



## Developing Best Practice Guidance for Local Heritage Assets

*“Local designation provides a means for local communities to identify and to protect the buildings, sites and spaces that matter to them. It helps to build a sense of local identity and distinctiveness, a sense of history, place and belonging.”*

Heritage Protection for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2007)

### The need for guidance on local heritage assets

English Heritage is in the process of developing non-statutory **best practice guidance** for local authorities and their communities for the identification and management of **local heritage assets** and the consolidation of these assets as a **local list**. Encouraging the identification and management of heritage at the local level is an important component of the heritage protection reform (HPR) programme. It is hoped that such guidance will be available by **Spring 2010**.

The government recognised the importance of local heritage assets to the continued and effective protection of the historic environment through the 2007 white paper *Heritage Protection for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The government has committed to raising the profile and influence of local heritage assets by:

1. **providing additional protection for local designations** – strengthening the role of local heritage assets as material considerations in deciding the outcome of planning decisions (particularly those located outside conservation areas) through the production of local lists and formalisation of these lists as **supplementary planning documents** within **local planning frameworks**
2. **renewing the role of local designation** as a means of encouraging local communities to identify and manage aspects of their local heritage – fitting neatly into the government's wider aspirations of increasing community involvement in decision making and promoting the idea of sustainable communities
3. **improving access to clear, comprehensive and current information about the historic environment at local level** – this will involve encouraging local authorities to migrate information on local designations to their local Historic Environment Records (HERs)

### The role of best practice guidance

The commitments made in the white paper will be delivered through best practice guidance. Guidance is required to give local authorities and their communities the confidence they need to make decisions on

local heritage assets at the local level. In doing so guidance also has an important role to play in encouraging:

- a more **consistent approach** to the identification and management of local heritage assets across England
- a **move away from the 'buildings-led' approach** to local listing to encompass the full scope of assets that make up the historic environment, including designed landscapes and intangible heritage
- the **proper validation and recording** of local heritage assets
- the submitting of local lists to **appropriate levels of public consultation**

### What the guidance will cover

Guidance will guide local authorities through the process of strengthening the role of local heritage assets as material considerations in planning decisions by seeking to answer the following questions:

- **What** local heritage assets should be added to the local list?
- **Why** should local heritage assets be added to a local list?
- **Who** decides if a local heritage asset should be added to the local list?
- **How** will local heritage assets be protected and managed once they are added to the local list?

Guidance will draw together current best practice, structured around two core areas:

1. **Selection criteria:** will provide a framework against which to judge the suitability of an asset for addition to the local list and define the meaning of “special local interest”
2. **General guidelines:** will provide step-by-step guidance on topics such as:
  - ways of involving the general public in the preparation of local lists
  - strengthening the protection for local historic assets from planning and development pressures
  - improving access to information on local heritage assets via HERs

### Developing best practice guidance – the role of local authorities

English Heritage is keen to learn from the experiences of local authorities in managing local heritage assets. If you believe that your local list could inform the preparation of the best practice guidance, please contact Gareth Wilson of the HPR team at English Heritage:

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