

A Guide to Heritage Impact Assessments



The New Central Library and Museum



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BASSETLAW
DISTRICT COUNCIL
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Document details

Title: Bassetlaw District Council: A Guide to Heritage Impact Assessments

Summary: This document provides service users with advice on how to carry out a Heritage Impact Assessment.

Consultation: This document was widely consulted with parish councils, local architects, conservation and archaeology bodies during July and August 2010.

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Document availability: Copies of the guidance document are available at Bassetlaw District Council Planning Services and on the Council's website:

www.bassetlaw.gov.uk

A Guide to Heritage Impact Assessments

Introduction

In order to comply with the advice set out in Policy HE 6 of Planning Policy Statement 5 – *Planning for the Historic Environment* applicants are required to provide a description of the significance of the heritage asset and/or its setting. This can be presented in the form of a Heritage Impact Assessment.

A Heritage Impact Assessment should provide the local planning authority with enough information to adequately understand the impact of the proposals on the significance of any heritage assets affected. The submission of inadequate information may lead to your application for planning permission, listed building consent or conservation area consent application being made invalid.

Why is a Heritage Impact Assessment needed?

Understanding the significance of an historic building complex or area (the 'asset') and the possible impact of the proposed scheme on this significance is the key to good conservation practice. Good information, available from the outset, can speed up the processing of applications, reduce costs and lead to better overall design.

If significance based on how the site has changed through time and what survives today has been clearly understood at the outset, then both the applicant and the planning authority can grasp, and seek to minimise the impact of proposals on that significance.. Therefore it is important to understand the significance of a heritage asset when considering any proposals to alter, demolish, extend it or develop within its setting. An early understanding of the significance will inform the direction of any application.

When is a Heritage Impact Assessment needed?

A Heritage Impact Assessment is needed for any application that directly affects a heritage asset or its setting.

A Heritage Impact Assessment will always be required for the following **designated** heritage assets.

- Listed building consent applications.
- Planning permission applications for sites within the setting of a listed building.

- Planning permission applications for sites/buildings in or within the setting of a conservation areas.
- Planning permission applications for sites within the setting of a scheduled ancient monument.
- Planning permission applications for sites in or within the setting of registered parks and gardens.
- Conservation area consent applications.

It should be noted that Heritage Impact Assessments should also be submitted for Planning permission applications that directly affect a **non-designated** heritage asset or its setting. Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, structures or sites (including archaeological sites) that may never have been assessed or not statutorily designated but have a heritage value.¹ Carrying out a pre-application meeting with the Planning Department will ensure that heritage assets are identified at the earliest stage.

I already have to include a Design and Access Statement. Do I still need a Heritage Impact Assessment?

Yes, where works are directly proposed to a Heritage Asset or its setting. The Heritage Impact Assessment may form part of the Design and Access Statement but the Design and Access Statement is not a substitute for it.

What should be included in a Heritage Impact Assessment?

The level of information provided should be appropriate and **proportionate** to the significance of the heritage asset and the potential impact upon that significance of the proposals. For example, for an application that includes substantial demolition of a heritage asset it is reasonable to expect an applicant to provide a thorough and detailed understanding of the asset , and a thorough explanation of the impact of the demolition on the asset and its setting. An application for a minor alteration to part of the asset is likely only to require detailed information on the affected part of the asset, with only a brief explanation of how the impact relates to the significance of the asset as a whole.

¹ The Council has produced guidance on non-designated heritage assets – ‘*Non-Designated Heritage Assets, Criteria*’ this is available from the District Council or www.bassetlaw.gov.uk.

Stage 1: Gather known information about the building or site.

Documents relating to the heritage asset

Heritage assets, especially when designated, will have some documentary information about them. For example, all listed buildings have a Statutory List Description and Registered Parks and Gardens have full detailed descriptions that include their historic development. The Historic Environment Record at Nottinghamshire County Council could be consulted as part of the information gathering stage.

Sources of information

Heritage Gateway: www.heritagegateway.org.uk

Bassetlaw District Council Conservation and Heritage:

http://www.bassetlaw.gov.uk/services/environment_and_planning/planning/conservation_and_heritage.aspx

Historic Environment Record (Nottinghamshire County Council)

Contact: Heritage Planning Specialists
Nottinghamshire County Council
Trent Bridge House
Fox Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 6BJ

Tel: 0115 977 2162 Fax: 0115 977 2418

Email: heritage@nottscc.gov.uk

Please note that there are numerous other sources of information

Photographs, including historic photographs

A good set of colour photographs showing the areas specific to the proposals should be included. There are many historic photographs of the district, often showing the application site or building. Historic photographs often reveal information about how the building has changed and can provide justification for proposed alterations or inform the design of an alteration or extension.

Sources of information

Welchman archive: <http://www.bassetlawmuseum.org.uk/index.asp?page=welchman>

Picture the past: <http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/>

Viewfinder: <http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/>

Worksop Heritage Trail: <http://www.worksopheritagetrail.org.uk/>

Francis Frith: <http://www.francisfrith.com/>

Parish Council websites

Please note that there are numerous other sources of information

Historic maps

Maps can reveal historic layouts of sites and buildings, their relationship with other buildings or structures and surrounding landscapes or gardens. An examination of historic maps will often reveal information on how the site has changed and developed, providing time periods for different building phases. There are many sources of historic and modern maps, such as enclosure and tithe maps, to the more detailed Ordnance Survey maps which were first drawn in the mid 19th century. The types of maps that you should consult will very much depend on the age of the heritage asset and your proposals. The amount of research should be **proportionate** to proposals.

Sources of information

Old Maps.co.uk: <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/index.html>

Nomadplus <http://www.nomadplus.org.uk/>

A Vision of Britain: <http://vision.port.ac.uk/>

Magic: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/>

Please note that there are numerous other sources of information

Other sources

Many buildings and areas in the district are referred to in other sources of information, which is often the work of local historians. For example, the history of many of the villages has been written about. The District or County Council may hold investigative reports on buildings or sites. Where an assets lies within a conservation area there may be a conservation area appraisal written. Historical directories can be useful sources,

especially where the site or building was built for a community purpose, often providing dates of construction, architects and benefactors.

Sources of information

Historical Directories: <http://www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/>

Nottinghamshire Libraries: <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/leisure/libraries.htm>

Nottinghamshire History: <http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/>

Nottinghamshire Archives:

<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/leisure/archives.htm>

Pevsner Architectural Guide (book): <http://www.pevsner.co.uk/>

Victoria County History <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/>

National Monuments Record: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/archives-and-collections/nmr>

Parks and Gardens, a Researcher's Guide to Sources for Designed Landscapes (2006) by D Lambert, P Goodchild and J Roberts.

Please note that there are numerous other sources of information

Stage 2: Written Description

A written description should also be provided; the amount and type of information will depend very much on the heritage asset itself and the proposals. If appropriate you may wish to include copies of any documents relating to the heritage asset, discovered as part of Stage 1. The following, to a greater or lesser extent should be included:

- A description of the building/structure/site and its setting (this may include important views towards and away from the heritage asset).

The description should include information on architectural style, date(s) of construction, materials and notable characteristics generally and specifically in the location of the proposals. Where proposals affect the setting of a heritage asset you may wish to make reference, if appropriate, to other buildings in the grounds/garden, details of landscaping and views towards and away from the application site.

- Summary of the building/structure/site’s architectural, archaeological or historical significance.

Significance is what people value about the heritage asset. This will often be the architectural interest, but can also be social, community, economic or environmental value. Unusual or rare features will usually have a higher level of significance.

Significance will often be derived from the age of the fabric of a building. For example, late 20th century extensions to an 18th-century farmhouse will not usually be considered to be as significant as the earlier original fabric. Where a heritage asset has numerous phases of development, or differing levels of significance, plans can be used to show this effectively.



Plan to show levels of significance across the ground floor of a building (courtesy of The Prince’s Regeneration Trust, 2009)

Where a heritage asset forms part of a group, consider the group value or cumulative significance i.e. the significance it has by virtue of being in the presence of other assets.

Stage 3: Proposals and Justification

The local planning authority must clearly understand your proposals and the reasoning for them. Through a good understanding of the heritage asset, your proposals should be designed to avoid or minimise any harm to the significance of the heritage asset. A written explanation should be provided outlining your proposals and justifying them.

Your explanation should answer the following questions:

- What is the need for the new work?
- Can your needs be met in a different way
- What are the benefits of the new work?
- Could the work harm the heritage asset or put it at risk in anyway?
- Do you understand the heritage asset well enough to make an informed decision?
- Will the benefits outweigh any harm?
- Can you avoid (mitigate) any minor impacts on the heritage?
- Is the scale, design, materials proposed for any new works appropriate?
- Is any new work in the least damaging place?

When developing your proposals it can be useful to set out your impact assessment as a table. It is also a useful way of summarising the proposals and justification.

| Proposal | Fabric affected and significance | Potential impact | Mitigation |
|--|--|---|--|
| <i>Example 1</i> Conversion of pumping engine house to residential units | Interior - large open spaces that retain elaborate architectural treatment to walls and open roof. | Loss of scale and integrity of space; small areas of visible detail become meaningless | Abandon residential use and seek commercial (B1) use – this will be more sensitive to interior avoiding the need to extensively sub divide internal space. |
| <i>Example 2</i> New industrial units | On the edge of but outside the designated boundary of a Registered Park and Garden. | Loss of vistas from within and towards park and garden. Loss of veteran trees. | Redesign layout to ensure vistas are uninterrupted, introduce additional tree screening of appropriate species. |
| <i>Example 3</i> Replace sash windows with PVC-U in listed house for better insulation. | Grade II listed building – original 18 th century timber windows and much original crown glass. | Loss of original fabric and glass with unacceptable alteration to external appearance of house. | Abandon replacing windows. Seek restoration and draughtproofing of original windows internal shutters. Investigate installing secondary glazing. |
| <i>Example 4</i> Extension to 19 th century house | Largely original Victorian house in Conservation Area. Positively contributes to character of area | Dominates house and detracts from special interest and character of conservation area. | Reduce size and scale of extension and use materials and architectural details and traditional materials to match original house. |

Where an application site includes, or is considered to have the potential to include, archaeological interest an appropriate desk based assessment or a field evaluation may be required. It is advisable to discuss the archaeological implications with the archaeology team at Nottinghamshire County Council (Tel: 0115 977 2162, Fax: 0115 977 2418, e-mail: heritage@nottscc.gov.uk)

Who should prepare the Heritage Impact Assessment?

The level of detail in the assessment will depend on the heritage asset and the extent of the proposals. The Heritage Impact Assessment should be written by anyone that is competent to do so. This may be the heritage asset owner (i.e. householder) but for a complex heritage asset with high levels of significance it is advisable to employ a heritage professional (i.e. conservation architect, architectural historian, building archaeologist). If using an architect/agent to submit any application on your behalf they may be capable of producing a Heritage Impact Assessment. ²

Glossary

Heritage Asset

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated assets and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision making or through the plan making process.

Heritage Impact Assessment

The process of establishing the impact of a specific proposal on the significance of a place and identifying ways of mitigating any adverse impacts.

Historic Environment Record

Historic Environment Records are information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use. Typically they comprise databases linked to a geographic information system (GIS) and associated reference material, together with a dedicated staffing resource.

Mitigation

Action taken to reduce potential damage to a significant place. This may include avoiding damage, design solutions, options appraisal or seeking further information, as well as, where damage is unavoidable, recording elements that will be destroyed.

² Heritage professionals are often listed on the Historic Environment Service Provider (HESPR), the Register of Architects Accredited in Conservation (AABC), the Institute for Archaeologists (IFA) and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

Setting

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.

Significance

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

Further reading

Communities and Local Government, 2010. *PPS 5 Planning and the Historic Environment*

Communities and Local Government; English Heritage; Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2010. *PPS 5 Planning and the Historic Environment – Historic Environment Practice Guide*

English Heritage, 2010. Understanding Place. Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice.

English Heritage, 2010. Understanding Place. Historic Area Assessments in a Planning and Development Context.

English Heritage, 2008. *Conservation Principles. Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment.*

English Heritage, 2008. *Understanding Historic Buildings: Policy and Guidance for Local Planning Authorities.*

The Prince's Regeneration Trust, 2009. *How to Write Conservation Reports.*