

Chapter 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

12.1 The Borough has a locally distinctive historic environment, with a wide variety of heritage assets. The Council has a duty to conserve and enhance the significance, character and appearance of the Borough's historic environment when carrying out its statutory functions and through the planning system.

CONSERVATION AREAS

12.2 Conservation Areas are places that the local planning authority have designated as having special architectural or historic interest and whose character and appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance. By law, special attention must be paid, in the exercise of planning functions, to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas[1].

12.3 There are four Conservation Areas within the Borough, namely Billericay, Great Burstead, Little Burstead and Noak Bridge. They were all reviewed by Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in 2011/2012 and updates are currently underway. The Billericay Conservation Area Shop Front and Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in 2015 to maintain and enhance the special architectural and historical qualities of the Billericay Conservation Area by providing advice and design guidance. The Council will continue to keep under review the Borough's Conservation Areas and where appropriate, designate new areas in accordance with the legislation.

LISTED BUILDINGS

12.4 National legislation provides for the protection of Listed Buildings under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In considering whether to grant permission for development that would affect a Listed Building or its setting, consideration must be given to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting, or any features of special architectural interest. There are currently over 125 listed buildings located within Basildon Borough.

SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

12.5 The NPPF considers Scheduled Monuments as being of the highest significance and that any substantial harm to them, or loss should be wholly exceptional. There are three Scheduled Monuments within the Borough that are statutorily required to be conserved in place. Two are moated sites at Botelers in the Fryerns neighbourhood, and at the site of the former Basildon Hall in West Thorpe. The third is the multi-period Norsey Wood, Billericay.

12.6 To ensure that the Borough's undiscovered archaeological heritage is protected, the Council will require potential areas of archaeological importance to be investigated and documented within a Heritage Statement before planning proposals are determined. The need for such investigation may be identified through evidence of previous archaeological finds on the site, or in the surrounding area, as listed in the Historic Environment Record, or through other evidence supporting the Local Plan.

NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

12.7 Not all heritage assets are formally recognised through a legal designation, but they are recognised through the NPPF as contributing positively to the historic environment. These are referred to as non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) which are

defined by the PPG as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas, or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated heritage assets.

12.8 There is a draft Local Heritage List currently being produced for Basildon Borough which will form part of the evidence base in due course.

[1] *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Area) Act 1990*

POLICY HE1: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

1. The Council will seek to protect, conserve, and enhance the Borough's historic environment. This includes both designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings, including Listed Buildings, historic structures, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, landscapes and archaeology.
2. Development proposals should be sensitively designed and should not cause harm to the historic environment. All development proposals which would have an impact on the historic environment, or any features of the historic environment, will be expected to:
    a. Provide a proportionate Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) which must accompany any application where development could affect the significance of designated heritage assets, to assess the potential impacts, inform the layout and design, conserve or enhance the significance, character, setting and local distinctiveness of the heritage asset and identify appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures;
    b. Make a positive contribution to local character through high standards of design, which reflect and complement its significance, including through the use of appropriate materials and construction techniques; and
    c. Ensure alterations, including those for energy efficiency and renewable energy, are balanced alongside the need to retain the integrity of the historic environment and to respect the character and significance of the asset.
3. Development within or affecting the setting of the Borough's Conservation Areas, as defined on the Policies Map, including views in or out, should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Consideration must be given to the streetscape, plot and frontage sizes, materials and relationships between all existing buildings, structures, and spaces. Proposals should have particular regard to the special features and key characteristics identified within the relevant character appraisal and management plan for the Conservation Area.
4. Open spaces, trees and other hard and soft landscape features important to the character or appearance of the area should be retained or, if replaced or enhanced, still be in keeping with the character of the area.
5. Proposals for all new development, including alterations and extensions to buildings, their re-use and the incorporation of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies, must be of a high quality and sensitive design.
6. Proposals to demolish buildings and/or structures will be assessed against their contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset. Where substantial harm would be caused to a Conservation Area's significance, the proposal will be

resisted unless substantial public benefits outweighing any harm to the Conservation Area can be demonstrated. Where the harm would be less than substantial, it will be weighed against any public benefits of the proposal, including securing optimum viable use of the heritage asset.

7. For development proposals involving demolition, a programme of recording and understanding of the heritage asset which is to be affected will be expected as part of the development proposal and the recordings must be submitted for inclusion on the Essex Historic Environment Record.

8. Proposals for development, including change of use, that involve any alterations to a Listed Building or within its curtilage, will be supported where they:

    a. Do not lead to substantial harm to, or total loss of, the significance of the building, including its setting;

    b. Harmonise with the period, style, materials and detailing of the building;

    c. Retain and repair existing features and fabric, or, if missing, replace them in a sympathetic manner;

    d. Do not harm the structural integrity or stability of the building, or that of adjoining buildings or structures; and

    e. Relate sensitively to the significance of the building and do not adversely affect the internal or external appearance or character of the building, curtilage, or its setting.

9. Proposals affecting the significance of a Listed Building will be required to:

    a. Be supported by a Heritage Statement carried out in accordance with Historic England guidelines, which demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the Listed Building and its setting by describing it in sufficient detail to determine its historic or architectural interest to a level proportionate with its importance;

    b. Justify any harm proposed to the significance of the Listed Building and demonstrate the overriding public benefits which would outweigh the harm to the Listed Building or its setting. The greater the harm to the significance of the Listed Building, the greater justification and public benefit that will be required before the application could gain support; and

    c. Minimise any identified harm or loss to the Listed Building through mitigation.

10. As a precautionary approach to ensuring that archaeological remains in the Borough are protected, the Council will require an appropriate desk-based archaeological assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation where heritage assets of archaeological interest of any significance are or may be present on the site of a proposed development, or are likely to be affected by the proposed development. This assessment must form part of the planning application.

11. Scheduled Monuments and other important archaeological sites and their settings will be preserved in situ. Mitigation measures must be taken to ensure the preservation of all remains

of archaeological importance and to avoid harm being caused to the important archaeological remains if they are to be preserved in situ.

12. Development proposals affecting archaeological remains of less than national importance must be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

13. If archaeological remains are to be impacted upon by development, a programme of excavation, recording, publication, and archiving of remains must be provided as part of the proposal. Evidence should be deposited with the Essex Historic Environment Record and any archives with a local museum or other public depository.

14. Proposals for development, including repairs, change of use, alterations, and extensions to a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) will be supported where they are designed sensitively and sympathetically and do not adversely affect the significance of the asset.

15. Where a NDHA is directly or indirectly affected by development proposals, its significance should be retained within development wherever reasonably practicable. Where this is not practicable, consideration will be given to the scale of any harm to or loss of the heritage asset and to the significance of the heritage asset when determining the application.

Reasoned Justification

12.9 The historic environment is a fundamental part of the Borough's environmental infrastructure which is sensitive to change and needs to be properly understood so it is managed and conserved appropriately.

12.10 There may be opportunities to enhance the historic environment, and it is important that these are realised and that any adverse impacts associated with such development are avoided or minimised. A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) may be required to ensure development does not affect or cause harm to, the setting and significance of any heritage assets, if required, a detailed HIA must be undertaken at planning application stage.

12.11 Proposals to introduce energy efficiency and renewable energy measures affecting heritage assets will be approached positively and weighed against harm to the significance of the heritage asset and the wider historic environment.

Policy Links

- SG1 - Growth Needs
- SG3 - Spatial Distribution of Growth
- HOU4 - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation
- HOU5 - Travelling Showpeople Accommodation
- HOU7 - Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation
- D3 - Design in Smaller Scale Projects
- D4 - Advertisements
- NE1 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- INF5 – Digital Infrastructure
- INF6 – Cultural Infrastructure

Evidence Links

- Policy Map

