Heritage Assessments Guidance note

1 What are Heritage assets

One of the statutory purposes of the Authority is to conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of the National Park. An element of this responsibility is to deliver the conservation and management of archaeological and historic landscape features and the built environment.

These 'heritage assets' are places, landscapes, buildings, structures, earthworks, sites, objects, monuments or buried deposits of heritage interest. They could be of any date, from thousands of years old to very recent.

Some heritage assets are protected by law from damage or destruction through designation (e.g. Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings including their curtilage, and buildings and structures within Conservation Areas), whilst others have no formal designation and are defined as 'non-designated heritage assets'. A 'non-designated heritage asset' can include any asset which has not been formally designated, but whose heritage significance still warrants consideration in planning applications. This can range from a fairly low level of significance, up to equivalent significance to a comparable designated heritage asset. It is the decision of the Local Planning Authority as to what constitutes a non-designated heritage asset.

Only a fraction of recorded heritage assets are designated. Many more sites, features and buildings of architectural, historic or archaeological significance are undesignated yet contribute to the Special Qualities of the National Park. They are particularly vulnerable to inappropriate change or loss due to their lack of specific protection.

Along with designated heritage assets, non-designated heritage assets are recorded on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Historic Environment Record (HER), although given the vast number of non-designated heritage assets in the National Park, there are many such assets which have not yet been recorded in the HER, or that have only brief records. Many previously unrecognised non-designated assets are identified through the work of Conservation Officers, through the planning process, and as part of pre-application enquiries.

2 Planning background: National Planning Policy Framework

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework [2024] (NPPF), 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', recognises that heritage assets are irreplaceable, and that any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

A key requirement of developers and their agents is described in the section Proposals affecting Heritage Assets (NPPF Para 207).

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the ***relevant historic environment record*** *should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

This requirement is reflected in the emerging Local Plan 2025-40 in policy AB1 Heritage Assets

3 Historic Environment Records

Historic Environment Record (HERs) are databases of information on archaeological and historic sites, features, structures and finds. They can also include information on historic landscape character, historic parks and gardens and aspects of the natural environment such as ancient woodlands.

There are over 80 HERs in England, which are maintained and managed by local authorities and National Parks as the essential core of Historic Environment Services.

> It is a requirement of planning related Heritage Assessments that the data held by the relevant Historic Environment Record is used to inform these documents. HERs are dynamic databases which are constantly being added to.
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> Data from any other sources, such as the Heritage Gateway, should not be used for the preparation of Heritage Assessments as they just provide a subset of information which is not regularly updated. Documents which do not use relevant HER data, may be rejected.

4 Heritage Assessments

If a proposed development is likely to affect a heritage asset an assessment of the heritage significance of the site should be submitted with the planning application. The pre-application advice service is a good way of identifying in advance of applying, whether a heritage statement and/or further information will be needed.

Professional guidance and standards exist for all types of cultural heritage report. These have been produced by Historic England and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. Where a cultural heritage report of any type is required and is not included in an application, or is lacking in content, the National Park Authority may ask for further information. Without the information we may not be able to approve the development.

4.1 Heritage practitioners

As Heritage Assessments are generally based upon the understanding of the origins and development of a heritage asset and the importance of its fabric and features, in many cases they will need to be written by a suitably qualified and experienced professional consultant. This could be a historic buildings specialist or archaeologist. Further information about finding a suitable consultant/contractor is given at the end of the document.

It is expected that all assessments which involve archaeological remains will be produced by a suitably qualified and experienced professional archaeological consultant or archaeological contracting unit.

The section below outlines the key types of cultural heritage report that could be required.

5 Heritage statements and their purpose.

A Heritage Statement is an assessment of the significance of heritage assets and their settings which would be affected by the development proposed.

It should identify the key aspects and features of the building, structure or site which define its archaeological or historic significance. These are the features which should be retained as part of the development. The information in the Heritage Statement should inform and shape the proposed development Proposals that fail to conserve or enhance heritage assets may be refused.

5.1 What types of application require a Heritage statement?

Heritage statements will be required for applications concerning:

- Development or work that affects listed buildings, scheduled monuments or other designated heritage assets or their settings;
- development in the curtilage of a listed building;
- development within or adjacent to a Conservation Area;
- development affecting a Registered Park or Garden of Special Historic Interest;
- developments affecting non-designated heritage assets (i.e. historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites).

The scope and degree of detail necessary in a Heritage Statement will vary according to the particular circumstances of each application. For applications involving a Scheduled Monument or Grade I/Grade II* listed building (or their settings) applicants should also seek pre-application advice from Historic England.

5.2 What information should they include?

Depending on the heritage assets affected by the proposals, a heritage statement would need to include:

- a description and location of all assets affected
- an assessment of the significance of the assets, demonstrating an understanding of their historical development
- an assessment of the impact of proposed works/development on significance, including on the special character and setting of the assets where relevant.
- a schedule of works and justification for the works
- any mitigation measures, if necessary.

5.3 Archaeological Desk-based Assessment

Where applications involve the disturbance of ground within an area of potential archaeological sensitivity a desk-based assessment may be required. This should contain archaeological and historical information and assess the impact of the proposed development on that interest. The desk-based assessment is usually the first stage of assessment of archaeological potential of the development area. The information provided within it will inform the need for field evaluation of the affected area possibly by means of geophysical survey and/or trial trenching.

A desk-based assessment may be required for works affecting buried deposits in:

- major development proposals or significant infrastructure works;
- development within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and/or the historic core of settlements, e.g. on land close to historic churches, or paddocks/crofts on street frontages;
- developments that require substantial groundworks or re-modelling.
- development affecting known earthworks e.g. field systems, ridge and furrow, early settlement, historic mining and quarrying, historic parkland/garden features;

- developments within or close to standing features or buried remains of known archaeological interest; and
- developments that will directly impact on a Scheduled Monument or its setting.

The desk-based assessment would need to follow Chartered Institute for Archaeologists CIfA guidelines and include the results of consultations of:

- the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER);
- Archive research (e.g. historic maps, places, unpublished sources);
- Published sources; and
- Site visit(s)

5.4 Historic Building Appraisal

Proposals for work to listed buildings or non-designated heritage assets of particular historic interest may require an historic building appraisal. The level of detail required would depend upon the significance of the building and the impact of the works proposed.

An historic building appraisal is an important component of the required Heritage Statement.

Typically, an historic building appraisal would include:

- Map regression and basic phasing;
- A description of the key spaces and functions (past and present) of the building;
- Description of specific features of the building e.g. blocked windows, doorways, former eaves lines, boskins, troughs, hay racks; evidence of former uses e.g fire places, bread ovens, forges, evidence of former ecclesiastical use, graffiti and apotropaic marks.
- Photographs;
- Description of significance based on an analysis of the details described above.

5.5 Archaeological Evaluations and Survey Reports

Applications for developments that are likely to affect buried deposits of archaeological interest may, in addition to a desk based assessment, need to be accompanied by the results of an archaeological evaluation. Archaeological evaluation might include one or more elements of geophysical survey, earthwork survey, trial trenching, test-pitting, soil sampling or field walking. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) would need to be submitted for approval by the Authority prior to works commencing.

Development applications requiring an archaeological evaluation/survey report are the same as those listed under an ‘Archaeological Desk-based Assessment’.
The results of this work should inform the design of the final scheme and further mitigation investigations could be required, should planning consent be granted.

5.6 Setting Assessment

Proposals for development within the setting of a heritage asset may require the submission of a Setting Assessment.

An assessment of the impact of any proposal on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance.

6 Further advice

For further information and advice please contact the YDNPA Historic Environment team via: herinfo@yorkshiredales.org.uk

7 Useful documents and links

Guidance

Archaeological works: a guide for construction companies and householders | CIfA

Understanding Historic Buildings: guide to good recording practice https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-historic-buildings)

The Setting of Heritage Assets | Historic England

Finding a consultant

Looking for an archaeologist? | CIfA

IHBC Accredited Practitioners

Sarah Whiteley
Senior Historic Environment Officer
Yorkshire Dales National Park

January 2026