ENGLISH HERITAGE

SOUTH EAST

Ms Karen Francis
Clerk to Great Horwood Parish Council

Our ref:	HD/P5132/01/PC4
Your ref:	

Telephone	01483 252040
Fax	

13th March 2014

Dear Ms Francis,

Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

Thank you for your e-mail of 11th February inviting English Heritage to comment on your Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

The nature of the locally-led neighbourhood plan process is that the community itself should determine its own agenda based on the issues about which it is concerned. At the same time, as a national organisation able increasingly to draw upon our experiences of neighbourhood planning exercises across the country, our input can help communities reflect upon the special (heritage) qualities which define their area to best achieve aims and objectives for the historic environment. To this end information on our website might be of assistance http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/get-involved/improving-your-neighbourhood/.

In addition, general guidance on Sustainability Appraisal and the historic environment is set out in English Heritage's publication "Strategic Environmental Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal and The Historic Environment" (http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/ publications/strategic-environ-assessment-sustainability-appraisal-historic-environment/). The appendix to this letter sets out a number of links to other potentially useful guidance.

We also have the following detailed comments, which we hope you will find useful.

We welcome the identification of the National Planning Policy Framework in Table 2. The implications specifically for Great Horwood of the twelve core planning principles could usefully be set out in more detail. Reference could be made to the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plan for Great Horwood and Singleborough, although we note that the Management Plan for Great Horwood is not detailed. Reference could also perhaps be made to the Historic Town Assessment Report for Great Horwood, produced by Buckinghamshire County Council, to which there is a reference in paragraph 4.40.

Cont'd

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We welcome the generally comprehensive description of the historic environment baseline in paragraphs 4.39 to 4.44. The reference to the Historic Town Assessment for Great Horwood in paragraph 4.40 should explain its age, origin, purpose and status as there is no prior reference to this document.

Whilst there is a reference to the non-statutory Archaeological Notification Areas, there is no reference to other non-designated features of local historic or architectural interest and value, such as locally important buildings, which can make an important contribution to creating a sense of place and local identity. There should also be a reference to the Buckinghamshire Historic Landscape Characterisation.

Normally we suggest a characterisation study of the settlement(s) within a parish as precursor to the neighbourhood plan, as such a study can help inform locations and details of proposed new development and identify possible townscape improvements, for Great Horwood, the Historic Town Assessment may fulfil this function.

However, any gaps in the existing baseline, such as perhaps an absence of a list of locally important buildings and features and the lack of a Conservation Area Management Plan specifically for Great Horwood, should be noted.

There should also be consideration of the current and potential future condition of the heritage assets within the parish – are there are particular threats to their significance e,g, from development, lack of maintenance etc ? Has there been any change in their condition in recent years, particularly for the worse ? Has been any or is any ongoing loss of character, particularly within the Conservation Areas, through inappropriate development, inappropriate alterations to properties under permitted development rights, loss of vegetation, insensitive streetworks etc. Perhaps the Parish Council could undertake a survey of Grade II buildings to ascertain whether any are at risk from neglect, decay or other threats.

The Key Historic Environment Issues for Great Horwood in Box 6 are good, but could perhaps be a little clearer. For example, the second issue and the second half of the second sentence of the third issue could be combined, along the lines of "*Ensure that listed buildings, of which Great Horwood has a significant number, are maintained and their historic settings are not adversely affected by new development, as their quality, character and significance can easily be destroyed by unsympathetic or inappropriate renovation, repair, extension and redevelopment, or simply by neglect.*"The third issue could be separated into two, one for the Archaeological Notification Areas and one for the conservation area.

In Table 4, Great Horwood Sustainability Appraisal Framework, we welcome the inclusion of heritage in an objective, but we are not clear why the objectives and means set out for landscape and heritage starts with "Through development". The conservation and enhancement of the landscape, heritage and the built character of the villages and countryside will also be achieved through restricting development in inappropriate locations.

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As a sustainability objective, it should simply read "Conserve and enhance the landscape, historic environment, heritage assets and their settings and the built character of the villages and the countryside". In fact, it may be better to separate landscape from heritage.

The bullet points setting out the means by which this objective is to be achieved are also good, but perhaps could be slightly rephrased as sub-objectives through which to assess the accordance or otherwise of the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan with the main objective e.g. "*Will the policy or proposal protect and enhance designated and undesignated heritage and landscape assets ?*" etc. Another sub-objective could be "*Will the policy or proposal respect, maintain and strengthen local character and distinctiveness ?*".

The Scoping Report normally also sets out the "indicators", with which the policies and/or site allocations can be assessed against the objectives and sub-objectives. Appendix 4 of the English Heritage guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessments and the historic environment contains a range of possible indicators for assessing and monitoring the performance of the policies and proposals of the Plan against a historic environment objective. Not all of these will be relevant, but we suggest that the following be considered:

- the number and percentage of different heritage assets at risk;
- the number of major development projects that enhance the significance of heritage assets or historic landscape character;
- the number of major development projects that detract from the significance of heritage assets or historic landscape character;
- the percentage of planning applications where archaeological investigations were required prior to approval; and
- the percentage of planning applications where archaeological mitigation strategies were developed and implemented.

We hope you find these comments helpful. Should you wish to discuss any points within this letter, or if there are particular issues with the historic environment in Great Horwood parish, please do not hesitate to contact us. We wish you success with your Neighbourhood Plan.

Thank you again for consulting English Heritage.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Small

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The National Heritage List for England: a full list with descriptions of England's listed buildings: http://list.english-heritage.org.uk

Heritage Gateway: includes local records of historic buildings and features www.heritagegateway.org.uk

Heritage Counts: facts and figures on the historic environment http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk

HELM (Historic Environment Local Management) provides accessible information, training and guidance to decision makers whose actions affect the historic environment. www.helm.org.uk or www.helm.org.uk/communityplanning

Heritage at Risk programme provides a picture of the health of England's built heritage alongside advice on how best to save those sites most at risk of being lost forever. http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk

Placecheck provides a method of taking the first steps in deciding how to improve an area. http://www.placecheck.info/

The Building in Context Toolkit grew out of the publication 'Building in Context' published by EH and CABE in 2001. The purpose of the publication is to stimulate a high standard of design when development takes place in historically sensitive contexts. The founding principle is that all successful design solutions depend on allowing time for a thorough site analysis and character appraisal of context. http://building-in-context.org/toolkit.html

Knowing Your Place deals with the incorporation of local heritage within plans that rural communities are producing, http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/knowing-your-place/

Planning for the Environment at the Neighbourhood Level produced jointly by English Heritage, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission gives ideas on how to improve the local environment and sources of information. http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/PDF/GEHO0212BWAZ-E-E.pdf

Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing produced by English Heritage uses good practice to support the creation and management of local heritage lists. http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/local/local-designations/local-list/

Understanding Place series describes current approaches to and applications of historic characterisation in planning together with a series of case studies http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.19604

Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit can be uses to record the features that give a settlement or part of a settlement its sense of place http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/CharacterAppraisalToolkit.htm

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