Herefordshire Council

Design Code Guidance Note Baseline Context - Cultural Heritage

September 2021

Design Code Baseline Context

Design Codes need to be based on an analysis of the parish they are intending to cover. Part of this baseline is to understand the heritage and cultural assets.

Well-designed developments add a new layer of history to a place while enhancing and respecting the past.

This guidance note has been developed to assist parish councils research the historical data to help define the character and distinctiveness of the place.

Guidance for Herefordshire's Historic Environment & Cultural Heritage Data

Understanding the differences in local cultural heritage and the individuality of the historic environment can have a large affect upon the distinctiveness of an area.

Local heritage – whether buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas, historic parks and gardens or other designed landscapes – plays an essential role in building and re-enforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness within the historic environment.

To understand what distinctiveness an area may contain, it is essential that an evidence base be gathered and collated, this can then be used to assess the range of features, (in type and date), and how these features might contribute to our understanding of local character.

The character of a locality can be traced by its historic development, potentially from the prehistoric period to the modern day. Such development might include:

- The growth or contraction of settlement boundaries;
- The changes in agricultural or industrial practices;
- The use of different building styles and materials during different periods;
- Changes to the layout of an area and many other factors.

All this can be revealed by looking at heritage data.

When gathering evidence, it is important to bear in mind that this is not simply an exercise in making a list of sites and features. It is essential to gain an understanding of the value (i.e. the significance) of heritage sites whether they are:

- Designated (those on the National Heritage List for England);
- Undesignated (available on the local Historic Environment Record); or
- Sites which have not yet been recorded but could be.

Without understanding these aspects of the historic environment sometimes subtle qualities of the local distinctiveness and character of the local area may be easily lost.

Sources of evidence to assist in gathering information include:

- The National Heritage List for England;
- The Heritage Gateway;
- Historic Environment Record (HER);
- Conservation Area Appraisals, Management Plans & Local Lists;
- Historic Characterisation Assessments & Historic Landscape Characterisation;
- Victoria County History;
- Historic Ordnance Survey Maps;
- Tithe Maps and other historic maps (seek out at Herefordshire Archives)
- In-house and local knowledge and other expertise (i.e. civic societies, local history groups, neighbourhood consultations)

Herefordshire Historic Environment Records (HER)

The Herefordshire HER can assist in data gathering for all types of heritage data. This includes both designated and non-designated heritage data.

Designated data is the heritage that has been identified as being of national importance and includes Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens and Historic Battlefields.

Non-designated data is every other aspect of heritage, commonly referred to as sites or monuments. These monuments can be a wide variety of site types, both standing above ground and buried. This includes records of where moveable objects (like coins and other artefacts) have been found as well as recording natural features that have a cultural impact and even historic place names.

The significance of heritage features should not necessarily be determined by their designation in law. It is just as important to understand the significance or value that local communities might place upon undesignated monuments and heritage assets which may have more bearing upon character and local distinctiveness to that community.

To understand properly the local character of heritage in a region it is helpful to breakdown the data is manageable sections. We would expect each pack to include a series of maps and lists that help understand the data in a cohesive way.

Each cultural heritage distinctiveness report should include:

- List and details of heritage assets within the target area
- Maps of the heritage assets split by period (prehistoric, Romano-British, early medieval, medieval, post-medieval, modern) and coloured by type (monument, building, landscape, findspot)
- List and details of designated heritage assets
- Maps of the designated assets coloured by type (scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, historic battlefields)
- Historic Map Regressions (Tithe, 1st Edition OS) and other relevant maps
- Historic Landscape Characterisation Map

This corpus of data is the baseline from which a group can start to understand what brings local distinctiveness to their area, and using this evidence base, a statement describing local heritage distinctiveness and character can be produced.

The HER can assist in providing this data, however they may be a charge relating to the production and retrieval of data, which is outlined on the website.

Guidance:

A Guide to Historic Environment Records (HERs) in England
Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage
Statements of Heritage Significance
The Historic Environment in Local Plans