

Historic England publish update Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3

Briefing Note

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Introduction

Historic England has published the 2nd Edition of **Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets**.

Updated in December 2017 it replaces *The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 – 1st Edition, (2015)* and *Seeing the History in the View: A Method for Assessing Heritage Significance within Views (English Heritage, 2011)*.

The Planning Note gives general advice on understanding the setting of heritage assets, and how the setting may both contribute to their appreciation and significance. It also provides advice on how views contribute to setting.

The Note makes clear that setting is different from the definition of curtilage, character and context. It identifies that ‘conflict’ between the impacts on setting and other aspects of a proposal can be either avoided, or mitigated by working collaboratively at an early stage.

The Note sits alongside **GPA1 The Historic Environment in Local Plans** and **GPA2 Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment** as part of the group of documents to be used by all parties involved in the process.

Part 1: Settings and Views

The definition of the ‘setting of a heritage asset’ is referenced within the National Planning Policy Framework as:

‘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.’

A **thorough assessment** of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes would enhance or detract from that significance, and the ability to appreciate it.

The setting of a heritage asset is separate from the concepts of curtilage, character and context. It is something which is not fixed and may change over time as the asset and its surroundings themselves evolve.

The **importance of setting** lies in what contributes to the significance of the heritage asset, or to the ability to appreciate that significance. Those that closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed or formed are likely to contribute strongly to significance. As change occurs however, this becomes more balanced and other factors also have influence, e.g. separation of function.

Setting may also have suffered negative impact from inappropriate past development and in some circumstance may benefit from the removal of an inappropriate structure(s) or feature and potentially their sympathetic replacement.

Buried assets and archaeological remains retain a presence in the landscape and may have a setting in relation to their surrounding topography and other landscape features. This however, should be considered based on the value and context of the archaeology.

A conservation area is likely to include the settings of listed buildings as well as have its own setting, as will the hamlet, village or urban area in which it is situated.

Consideration of setting in **urban areas**, given the potential numbers and proximity of heritage assets, and the diversity of character, often overlaps with consideration of townscape/urban design and the character and appearance of conservation areas.

Contact us:

Ground Floor, V1 Velocity Building, Tenter St, Sheffield S1 4DE
t 0114 2289190 f 0114 2721947 e sheffield@dlpconsultants.co.uk

www.dlpconsultants.co.uk



Many heritage assets have settings that have been designed to enhance their presence and visual interest such as the designed landscape surrounding a country house. The **setting of a historic park or garden** may include land beyond its boundary which adds to its significance.

The contribution of setting to the significance of a heritage asset is often expressed by reference to views. Views may be identified and protected by local planning authorities and guidance for the part they play in shaping the appreciation of the historic environment. For example important views can be identified within character area appraisals or in management plans.

Part 2: Setting and Views – A Staged Approach to Proportionate Decision-Taking

Conserving or enhancing heritage assets by taking their settings into account need not prevent change. Indeed, change may be positive, for instance, where the setting has been compromised by poor development.

Conservation decisions are based on a **proportionate assessment of the particular significance** of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset. Historic England recommends a 5 stepped approach to such assessments:

- Step 1:** Identify which heritage assets and their setting are affected
- Step 2:** Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated
- Step 3:** Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance, or on the ability to appreciate it
- Step 4:** Explore ways to maximize enhancement and avoid or minimize harm
- Step 5:** Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes

DLP Planning Ltd has wide-ranging experience in assessing the setting and significance of heritage assets and the impact development proposals can have on heritage assets. We can provide advice and assistance on heritage related projects.

Should you require further details or wish to discuss a particular project in detail please do not hesitate to get in touch with your local office or Laura Holland in our Sheffield office on specific heritage matters.