

# Neighbourhood Plans and the Historic Environment

## Assistance from West Berkshire Council Archaeology

Neighbourhood Plans can shape future development in your parish, but of course everywhere in West Berkshire has a past – people have been influencing, modifying and exploiting the landscape of our area for millennia. The surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried, and including landscaped, planted or managed flora, make up the ‘historic environment’, and there is much economic and social value in this heritage. Sustainable development will seek high quality design, take account of the character of different areas and conserve those features identified as ‘heritage assets’ so they can be enjoyed by future generations.

### The Historic Environment Record (HER)

One of the first steps in preparing a neighbourhood plan is to gather information about your area, and the West Berkshire Archaeology team can assist you. Our remit is to advise on the conservation and management of the archaeological resource, and in order to do this we maintain and develop the [West Berkshire Historic Environment Record](#) (HER). This continually evolving public record is an index to many elements of information: from known sites, monuments and buildings to archaeological fieldwork, from lists of books and reports to assessments of significance. We have also undertaken projects looking at the historic character of all the land in the district.

### Where HER data and archaeological advice can be used in an NDP

#### The background to the Designated Neighbourhood Area

For a general overview of the NDP area’s evolution, surviving historic buildings and structures, known archaeological sites and identified heritage assets, along with its archaeological potential.

For example: *“The presence of Bronze Age barrows at Holden’s Firs shows that the area around Mortimer has been utilised by people since the prehistoric period, and evidence found at Mortimer Hill suggests that a Roman settlement existed here.”* Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (SMNDP) 2017 p9

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/smndp>.

#### Vision Design Statements

To understand local character and describe vernacular architecture (traditional or regional styles) which can help frame Vision Design Statements and related policies.

These can be used to better preserve character by influencing appearance, scale, layout, and position of development. For example: *“House types should be in sympathy with the local vernacular”* and *“Any local pattern of trees and hedgerows will be reflected in the landscaping”* SMNDP pp29-30.

#### Site identification and allocation

To assess appropriate sites for development if Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) sites are not being used.

Advice can also be offered about the type of archaeological investigation which may be required if there is archaeological potential on a site (eg geophysical surveys and evaluations).

#### Reuse of Historic Buildings

To provide information and help identify historic buildings most appropriate for conversion, such as farm buildings.

Advice can also be given regarding any likely archaeological investigation required ahead of development. Conservation advice may also be required, and will be necessary for Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas.

## Green Spaces

To help identify where Local Green Spaces could be created in order to preserve or enhance the historic environment, or to better understand the historic significance behind existing green infrastructure.

## Heritage-Specific Policies

To enhance and preserve the heritage of a parish.

HER data can be used to identify known historic buildings and archaeological sites which a parish may want to promote, research, or preserve using specific policies in their NDP. The Archaeology team can also provide characterisation about the wider historic landscape. Examples of heritage-related projects in an NPD include: *“Identify heritage sites; Negotiate new or better access where appropriate; Seek funds for information boards at sites where appropriate and erect such boards with the agreement of landowners; Develop a Mortimer Heritage Trail: seek funding for the publication of a Mortimer Heritage Trail leaflet to identify and suggest routes for visiting heritage sites; Seek funding and agreement to the installation of heritage trail signage”* SMNDP p63.

## Local Listing

To identify places which deserve recognition and custodianship through local designation.

West Berkshire Council maintains a Local List of Heritage Assets, which is updated in response to nominations from any group of individual which are submitted to the West Berkshire Heritage Forum. The HER logs which buildings, structures, sites and landscapes are candidates for local listing, and which might be suitable for nomination (eg buildings which do not meet the criteria for being added to the National Heritage List for England, but which are described as being of local significance).

## Links and Further Information

West Berkshire Council online map with many different layers including some historic environment data, for general use	<a href="https://gis2.westberks.gov.uk/webapps/OnlineMap/">https://gis2.westberks.gov.uk/webapps/OnlineMap/</a>
West Berkshire Council Archaeology information	<a href="https://info.westberks.gov.uk/archaeology">https://info.westberks.gov.uk/archaeology</a>
West Berkshire Council's Local List of Heritage Assets and the process of local listing	<a href="https://info.westberks.gov.uk/locallist">https://info.westberks.gov.uk/locallist</a>
Heritage Gateway, a portal to national and local datasets	<a href="https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/">https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/</a>
The National Heritage List for England, of nationally designated heritage assets	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/</a>
Heritage at Risk, a register maintained by Historic England	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/">https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/</a>
Historic England also provide national guidance	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/historic-environment/neighbourhoodplanning">https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/historic-environment/neighbourhoodplanning</a> <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/improve-your-neighbourhood/">https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/improve-your-neighbourhood/</a>
An advice note was published in 2018	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/">https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/</a>