listed buildings, scheduled monuments, conservation areas, registered parks and battlefields or local heritage assets. An assessment of the condition and vulnerability of the local historic environment will also help in identifying the need for any future management action.

When deciding on how much information to provide, as a guiding principle, we recommend including as much as is necessary to guide future decisions that may affect the character and heritage of a place.

Our guidance on [Knowing Your Place](#) may help you in deciding what information to include in your Plan.

HOW DO I FIND THIS INFORMATION?

There is a wide range of information about the historic environment available online which could be useful for your Neighbourhood Plan, such as:

- [The National Heritage List for England](#): provides descriptions of all nationally designated heritage assets
- [Heritage Gateway](#): gives access to a number of local Historic Environment Records for information on historic buildings, archaeological sites and other features
- [Guide to Local Listing](#): sets out good practice in developing or amending a local heritage list which is especially useful in identifying heritage assets that are valued by the community, but not nationally designated
- [Heritage at Risk Register](#): identifies heritage assets at risk that may be found in your local area
- [Heritage Counts](#): is the annual survey of the state of England's historic environment and looks at its wider social and economic role
- [English Heritage's Advice by topic](#): national guidance and advice on a range of subjects including regeneration, places of worship, heritage crime and climate change

The Historic Environment Record maintained by the local authority is a key resource, and local amenity and other environmental groups may also hold useful information.

WHAT DO I DO TO GET STARTED?

You can carry out a survey of your area as part of a local group of interested people. This could start with a [Placecheck](#), which should help identify widely held views on what is liked and disliked about the area, what needs to be worked on and what needs to be brought to the area by development for the benefit of the community.

This can help you as a group decide what might be in your Plan, taking into account the information not only on the historic environment but other information held by your local authority planning department on the local area.

If you want more information on what you could include in your Plan, you might find our guidance on [Knowing Your Place](#) useful.

Before getting started on a Neighbourhood Plan it would be helpful to discuss this with the local authority planning policy team. It is also advisable to contact and act on the advice of the local authority heritage advisers (both archaeological and historic building conservation officers). This will help to ensure the work is efficiently focussed.

FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR LOCAL AREA

Before starting out on neighbourhood planning and preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, it is important to fully understand what it is the community likes and dislikes about their local area. [Placecheck](#) is a user-friendly tool designed to help communities to articulate what it is about their local area they want preserved or what they want to change.

Placecheck also provides a starting point for assessing the historic environment at a neighbourhood level. It can be carried out by local people without additional support and can be used as the basis for drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan. It can also be used to start the process of drawing up a local list of heritage of local importance.



Local people need to decide what they like and what they don't like about their local area

Placecheck is a very good way of agreeing what is good about a place and what can be improved. The [Placecheck](#) website provides a series of questions which can be used to begin these discussions. It is also important to find out why the local area is the way it is. This will require looking at local historic records such as in local record offices, local history libraries, museums and using the Historic Environment Record. By building a Neighbourhood Plan on the back of the understanding developed through carrying out a Placecheck, a community can ensure that the Plan supports changes which preserve and enhance local character. In a speech given at the

English Heritage 'Heritage Champions Conference' in November 2012, Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, welcomed the creation of Placecheck as a user friendly tool when referring to the neighbourhood planning process.

The evidence developed through Placecheck might also lead you to think about the following actions, although a Neighbourhood Plan may not be the most appropriate way to take these forward. Your local planning authority can advise you further.

These actions could include:

- Small scale improvements to the neighbourhood to enhance the appearance of the streets and public space
- Preparing guidance on the design of new development where it may affect a place's character
- Promoting best-practice in the conservation and reuse of local heritage assets and their settings
- Encouraging investment and enhancement of particular buildings and spaces especially those that are at risk
- Considering whether any buildings and spaces are worthy of protection through [national designation](#) or [local designation](#)
- Undertaking a conservation area appraisal, review or suggesting new conservation areas, the creation a local heritage list or local buildings at risk survey

Having completed a Placecheck, the information can be also used to begin a dialogue between the local community, owners, the local authority (especially those with responsibility for managing the historic environment) and voluntary groups (civic societies, building preservation trusts, etc) on how to improve the area.

FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In addition to your initial [Placecheck](#), you may wish to carry out a more detailed assessment of the historic character of your local area which will help to make your Plan more comprehensive and robust. A range of other methods and their possible applications are described in '[Understanding Place: An Introduction](#)' which acts as a signpost to other help and advice including practical case studies.

English Heritage and CABE's '[Building in Context toolkit](#)' provides further information on heritage and design issues. Its purpose is to stimulate a high standard of design when development takes place in historically sensitive areas.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES

Once adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Local Plan. Development decisions in the neighbourhood will need to be made in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, unless 'material considerations' suggest otherwise.

If you are considering a Neighbourhood Plan, there could be opportunities to enhance your area and conserve its heritage. For example, the Plan might seek to ensure that when development takes place its location and quality enhances a place for local people. The historic environment often presents opportunities in improving the attractiveness of an area for the community, business and visitors, and when used successfully it can help inform the design of new buildings and spaces, town centre viability and to stimulate economic development. The Neighbourhood Plan could also reflect and positively support strategic heritage policies in the Local Plan.

To include heritage in your Neighbourhood Plan, experience shows that the best approach is addressing it in a holistic way and with sufficient information on it to demonstrate that any future decisions which could affect the historic environment are based on sound evidence.



Placecheck gets people to think about local issues: prompt cards stimulate discussion

It is for the local community to decide on the scope and content of a Neighbourhood Plan. However, there could be benefits in setting out a specific historic environment section within the Plan, drawing on the evidence from [Placecheck](#), other sources of information on the historic environment, and/or more detailed assessments where they have been carried out.

This could include:

- An analysis of the historic character of the area highlighting its contribution to the development and appearance of the place
- The identification of any listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, and battlefields or local heritage assets, and a discussion of the contribution they make to local character
- The environmental issues which the Plan seeks to address
- Opportunities to repair, conserve or bring heritage assets back into use especially those that are at risk
- Policies to manage the settings of heritage assets or important views
- Policies to promote locally distinctive development in terms of scale and materials
- Particular historic environment considerations to be taken into account when seeking to develop specific sites
- Opportunities for investment into the historic environment alongside delivery of new development, for example through Community Infrastructure Levy, Planning Contributions and other sources of funding
- The Neighbourhood Plan could also identify any buildings and spaces that are worthy of protection through [national designation](#) or [local designation](#), the possibility of new or revised conservation areas together with conservation area appraisals, the need for a local heritage list or local buildings at risk survey

WHO DO I CONTACT

Your local authority heritage advisers (both archaeological and historic buildings conservation officers) will be able to advise you on local heritage issues that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and should be your first point of contact. Discussions should also be held with the local authority planning policy team.

They will be able to tell you what form the results of your Placecheck and the evidence on the historic environment might take and whether any further information is needed. They can also advise on how your evidence can feed into the Plan.

Further information is available from the [Planning Advisory Service](#).

ENGLISH HERITAGE ADVICE TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In the summer of 2012 we sent a letter to all the Chief Planning Officers on the role of the historic environment in neighbourhood planning and when we will get involved. A copy of the advice is included at the end of this document.

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH HERITAGE

As the Government's adviser on the historic environment English Heritage can offer national advice on a range of local historic environment issues, both in relation to individual heritage assets and plan-making.

By consulting us early in the plan-making process we can help you to:

- Maximise opportunities to benefit the historic environment through the Plan and maximise the benefits that can be obtained from the historic environment
- Address any conservation issues which might delay the plan-making process once it has been submitted to the local authority
- Ensure that the Plan fully reflects the historic environment requirements set out in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- Assess the need for Environmental Impact Assessment in relation to the historic environment arising from the development of specific sites

With Neighbourhood Plans likely to be prepared by many communities across England we will target our resources towards proposals with the potential for major change to significant, nationally important heritage assets and their settings. However, our local offices may also advise communities where they wish to engage directly with us subject to local priorities and capacity.

STATUTORY CONSULTATION WITH ENGLISH HERITAGE

English Heritage has a statutory role in the development plan process. There is a duty to consult us on any Neighbourhood Plan before submitting it to your local authority where you consider our interests to be affected.

When consulting us we encourage you to contact us early in the process of plan-making when we will best be able to help you, for example, in identifying sources of information or potential conservation issues.



Training event in community planning

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT ORDERS, COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUILD ORDERS AND ENGLISH HERITAGE

These go beyond the Neighbourhood Plan to give permitted development rights (planning permission) for certain specified types of development within the neighbourhood area. There is a requirement to consult English Heritage on all Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders. On consultation we will assess the Order for impacts on the historic environment and heritage assets, including the need for an archaeological statement.

Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders must satisfy a number of basic conditions. These include having special regard to the desirability of preserving any listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it may possess and having special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any conservation area.

Further information on Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders can be found in the English Heritage [Guide to Heritage Protection](#).

WHAT IS AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STATEMENT?

An archaeological statement will reference the information contained in the local authority Historic Environment Record. It sets out how this has been reviewed in relation to neighbourhood planning and how it has been taken into account in preparing the proposal.

Where no findings have been identified the archaeological statement need only mention that the review took place and explain there were no findings relevant to the neighbourhood area.

A sound archaeological statement is likely to take into account all aspects of the historic environment including landscapes, buildings, sites and artefacts. It is always advisable to seek guidance from your local authority heritage advisers (both archaeological and historic buildings conservation officer) on the scope and content of your archaeological statement.

ENGLISH HERITAGE LOCAL OFFICES

If you wish to speak to us about heritage issues in neighbourhood planning, please contact your [local English Heritage office](#).

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

Where a Neighbourhood Plan is being considered the following questions can help to ensure it takes account of the historic environment at all stages of the plan-making process:

1. Does the area to be covered by the Plan include any heritage assets? ¹

2. Has consideration been given to the Historic Environment Record, or other available studies of local historic character which could inform the Plan?
3. Have you discussed your proposals for a Plan with your local authority heritage advisers and planning policy team?
4. Does the Plan have a clear vision for the historic environment and what are the key conservation issues?
5. How can the contribution made by the historic environment / heritage assets be used to help achieve your overall aspirations for development?
6. What are the opportunities for protection, enhancement and greater understanding or appreciation of the historic environment, for example through development management, targeted investment or enhanced national or local designation?
7. Have local characteristics - materials, styles, scale – been considered as part of design policies, and how can new development be made locally distinctive?
8. What impact will the proposals have on heritage assets or their settings or the local character? ²
9. Has consideration been given to English Heritage's 'Heritage at Risk Register', local authority Buildings at Risk Registers and whether proposals in the Plan could utilise these assets?
10. In light of the potential impacts on the heritage assets have you consulted with English Heritage and sought their advice?

FOOTNOTES

1. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework ([NPPF](#)) provides the following description of heritage assets - a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing). Designated heritage assets - World Heritage Site, scheduled monument, listed building, protected wreck site, registered park and garden, registered battlefield or conservation area designated under relevant legislation.
2. The NPPF provides that there should be a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In developing the strategy account should be taken of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of historic environment can bring, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of the place.

REFERENCES

GUIDANCE ON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- Government Guidance on Neighbourhood Plans
<https://www.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>
- Short Guide to the Environmental Considerations in Neighbourhood Planning
<http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/PDF/GEHO0212BWAZ-E-E.pdf>

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Heritage List for England
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/>
- Heritage Gateway
<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>
- Heritage at Risk Register
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk>
- Heritage Counts
<http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/>
- English Heritage Advice by Topic
<http://swncms01/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/>
- Examples of Local Archaeological Projects
http://www.algao.org.uk/localgov/community/case_studies

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

- Placecheck
<http://www.placecheck.info/>
- Understanding Place – An Introduction
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-intro/>
- Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-principles-practice/>
- Understanding place – Historic Area Assessments in a Planning and Development Context
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-planning-develop/>
- Understanding Place: Character and Context in Local Planning
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-character-context-local-planning/>

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Knowing Your Place
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/knowing-your-place/>
- Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/good-practice-local-heritage-listing/>

- Understanding Place: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-conservation-area/>
- Building in Context Toolkit
<http://building-in-context.org/toolkit.html>

OTHER USEFUL ADVICE

- The Setting of Heritage Assets
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/setting-heritage-assets/>
- Streets for All
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/streets-for-all/>
- Street Clutter Audit
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/street-clutter-audit/>
- Pillars of the Community: The Transfer of Local Authority Heritage Assets
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/pillars-of-the-community-the-transfer-of-local-authority-heritage-assets/>
- Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/managing-local-authority-heritage-assets-document/>
- Stopping the Rot: A Guide to Enforcement Action to Save Historic Buildings
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/stoppingtherot/>
- Vacant Historic Buildings: A Guide to Temporary Uses, Maintenance and Mothballing
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/buildings/maintenance-and-repair/vacant-historic-buildings/>



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Letter to Chief Planning Officers on considering Historic Environment in Neighbourhood Planning – July 2012

I am writing to you to set out the support English Heritage is able to offer in relation to Neighbourhood Plans.

Research has clearly demonstrated that local people value their heritage¹ and Neighbourhood Plans are a positive way to help them manage it. English Heritage wants to support you in helping communities protect what they care about.

English Heritage is expecting that as communities come to your authority to seek advice on preparing Neighbourhood Plans they will value advice on how best to understand what heritage they have and assistance on preparing appropriate policies.

Information held by your local authority and used in the preparation of your Local Plan is often the starting point for Neighbourhood Plans. Other useful information may be available from the Historic Environment Record Centres or local environmental and amenity groups. English Heritage also publishes a wide range of relevant guidance. Links to these can be found in the appendix to this letter.

Plan preparation also offers the opportunity to harness a community's interest in the historic environment by getting them to help add to the evidence base, perhaps by creating and or reviewing a local heritage list, inputting to the preparation of conservation area appraisals and undertaking historic characterisation surveys.

English Heritage has a statutory role in the development plan process and there is a duty to consult English Heritage on any Neighbourhood Plan where our interests are considered to be affected as well as a duty to consult us on all Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders.

English Heritage will target its limited resources efficiently. We will directly advise on proposals with the potential for major change to significant, nationally important heritage assets and their settings. Our local offices may also advise communities where they wish to engage directly with us, subject to local priorities and their capacity.

Should you wish to discuss any points within this letter, or if there are issues about a particular Neighbourhood Plan where the historic environment is paramount, please do not hesitate to contact me.

¹ English Heritage, *Heritage Counts*, 2008

Appendix

The National Heritage List for England: a full list with descriptions of England's listed buildings: <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk>

Heritage Gateway: includes local records of historic buildings and features www.heritagegateway.org.uk

English Heritage's Advice by topic: you can search for advice on a range of issues relating to the historic environment in the Advice section of our website

Heritage Counts: facts and figures on the historic environment <http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk>

HELM (Historic Environment Local Management) provides accessible information, training and guidance to decision makers whose actions affect the historic environment. www.helm.org.uk or www.helm.org.uk/communityplanning

Heritage at Risk programme provides a picture of the health of England's built heritage alongside advice on how best to save those sites most at risk of being lost forever. <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk>

Placecheck provides a method of taking the first steps in deciding how to improve an area. <http://www.placecheck.info/>

The Building in Context Toolkit grew out of the publication 'Building in Context' published by EH and CABE in 2001. The purpose of the publication is to stimulate a high standard of design when development takes place in historically sensitive contexts. The founding principle is that all successful design solutions depend on allowing time for a thorough site analysis and character appraisal of context. <http://building-in-context.org/toolkit.html>

Knowing Your Place deals with the incorporation of local heritage within plans that rural communities are producing, <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/knowing-your-place/>

Planning for the Environment at the Neighbourhood Level produced jointly by English Heritage, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission gives ideas on how to improve the local environment and sources of information. <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/PDF/GEHO0212BWAZ-E-E.pdf>

Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing produced by English Heritage uses good practice to support the creation and management of local heritage lists. <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/local/local-designations/local-list/>

Understanding Place series describes current approaches to and applications of historic characterisation in planning together with a series of case studies <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-intro/>

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Services Department:

Telephone: 0870 333 1181

Fax: 01793 414926

Textphone: 0800 015 0516

E-mail: customers@english-heritage.org.uk