

Planning Bulletin January 2026

This monthly note highlights some of the recent and forthcoming developments in the world of planning, from a heritage perspective. Please note that this is not necessarily a complete review of matters and is not intended to provide any legal advice on the issues raised. Unless otherwise stated, it does not comprise the formal position of Historic England on these matters.

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Abbreviations

- DEFRA: The [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#)
- DESNZ: The [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero](#)
- DfT: The [Department for Transport](#)
- MHCLG: The [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)
- NPPF: The [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- NSIPs: [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects](#)
- PPG: [Planning Practice Guidance](#)

Legislation and Matters Arising

This section provides a summary of updates to legislation in the last month. Further information on what emerging legislation covers can be found in [Appendix I](#).

- **Holocaust Memorial Act:** On 22 January, Royal Assent was given to the [Holocaust Memorial Act 2026](#), a key step in the development of a national Holocaust Memorial, addressing previous legislation that prevented development in Victoria Tower Gardens.
- **English Devolution Bill:** The House of Lords committee stage for the [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#) commenced on 20 January. Proposed amendments include:
 - To make explicit reference in the bill to ‘the arts, creative industries, cultural services and heritage’ as an area of competence for strategic authorities ([English Devolution Bill amendment six, withdrawn](#)).
 - To require Mayoral Combined Authorities to prepare multi-year local cultural ecosystem plans, including mapping cultural infrastructure such as heritage assets ([English Devolution Bill, amendment 147, not yet discussed](#)).
- **NSIPs:** The [Infrastructure Planning \(Business or Commercial Projects\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2026](#) came into force on 8 January, enabling data centres to be considered under the NSIP regime.

Parliamentary Committees

This section provides a summary of updates to [parliamentary inquiries](#) in the last month.

- **Protecting Built Heritage:** [Historic England gave oral evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee Protecting Built Heritage Inquiry](#). The inquiry examines a range of issues and opportunities around skills, funding and regulations. A [summary of the key points raised in the Historic England evidence to the Protecting Built Heritage Inquiry](#) was summarised in a follow-up letter (13 January) recommending focus on:
 - Recognising the **potential of heritage** and its relevance in helping to address societal challenges and political priorities.
 - Addressing **resilience in the heritage sector**, including financial resilience and sustainability.
 - Reversing the decline in conservation officer and planner resource, to address **local authority capacity and capability**.

- In the context of this evidence, the [Director General of Historic Houses submitted a letter to the Built Heritage Inquiry on the topic of Listed Building Consent Orders](#).
- **New Towns:** the [Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee](#) held a [one-off oral evidence session on New Towns](#) with Sir Michael Lyons, chair of the New Towns Taskforce, and Matthew Pennycook, Minister for Planning.
- **Developer Contributions:** the [government has released a response to the Public Accounts Committee Improving Local Areas through Developer Funding inquiry report](#), which looks at the use of mechanisms such as s.106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy for area-based improvement.

Policy and Guidance

This section provides a summary of updates to government planning policy in the last month, including for example the NPPF and PPG.

- **Design and Placemaking:** MHCLG has released a [consultation on the Design and Placemaking Planning Practise Guidance](#) (closes 10 March), consolidating and revising the National Design Guide, National Model Design Code and existing guidance.

Infrastructure Planning

- **National Policy Statements:** On 6 January, DESNZ published three updated national policy statements: [EN-1 Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy](#), [EN-3 National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure](#) and [EN-5 National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure](#).

Natural Environment

- **Environmental Delivery Plans:** In December, [Natural England published a notification to DEFRA of its intention to prepare the first set of environmental delivery plans](#). EDPs set strategic action to address the impact of development on protected sites or species. They are funded by the Nature Restoration Levy on developers, paid into the Nature Restoration Fund. More information can be found in the [Implementing the Nature Restoration Fund policy paper](#).
- **Water:** In January, DEFRA published the [‘A New Vision for Water’ White Paper](#). This includes intention to **rationalise planning for water**, bringing it in closer alignment with planning for housing and other key infrastructure. Measures include:

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- Amalgamating the c.20 current plans and processes that water companies must publish into **two planning frameworks (water supply and water environment)** with a **dedicated water planning function** at regional level.
- Addressing the role of water and sewerage companies as **consultees for plan and decision-making**.
- A review of **permitted development rights for water companies** and their own infrastructure, alongside **potential easements for smaller-scale development**.
- Updates to water resources and wastewater **National Policy Statements**.

Energy Efficiency

- **Warm Homes Plan:** In January, DESNZ published the [Warm Homes Plan](#), a strategy for ‘cutting energy bills and upgrading homes’. This includes **supporting consumers with installing measures such as heat pumps**. In this context, the plan identifies a commitment to **consulting on further changes to the air source heat pump permitted development rights** and, where permission is needed (e.g. listed buildings), exploring ‘how planning policy and guidance can clarify expectations’.

Other

- **Wellbeing:** [Historic England has published a new Wellbeing and Heritage Strategy 2025-2030](#), setting out how it wants to work in partnership with local authorities, the health and social sector and local people to **use heritage to build happier and healthier communities**. This was published alongside a [joint Historic England and University of Glasgow report which reveals local historic places are vital for mental health](#).
- **Culture Funding:** [DCMS announced £1.5 billion for investment in cultural organisations over the next five years](#). This includes:
 - £75 million additional funding for the **Heritage at Risk Capital Fund**.
 - £92 million for a new **Places of Worship Renewal Fund**, replacing the £23 million Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. [DCMS has also published an evaluation of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme](#).
 - £160 million for local and regional museums through the **Museum Estates Development Fund**.
 - £46 million for the **Heritage Revival Fund**, run by the Architectural Heritage Fund.

Historic England Consultations

This section outlines responses made by Historic England to consultations in the last month. Past [Historic England consultation responses](#) are available online.

- **Statutory Consultee Review:** [Historic England has issued a response to the Statutory Consultee Review](#). The consultation considers measures including changes to when Historic England are consulted, and the role of the Theatres Trust and Gardens Trust.
- **Electric Vehicle Charging:** [Historic England submitted a response to a DfT consultation on permitted development rights for Electric Vehicle charging](#), including introducing a right for cross-pavement solutions for those without off-street parking.

Historic England Advice

All [Historic England planning advice](#) is available on our website, and [Appendix II](#) includes a list of all Good Practice Advice Notes (GPAs) and Historic England Advice Notes (HEANs).

- **Commercial Renewable Energy:** Historic England has published an [updated webpage on commercial renewable energy planning and the historic environment](#).

Calendar

February

26 February – Government [call for evidence on reforms to planning rules for digital infrastructure](#) closes.

March

10 March – Government [consultation on a revised National Planning Policy Framework](#) closes.

10 March – Government [consultation on the Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance](#) closes.

Planning Bulletin Notifications

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Appendix I: Emerging Legislation

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

The government states that the [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#) falls under three broad sections:

- **Devolution:** describing devolution structures, outlining and expanding powers for mayors and authorities through the new Devolution Framework and explaining routes to devolution for places that do not have it.
- **Local government:** ensuring the process for local government reorganisation supports the ambition in the [English Devolution White Paper](#), outlining changes to local authority governance, reforming accountability and introducing effective neighbourhood governance structures to amplify local voices.
- **Communities:** giving more power to local communities to purchase Assets of Community Value (ACV) and making reforms to commercial leases.
- More information can be found in the following:
 - [Explanatory notes to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#).
 - [Guidance on the purpose of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#).
 - [Devolution Framework Explainers, setting out the statutory functions of Strategic Authorities](#).
 - [House of Commons Library Research briefing on the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#).
 - [House of Commons Library Research Briefing on Progress of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(20 November\)](#).

Appendix II: Historic England Planning Advice

All [Historic England planning advice](#) is available on our website. Below is a list of all Good Practice Advice notes (GPAs) and Historic England Advice Notes (HEANs). These are amended from time to time to reflect changes in legislation, policy, case law interpretation etc.

Good Practice Advice Notes (GPAs)

The GPAs provide information on good practice, particularly looking at the principles of how national planning policy and guidance can be applied. They are the result of collaborative working with the heritage and property sectors in the [Historic Environment Forum](#), and have been prepared following public consultation:

- [GPA1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans \(March 2015\)](#)
- [GPA2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment \(March 2015\)](#)
- [GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets \(December 2017\)](#)
- [GPA4: Enabling Development and Heritage Assets \(June 2020\)](#)

Historic England Advice Notes (HEANs)

The HEANs include detailed, practical advice on how to implement national planning policy and guidance. They have been prepared by Historic England following public consultation:

- [HEAN 1: Conservation Areas: Designation, Appraisal and Review \(Second Edition\) \(February 2019\)](#)
- [HEAN 2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets \(December 2025\)](#)
- [HEAN 3: The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans \(October 2015\)](#)
- [HEAN 4: Tall Buildings \(Second Edition\) \(March 2022\)](#)
- [HEAN 5: Setting up a Listed Building Heritage Partnership Agreement \(December 2025\)](#)
- [HEAN 6: Drawing up a Local Listed Building Consent Order \(November 2015\)](#)
- [HEAN 7: Local Heritage Listing \(Second edition\) \(January 2021\)](#)
- [HEAN 8: Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment \(December 2016\)](#)
- [HEAN 9: The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings \(October 2017\)](#)
- [HEAN 10: Listed Buildings and Curtilage \(June 2025\)](#)
- [HEAN 11: Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment \(Second Edition\) \(April 2022\)](#)



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- [HEAN 12: Statements of Heritage Significance \(October 2019\)](#)
- [HEAN 13: Minerals Extraction and Archaeology \(January 2020\)](#)
- HEAN 14 has been superseded by HEAN 18 and has been withdrawn
- [HEAN 15: Commercial Renewable Energy Development and the Historic Environment \(February 2021\)](#)
- [HEAN 16: Listed Building Consent \(June 2021\)](#)
- [HEAN 17: Planning and Archaeology \(November 2022\)](#)
- [HEAN 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency \(July 2024\)](#)