

Heritage Statements

Planning application validation guidance

What is a Heritage Statement?

A Heritage Statement is an assessment of the significance of any heritage asset and/or their setting affected by a development proposal, and of the impacts of that development proposal upon them. Heritage Statements can also be called Heritage Impact Statements and Heritage Assessments, and can either be stand-alone documents, or included in other documents such as Design and Access Statements.

The purpose of Heritage Statements is set out in paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

194. 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.

As well as complying with the NPPF, a Heritage Statement is an important practical tool to guide an applicant in developing their proposals. It should be one of the first things that an applicant considers when beginning to formulate their development proposals.

The needs and constraints of the identified heritage asset/s should influence the evolution of a proposal from the outset, and a Heritage Statement should explain how an applicant/agent has arrived at a certain proposal. Good understanding of the heritage asset/s is essential before that process can take place.

Heritage Statements do not achieve their full purpose or value if they are prepared only between finalising plans and submitting them to the local planning authority.

When is a Heritage Statement required?

A Heritage Statement is required with all development proposals requiring planning permission or listed building consent, when the proposal directly involves or affects, or is within the setting of a heritage asset, or where the significance of a heritage asset is affected. Where development proposals may impact on known, or suspected, archaeology, this should also be assessed.

Some proposals will affect more than one asset; the Heritage Statement should address them all.

Development proposals requiring planning permission include:

- development to property / properties in a conservation area.
- development affecting the setting of, or adjacent to a conservation area.

Development proposals requiring listed building consent include:

- development to a listed building in the form of alterations, extensions, demolition.
- development adjacent to a listed building.
- development within the setting of / affecting the setting of a listed building.

When the proposal directly involves or affects/is within the setting of a heritage asset, this means the immediate, intermediate, and wider setting.

Heritage Asset Definition.

Heritage Asset as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework, 2023.

A heritage asset is 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. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Designated Heritage Asset as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework, 2023.

Heritage asset/s designated under relevant legislation comprise:

- A World Heritage Site
- Scheduled Monument
- Listed Building
- Protected Wreck Site
- Registered Park and Garden
- Registered Battlefield
- Conservation Areas

Non-Designated Heritage Asset as defined in Paragraph 039, Historic Environment, Planning Practice Guidance.

Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas, or landscapes identified as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

Definitions of Interests.

Archaeological interest.

There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Architectural Interest.

These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way, the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types.

Artistic Interest.

An interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.

Historic Interest.

An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

Definition of Significance.

Significance is 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Such interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic, and it may not only derive from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting' (National Planning Policy Framework, 2023).

Definition of Setting.

The setting of a Heritage Asset is 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' (National Planning Policy Framework, 2023).

Further guidance on setting of heritage assets: The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition).

What to include in a Heritage Statement?

Paragraph 194 of the NPPF states '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'.

The Heritage Statement should include more than a copy of the buildings listed description, Historic Environment Record entry and section/s from the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

Well-captioned photographs, other illustrations and tables are very useful as a substitute for plain text and can help to keep a statement concise and to the point.

Whilst the level of detail needed differs, all Heritage Statements should include as a minimum:

- **Introduction** – Include a description of the application site, and the proposed works.
- **A description of the heritage asset(s)** - Include what it is, and why it is significant.
- **An assessment of impact** – Outline how the proposed works affect the significance of the heritage asset(s), including any impact on architectural and historic merit or setting, both positive or negative.
- **Mitigation of impact** – Outline how the proposals have been designed to limit detrimental impact to heritage significance, and/or designed to preserve or enhance the heritage assets and better reveal their significance.

Who should prepare a Heritage Statement?

Paragraph 194 of the NPPF requires 'heritage assets' to be 'assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary'. Therefore, the production of a Heritage Statement may require specialist services and input from suitably qualified heritage professionals such as (but not limited to) archaeologists, building recording specialists, or conservation accredited architects.

Whilst heritage professionals can be found through the [Institute of Historic Building Conservation](#) website and the [Chartered Institute for Archaeologists](#) website, the Council cannot recommend an individual or company, and must remain impartial.

Web links to Further Guidance and Information.

- [Statements of Heritage Significance. Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets](#)
- [Managing Significance in decision taking in the Historic Environment](#)
- [The Setting of Heritage Assets](#)
- [GOV.UK advises on enhancing and conserving the historic environment](#)
- [Chartered Institute for Archaeologists code, regulations and standards & guidance](#)

Web links to Sources of Information

- [Walsall Conservation and Regeneration](#)
- [Designated Heritage Assets. Search the List to find listed buildings, monuments, battlefields and more](#)
- [Search the Heritage at Risk Register](#)
- [Heritage Gateway including Walsall Historic Environment Record](#)
- [Walsall Archives](#)
- [Black Country History](#)