Topic Paper 7

Heritage

February 2019

Purpose

1.   The purpose of this Topic Paper is to provide background information on the subject of heritage in relation to the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Further versions of these Topic Papers may be produced at later stages in the Plan making process.

Context

2.   Oxfordshire has a rich and varied cultural history helping to establish the distinctive character of the County. The County has a wealth of heritage sites from the prehistoric, the Roman occupation and the Saxon, Norman, Medieval, post-medieval and Victorian periods. Examples include the Neolithic long barrow at Wayland Smithy, the Iron Age hillforts such as Uffington Castle and Sinodin Hill, Roman temples at Frilford, Wiggington and the Lowbury Hill, lost medieval villages such as Tiggersley, and the chalk figure of the Uffington White Horse, one of the most iconic examples of Iron Age art in the world. In addition, the County contains the internationally renowned medieval collages and buildings of Oxford, one of the region's most important tourist destinations.

3.   These remains form a valued and important resource that underpins Oxfordshire's sense of place. In addition to these visible remains the County has an abundance of below ground archaeological sites providing a valuable resource for investigating and understanding our development across thousands of years.

4.   The county's Historic Environment Record, the oldest such record in the UK, has 13273 archaeological heritage assets recorded and 12,694 important buildings formally listed by Historic England. The Oxford Urban Archaeological Database holds a further 4,300 asset records for one of England's most visited and recognizable historic towns. In addition, the county contains 301 scheduled monuments, formally designated historic sites and features of the highest significance, 253 conservation areas, 58 registered parks and gardens, two formally designated Civil War battlefields and the world heritage site of Blenheim.

5.   These surviving heritage assets are of more than just aesthetic and academic value and are an important factor in the county's economy both in terms of attracting visitors as well as investment.

- Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) recognises in its strategic economic plan that Oxfordshire's "world class natural and built heritage contributes significantly to its enterprise base"

- Estimates that the county's cultural, heritage and visitor economy attracts over 26 million visitors per year, adding around £3.1 billion to the local economy.

- Through agri-environment schemes we have secured £12 million of funding for archaeological related protection and environmental enhancement projects in Oxfordshire between 2005 and 2015. This includes £1.2 million specifically for archaeological feature protection.

6.   These archaeological and historic heritage assets are a finite resource that is highly valued by the local community as well as both nationally and internationally. They form and important backdrop to the characteristic sense of place of Oxfordshire that makes it such a vibrant and attractive place to live and work. The Historic environment also plays an important role in the creation and enhancement of communities. These irreplaceable historic assets are easily disturbed and destroyed by unsympathetic development unless carefully managed.

Policy context

7.   The National Planning Policy Framework[1] highlights that the protection and enhancement of the Historic Environment is a key factor of Sustainable Development as an environmental objective. "*c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment*" (paragraph 8).

8.   In order to achieve this the NPPF requires that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment (NPPF 2018, Para 20).

9.   In detail the NPPF sets out that:

"Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and

d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place." (Paragraph 185)

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[1] Section 16, NPPF (July 2018) MHCLG

10.   The link between the historic environment and the character of a place and wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits is clearly highlighted in this section of the NPPF.

Local Planning Policies

11.   In line with the NPPF this positive strategy has been incorporated into a number of policies in each of the Districts Local Plans. These policies also highlight the link between the historic environment and the sense of local distinctiveness and character of the District.

12.   The **Cherwell Local Plan 2016-19** sets out this positive strategy in Policy ESD 15 which states:

> *"We will protect our historic environment; it is a major resource contributing to the local distinctiveness of the District. Conservation Areas and other heritage assets (including both designated and undesignated assets) form part of the historic fabric of the District and contribute to the character of the area and will be maintained"* (Policy ESD 15, B.263).

> *"The Council will protect and enhance the special value of these features individually and the wider environment that they create."* (Policy ESD 15, B.264).

13.   **The emerging Oxford Local Plan 2036** contains a chapter on enhancing Oxford's heritage and creating high quality new development (chapter 6) which contains a number of draft policies relating to the historic environment. These include a draft policy specifically to protect designated assets, listed buildings and scheduled monuments and their setting (Policy DH3).

> *"Planning permission will be granted for development that respects and draws inspiration from Oxford's unique historic environment (above and below ground), responding positively to the significance character and distinctiveness of the heritage asset and locality."*

14.   The plan also contains a draft policy specifically dealing with archaeological remains (Policy DH4) and a draft policy which sets out how Local Heritage Assets will need to be identified and conserved (Policy DH5). These local Heritage Assets consist of buildings and sites not formally listed which are valued for the special contribution they make to the character of Oxford and its neighbourhoods through their locally significant historic, architectural, archaeological or artistic interest.

15.   **The Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2036** highlights the importance of the historic environment within the District. The Local Plan states that '*We seek to ensure the conservation, enhancement, enjoyment and understanding of all our heritage assets as they make a positive contribution to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality.*' (SODC Local Plan 2036 – para8.6). This ambition is in its Strategic **Objective 7 Natural and Built environment:**

"OBJ 7.2 Conserve and enhance our rich and varied historic assets and their settings, celebrating these as some of our strongest attributes."

16. The Plan also contains a draft Policy ENV6: Historic Environment which sets out this need to these valuable assets.

"1. The Council will seek to protect, conserve and enhance the District ' s historic environment. This includes all heritage assets including historic buildings and structures, Conservation Areas, landscapes and archaeology."

17. The plan also contains a number of draft detailed policies for dealing with Listed Buildings (ENV7), Conservation Areas (ENV8), Archaeology and scheduled monuments (ENV9) and Historic Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens and Historic Landscapes (ENV10).

18. **Vale of White Horse District** Local Plan 2031 highlights the importance of the historic environment to the district where it indicates that '*One of the greatest assets of the Vale is its rich and varied built heritage, which contributes greatly to the distinctive character and cherished identity of its towns, villages and countryside.*' This is reflected in **Core Policy 39:**

The Council will work with landowners, developers, the community, Historic England and other stakeholders to:

i. ensure that new development conserves, and where possible enhances, designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets and their setting in accordance with national guidance and legislation

ii. ensure that vacant historic buildings are appropriately re-used as soon as possible to prevent deterioration of condition iii. seek to reduce the number of buildings on the "Heritage at Risk" Register

iv. encourage better understanding of the significance of scheduled monuments on the "Heritage at Risk" Register and to aid in their protection

v. better understand the significance of Conservation Areas in the district through producing Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans

vi. identify criteria for assessing non-designated heritage assets and maintaining a list of such assets as Locally Listed Buildings, and

vii. encourage Heritage Partnership Agreements, particularly for Listed Buildings on any 'at risk' register.

19. The **West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031** highlights this importance in policy **CO14**:

CO14 Conserve and enhance the character and significance of West Oxfordshire's high quality natural, historic and cultural environment – including its geodiversity, landscape, biodiversity, heritage and arts – recognising and promoting their wider contribution to people's quality of life and social and economic well-being both within the District and beyond.

Other relevant Strategies

20.   LTP4 recognises the important of protecting and enhancing the historic environment and highlights that '*Oxfordshire has a rich and varied natural and historic environment, which makes it an attractive place to live, visit and work*' (para 20). As such it is included in a general environmental policy, Policy 24:

21.   "*Policy 24 Oxfordshire County Council will seek to avoid negative environmental impacts of transport and where possible provide environmental improvements, particularly in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas and other areas of high environmental importance.*"

22.   The Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (Sep 2017) also recognises the need for this positive strategy in the historic environment and archaeology section (6.50) where is states that 'Oxfordshire has a wide range of heritage assets including the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and scheduled monuments, which influence the character of the environment and sense of place.' As such it contains a policy for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment, Policy C9:

> "*Policy C9: Historic environment and archaeology Proposals for minerals and waste development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated, including where necessary through prior investigation, that they or associated activities will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the historic environment.*"

Challenges for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050

23.   Future build development in Oxfordshire over the next 30 years has the potential to significantly impact on these important and valued heritage assets unless this is carefully planned to maintain the sense of place which makes it such an attractive place to live work and invest in.

24.   Policies are in place at both a national level and at a local level through the Local Plans to ensure that this new development takes into account the historic environment to minimise this impact and seek opportunities to enhance this fragile and important resource. Whilst these local plans all recognise the importance in preserving and enhancing the historic environment the policies all approach this need in different ways.

25.   With a pressure for new development there is a need for high quality urban design and place shaping that uses and enhances heritage value to help create healthy, engaged and culturally enriched communities. Option for the spatial strategy for new development will consider impact upon heritage assets e.g. World Heritage Site and the setting of conservation areas) thought the Sustainability Appraisal process.

Further issues

- The long term need to protect, repair and enhance Oxfordshire's exceptional historic stock/'at risk' structures;

- Securing long term storage of artefacts that are being produced in volume as a result of the pace of development;
- The need to foster and support the maintenance of a skills base in the heritage sector to meet the needs created;
- To secure more effective networking and harnessing synergies of disparate heritage bodies across city and county;
- The need to sustain the character of important 'place making' views[2] in and out of Oxford; and
- The need to foster and support a long term strategic vision in terms of sustaining key heritage values across the county, for example in Oxford there are challenges with the cumulative impact of the pressure of modernisation and expansion of Colleges in the historic core. The Oxford Archaeological Action Plan[3] provides more detail.

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[2] Assessment of the Oxford View Cones (2015) Oxford City Council
[3] Oxford Archaeological Plan 2013-18 Oxford City Council