



Urban Vision Enterprise

Town and Parish Council Planning Service

Neighbourhood Plans & Heritage

October 2025 V1.3



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Engagement and Evidence.....	5
2.1 Stakeholder and Community Engagement	5
2.2 Evidence Base	5
3. Understanding Heritage.....	8
3.1 Heritage Designations.....	8
3.2 Values of Heritage.....	9
3.3 Understanding Character.....	11
4. Drafting Planning Policies	14
4.1 Positive Planning for Heritage.....	14
4.2 Clear and Locally Specific Policies	14
4.3 Heritage and Growth	15
4.4 Historic and Natural Environments:.....	15
4.5 Creativity.....	15
4.6 Effective Policies	16
5. Local Lists.....	18
5.1 Selection and Justification	18
5.2 Where to Use Local Lists	18
6. Case Study	20
5.1 Faversham Neighbourhood Plan.....	20
7. Other Guidance	22
8. About Urban Vision Enterprise	23
8.1 Experience and Services	23
8.2 Our Clients	23
8.3 Contacts	24

1. Introduction

Most neighbourhood plans address heritage in some way. This can be through specific heritage policies, or a range of policies that affect the use and development of historic areas and buildings, for example relating to town centres, employment, housing or design.

Historic buildings and areas are part of the infrastructure of cities, towns, villages and rural areas in the present. Most heritage is in productive use, as workspace, homes, leisure space and a wide range of other uses. Heritage has cultural value, but also economic and social/community values in the present.

At their best, neighbourhood plans can provide a creative approach to realising the social and economic values of heritage and reconciling conservation with adaptation and change and practical measures to address climate change.

Historic areas tend to have intrinsically sustainable characteristics, for example as mixed use and walkable neighbourhoods. Heritage can also form a basis for regeneration, without comprehensive redevelopment. So, heritage can be a means to achieving more inclusive and sustainable forms of growth and development.

So, planning for historic places should be an integral part of the wider social, economic and environmental planning of the area. This guide describes different ways in which heritage can be incorporated into Neighbourhood Plans in an effective and constructive way.



2. Engagement and Evidence

2.1 Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Engagement with people that own, occupy or use historic places and buildings should help to identify local issues, challenges and opportunities. This may include challenges around economic viability.

Normally, community and stakeholder engagement on heritage would be a part of wider engagement activities, rather than a separate exercise. Indeed, for many people, their interest in heritage will be related to occupation and use of historic buildings or investment.

Many members of the public will identify conservation of the historic environment as being important for their area.

2.2 Evidence Base

The evidence base for heritage in neighbourhood plans depends on the specific characteristics of the area and the policies proposed. The following are common elements of the heritage evidence base (which is part of the wider evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan):

The heritage resource: The nature of the heritage resource should be identified in concise terms, for example types and numbers of statutory designations, and any locally specific or distinctive features.

Use: Use trends and issues affecting heritage should be recognised, for example evidence on the impacts of changing live/work patterns on commercial areas and town centres.

Economic value: The contribution of heritage to the local economy should be identified, for example in heritage-led regeneration, providing accommodation for enterprise or supporting the visitor economy.

Vacancy and condition: Data on the condition of buildings, levels of vacancy, and numbers of buildings at risk should be included.

Economic viability: The economic viability of continuing use, refurbishment and reuse is a key factor in planning for historic areas (and is usually reflected by condition and vacancy levels).

Other issues: Any other issues impacting on heritage should be highlighted, such as environmental quality, adequacy of access and infrastructure.

Conservation Area character appraisals and management plans can be useful, especially where they attempt to define the special architectural or historic interest of the area and where the character analysis includes spatial and townscape characteristics (which translate most easily into policy). Character appraisals that are over-descriptive or excessively detailed tend to be less useful and can be difficult to translate into meaningful policy.

Town centre data and analysis will be useful in planning for historic towns. This could include evidence compiled by the local authority or other bodies, such as a Business Improvement District. Opportunity sites could be identified in historic towns.

Housing need and site availability evidence may highlight opportunities to increase the residential catchment of historic centres.

An area may have a local 'buildings at risk' survey, or there may be data on high grade buildings and conservation areas at risk. High levels of buildings at risk would often be related to viability challenges.

Property web sites will give an indication of residential and commercial values and rentals, which can be compared to regional and national averages. Relatively low property values and rentals can be indicative of viability challenges, which may be reflected in high levels of vacancy. Relatively high property values and rentals can be indicative of affordability challenges.



3. Understanding Heritage

3.1 Heritage Designations

There are a range of heritage designations, including:

- Statutory designations for buildings and areas that introduce additional controls and protection;
- Statutory designations (areas) that do not introduce additional controls and protection, but are a material consideration in the planning process;
- Non-statutory designations, which are an area of material consideration in the planning process.

These include:

Conservation Areas: Conservation areas are designated by local planning authorities. They provide protection against demolition and introduce other controls, such as reduction of permitted development rights and protection for trees. The legal definition of a conservation area is an ‘area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. Conservation area designations may be accompanied by **Article 4 Directions**, which provide more rigorous protection, for example on things like replacement of doors, windows and shopfronts or painting of masonry walls.

Listed Buildings: The legal definition of listed buildings is ‘buildings of special architectural or historic interest’. The statutory list is administered at national level. Most listed buildings are Grade II. A small proportion of buildings of particular importance are listed Grade II* and an even smaller proportion Grade I. Works to listed buildings, including internal works, may require listed building consent.

Scheduled Monuments: Scheduled monuments are designated at national level and consents are administered nationally by Historic England. Generally, scheduled monuments are incapable of productive economic use. Virtually all works to scheduled monuments need consent.

World Heritage Sites: World Heritage Sites are designated at international level by UNESCO. World Heritage Site status does not introduce additional controls, but is a material consideration in planning decisions. More substantive protection for World Heritage Sites is provided by conservation area, listed building and scheduled monument designations.

Historic Parks & Gardens Register: The Register of Historic Parks and Gardens is compiled at national level. Inclusion on the register does not introduce additional controls, but is a material consideration in planning decisions. More

effective protection is often provided by them being designated as conservation areas or through individual structures having listed building status.

Battlefields: A register of historic battlefields is administered by Historic England. Inclusion on the register would be a material consideration in planning decisions.

Local Lists: Many local authorities have compiled lists of buildings and other heritage assets of local interest. Local lists of buildings or structures do not introduce additional controls, but is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Archaeology: Local historic environment records identify designated and undesignated archaeological areas or structures. The latter are a material consideration in planning decisions.

Neighbourhood Plans could include specific policies addressing different kinds of heritage designation, for example relating to a specific historic park or garden.

3.2 Values of Heritage

The various designations recognise the heritage or cultural value of a building, structure or place. However, historic buildings have a range of other values in the present.

Economic: Most heritage is in productive, economic use, from large urban commercial buildings to small rural cottages. This can include commercial space, residential accommodation, community uses, recreation, and a range of other uses. For most owners, use of the property or investment are the main motive for taking on historic properties. Historic buildings form part of high streets, business districts and other commercial areas. Planning policies could seek to support the reuse, refurbishment and productive use of historic buildings.

Regeneration and enterprise: Historic places can form a basis for sometimes dramatic physical and economic transformations, especially in areas that have previously experienced commercial or industrial decline. Such areas can provide flexible and affordable floor space, essential for supporting small businesses and enterprises. Rural and agricultural buildings can support diversification. Historic environments can help to project a distinctive image and attract investment, jobs, population and visitors to an area, from city centres to villages. Planning policies could identify opportunities for heritage-led regeneration

City, Town and Village Centres: High-quality historic environments help to attract shoppers and visitors, creating competitive advantage for town and city

centres. In rural areas, villages with high quality historic environments can be a 'honeypot', attracting people to visit shops, pubs and cafes. There is evidence to suggest that historic places have higher proportions of independent businesses and specialist shops, supporting choice and diversity. Planning policies could seek to enhance the vitality of historic centres.

Tourism: Historic places and buildings help to create identity and distinctive character. This is key to attracting tourists and visitors, supporting a range of local businesses. Tourism is a significant part of the local economy in many urban and rural areas. High profile historic buildings can be part of the attraction. Planning policies could be supportive development to support the visitor economy.

Skilled Employment: The maintenance and repair of historic buildings creates skilled employment (professional, technical, skilled manual and vocational), including craft-based jobs. Building refurbishment generates higher levels of pay and investment in local urban and rural economies. A lack of availability of local skilled contractors can be a challenge in some areas. Although outside of the scope of neighbourhood plans, it is useful to be aware of possible barriers to heritage-led schemes.

Sustainability: Conservation of historic buildings and places avoids the use of scarce resources and landfill associated with demolition and redevelopment. Historic buildings are often durable and adaptable. Historic places often have high-density building patterns and were designed for a low-carbon economy in terms of movement and activity patterns, so support ease of pedestrian movement. Older areas tend to support a finer grain of mixed use, with concentrations of facilities in easy walking distance. Historic places include parks and other green infrastructure, including trees and hedges (so there is a biodiversity angle). It is important to assess the historic environment in terms of sustainable characteristics, to ensure that such characteristics are reinforced by policies and not harmed.

Housing: Historic buildings can add to the variety, choice and quality of housing in an area, from well-established terraced streets and rural cottages to new apartments in converted mills and factories. Identifying opportunities for new housing in and around centres, or opportunities for building conversions, can be an effective way of enhancing their viability and supporting local businesses and community facilities, including shops. Housing site allocations could maximise positive impacts on historic centres.

3.3 Understanding Character

There are different elements that make the special architectural or historic interest and character of an area.

Spatial Quality: Spatial quality is a combination of plan form, townscape and topography. Layout and townscape create enclosure and definition to streets and spaces, and these are important elements in understanding the character, often dating back centuries. Spatial character can be translated into policy, for example relating to the height, massing, townscape character and setback of new development.

Architecture and Buildings: Places have changed constantly over decades and centuries, so the architectural character of historic areas is often based on diversity of styles, construction techniques and building types. For areas developed in a more planned way, there may be more uniformity. Also, many historic areas have a mixture of vernacular buildings and more formal (polite) architecture. Vernacular buildings are not architect designed and are based on function and the materials and constructional techniques available in the local area. Formal or polite architecture is based on conscious design principles, often based on national or international movements, and sometimes using materials from wider sources and deliberately contrasting with an area's traditional materials. Many buildings fall between the two, using local materials, but also with more formal architectural elements.

Design Movements and Principles: Historic movements in architecture and town planning may be apparent in the forms and styles of buildings and the layout and townscape of places. For example, movements of the 20th century, from Arts and Crafts to the New Brutalism and High Tech, are based on ideas around 'truth' and expression of structure and materials, looking back to Gothic architecture and vernacular buildings. Classical and some Modern Movement architecture is based on proportioning systems and ideas about composition or formal layouts. In other places, such as some villages, the character will sometimes be more informal and organic. However, even in villages, there are often areas of a more formal nature, for example symmetrical buildings and planned layouts.

Technology, Materials, Fabric and Features: Materials used in buildings, structures, walls and ground surfaces reflect what was available and the technologies and trends of the time. Constructional walling and roofing materials all contribute to special interest and character. Innovation in materials or methods of construction can be important factors determining special interest. Ground surfaces can also make a significant contribution to character. This can include things like paving, stone setts, and metal curbs.

Historic Associations: Associations with famous people or events can contribute to the special interest of buildings and areas, as recognised by 'blue

plaques'. This could include people or events associated with any area of life and society (for example, politics, literature, science, arts). Buildings by leading architects or designers often have the potential to be high grade-listed buildings.

Completeness and Scarcity: The survival of buildings and places in an unaltered form can be an important factor in assessing special interest. However, some alterations can enhance that special interest. Scarcity is also a key factor, where few buildings of a certain type were built. Wartime defence structures are a good example. For older buildings, where much of the building of the period has been demolished, even mundane buildings have value (because few remain).

Other Aspects of Character: It is impossible to create a comprehensive list of elements that contribute to special interest or character. The above factors are just some things to consider. Other factors to consider could include glimpses, boundary treatments, historic signage or street furniture, and so on.

Harm: Once the character is understood, it will be possible to identify where harm to that character has occurred. Such harm could include loss of original features, such as doors, windows and shop fronts. Harm could be based on poor quality alterations, extensions or new buildings. Clutter created by signage and street clutter may be an issue. Poor quality surfacing of streets and spaces may detract from their character. Car parking may dominate streets and spaces. These are just a selection of common examples of harm.



4. Drafting Planning Policies

4.1 Positive Planning for Heritage

Carefully drafted policies in a neighbourhood plan can help to achieve the social and economic potential of historic areas and buildings, whilst conserving them for future generations.

Heritage should be dealt with as an integral part of wider social, economic and environmental planning for the area. The relationship between heritage and growth is a critical one, both in terms of heritage supporting growth, but also growth supporting the conservation of historic areas and buildings.

For example, housing site allocations in and around a historic town centre could increase the catchment population, helping to support vitality and viability. Good pedestrian connectivity between new housing and historic centres reinforces these benefits and helps to create sustainable live/work patterns.

4.2 Clear and Locally Specific Policies

Heritage policies, as with all policies, should set clear requirements to enable development or for development schemes to meet.

Policies should be locally specific. Generic policies on heritage or vague requirements (such as 'should be in keeping') will have no effect.

There is no point in repeating local plan or national heritage policies (the NPPF makes clear that neighbourhood plans should not do this). The most effective policies relate to locally specific issues.

For example, a conservation area policy could require development to complement the specific key characteristics of the area, including things like predominant heights, set-back of frontages, townscape characteristics, materials or architectural diversity.

Policies referring to external documents or standards (such as character appraisals or design codes) tend not to work, as it requires decision-makers and developers to read those documents and assumes that they will pick out the important parts. Any amendment of those external documents effectively kills the policy. So key principles from external documents and evidence should be drafted into the policies themselves.

4.3 Heritage and Growth

A Neighbourhood Plan may highlight and enable growth opportunities, for example by supporting heritage-led regeneration.

Policies could support the diversification of high streets, highlighting the potential for development of key sites. Policy could support changes of use and adaptation of peripheral commercial or industrial areas around towns. A plan could enable residential development in and around towns, to increase the residential catchment population.

Positive policies can also help to address misconceived perceptions of conflict between historic context and economic growth or green design.

4.4 Historic and Natural Environments:

There is often a close correlation between heritage policies and those relating to landscape and biodiversity. For example, protecting elements of character and protecting biodiversity in garden suburb or village conservation areas can involve similar policy requirements, for example in protection of trees, gardens and green infrastructure.

Local Green Space (LGS) designations can sometimes be appropriate for protecting landscape settings of historic buildings, where national policy criteria for designation are met. Village greens or key green community spaces could be suitable for LGS designation.

4.5 Creativity

Policies should avoid being over-prescriptive or should not suppress creativity, and especially avoid imposing personal stylistic preferences.

Policies should make clear the specific elements of character, in particular townscape and spatial qualities. Spatial qualities are often the most timeless elements of character and relate to the combination of plan form, townscape and topography.

When judging new development, the focus should be on quality and how it complements the character of the area. This is not about stylistic imitation. Indeed, imitation can be harmful in development affecting the setting of distinctive historic buildings. The character of many areas is based on diversity, with contrasting buildings from different ages.

4.6 Effective Policies

A Plan may have specific heritage policies, but will often address heritage issues through a range of policies. It is important to ensure that different policies are not setting conflicting requirements.

Effective policies include:

- Addressing growth and recognising and enabling the social and economic potential of historic buildings and areas;
- Having a clear and logical structure of policies, with heritage as an integral part of the Plan;
- Being precise and unambiguous and setting clear requirements for development to meet;
- Being locally-specific, to address the actual heritage of the area (for example the character of a specific conservation area);
- Avoiding being over-prescriptive and support creative and green design.

Common problems that can make policies ineffective include:

- Setting vague or generic requirements like ‘... must be in keeping ...’;
- Setting conflicting requirements for heritage and design in different policies;
- Repeating national policy requirements (which makes the policy inconsequential);
- Requiring imitation (often due to failure to understand character) or suppressing creativity and green design;
- Requiring compliance with external documents, such as conservation area character appraisals;
- Focusing on vernacular buildings only and failing to recognise that character is often based on formal architecture too (which often has national or international influences).



5. Local Lists

5.1 Selection and Justification

If the Neighbourhood Plan is to include a local list (non-designated heritage assets), then a report should be prepared to justify it.

Local lists are non-statutory. Nonetheless, it should be clear how buildings were selected. Selection could be based on consideration of local architectural or historic interest.

For each building or structure included, there should be a clear justification. This could be fairly concise and could include:

- The date, if known, or general period of construction;
- The architect or designer, if known;
- Whether the building is vernacular in nature or a more formal architectural style, such as classical, gothic or Modern;
- Any known historic facts, including the original purpose or reason for being built;
- Any feature of interest, architectural or in terms of landscape and hard surfaces;
- Anything else relevant to the building or structure's value.

5.2 Where to Use Local Lists

Local lists are usually (but not always) used outside of conservation areas. There is less benefit in considering buildings in a conservation area, as these are already part of a designated heritage asset, so have a greater level of protection (including control over demolition).

In particular, local lists should not be used as a means to identifying key buildings in conservation areas, as this could lead to legal difficulties. Local lists have no legal basis, so do not equate to an area-level assessment of 'special architectural or historic interest' or 'character', as set out in the legal definition of conservation areas.

Local lists can be useful in identifying buildings that are under-represented through the listing process, including 20th century Modern or Post-Modern buildings.



6. Case Study

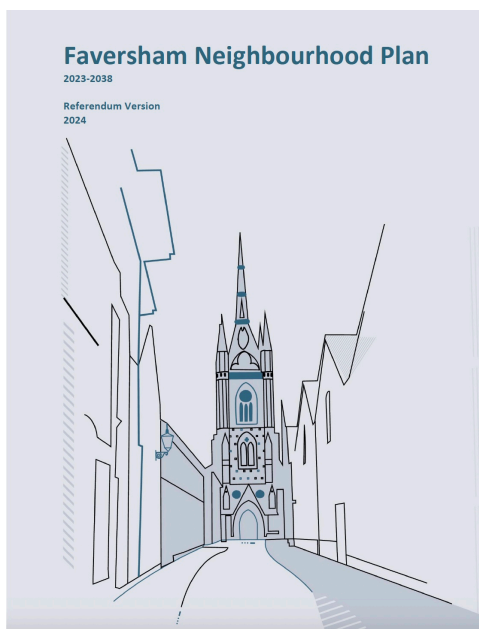
5.1 Faversham Neighbourhood Plan

The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan was prepared by Faversham Town Council, working with different stakeholders, with support from Urban Vision Enterprise. The Plan covers a complex urban area, with extensive heritage, but also with sensitive natural environments and landscapes. It replaces a previous Neighbourhood Plan, relating to the Faversham Creek area only.

Policies deal with a range of issues, including town centre vitality, housing, movement, and community facilities. Heritage considerations informed most of the policies, including those relating to growth, design and environmental protection.

The site allocations took account of heritage impacts, to help ensure that they would be positive. The Plan includes a specific heritage area regeneration policy, relating to a defined area, which enables and supports regeneration and sets parameters for development.

There is a specific policy relating to Faversham Creek, recognising its economic, community, heritage and landscape importance. The Plan also designates Local Green Space.





7. Other Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Planning Practice Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

Conservation Professional Practice Principles, IHBC, HTVF, Civic Voice, 2017

<https://ihbc.org.uk/Conservation-Professional-Practice-Principles/>

BS 7913:2013 Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings, BSI:

<https://knowledge.bsigroup.com/products/guide-to-the-conservation-of-historic-buildings>

Guide to Heritage in Neighbourhood Plans, National Trust, 2019:

<https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/binaries/content/assets/website/national/pdf/neighbourhood-planning-guidance.pdf>

8. About Urban Vision Enterprise

8.1 Experience and Services

Urban Vision Enterprise (UVE) is a professional planning consultancy providing services in planning, regeneration, economic development and third sector organisational development. UVE provides a Town and Parish Council Planning Service in England. UVE specialises in planning for historic areas.

UVE has supported more than 225 neighbourhood plans and can provide support at all stages of the process. This includes drafting of effective policies, site allocations and advice on legal compliance at all stages. UVE specialises in planning for historic areas.

Other specialisms include:

- mediation and complex negotiations;
- neighbourhood planning;
- regeneration and economic development;
- town centres and high street recovery;
- housing growth, site selection and masterplanning;
- heritage-led regeneration and conservation;
- natural environment and blue and green infrastructure;
- urban design, including strategies, policies, guidance and design review;
- community and stakeholder engagement;
- statutory consultation (legal compliance);
- technical reports including housing need, site assessment and heritage studies;
- feasibility and viability studies and project business plans;
- training, continuing professional development (CPD) and education;
- preparing guidance and briefings;
- in person (verbal) and written evidence for Parliamentary committees;
- third sector (not-for-profit) organisational development, including strategy, operations, governance and business development.

Urban Vision Enterprise is ISO 9001 Registered. The practice is an IHBC recognised historic environment service provider (HESPR) and CPD provider.

8.2 Our Clients

Current and past clients include government and funding bodies, UK and national professional bodies and membership organisations, local authorities, town and parish councils, neighbourhood forums and third sector (not-for-profit) organisations. These include the Heritage Lottery Fund, Locality, Royal Town Planning Institute, institute of Historic Building Conservation, and the National Trust.

8.3 Contacts

uvecic.co.uk
info@uvecic.co.uk
01538 386221

© Urban Vision Enterprise CIC., 2025.

This document and its contents are protected by copyright. No part may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the copyright owner, except as permitted by law.

Urban Vision Enterprise comprises UVE Planning Limited (Company Number 15166024) and Urban Vision Enterprise CIC (Company No. 7690116).
Registered address: Foxlowe Arts Centre (1st Floor), Stockwell Street, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 6AD