

## **EDDC GUIDANCE NOTES FOR Assessment of Significance REQUIRED TO ACCOMPANY APPLICATIONS FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT AND PLANNING PERMISSION AFFECTING HERITAGE ASSETS**

This guidance note has been prepared by East Devon District Council Conservation Team and is designed to show you as the applicant/agent what information you should be submitting as part of your Assessment of Significance, and where to find that information.

**PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment** introduces a requirement for applications affecting 'Heritage Assets' to be accompanied by an Assessment of Significance. These statements will form part of the justification for the proposal and should demonstrate that consideration has been given to the protection of the heritage asset and/or its setting. The purpose of the Statement is to identify the important characteristics/significance of the existing heritage asset and to explain how the proposals would affect these and justify why this is necessary or desirable. If appropriate the Statement can be incorporated as part of a Design and Access Statement as long as it is clearly identified within the overall document. A complete Statement must include:

- Statement of significance of the heritage asset
- Details of the proposal
- Analysis of the impact of the proposal on the significance (including a statement of need & statement of impact)

The term '**Heritage Assets**' includes '**Designated Assets**' such as Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks, Gardens and Battlefields, as well as '**Non-designated Heritage Assets**' eg. sites and buildings of historic interest as determined by the Local Authority. In East Devon, such non-designated assets would include buildings on the Local List, and other non-listed houses, public houses, barns, and other farm buildings, amongst others.

The Assessment of Significance will need to contain a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected by the proposal, and the contribution of their setting to that significance.

**It is important to note that Applications submitted without such Assessment of Significance will not be validated.** In this case, the relevant Planning Team will write to you, explaining that further information will be required before the application can be validated, and it is your responsibility, as applicant/agent, to provide this information in order for the application to proceed.

In rare circumstances, a validated application may subsequently be found by the planning officer to be deficient either in the depth or extent of the description of significance and impacts, and in these cases the Council has powers to require further information from the applicant before progressing the application.

### **Why do I need to prepare an assessment of significance?**

As well as the policy requirement for this information, being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting is very important to an applicant or agent in order to conceive of and design a successful development or alterations to heritage assets.

## What should my assessment of significance consist of?

The information that you provide should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and the potential impact upon that significance of the proposals.

For example, for a substantial demolition of a heritage asset, or where new development affects the setting of a heritage asset - for example a listed building or conservation area - you would need to provide detailed information on the asset as a whole and a thorough explanation of the impact.

Meanwhile an application for a minor alteration to part of the asset – for example internal works to a historic building - is likely to require more detailed information on the affected part of the asset, along with a briefer explanation of how the impact relate to the significance of the asset as a whole. In assessing the significance of an historic building or site, it is important to realise that heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by changes in their setting, and that 'significance' can relate to a variety of aspects. In making an application, you need to understand both the nature and the extent of the significance.

Significance may be informed by a number of factors. Therefore as well as requesting general descriptive information regarding the heritage asset affected, this pro-forma requests assessment of the significance of the site, setting and building, where relevant, under a number of headings:

- **Historic significance** – the age and history of the asset, its development over time, the strength of its tie to a particular architectural period, the layout of a site, the plan form of a building, internal features of special character including chimneystacks and fireplaces,
- **Cultural significance** – the role a site plays in a historic setting, village, town or landscape context, the use of a building perhaps tied to a local industry or agriculture, social connections of an original architect or owner,
- **Aesthetic / Architectural significance** – the visual qualities and characteristics of the asset (settlement site or building), long views, legibility of building form, character of elevations, roofscape, materials and fabric, special features of interest,
- **Archaeological significance** – evolution of the asset, phases of development over different periods, important features, evidence in building fabric, potential for below ground remains To be able to address these aspects, and depending on the nature of the heritage asset, you may need to
  - refer to the sources of information listed below;
  - examine the asset and its setting;
  - carry out both desk-top and on-site analysis;
  - consider whether expert assessment or supplementary expertise is necessary (For example; archaeological, timber frame analysis, architectural historian, social history, etc). Remember, archaeological interest is not confined to below ground remains; an archaeological interpretive survey of a building can

be key in understanding phases of development and the significance of features;

- Consider whether exploratory works are required to understand hidden layers of fabric.

You may also choose to supplement this assessment with additional reports, studies, historic information, photographs and any other information where relevant. In some cases, where the significance is very high, or the proposed works have substantial impact, such supplementary information may be a required part of the assessment of significance.

### **Where can I gather the sort of information needed for my assessment of significance?**

There are a variety of sources, national and local, that can help you ascertain and describe the significance of the Heritage Asset that is the subject of your application. This list is by no means exhaustive and they will not all be relevant to each case, but a useful list includes:

- List descriptions for statutorily designated buildings. Though these are often very brief and early entries may be inaccurate in part, they do provide a starting point for understanding the listed building
  - English Heritage Registers of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens and Historic Battlefields - For more information, contact the English Heritage Regional Office on 01483 252000
  - National Amenity Societies (e.g. SPAB, Georgian Group, Victorian Society, Twentieth Century Society) – these groups publish extensive material on their websites and in books and journals
  - Conservation Area Appraisals - these have been prepared for the majority of the 33 Conservation Areas within the district, and are now available on the Council's website
  - Local History and Conservation Societies - These exist in many towns and villages within East Devon District and often contain a wealth of local information
  - Historic tithe and OS maps and photographs
  - Devon Record Office - Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, EXETER, Devon, EX2 7NL Tel: 01392 384253 Email: [devrec@devon.gov.uk](mailto:devrec@devon.gov.uk)
  - Contains a wealth of research material relating to individual sites and buildings, as well as local history.
  - Devon County Historic Environment Record (HER)
  - Maintained by the Archaeology Team at Devon County Council
  - Architectural publications, which often describe typical building types and features of architectural periods, and locally relevant buildings and typologies.
- Suggested texts are:
- The Buildings of England series (ed. N Pevsner) – Devon edition
  - Devon Building - Peter Beacham
  - Devon Thatch - Cox & Thorpe

## **Types of application**

The scope and degree of detail necessary in a Heritage Statement will vary according to the particular circumstances of each application. Applicants are advised to discuss proposals with either a planning officer or a conservation officer and the planning archaeologist before any application is made. The following is a guide to the sort of information that may be required for different types of application.

For applications for **listed building consent**, a written statement that includes a schedule of works to the listed building(s), an analysis of the significance of archaeology, history and character of the building/structure, the principles of and justification for the proposed works and their impact on the special character of the listed building or structure, its setting and the setting of adjacent listed buildings may be required. A structural survey may be required in support of an application for listed building consent. Statements can include supplementary photographs and reports if appropriate.

For applications for **conservation area consent** for the demolition of a structure, a written statement that includes a structural and condition survey, an analysis of the architectural and historic character of the building/structure, the principles of and justification for the proposed demolition and its impact on the special character of the area will be required. This may include information about the use and viability of the building and evidence that alternative uses or ownership have been fully considered. In addition, the following information should be included:

- The condition of the building, the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance and to the value derived from continued use;
- The adequacy of efforts made to retain the building in use, including evidence that the building has been offered on the open market at a realistic price;
- The architectural and historic merit of the building and the contribution that it makes to the conservation area;
- The merits of alternative proposals for the site.

Any proposal for demolition would normally be considered in conjunction with a detailed application for a proposed redevelopment.

For **planning applications either related to, or impacting on the setting of heritage assets**, a written statement that includes plans and photographs showing historic features that may exist on, or adjacent to the application site, including historic buildings and structures, historic parks and gardens and scheduled ancient monuments will be required. This should include an analysis of the significance of archaeology, history and character of the building/structure, the principles of and justification for the proposed works and their impact on the special character of the historic building or structure, its setting and the setting of adjacent historic buildings.

For **applications within or adjacent to a conservation area**, an assessment of the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area will be

required. This would include an analysis of the important characteristics of the area including significant buildings or features as well as views into or out from the proposed development.

For all applications involving the disturbance of ground within an **Area of Archaeological Potential** as defined by the planning archaeologist or in other areas in the case of a major development proposal or significant infrastructure works, an applicant may need to commission an assessment of existing archaeological information and submit the results as part of a complete Heritage Statement. Applicants are advised to contact Devon County Council Archaeology regarding these matters.

## Terminology

**Designated Heritage Asset:** World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Wreck, Registered Park and Garden, Conservation Area.

**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 heritage assets (as defined in Planning Policy 5) and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process (including local listing).

**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 information regarding historic buildings and conservation areas is available on:

- The East Devon District Council website at <http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/conservation> (for Conservation Area information and [http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/listed\\_buildings](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/listed_buildings) (for listed building information)).
- Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment) <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps5> and the accompanying practice guide PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/pps-practice-guide/pps5practiceguide.pdf>
- The Planning Portal: [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)