

Technical Advice Note

Statements of Significance

About this Note

This leaflet is one of a series of non-statutory 'Standing Advice' statements produced by the council. They are not formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Documents but are intended to provide general advice to those applying for planning permission or listed building consent. They also help the council's Development Management process by providing clear guidance on particular aspects of planning policy, design, heritage conservation or archaeology and by ensuring applicants and agents are informed of the information that may be needed to support applications affecting heritage assets. This note covers the following:

What is a Statement of Significance?

What is a Heritage Asset?

Why are Statements of Significance needed and when should they be submitted?

What should a Statement of Significance contain?

Where can I find out more about heritage assets and significance?

It should also be read alongside the Council's Core Strategy (adopted December 2013) and Local Plan: Policies, Sites and Places (adopted November 2017).

What is a Statement of Significance?

A 'statement of significance' of a heritage asset should be a summary that describes and articulates what is significant about the asset as a result of its heritage interest. This interest may come from its physical fabric, its links to its surroundings, its development over time or its association with particular people or events. The setting in which an asset is experienced may also make a contribution to its heritage interest.

What is a Heritage Asset?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines heritage asset as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage

assets include designated heritage assets (Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas and Registered Battlefields) and non-designated assets identified by the local planning authority (locally listed buildings; locally registered parks and gardens; archaeological sites and buildings identified in the South Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record).

The NPPF defines significance as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Why is a Statement of Significance needed and when should it be submitted?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies on different aspects of spatial planning in England, including those relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It states:

"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." Paragraph 189, NPPF

In accordance with the council's Planning Application Requirements List (<http://edocs.southglos.gov.uk/planningapplicationsrequirements/>) a Statement of Significance is required to support applications for listed building consent and planning permission affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets.

To meet the requirements of the NPPF we will require applications affecting heritage assets to be accompanied by a Statement of Significance before the application will be validated.

What should a Statement of Significance contain?

The amount of detail that is required in a Statement of Significance will vary according to the proposal for which consent or planning permission is being sought. The statement should be proportionate in detail to the type of works being carried out. For example, a major scheme that affects several assets or involves substantial work to, or affecting the setting of, a heritage asset will require an extensive and professionally produced statement setting out the significance of all assets affected. A small-scale scheme that will have a limited impact to a single heritage asset will probably require a short statement.

When writing a statement of significance for a heritage asset, however old it is, it will help to consider the following:

- Its age, physical form, and development over time, including the relative weighting of different aspects of the asset. *For instance, a building may have origins in the 18th century, with later 19th and 20th century additions. Not all parts of the building will have the same level of significance, and the heritage significance of each phase may differ.*
- The aesthetic qualities and interest of its design and character. *What is the dominant architectural style of the building; is it a polite Georgian house, a modest Victorian cottage or a vernacular medieval farmhouse?*
- The fabric - in other words, the materials used to build it. *For instance, are the internal walls of stone, brick, lath and plaster or plasterboard? Are the floors covered with wide elm/oak planks or uniform modern machined tongue and groove boards? Is it the last thatched building in the area?*
- Its archaeological interest. *Is there any indication in the building or documentary evidence that suggests the possibility of buried or concealed features? Is there evidence of or potential for hidden decorative schemes?*
- The fixtures and fittings - identifying the age, rarity and quality of the internal fixtures and fittings. *For instance, are there features in the building such as historic fitted dressers, fire surrounds, display cupboards or original oak doors that contribute to the character and significance of the building?*
- The building's footprint, including its external composition and internal plan form. *Does the layout of the building tell us anything about how it was used, the function of individual spaces, or the social hierarchy of certain rooms? Are blocked windows evidence of the occupants trying to avoid window tax, or were they used purely for aesthetic and architectural reasons and have no relation to the floor plan of the building?*
- Its links to the local environment, people or events. *Is there a connection between the asset and a known architect, a famous owner or tenant, or did it play a pivotal role at a particular time in history?*
- Its associations with, or visual/physical connection to other heritage assets in the locality. *Does the asset have group value with other buildings, gardens or structures that enhance our understanding or appreciation of its significance?*

It is important to also consider:

- Who values the heritage asset, and why
- Whether associated objects and historical records contribute to its interest
- The relative weighting of the heritage asset's interests with those of other heritage assets, sharing similar interests (some sites or buildings will be more important than others).
- The extent of any uncertainty about its values (particularly in relation to potential for hidden or buried elements),

In the majority of cases, a Statement of Significance does not need a full history of the previous occupants of a building.

For new development in a conservation area, the Statement of Significance should consider what gives the area its special character and distinctive appearance. For instance, it may look at the type and scale of buildings, how traditional materials are used, how buildings relate to the street and to one another, typical boundary treatments and the use of open space. An understanding of the significance and character of an area will assist the council in assessing the potential impact (positive or negative) of any proposal, including contemporary new development.

Useful information to include in a Statement of Significance:

- Any available information from the local Historic Environment Record or County Records Office;
- An extract of the relevant designation record (i.e. list description; scheduled monument entry, conservation area appraisal)
- A set of high-quality photographs that show each feature of the heritage asset(s) affected by the proposed works and its surroundings. You may also have historic photos (or any image when the heritage asset(s) looked different) which should be included
- Information from historic Ordnance Survey, tithe or estate maps or previous architectural plans.

Where can I find out more about heritage assets and significance?

Websites

- Gloucestershire Archives www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives
- Bristol Record Office www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-record-office
- National Archives www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
- The English Heritage Archive www.englishheritagearchives.org.uk
- Conservation Area Appraisals www.southglos.gov.uk/conservationareas
- Historic England guidance <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/>
- Institute of Field Archaeology www.archaeologists.net
- The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings www.spab.org.uk
- The Victorian Society www.victoriansociety.org.uk
- The Georgian Group www.georgiangroup.org.uk
- The 20th Century Society www.c20society.org.uk
- The Garden History Society www.gardenhistorysociety.org

Useful Historic England Documents

- Understanding Historic Buildings (May 2016)
- Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments (April 2017)
- The Setting of Heritage Assets (Dec 2017)
- Conservation Principles, Policy and Practice (Apr 2008)

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