

CONSIDERING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT WITHIN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Your Borough: Planning for the future



Yelden Castle: Designated heritage asset of archaeological interest (scheduled monument)

© Mark Newman

Who is this guidance for?

- Neighbourhood forums, parish councils and other community groups
- Consultants who have been commissioned to prepare Neighbourhood Plans

What is the historic environment?

***Historic Environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora (National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 Annexe 2: Glossary p.52).*

Why should we consider the historic environment for our Neighbourhood Plan?

The historic environment plays a significant role in what makes an area special and 'locally distinctive'. This distinctiveness or identity can be influenced by historic buildings and archaeology, settlement, townscape and street patterns, field or plot sizes and shapes, building scales, architectural styles, materials and traditions, and landscape uses. Many of these have their origins in the past, and can be hundreds to thousands of years old.

Neighbourhood Plan policies can help to guide how locally valued heritage can be sensitively conserved and enhanced. Where appropriate, policies can include the adaptation of buildings for modern needs and ensure heritage plays a positive role in invigorating an area, stimulating investment, entrepreneurship, tourism and employment. Policies can also help to ensure that potential new development is properly integrated with the existing environment and does not result in the loss of local distinctiveness.

How can a Neighbourhood Plan protect the historic environment?

Well-drafted plans can provide a sound policy basis from which to manage future development, including both new-build homes and change to existing stock. Once adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan and future development decisions will be made in accordance with it. Its policies need to be robust, as planning applications, (including smaller-scale development such as alterations and extensions), will be assessed against them and they will be relied upon to rebut challenges at appeal. Furthermore, the Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity to inform and engage with your community, providing guidance to property owners and promoting best practice.

Have you looked at your local Historic Environment Record?

Bedford Borough's Archaeology Service looks after the Historic Environment Record and gives advice on archaeological matters. The Historic Environment Record contains information on the borough's local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes. This is held in a database and digital mapping system (Geographical Information System) and should be consulted as part of the plan preparation. It is the most comprehensive source of historic environment information available for the borough and is available to those preparing Neighbourhood Plans.

For further details on the Historic Environment Record including access and contact information please visit:

http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning_town_and_country/historic_environment/historic_environment_record.aspx

How can this information be used?

The historic environment information can help in developing a clear vision for your Neighbourhood Plan. It can ensure that key conservation issues are taken account of in the overall aspirations for development, and set out how for instance, local characteristics – building materials, styles, scales – have been considered as part of design policies, and locally valued heritage sites and their settings will be protected.

What historic environment issues need to be addressed in Neighbourhood Plans?

- **Are there any heritage assets within the area?**

At the start of the plan-making process, it would be useful to identify any **Nationally Designated Heritage Assets**, such as Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, or Registered Parks and Gardens and **Locally Designated Heritage Assets**, such as Conservation Areas, buildings or structures of local historic interest, or areas of potential archaeological interest. This information can be obtained from Historic England and the Historic Environment Record. Details of the Conservation Areas are shown on the [Bedford Borough Council Policies Map 2013](#).

In addition, the area may also include **Non-designated Heritage Assets** of local importance, such as known sites of archaeological interest which will help to inform the decision-making process. Information on non-designated Heritage Assets can be obtained from the Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (see web link above). A brief description of the character of an historic area or historic landscape could also be included to supplement the record of heritage assets.

Information on the historic elements of Bedford Borough's landscape character can be found in the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2014) at:

<http://www.forms.bedford.gov.uk/planning/BBCLCAFinal2014-11-28.pdf>

• **Is this information based on sound evidence?**

Any policies you include in the Neighbourhood Plan should 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 Gardens, and Battlefields or local heritage assets. It should be based on the borough's Historic Environment Record data, which includes individual records and useful documents such as historic parish surveys, conservation area appraisals and management plans, and the archaeological Extensive Urban Surveys for Bedford and Harrold.

How should this information be presented?

It is up to your community to decide on the scope and content of your Neighbourhood Plan. However, as the policies need to be based on evidence, the historic environment information should be presented as a background report. The evidence should include a summary of, and a map locating, heritage asset designations. A list of heritage assets and/or the key characteristics of an historic area could be added as appendices to the plan.

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

Possible policy areas to consider for inclusion within the Neighbourhood Plan:

- The Neighbourhood Plan can seek to protect and enhance its heritage assets and promote an overall high quality setting for them;
- The Plan can sustain and enhance the significance of its heritage assets and historic landscape character for the enjoyment of the local community and visitors alike;
- The Plan can put in place measures to avoid or minimise impact, or mitigate damage to its heritage assets;

- The Plan can recognise the contribution which small elements make to the local character and distinctiveness of an area, and seek to protect them;
- The Plan can identify the key characteristics, design details and materials of construction which would enable new development to complement and enhance the existing historic environment; and
- The Plan can direct, inform and control new larger-scale development, ensuring its suitability and appropriateness within the context of the historic environment.

Other sources of information and support:

- Placecheck – this gives information about how to identify what is important in an area (<http://www.placecheck.info/>)
- The National Heritage List for England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>
- Heritage at Risk Register <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/>
- Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap <http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap/>
- Neighbourhood Planning Knowledge Hub <http://planning.communityknowledgehub.org.uk/>
- Planning Aid Forum <http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/>
- LinkedIn Neighbourhood Planning Group <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/Neighbourhood-Planning-3741603/about>
- Heritage Gateway
<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/herdetail.aspx?crit=&ctid=95&id=5059>

Who can we contact to discuss our Neighbourhood Plan Area's historic environment?

- Sonia Gallaher: Neighbourhood Plan Area coordinator - contact sonia.gallaher@bedford.gov.uk
- Whilst the Historic Environment Team is unable to undertake Neighbourhood Plan work on your behalf, they can provide you with the data for your area, and provide further advice. We would recommend that you also consider seeking the help of a historic environment consultant.
- Under the Regulations covering neighbourhood planning, there is also a duty to consult Historic England as a statutory consultee on any Neighbourhood Plan where its proposals affect the historic environment, prior to submitting it to the local planning authority (See: <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/contact-us/local-offices/east-of-england/>)