

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment

RESEARCH



Welcome...

...to the Winter issue of Research magazine.

This issue reports on a range of recent place-based research projects, situating them in the context of [Historic England's 2018 Places Strategy](#), which emphasises the important role played by research in successful place-making, and in the continuing development, deployment and evaluation of characterisation and Historic Area Assessment approaches .

Research carried out by our own architectural and archaeological investigators and commissioned by Historic England is an integral part of our input to Heritage Action Zones (HAZs), which involve working with local partners to harness the potential of heritage to promote sustainable growth in places facing a range of pressures. Johanna Roethe and Kaija-Luisa Kurik describe how our research in central Rochdale is enhancing the understanding of the special character of the area and laying the foundations for the grant-aiding of repairs to key buildings. Elsecar, encompassing an industrial landscape near Barnsley in Yorkshire, is a three-year HAZ approaching completion. As Dave Went explains, the research project there has provided a really powerful vehicle for community engagement. It's a great example of how research can help communities discover more about their heritage and rejuvenate pride in their local place.

Recently Historic England was awarded £92m by Government to help revitalise often struggling historic high streets around England as part of its High Streets Heritage Action Zones initiative, and the programme will start from 1st April 2020. Owain Lloyd-James, Aimee Henderson and Rebecca Lane describe the context and the role that research is likely to play in the High Street HAZs and discuss our demonstrator project in Coventry.

As a world city London is in many ways a special case requiring a Greater London-wide approach and an agreed set of terms to describe historic character. Dave Hooley talks about the work we are doing to support the Greater London Authority in this sphere.

Lastly, we're involved in a number projects where there is a need for research to tease out the complex character of places such as Digbeth and Deritend in Birmingham in advance of development as Pete Boland and his co-authors explain. This encompasses the rural as well as the urban and Neil Redfern highlights the novel approach we are taking to the remarkable landscape that is the Yorkshire Wolds where we are working in tandem with local history and arts groups to build consensus around what the heritage of the area means to each of us and how it can be sustained for the future.

Claudia Kenyatta **Ian Morrison**
Director of Regions. *Director of Policy & Evidence.*

Front cover image: The Strand, Derby City Centre, Derbyshire. © Historic England Archive, Patricia Payne, DP187421

We are the **public body** that **helps people**
care for, enjoy and **celebrate**

England's **spectacular**
historic environment

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RESEARCH magazine

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Historic England, research and place: the past and the future

Informing the understanding, management
and enjoyment of England's historic places.



Architectural investigation at Ely. © Historic England Archive, Patrica Payne, DP172317.

Historic England and its predecessor organisations have been investigating and researching England's historic places for many years. This collective research effort has informed decisions about the protection and management of places as varied as Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, Boston in Lincolnshire and Berwick-upon-Tweed. The research has helped create effective local partnerships and shaped how communities and local authorities perceive and value their historic places.

Strategic programmes

Our focus on place making and our major national programmes such as [Heritage Action Zones \(HAZ\)](#), High Street Heritage Action Zones (High Street HAZ) and regional priority places all require a targeted research input that responds to the specific needs of the place and local partners. As stated in our Places Strategy published in 2018 what research reveals 'about a place's significance is often catalytic to the establishment of a shared vision and informs its realisation'.

Places come in all shapes and sizes and while we focus much staff resource and research grant funding on particular landscapes and places we also research individual heritage assets at risk, and carry out a small number of strategic thematic studies of threatened and little understood building and place types, e.g. 20th-century public houses, 20th-century new towns, and a national study of the development of suburbs which is nearing completion. These strategic national projects help inform our listing programmes and provide

an all-important national context for work in particular places.

In 2017 Historic England published its [Research Agenda](#) which sets out what we see as the main research priorities for the heritage sector. Place-based research permeates many of the nine priority themes identified in the document and the topics and research questions below each, but it is particularly relevant to the #Understand theme. It was always intended that the Research Agenda would in effect operate as a vehicle for establishing research collaborations with universities and other organisations.

Historic England became an Independent Research Organisation (IRO) in 2017. IROs are recognised by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as possessing the in-house capacity to carry out research that substantially extends and enhances the national research base, and are able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes. They are also able to apply to the Research Councils for funding.

In the light of this, establishing productive partnerships with Higher Education Institutions and Independent Research Organisations is a strategic priority for us and there is great potential to bring together our applied heritage research with that being undertaken by others. We see such research collaborations adding real value alongside our own contributions to place making programmes such as the High Street HAZ. >>

As stated in our Places Strategy published in 2018 what research reveals 'about a place's significance is often catalytic to the establishment of a shared vision and informs its realisation'.

Our research approaches

Over the last two decades we have developed a range of approaches to assessing and characterising historic places, including broader brush characterisation programmes, such as [Historic Landscape Characterisation](#) and more urban focused and finer-grained approaches of the kind explained by Dave Hooley on p.48. Sitting below these in this suite of approaches to understanding place, and finer-grained still, is that known as Historic Area Assessment (HAA). This is used to assess the historical development and character of a defined area usually a suburb, town or city centre. It combines an analysis of fabric evidence with map regression and documentary research to highlight particular character areas or buildings of interest and also parts of places

that are of more limited heritage value. Core elements of the approach are incorporated in advice on undertaking Conservation Area appraisals. Different combinations of the above approaches can be used depending on the nature and size of the place, research need and the intended application.

The HAA approach, which was deployed in many of the projects described in this issue, was developed in the course of our own internal place-based research projects and has been tested in a variety of urban contexts as well as in rural or mixed landscapes such as Alston Moor in Cumbria and the Hoo Peninsula in Kent.

Guidance on the approach was produced by English Heritage in 2010 and revised

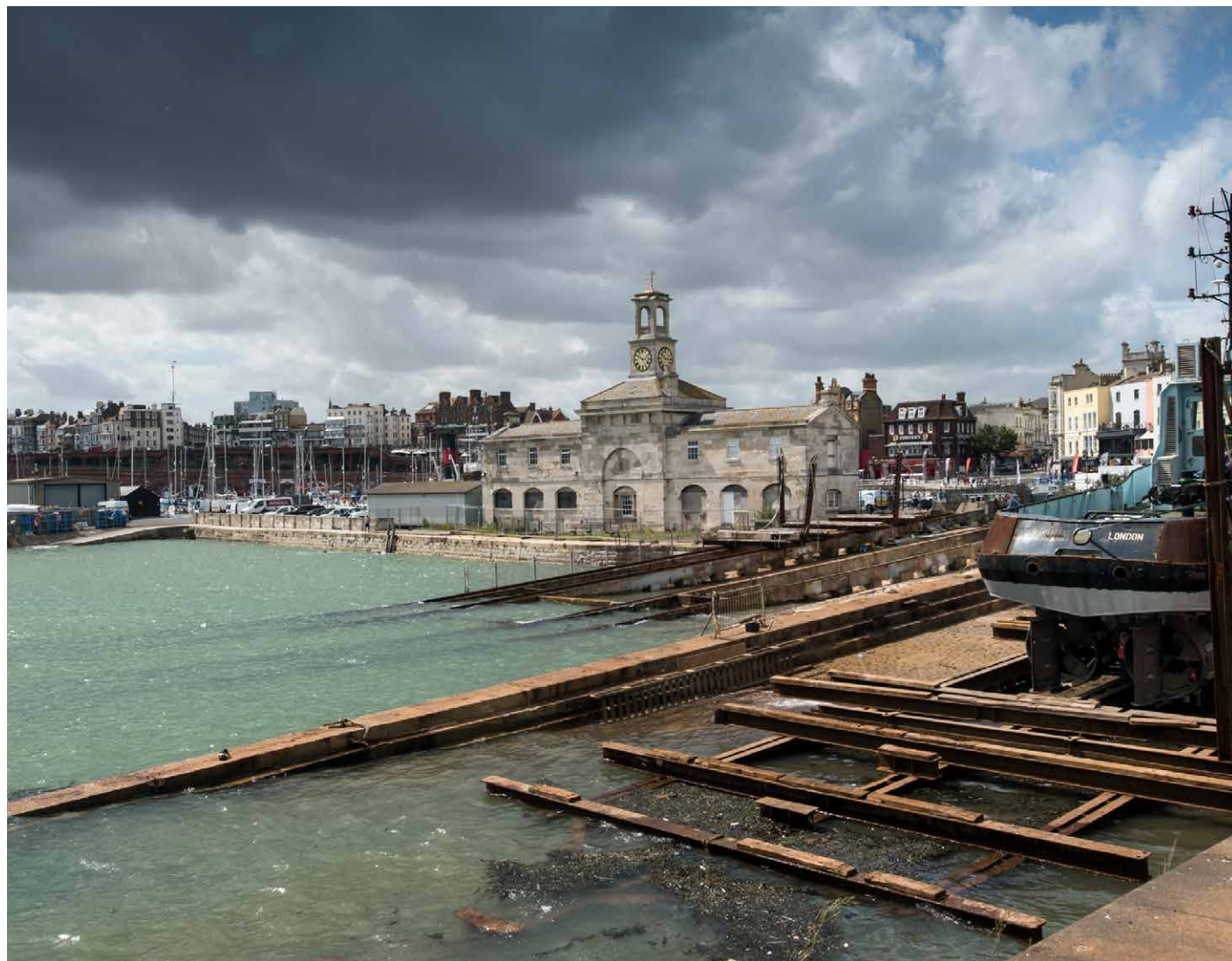
by [Historic England in 2017](#). It draws on the approach adopted in its sister document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (first published 2006 and revised in 2016) by advocating a series of levels of assessment to help those specifying the HAA and to ensure it is tailored to the research need, the nature of the place and the resources available.

The main outputs of HAAs tend to be research reports published in our online [Research Reports Series](#) or small accessible books, collectively published as the [Informed Conservation Series](#) by Historic England. 34 titles have been published in the series to date and more will emerge from our research in Heritage

Action Zones. A book on the Ramsgate HAZ is the next one to be published.

The available qualitative evidence points to these books having a significant impact in terms of enhancing knowledge, building partnerships and in helping to shape local heritage strategies. A proto-HAA and research project carried out on Swindon's railway works and estate and published in the mid-1990s has been used by the local authority on a regular basis since that time to underpin the provision of conservation advice. The Swindon Railway Village and associated former GWR buildings (see image below) are now the focus of a Heritage Action Zone, and the benefit of having the detailed research 'in the bank' is clear. >>

Below left: Ramsgate Harbour with the Clock House.
© Historic England Archive, Chris Redgrave, DP084728.



Below right: Houses on Exeter Street, Swindon Railway Village. © Historic England, Steven Baker, DP263281



Right: Swindon's Railway Village becomes a Heritage Action Zone. © Historic England Archive, Damian Grady, 29615/042.



Very often the true impact of place-based research projects takes a long time to surface so there is a need for a long view in the process and to use this looking back to identify more effective evaluation measures for the future.

Evaluating value and impact

As part of our drive to ensure that everything we do has clear public benefit we are looking to improve the way we evaluate the impact of research projects. Consequently, we have commissioned LUC consultancy to carry out a review of our urban characterisation programmes, and further work may be required to assess the extent to which characterisation has influenced local planning policies. We also need to review the effectiveness of our HAA projects and their output. Very often the true impact of place-based research projects takes a long time to surface so there is a need for a long view in the process and to use this looking back to identify more effective evaluation measures for the future.

Lastly, the research resulting from place based characterisation and HAA projects provide the new understanding that fosters community engagement, wellbeing and wider social capital, as the research in the Elsecar HAZ demonstrates so clearly with 1300 members taking part in the research and activities associated with it and many more indirectly involved. Evaluation of place-based research needs to capture this wider impact beyond the significance of the bricks and mortar and the influence on local planning policy. All High Street HAZ projects are required to produce community engagement plans which will be fully integrated with the other parts of the project and will result in a range of sustainable community engagement



outcomes. The HAZ and High Street HAZ programmes offer us an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate the value of research and investigation to place making, and to develop new approaches. We are incredibly excited about it ■

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Above right: Market Place, Norwich, Norfolk. © Historic England Archive, Steve Cole, DP084728



Uncovering Digbeth

New research highlights the threatened special character of an inner-city area in Birmingham.

Cool, funky and beautiful, as well as dusty and noisy, Digbeth is one of Britain's most varied, dynamic and colourful inner-city areas. It is located just to the south-east of the sleek Bullring shopping centre but this is a place with a very different character, full of contrasts. It contains Birmingham's oldest building as well as the large industrial complexes of household names such as Typhoo tea and Bird's custard. The urban landscape is strikingly multi-layered, with canals crossing the river Rea and viaducts looming over roads. Former industrial buildings have been creatively repurposed or transformed into colourful canvases by graffiti and street artists. The area is greatly loved by many, who are attracted by its diverse character. >>

Left: Digbeth's overlapping routes of railway, canals, river and streets, with Fazeley Street to the right. © Historic England Archive, Damian Grady, 33191_002

Masterplanning for Digbeth

Arising from potential development pressure connected to the arrival of the High Speed 2 (HS2) Terminus in the Curzon Street area of Birmingham, the City Council produced an initial masterplan and committed to the undertaking of a conservation area review. As part of the latter, revised character appraisals and management plans are being prepared for the Digbeth/Deritend and Warwick Bar conservation areas. The City Council also commissioned a further, more detailed Digbeth Masterplan.

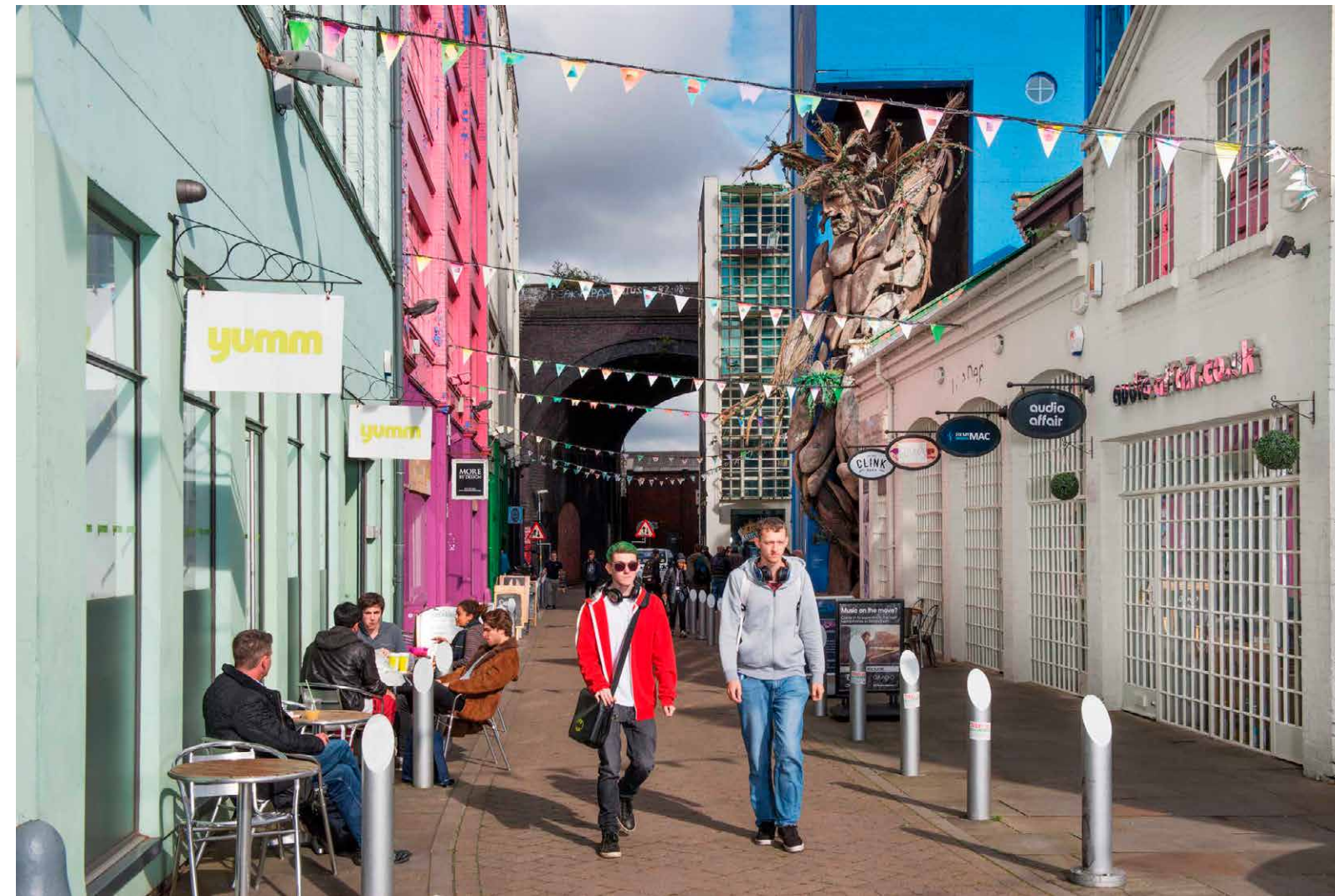
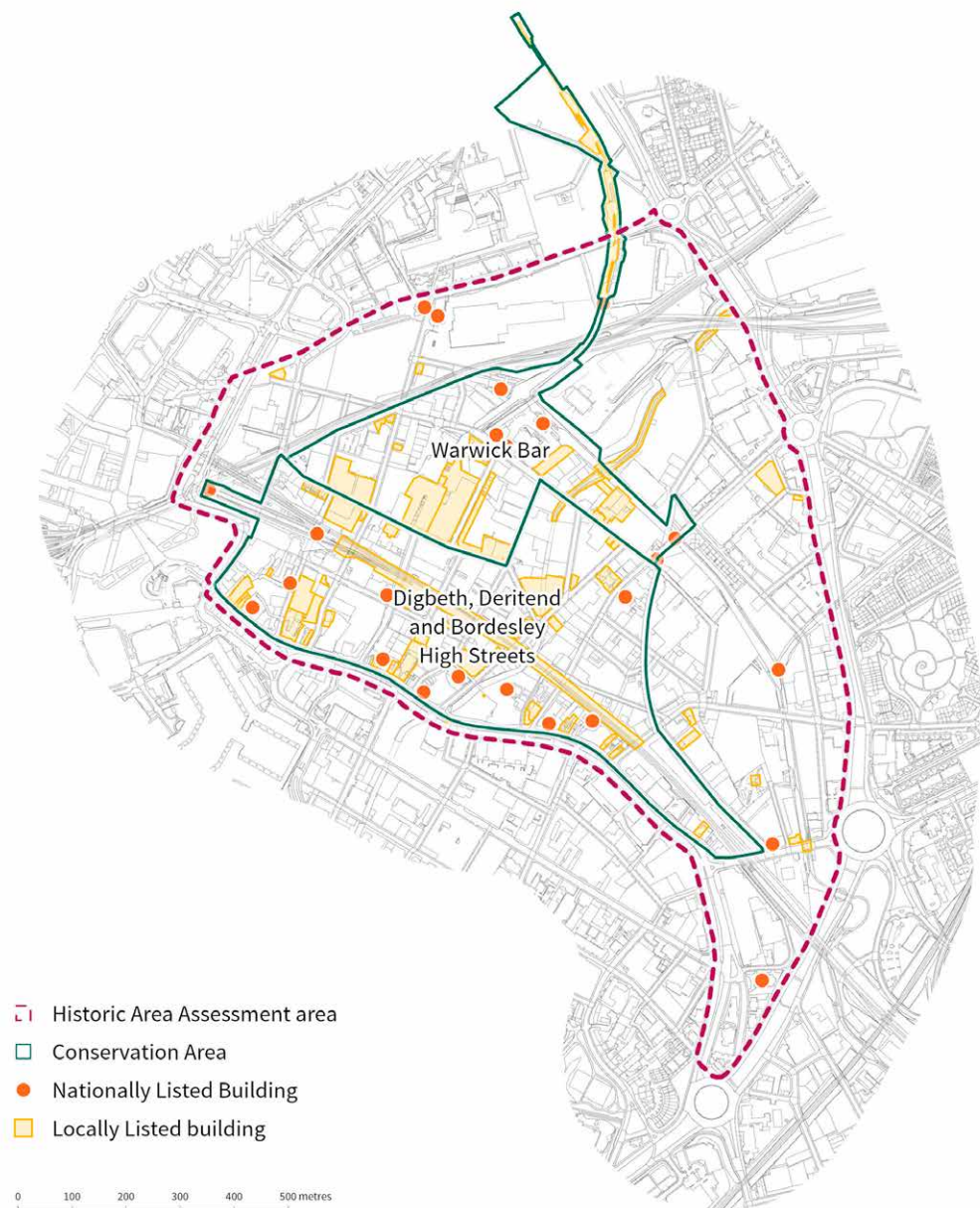
In the Regional office of Historic England there were concerns that traditional approaches to the appraisal of historic areas, that tended to assign value based on architecturally polite styles and early date, were unlikely to adequately capture the essential nature of Digbeth. The perception was rather that the special interest here was derived from very different and quite modest components all intertwined with a vibrant range of creative uses that in themselves helped to define the 'place'. Architectural Investigation staff were, therefore, commissioned to produce a Historic Area Assessment and this has

greatly assisted in the overall masterplanning process by emphasising that, whilst Digbeth's urban fabric may be architecturally modest and quite late in date, it is nevertheless highly significant in the context of the city as a whole, as an area which has retained some continuity of industrial use.

More recently, the principal landowners in Digbeth (the Gooch Estate, Oval Real Estate and Homes England) commissioned their own masterplan called 'Digbeth Vision'. This has been informed by the Historic Area Assessment and a stakeholder meeting drawn, for the

first time, from local creative businesses, academics and residents which has given a fresh perspective. >>

the special interest here was derived from very different and quite modest components all intertwined with a vibrant range of creative uses that in themselves helped to define the 'place'



Left: Location map showing the boundaries of the Historic Area Assessment and relevant designations (derived from OS mapping © Crown copyright [and database rights] 2020 OS 100024900; additional information derived from Birmingham HER)

Above: Gibb Street, the main route through the Custard factory complex, a successful example of the reuse of historic buildings as studios, shops and workshops. © Historic England, James O Davies, DP195109



Above: The late 15th-century guildhall on Digbeth High Street. © Historic England Archive, James O Davies, DP195933

What makes Digbeth special?

Digbeth's history has been particularly shaped by transport infrastructure, including the river Rea, the main road into Birmingham, the canals, and the railways. During the Middle Ages, Digbeth and its close neighbour Deritend were on one of the main approaches to the medieval settlement, and ideally situated for development, near the river but within close reach of the market place in the Bull Ring. The settlement straddled the approach road, with burgage plots laid out to the north and south. Central Birmingham's only intact medieval building, the former guildhall of the Guild of St John the Baptist, was built in the late 15th century. Like the rest of Birmingham, the main local industries in the early modern period were related to all aspects

of metalwork, and in 1538 the antiquary John Leland described the approach through Deritend as inhabited by 'smithes and cuttellers'.

Development focused largely on the High Street until the late 18th century, when the arrival of the Digbeth branch of the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal, and the Warwick & Birmingham Canal prompted the development of the surrounding area. A grid of new streets was laid out between the canal routes and the earlier settlement along the High Street, including the main west-east routes of Bordesley Street and Fazeley Street. This phase of development, of which the nightclub Suki10c (the former Spotted Dog pub) is a rare survivor, contained a mixture of domestic and industrial properties. >>

Central Birmingham's only intact medieval building, the former guildhall of the Guild of St John the Baptist, was built in the late 15th century



Top: The 'banana warehouse' (about 1850) and the Warwick & Birmingham Canal (1800). © Historic England, James O Davies, DP195952

Bottom: Suki10c, the former Spotted Dog pub built as a 'brew house' in about 1810. © Historic England, James O Davies, DP219838





Above: Duddeston Viaduct seen from Hack Street. © Historic England, James O Davies, DP195887



Top: The former Typhoo tea packing works by Harry W. Weedon were built in several phases between 1929 and the 1960s. © Historic England, James O Davies, DP195920

Bottom: The former gas retort house of 1909 off Adderley Street. © Historic England, James O Davies, DP195945

...three viaducts dominate the streetscape and vistas of Digbeth. One of them, now known as Duddeston Viaduct, was never actually used and remains unfinished to this day

The railways arrived in the mid-19th century and added another layer of transport infrastructure, including the Grade I-listed Curzon Street Station of 1838, as well as three viaducts which dominate the streetscape and vistas of Digbeth. One of them, now known as Duddeston Viaduct, was never

actually used and remains unfinished to this day. The presence of the canals and railways brought industry and businesses to the area, including gasworks and warehouses but also later concerns such as the Typhoo tea packing works which in 1925 moved to a site in Bordesley Street with its own canal dock. >>



The post-war development was shaped by severe bomb damage and the subsequent ‘zoning’ of the area for industrial uses, which saw the demolition of housing in the area and the displacement of the local population. The units built in the post-war period were generally associated with Birmingham’s metal trades, but their large open-plan spaces have proved ideal as flexible space for newer industries. Today, many historic buildings have found new uses; for example, a Victorian Unitarian chapel in Fazeley Street and an adjacent light industrial unit are now Fazeley Studios, home to numerous digital and creative businesses. Other buildings provide a home for Digbeth’s fast-changing music and art scene, and are decorated with often startling street art and graffiti.

Much of the area’s appeal is based on its unique character, with its mixture of canals, viaducts, and

19th and 20th-century industrial buildings, which provide a distinctive home for cultural and creative activity. Digbeth’s special character as a vibrant inner-city area which yet is on the fringe, with a significant industrial heritage, is partly recognised in the existing designation of two conservation areas. However, the character of the area is not only determined by the built environment but also to a large degree by the people who live and work here and their activities. Activities vary from street to street and between day and night-time, including those by residents, workers, businesses, consumers, people who come here for entertainment, those who explore the area or are simply passing through. Many people are keen to ensure that this varied and lively character, which has deep historic roots, survives the potentially substantial changes, including new residential developments, that HS2 may bring in its wake.



Above: The former Argyle Works in Great Barr Street, an unlisted factory built between 1937 and 1952, has been used as a performance venue by Birmingham Opera. © Historic England, James O Davies, DP196448

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The impact of our research

Our research made the case for placing Digbeth’s special interest at the centre of the masterplanning exercises. It will also feed into the revision of the conservation area appraisals, which the City Council proposes to adopt as supplementary planning guidance. As the area evolves, Historic England’s assessment and on-going advice will make the case for the history and character of Digbeth which is already such a vital part of the cultural and social life of the area and which will be an important asset for any future developments in the area ■



Above: A metalworker in one of Digbeth’s workshops. © Historic England, James O Davies, DP219874

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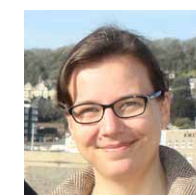
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Weston-super-Mare and Rochdale. She is one of the authors of the recent book on Weston-super-Mare in the *Informed Conservation* series.

Further information

Bayer, O, Herring, P, Lane, R and Roethe, J 2018
Digbeth and Deritend, Birmingham, West Midlands: Outline Historic Area Assessment. Historic England Research Report Series 031-2018

Community engagement in the Elsecar Heritage Action Zone

Working with and for the community in a former South Yorkshire mining village.



The grand façade of the Miners' Lodging House (listed grade II) built by the 5th Earl c 1853, Fitzwilliam Street, Elsecar. © Historic England Archive, Alun Bull, DP175862



Elsecar's schoolchildren gathered at the launch of the HAZ in 2017 © Scott Bairstow (all permissions secured)

The former mining village of Elsecar in South Yorkshire was one of the first ten places to be awarded Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) status by Historic England in 2017. The project was formed as a partnership between Historic England and Barnsley Metropolitan District Council, and its aim was to focus expert advice, research and grant aid on the task of safeguarding the village's industrial heritage, whilst developing opportunities to maximise its potential for economic growth and the greater well-being of the local community. A Historic Area Assessment of the entire village lay at the heart of Historic England's research project, informed by a number of specific archaeological investigations all aimed at

extending and sharing our knowledge of Elsecar's heritage.

The Industrial 'Estate Village'

Elsecar's heritage is very significant indeed, both at the local and national level. The village lies less than a mile from the great country house of Wentworth Woodhouse, whose owners, notably the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham and the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, took a direct interest in the development of local industries on their estates, including a succession of coal mines and two major ironworks at Elsecar.

Throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries this unusual level of aristocratic patronage saw Elsecar developed as a unique variant of the traditional estate village.

Devised to serve industrial rather than agricultural needs, it stands apart from the rural villages created by many of the Fitzwilliam's aristocratic contemporaries. Indeed, as a means to showcase the Earls' enlightened political views and religious principles, it had more in common with the emerging 'model' industrial villages – such as New Lanark, and later Saltaire and Bourneville – whose proprietors came from lower social positions and were often motivated by non-conformist convictions. This aristocratic patronage is clearly demonstrated in the architecture chosen for the purpose-built workers' housing and the Central Workshops, built at the heart of the village to consolidate all the services needed by the estate's mines. >>

Nearby stands the only Newcomen engine in the world remaining within its original engine house

The workshops, together with the rolling mill of the adjacent Elsecar Ironworks (which produced plate metal for the world's first ironclad warship, HMS Warrior), now house the Elsecar Heritage Centre.

Nearby stands the only Newcomen engine in the world remaining within its original engine house, and beside that runs a restored section of the South Yorkshire Railway, the only Heritage

Railway in South Yorkshire, whose volunteers use a former iron-casting house of the Elsecar ironworks as a repair shop for its steam locomotives. The engine house is a recently revised scheduled monument. The workshops, the principal examples of workers' housing and institutions provided by the Fitzwilliams are listed, but all of these designations have been subject to review as a consequence of the new research.

The conservation area which covers the core of the village is similarly due for reappraisal.

Elsecar's decline

The two ironworks, Elsecar and Milton, closed in the 1880s, and from that time onward the village's fortunes were inextricably bound to the sole pursuit of coal, latterly focused on Elsecar Main Colliery. Nationalisation after the Second World War stripped away the

Elsecar's unique and valuable past plays a central, dynamic and successful role in its future

association between the village and Wentworth Woodhouse, but the greatest change came with the closure of Elsecar Main in 1983. Tremendous local efforts in the 1990s helped to preserve Elsecar's proud industrial heritage and create a viable visitor attraction, but profound effects of the collapse of the mining industry here, as in many former mining communities, still resonate in terms of low employment, limited local services

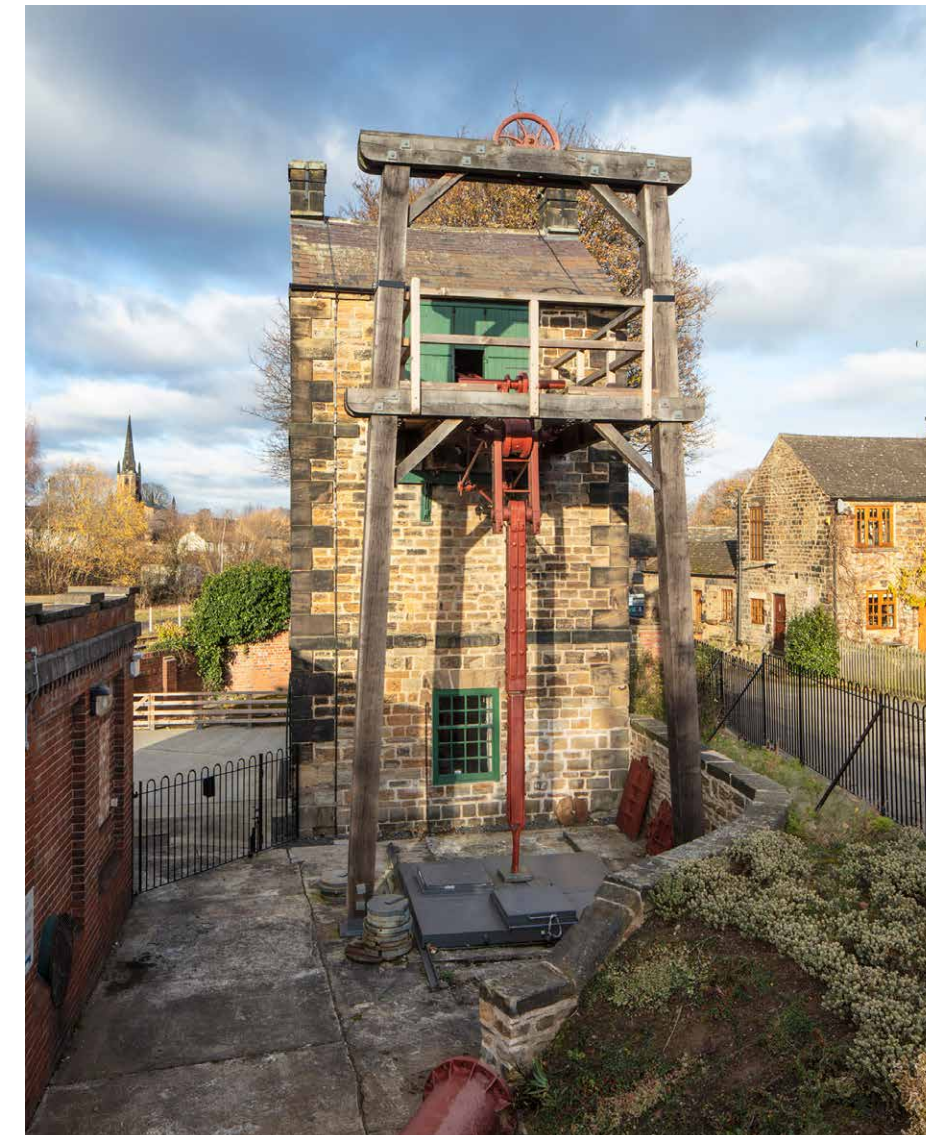
and personal expectations, and areas of deprivation.

The HAZ programme was developed to help tackle this situation by ensuring that an appreciation of Elsecar's unique and valuable past plays a central, dynamic and successful role in its future. This has been a vital step in a process that began with the conservation of the Newcomen Engine in 2014, with the support

of Historic England. One crucial aim has been to bring the local community with us in this venture, which has been done in close partnership with Barnsley Council's Museum Service, who run the Elsecar Heritage Centre and are assisting community discussions on future development plans for the village. >>



Above: Elsecar's Heritage Railway occupies the site of the former ironworks. Note the casting house in the distance and the rolling mill to the right. © Historic England Archive, Alun Bull, DP175855



Left: The Newcomen engine, installed to pump water from Elsecar's 'New' Colliery in 1795, remained in operation until 1923. The mechanism was brought back into operation (although no longer steam-powered) with assistance from English Heritage in 2014. The restored engine and the house are together designated as a scheduled monument. © Historic England

Community engagement has been extensive and highly varied throughout the three-year duration of the HAZ

Engaging with Elsecar

Community engagement has been extensive and highly varied throughout the three-year duration of the HAZ. Public events to explain the scope of the HAZ and showcase the results of various investigations attracted over 500 local people in the first year and nearly 800 in the second, and the messages have reached many more through local radio, newspaper and social media coverage facilitated by Barnsley Museums. Among the more innovative events were

guided walks conducted in twilight and darkness which, although not without a few logistical problems, proved to be a highly evocative way of explaining recent discoveries by HE's research staff and others, and of re-imagining areas of industrial activity that have been swept away and largely forgotten.

Our research teams were frequently to be found across Elsecar in the first and second years of the project, investigating the evolution of the village and significance of

its industrial legacy. This brought our specialists into regular contact with residents and local historians who were curious to know what we were about, and keen to share their memories and knowledge. Specific 'Making History' events organised by Barnsley Museums delved further into local people's memories and helped us to better understand how certain areas and workplaces functioned in the near past. These conversations, as well as more formal consultations with local historians, have informed

The work of our geophysical survey team was followed avidly in the field by large parties of children from the local schools

the content of HE's forthcoming Historic Area Assessment report, which is important as the report is intended to root Elsecar's future development in an understanding of its historic significance, and that significance must embody a wide spectrum of values reflecting the ways in which local people and visitors experience Elsecar's heritage. These conversations have also provided a wealth of engaging stories for a future Elsecar guide book.

Digging deeper

Some of the most rewarding areas of community engagement led directly from our historical research. In the summer of 2017 the study of historic maps and records was followed up by a programme of geophysical surveys in search of evidence for apparently lost areas of industrial activity.

The work of our geophysical survey team – involving ground penetrating radar (GPR) and other techniques - was followed

avidly in the field by large parties of children from the local schools, and they were even more closely involved when we decided to probe the depths of the original 18th-century canal basin, which was buried beneath railway sidings around 1870. This provided 50 or so local children (and many of their parents) with a taste of the excitement of archaeological discovery, and inspired numerous imaginative classroom activities about what it was like to live and work in the Elsecar of the past. >>



Left: Historic England deploying Ground Penetrating Radar in the Newcomen engine boiler yard in 2017. © Barnsley Museums.



Right: Children from Elsecar School learning about coring on the old canal basin with Reading University's Geoarchaeological team. © Barnsley Museums (all permissions secured)



Above: Community excavation at Milton Ironworks 2018. © Barnsley Museums (all permissions secured)

Taking things one step further, our investigations helped to pinpoint areas suitable for community excavations in the summers of 2018 and 2019. The first, run by Barnsley Museums and ArcHeritage Ltd with support from the 'Wentworth and Elsecar Great Place' project, looked at the site of the former Milton Ironworks, built by Walkers of Rotherham in 1795 and famous for the manufacture of iron bridges, among many other things. Long after its demolition the area was landscaped for playing fields which left few visible hints of its former existence. The excavations found rare evidence for an early calcining (ore-roasting) kiln but that was not the only success.

Of equal importance, 100 members of the community volunteered to take part in the excavation, which was assisted by 55 school children

from three different local schools and visited by over 360 people over the two week period. The 2019 dig looked at the site of the Newcomen engine's boilers: a much smaller area which nonetheless involved 125 young people, engaged 40 volunteers in the excavation process, worked with 5 local artists (including music, drawing, textiles and ceramics) and attracted over 350 visitors over an 11-day period.

The success of community engagement at Elsecar has benefitted massively from the curiosity, knowledge, enthusiasm and pride of its residents, as well as the steps that the HAZ partners have taken to build local interest. Partnership working with Barnsley Council, further collaboration with local schools, university and commercial archaeologists, and support from

members of local heritage societies such as the Friends of Hemingfield Colliery and the Elsecar Heritage Railway (all largely orchestrated by the HAZ Project Officer), has proved to be utterly invaluable: each contribution multiplying the efforts of the others to extend the project's reach both locally and further afield.

In all over 2000 local people have attended HAZ events, over 200 local volunteers have been directly involved in front-line research, and a further 1000 young people from nearby Barnsley and Rotherham have been able to engage in heritage-led activities. These figures speak volumes about the success of the community engagement and close partnership work that has been at the heart of this project. What the HAZ has done is to provide the impetus to

The success of community engagement at Elsecar has benefitted massively from the curiosity, knowledge, enthusiasm and pride of its residents

encourage and focus local interest around new research, the improved understanding of the village and its heritage, and the creation of future development plans for Elsecar. Long-term success depends on the value that heritage professionals and local people together place on the historic environment arising from their different perspectives. Protection is not just the result of formal legal instruments but it is achieved through the understanding and appreciation of everyone with a stake in the future of the place. In this regard the HAZ project has helped to ensure that Elsecar's unique and important heritage is safeguarded for, and by, its community for years to come ■

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Thanks to Dr Tegwen Roberts, Heritage Action Zone Officer, Barnsley Museums, for advice in compiling this article.

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He joined English Heritage in 1993, working first for the

Monuments Protection Programme and later the Characterisation team, before joining the Research Department in 2007. His particular interests are Roman archaeology, the early church and medieval landscapes. Current research includes the use of drone photography for localised archaeological survey.

Further information

You can find out more about the Milton excavation project on YouTube, via the 'Great Place' scheme's channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWSVfnk0jaQ>, and about the Newcomen yard excavation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6LiCYipKQ8>

The Historic Area Assessment report encapsulating the research project at Elsecar is due for general release in February 2020 to coincide with events marking the end of the 3-year HAZ. It will be available online at <https://research.historicengland.org.uk/> by searching the keyword 'Elsecar'.

The 'Report on Geophysical Surveys, Elsecar, Barnsley' (Linford N, Lindford P and Payne A, 2017) is already available to download.

Heritage, place-making and co-operative connections in central Rochdale

New research is supporting the Heritage Action Zone initiative.

The 'Co-operative Connections' Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) programme launched in Rochdale, Greater Manchester, in May 2018. A partnership between Historic England Rochdale Borough Council and a variety of local organisations, the HAZ focuses on the historic Drake Street leading from the railway station to the Town Hall and aims to revitalise one of the key gateways to the town centre, encourage investment into historic buildings, and significantly contribute to the town's wider regeneration programme.

The HAZ area includes two conservation areas: the Maclure Road Conservation Area and the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area, which is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. Some of the main challenges affecting the area include high vacancy rates and continuous loss of historic built fabric.



Some of the main challenges affecting the area include high vacancy rates and continuous loss of historic built fabric

The 5-year HAZ programme includes building grants and an ambitious research, engagement and events programme and is framed by an interest in exploring and highlighting Rochdale's co-operative heritage and using co-operative place-making

strategies as a launch-pad for regeneration. Historic England's recent historic area assessment of Rochdale's town centre is one of the first completed projects. This article details some of the findings and puts them in the wider context of the initiative. >>

Above: Annotated aerial photo showing the HAZ area (aerial photo: © Historic England Archive, 33758_003; overlays: © Rochdale Development Agency)



Above: The remains of Water Street Mill, an early steam-powered woollen mill, include an engine house of the 1820s (far left). © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP221867

Central Rochdale's character and significance

Historic England's guidance *Understanding Place* defines an historic area assessment as 'a practical tool to understand and explain the heritage interest of an area'. It is based on archival research and fieldwork, which at Rochdale also included a comprehensive photographic survey. The historic area assessment provides an overview of the history and development of an area, defines its character and significance, and highlights any vulnerabilities. While the HAZ programme in Rochdale focuses on a relatively small and clearly defined area, the historic area assessment covers the wider town centre, including part of Yorkshire Street and the area surrounding the river Roch. Widening the focus slightly was thought to yield more

The historic area assessment provides an overview of the history and development of an area, defines its character and significance, and highlights any vulnerabilities

meaningful results, by placing the HAZ area in its historical context.

First mentioned in Domesday Book, Rochdale started as a medieval market town at the centre of a large parish and developed into a woollen and later cotton town. Trade and industry were dominated by several local families, such as the Vavasour family of merchants.

Between the 1540s and the 1790s, the market place on the north side of the river Roch was the commercial centre. However, in 1798 this was complemented by the basins and wharves of the Rochdale Canal branch, which prompted the development of the glebe land on the south side of the river, with Drake Street as a major new road. >>



Left: Built for the Vavasour family in 1708, 17 Yorkshire Street is one of the oldest buildings in the HAZ area. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP248371

Below: Drake Street leads from the west (top left) past the canal terminus site (centre left) to the town centre (centre right). © Historic England Archive, Damian Grady, 33758_046



Above right: 7-11 Oldham Road of 1864-5 is the earliest surviving purpose-built co-operative branch store in Rochdale. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP235562



The problems of a rapidly expanding industrial society contributed to the opening of the world's first modern co-operative shop in 1844 by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers. They developed the so-called 'Rochdale Principles', which balanced mutuality and self-interest and gave workers the means of feeding their families and taking control of their lives. Purpose-built branch stores and other co-operative societies soon followed.

Centre in 1978 and The Wheatsheaf Centre in 1990) marked the first major changes for the historic high streets. Such changes in retail patterns have particularly affected businesses on Drake Street.

Today, the character of central Rochdale is largely shaped by its historic road pattern, the topography of the river valley, the prevalent building materials (local stone and red brick), and its ginnels (alleyways). Several building types are characteristic for central Rochdale and are of local, and in some cases of national, significance: shops and banks, co-operative buildings, the late-Georgian buildings of the Drake Street area, industrial buildings and workers' housing.

During the Victorian and Edwardian periods, Drake Street and Yorkshire Street developed as the main high streets, connecting the two commercial hubs of the canal terminus and the market. However, in the 20th century, the textile and engineering industries declined, leading to the demolition of many industrial buildings and the in-filling of the canal terminus. The opening of two large shopping centres on the north side of the river (Rochdale Exchange Shopping

The smaller buildings of artisanal industry, including domestic workshops, are particularly rare and vulnerable. These findings and the research captured as part of the historic area assessment will inform the next phases of the HAZ programme. >>

Several building types are characteristic for central Rochdale and are of local, and in some cases of national, significance

Right: The former Union Bank of Manchester of 1906-7. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP221832



Left: The late-Georgian house and workshop at 24 Baron Street are important survivors of the smaller-scale industries. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP235587

Right: A mural by the artist Philth on the west elevation of the former Water Street Mill, whose white cotton bolls refer to the building's and the town's textile history. © Rochdale Development Agency



The HAZ programme

A central aim of the Rochdale HAZ is to revitalise Drake Street by encouraging a greater diversity of uses and using a heritage-led approach to regeneration which is sensitive to context but also innovative and community-led. The historic area assessment is a valuable basis for a programme that enhances and protects heritage assets while supporting the creation of high-quality contemporary space. The success of residential conversions and small businesses taking over vacant properties depends on creating and supporting a sense of place that celebrates local heritage.

The first year of the HAZ programme included a year-long collaboration with Manchester School of Architecture that

culminated in the exhibition 'Rochdale Reimagined' in the Rochdale Central Library and the publication of an accompanying catalogue of the same title. A large-scale mural festival called 'Rochdale Uprising' brought local and international mural artists to the town who worked to a brief created by Rochdale Council in collaboration with the Co-operative Heritage Trust and delivered 12 artworks highlighting Rochdale's unique heritage.

The Council's collaboration with the Co-operative Heritage Trust is also central to a further HAZ project: Opening in early 2020, a Co-operative Enterprise Hub in the former Butterworth Jewellers' building will provide an innovative community space for young people wanting to develop their own co-operative businesses. >>



Above: The former Butterworth's Jewellery shop on Drake Street will be brought back into use as the HAZ's Co-operative Enterprise Hub. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP221858



The first-year building grants programme focuses especially on historic shops in South Parade and the northern part of Drake Street. This aims to link the HAZ area to the river crossing, which was recently the focus of an award-winning restoration project, and the new Riverside cinema and shopping centre development, which will open in 2020. This building frontage and shop front reinstatement scheme will be complemented by public realm works. Additionally, a number of residential conversions of historic buildings are underway in the HAZ area.

The Rochdale HAZ has the potential to deliver lasting benefits for the area

Laying the foundations for further work

The Rochdale HAZ has the potential to deliver lasting benefits for the area by improving the condition of the historic built environment and bringing empty buildings back into use, and thereby changing perceptions of the town centre. The research component is a fundamental part of the early phases of delivering this, by highlighting the area's special character and the significance of its heritage assets, and by providing an evidence base for the future management of the two conservation

areas. Reviews of the national and local designations are currently underway, using the information provided by the historic area assessment. The first outcome of this process is the listing of the historic Rochdale Bridge at Grade II.

While the initial research is a key part of the programme, the collaborative and heritage-led approach of the HAZ will provide many further tangible benefits for the local community over the next few years ■

Above left: The newly-listed Rochdale Bridge has medieval origins but was widened on several occasions. The Victorian town hall is visible beyond. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP221862

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Johanna joined Historic England in 2017 after working in the commercial sector for seven years. She has contributed to several historic area assessments, including for the Heritage Action Zones at Weston-super-Mare and Rochdale. She is one of the authors of the recent book *Weston-super-Mare: the town and its seaside heritage* (Historic England, 2019).

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Kaija-Luisa has been working as the Heritage Action Zone Project Officer in Rochdale Development Agency since 2018. She moved to the role from the Conservation and Design team in Rochdale Borough Council where she contributed to variety of masterplans and conservation area appraisals as well town centre regeneration projects. She is a final year PhD student at the Manchester School of Architecture.

Further information

Roethe, J and Williams, M 2019 *Central Rochdale, Greater Manchester: Historic Area Assessment* ([Historic England Report Series 56/2019](#))

Historic England 2017 *Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments* ([Historic England website](#))

Researching High Streets Heritage Action Zones

How research is adding value to the regeneration of historic high streets.

Whilst use of the term 'high street' can be traced back several centuries, the development of high streets, as we would now recognise them, coincided with more people living in urban areas, and the provision of shops and market stalls serving a wider, and growing, population.

However, as these streets developed they offered more than the opportunity to buy goods and became places where people congregated, seeing shopping as a leisure pursuit (*English Shops and Shopping*, Kathryn A. Morrison, 2003). In the 1960s, cheaper manufacturing processes and the rise of 'disposable culture', meant that retail became increasingly important to what high streets offered the communities they served. It is therefore not surprising that high streets remain defined by their retail offer and the narrative of their 'death' is one that uses evidence of shop closures

(<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/sep/11/retailers-call-for-action-as-high-street-store-closures-soar>) and the fall in retail employment (<https://brc.org.uk/retail-insight-analytics/other-kpis/retail-employment-monitor/reports>). The reality, however, is that these places have always provided their communities with more than this and so preparing their obituary on the back of falling retail is premature.

High Streets as 'experience'

Recent evidence points to successful high streets being places where people enjoy spending time, not just money. See, for example *Making sense of mixed use town centres*, Turley, 2019; *High streets and town centres in 2030*, Housing Communities and Local Government Select Committee, 2019; and *The Deloitte Consumer Review: Reinventing the role of the high street*, 2013). >>

Recent evidence points to successful high streets being places where people enjoy spending time, not just money



Left: High Street Heritage Action Zone. Bedford, Bedfordshire. North end of High Street, Historic England Archive, Patricia Payne, DP261578



Right: Derby City Centre, the Strand, Historic England Archive, Patricia Payne, DP187421

While the failure of a number of significant high street brands has been well reported, not every enterprise is seeing the same level of decline. The success of some stores, in particular those whose activities that cannot be replicated online (barbers, independent coffee shops, etc.) suggest grounds for optimism for those high streets that are able to offer what is being called ‘experiential retail’. This refers to a place providing more than just a location for buying and selling goods. To quote the House of Commons Briefing Paper, *Retail Sector in the UK*:

“...increasingly, what attracts people to the town centre...is no longer just the shops (which have often been substituted by online vendors), but rather the leisure facilities that they can access there, such as cafes, restaurants, cinemas and children’s activities”

Research undertaken on behalf of the Mayor of London in 2017 found that “45% of surveyed users’ primary high street use was non-retail related” and that “High streets are important gathering spaces for marginalised and under-represented groups” https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/high_streets_for_all_report_web_final.pdf. High streets are one of the few places where all people are able to congregate and mix and that makes them incredibly important, not just for local economies, but also for local social cohesion and well-being.

What is the future for our high streets?

High streets are evolving. Online shopping and out-of-town retail mean that they need to offer people something different to what they did in the latter part of the 20th century. Whilst that ‘offer’ will vary in different places (what works for Hastings might not work for Blackpool), we can see demand for retail falling and an emphasis on personalised offers to customers, providing goods and services that can’t be got elsewhere. (<https://www.raconteur.net/retail/high-street-independent>)

Online shopping and out-of-town retail mean that high streets need to offer people something different to what they did in the latter part of the 20th century

With funding from central government, High Streets Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ), the programme developed and managed by Historic England, will see £92m invested into 69 high streets in England (with an additional £3m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund). As high streets become more about the ‘experience’ and less about simply buying and selling, the quality of the environment and its contribution to that ‘experience’ becomes more important. The HSHAZ programme will see investment focused on

understanding and regenerating historic buildings on the high street, along with investing in the public realm, restoring local character and supporting the features that help make these places unique and attractive for residents and visitors alike. Success of the programme will not just be measured in terms of historic fabric restored, but in the impact it has on the economic, social and cultural well-being of the place and the people who use it.

The role of research in High Street Heritage Action Zones

Central to the HSHAZ programme is the targeted research that Historic England will be carrying out where the history and evolution of the High Street as it stands is poorly understood or underappreciated. This will build on the success of integrating research into the current Heritage Action Zones, which has provided research to underpin proposals for change, and to link into wider cultural programmes to raise people’s awareness and appreciation of the history of their local areas.

As part of the HSHAZ programme, Historic England is making use of a ‘demonstrator’ project, The Burges in Coventry. By beginning work in The Burges, Historic England is able to use it to inform the development of the other HSHAZs. This early start to the work in The Burges means that we are able to highlight the positive link that exists between applied research and regeneration projects and use that to influence other historic high streets.

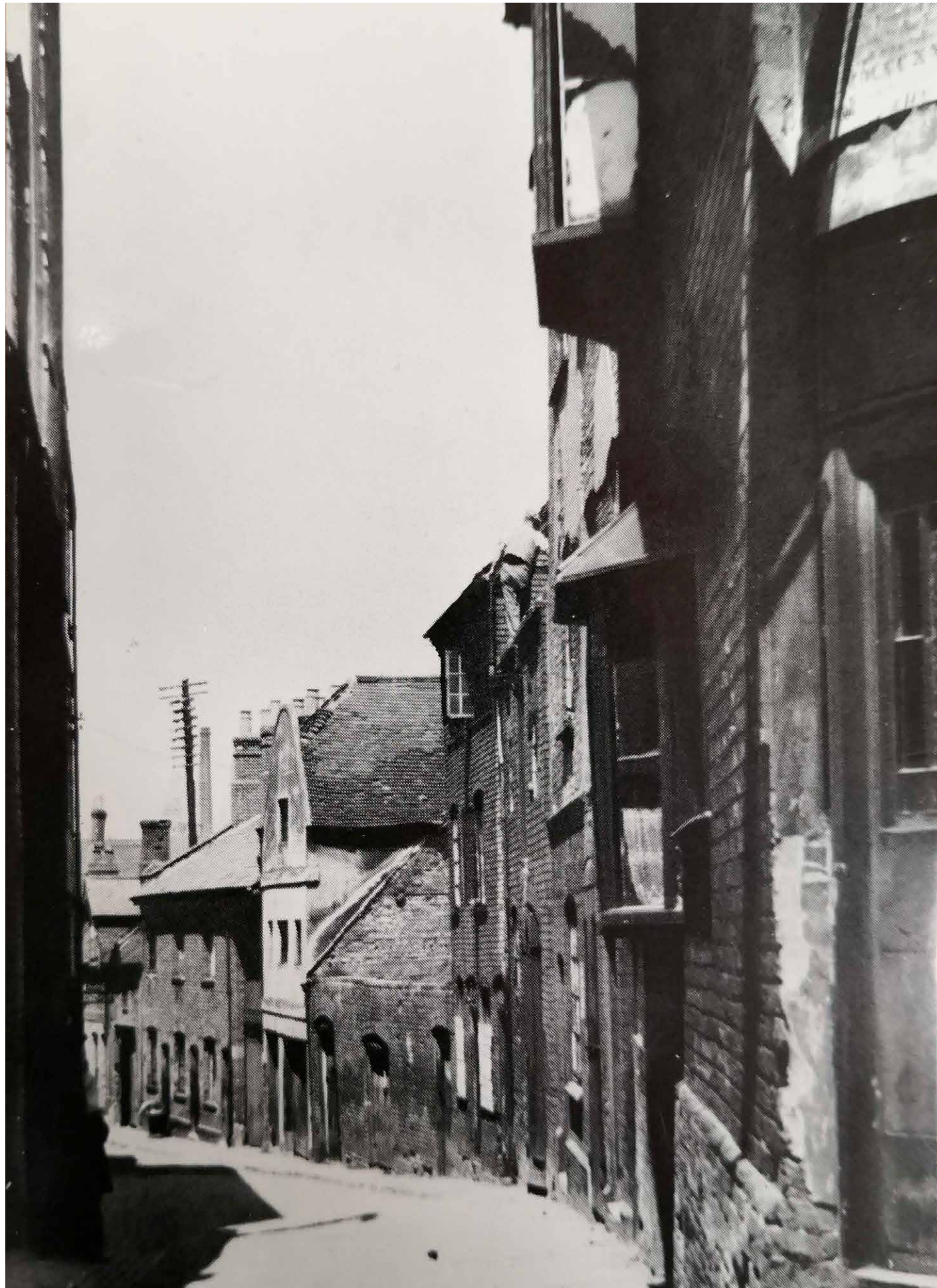
For the ‘demonstrator’ project £1.9m has been allocated by Historic England, to the Historic Coventry Trust, working in conjunction with Coventry City Council and Coventry Business Improvement District to regenerate The Burges Conservation Area in the city centre. This has also included a programme of research designed to highlight the early origins of the street, which are not immediately apparent from the surviving shop frontages.

The Burges represents a surviving section of one of the historic routes into the city

The Burges represents a surviving section of one of the historic routes into the city, and now provides one of the main gateways into the commercial heart of the city from the north. With adjoining Hales Street it forms a small conservation area, focused on the eastern side of The Burges, which is lined with an assortment of shop fronts mostly dating from the 20th century. Behind these facades however the buildings range in date from the 18th to 19th centuries, and some have earlier origins with 17th-century timber-framed sections visible from Palmer Lane to the rear. >>

Below: The Burges Conservation Area in Coventry city centre, © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP249153





Above: This 1930s photograph of Palmer Lane was one of those included in posters displayed in local shops. © Coventry Archives, PA2465_15



23 The Burges: Godiva Tailoring

Number 23 was also known as Palmer House due to the alleyway which leads to Palmer Lane, one of the oldest streets in Coventry. A number of alleyways linked The Burges to Palmer Lane and small 'court' buildings.

In 1861 the building was occupied by a tailor named John Sutton and his family. Although it has seen a number of uses including as a tobacconist, confectioners, and boot makers, the building has now returned to use as a tailors.



Top photo taken in 2017 © Historic England
Above image reproduced by kind permission of Culture Coventry Trust/ Coventry Archives, taken in about 1934 [1454-26-75]

Above: An example of a poster displayed in a local shop as part of the project. © Historic England

In support of the work of the Historic Coventry Trust, Architectural Investigators at Historic England have been researching the history of these buildings and undertaking a small Historic Area Assessment, to inform the proposed conservation work and to help promote the heritage of the area. For the Heritage Open Days in September 2019 a walking tour leaflet was produced which was available throughout the weekend, in conjunction with guided tours by the Coventry Society. Research into individual buildings has also

allowed the creation of a timeline of the owners and occupants of each property on the street – providing an insight into the shops and trades that characterised Coventry in the 19th and early 20th centuries, including tailors, drapers, butchers, jewellers and watch makers. With the support of Historic England's photography and graphics team, these have been used to create posters which have been hung in each shop window, telling the story of each property over the past few centuries. >>

Research into individual buildings has also allowed the creation of a timeline of the owners and occupants of each property on the street

This work has provided a valuable tool for the Historic Coventry Trust to engage the general public in the area, and also in providing interest and information for the shop owners and tenants in the streets today. The tenants of 23 The Burges, now operating as Godiva Tailoring, were thrilled to learn that their shop had in fact been a tailors in the late 19th century – providing an important connection between the shop as it is today and its occupants 150 years ago. This work is therefore already making both residents and visitors more aware of the history of The Burges, an appreciation which will serve both to support conservation of the historic fabric of the area, and its economic viability. The research products of this demonstrator project will also form a template for similar work in selected other High Streets as part of the wider project.

The High Street scheme is focused on providing a sustainable future for the area, but in doing so it is illuminating to reach back into the past, to reveal generations of owners and occupants, identify the alterations, small or large, that they made to the buildings, and the wider changes they would have witnessed around them. These are common threads in the evolution of an area to which we can all relate ■

The authors

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Owain is the strategic lead for the High Streets Heritage Action Zones programme, the £95m fund aimed at regenerating historic high streets in England. He is also responsible for implementing Historic England's

Places Strategy. He started his professional life as an archaeologist, after which he worked for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport working largely on policy related to portable cultural property. Since joining English Heritage (now Historic England) in 2007, he has been responsible for the co-ordination and development of work with local government and national infrastructure, and undertaking research looking at the impact of development on the historic environment.

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Rebecca worked in the commercial sector for six years as a buildings archaeologist, and latterly as a historic buildings consultant before joining the Architectural Investigation team at English

Heritage (now Historic England) in 2010. She is currently responsible for a range of projects looking at Early Fabric in Historic Towns, and has recently drafted the new edition of [Understanding Historic Buildings](#), a guide to good recording practice.

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Aimee started her career in a conservation workshop; conserving and repairing large-scale museum objects, sculptures and architectural features, before becoming a Heritage Consultant for a large

architectural practice. She joined Historic England in 2017 as part of the Heritage at Risk team in the West Midlands, and has recently moved into a new role as an Architectural Investigator. Her first project has been to undertake historic research and building analysis of The Burges in Coventry, as well as supporting Heritage at Risk Projects through research and investigation in order to enhance our understanding of a number of buildings on the HAR Register.



Above: The frontage of Godiva Tailoring at 23 The Burges, Coventry. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP248442

Sustaining London's vibrant historic places

Helping London's historic character
build its fascinating future localities.

As London accommodates growing pressures for change, Historic England is helping ensure its emerging new places retain their historic identity.

London is an energetic, cosmopolitan and distinctive city, a major cultural and economic player on the world stage.

For those experiencing London, whether in their everyday lives or on visits, much of that valued distinctiveness is framed by its uniquely characterful neighbourhoods, the outcomes of its people's interactions with places they've inherited through time, using and modifying them to fulfil their own needs, styles and aspirations.

We stand in that continuum as today's culturally diverse generations use, adapt

and add new contributions to their inherited local places to meet their purposes.

Resolving tensions of scale

However London's economic success as a global city and its needs to resolve such social issues as ensuring adequate housing provision for its population have produced a scale and intensity of development pressures across Greater London that transcend effective management by forward planning at purely local levels.

Research commissioned by Historic England on London's local character and density by consultants Allies and Morrison showed how, in recent decades, the overarching scale of those pressures and planning policies designed to address them are producing rapid and substantial

transformations of London's traditional neighbourhoods more incrementally developed over many generations.

That research highlighted the need to accommodate the city's growth and development with greater respect to those neighbourhoods' existing character if we are to retain the historically-rooted identity that makes London such a fascinating, distinctive complex of local places in which people want to build their lives and businesses.

The Greater London Authority's (GLA) Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Shaping Neighbourhoods: character and context' responded in 2014 to earlier concerns about impacts on local distinctiveness from insensitive application of London's strategic

development policies to the historical context of places earmarked for change.

National planning policies – such as the National Planning Policy Framework (2012 and later 2018) and the Gov't Planning Practice Guidance- have similarly asserted the key planning roles of local character and distinctiveness in sustainable development and the important contributions made by the historic environment to local character, echoed also in the 2016 Culture White Paper and 2017 Heritage Statement. But the issue remains: the need to sustain local character and the heritage underpinning it form major threads in the developing draft of the new London Plan. >>



Left: Bermondsey's present character reflects fortunes and traumas in its eventful past. © Historic England Archive, Damian Grady, 33086_005



Right: Historic warehouses give the Bermondsey Street Festival a unique setting. © Historic England Archive, Chris Redgrave, DP232620

Addressing inconsistencies

Despite this raised profile for the roles of historic local character, Greater London lacks a consistent overall assessment of its historic character to underpin planning and development roles.

Characterisation studies use a rapid broad brush approach to capture the distinct patterns and features charting the historic development and changing uses of a whole area.

In 2016, to inform the GLA's review of the London Plan, Historic England commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to examine how far London's historic environment had been characterised and how this was being applied in planning, notably in linking local character and significance to strategic planning. Their report found over half of Boroughs had characterisation studies in place, with widely varying influence on Local Plans' development management policies. However their diversity of approach and lack of context beyond their Borough produce substantial inconsistencies and inward-looking perspectives that work against strategic overviews of Greater London's character or assessment of how far a Borough's character reflects London's broader development.

Particular urgency to overcome these limitations arises from needs to accelerate delivery of affordable new homes across

Despite this raised profile for the roles of historic local character, Greater London lacks a consistent overall assessment of its historic character to underpin planning and development roles

London. The GLA's 'London Housing Strategy' 2018 describes far-reaching measures to address that, with its implementation required to accord with GLA policy on 'London's form, character and capacity for growth' to promote well-designed future places across London. In response, London's 'Homebuilding Capacity Fund' invited bids for Borough-wide characterisations that will enable due regard to the capacity and sensitivity of places to accommodate changes in housing density taking into account, amongst other aspects, their 'historical evolution and heritage assets (including assessment of their significance and contribution to local character)'.

Developing a common language

GLA guidance will underpin these characterisations' approach. Additionally to promote their consistency and ability to inform both Borough and strategic-level understandings of London's character, Historic England has commissioned LUC to build on their earlier research by compiling a thesaurus of historic character terms and their meanings, relevant to a fine-grained characterisation of Greater London's historic environment.

The 'London's Historic Character Thesaurus' will allow Borough characterisations all to use a common language, enabling the GLA to assess and monitor consistently the application of its design-led approach to new residential development sites across Greater London. >>

Top right: Hanway Street's older frontages offer engaging contrasts with nearby Oxford Street. © Historic England Archive, Chris Redgrave, DP165586



Bottom right: Brixton's bustling Electric Avenue, among the first streets with electric lighting. © Historic England Archive, Chris Redgrave, DP183522





Broader roles for urban historic character

LUC's work is in progress but the Thesaurus and the characterisations it informs have roles wider than the immediate context of alleviating London's shortage of new homes. The London Plan's 2019 draft comments: *'as change is a fundamental characteristic of London, respecting character and accommodating change should not be seen as mutually exclusive'*. By providing a consistent common language for historic character across all of London, Historic England gives that character a more effective voice

in shaping sustainable new places whose vibrancy, identity and distinctiveness can rest on strong contributions from their historic cultural narratives.

Historic England's engagement with this work builds on its long-standing advisory roles on London's historic environment. Historic England operates the Historic Environment Record for Greater London and, as part of its enhancement, we have commissioned [Urban Archaeological Database \(UAD\) Projects](#) akin to those carried out in other historic cities.

Left: Langham Street, varied rooflines and frontages in London's Fitzrovia district. © Historic England Archive, Chris Redgrave, DP177575



Right: Continuity with fine-grained change adds interest in Scala Street/Whitfield Street, Camden. © Historic England Archive, Derek Kendall, DP134690

Our latest initiative for a UAD in Westminster and Whitehall will explore time-depth characterisation of this complex urban area helping to bring the disciplines of archaeology and built heritage closer together.

Historic England's engagement also draws on extensive national experience from the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of the former metropolitan counties and Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of smaller towns and cities across England. That experience now finds application in bringing character-based understanding to Heritage Action Zones (HAZs), Historic

England's initiative with local partners to kick-start regeneration and renewal in heritage-rich places facing challenges from neglect and economic decline. Recently extended to 69 of England's high streets, HAZs celebrate their places' unique character and heritage, helping rebuild a sense of local pride. >>

HAZs celebrate their places' unique character and heritage, helping rebuild a sense of local pride



Place, people and sustainability

London's local places, as elsewhere, encompass far more than their buildings' materiality, important though that is. They are about areas and how people perceive them. Their unique patterns of age, design, form, scale, public space and thoroughfares conflate successive narratives of past people's daily lives, hopes and fears, struggles won and lost, whether from recent post-war decades or reaching back into London's earlier phases. Some places now celebrated for their rich heritage have previously suffered economic decline; others await realisation of their potential. Far from being a blank canvas, they are our historic cultural context.

Far from being a blank canvas, local places are our historic cultural context

When recognising our familiar local places as distinctive, part of our own identity joins with the thoughts and actions of people who have previously made use of these same areas. Historical sustainability for our thriving city means recognising we too can add our contributions that accommodate our needs and hopes while still passing on historically distinctive places to future generations ■

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Sandy Kidd for his input on the Westminster and Whitehall UAD.

Above left: Tottenham High Road's character is central to its diverse communities' identities. © Historic England Archive, Chris Redgrave, DP262553



Above right: Sutton's Heritage Action Zone uses distinctiveness as a regeneration asset. © Historic England Archive, Damian Grady, 33091_034

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Dave has for many years worked with colleagues and partner organisations developing and applying approaches to characterising the historic dimension of England's present landscape and seascape. He now works in Historic England's Archaeological Survey and Investigation Team.

Further information

Allies and Morrison 2016 *London's Local Character and Density*. Report for Historic England, available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/protect/keep-it-london/>

Land Use Consultants 2016 *London Plan Review. Project No. 3: Characterisation of London's historic environment*. Report for Historic England, available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/get-involved/luc-characterisation-london-historic-environment-final-report-pdf/>

Mayor of London 2014 *Character and Context. Supplementary Planning Guidance*. London: City Hall, available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/planning-guidance-and-practice-notes/character-and-context>

For more information on Historic Landscape Characterisation: <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation-2/historic-landscape-characterisation/>

Food for thought

Community involvement in a research strategy for the Yorkshire Wolds.

In 2018 Historic England commissioned the York Archaeological Trust to carry out the 'Food for Thought' project to help us explore the story of the Yorkshire Wolds in the East Riding of Yorkshire and to create a research strategy. Principal Inspector Neil Redfern shares his experience of the interaction with the community that formed an important part of this project. >>



The Wolds in winter. Thixendale runs away between the tops. © Historic England Archive, Dave Went, 34098_066 31-JAN-2018

few people outside the area know about the Wold's wealth of archaeological monuments and historic landscapes

What matters in the Yorkshire Wolds?

As landscape the Yorkshire Wolds is outstanding for its quality and richness in archaeological sites and heritage assets which provide us the means to understand how countless generations have lived and farmed the area over thousands of years.

What they have left behind are not just fantastic archaeological sites - Neolithic cursus monuments, Iron Age square barrows and chariot burials, Anglian cemeteries, and deserted medieval villages like Wharram Percy, to name but a few - but also great estates, historic houses, model farms, designed gardens and parklands. The quality of these sites and places can compete with any in Britain for their impact and importance.

Curiously, however, despite more than a century of archaeological discoveries by local luminaries, national bodies and universities, few people outside the area know about the Wold's wealth of archaeological monuments and historic landscapes, and fewer still visit them. The cultural heritage of the Wolds is relatively untapped and has yet to contribute its full potential to the tourism and rural economies of the area.

Driving along the tops of the Wolds, across the open landscapes beloved of David Hockney, you are confronted by a picture dominated by highly productive, quite featureless arable fields. But great linear earthworks, ancient churches and historic estates lie only slightly out of view in the valleys and underneath the wooded slopes. Many more highly significant archaeological sites are ploughed down and even harder to appreciate. These are now only visible to the informed eye as faint undulations or strange patterns in the ripening crops, best appreciated from the air.

Research frameworks and local communities

Historic England has long supported the development of regional and local [research frameworks](#), designed to pool knowledge and define priorities for future investigation, whether by universities, commercial archaeological units, Historic England or community groups.

The Yorkshire Wolds project has this aspect at its core, and it is currently gathering and analysing information in order to provide a robust model of our current understanding and key questions for future research and engagement.

But it is also testing new ideas. These include a focus on sample areas reflecting different aspects of settlement and land use across the Wolds, from the coastal peninsula at Flamborough to the great estates and larger settlements of the interior and southern fringe.

These areas lie at the heart of a broad conversation about the past and future of the Wolds involving not just those with an established interest, but anyone, local or visitor, drawn to 'Food for Thought' events, workshops, market-place stands and pop-up museums.

The Food for Thought project has as its aim the creation of a vision for the wider heritage of the Wolds, for the whole community as well as for the specialist archaeological sector. A number of innovative approaches have been adopted to create this vision and make it accessible to a range of audiences. This includes its development as one of a small number of pioneer online wiki systems which Historic England is currently helping to develop. These will make frameworks much more accessible and easy to find, allowing them to be managed and updated by their own research communities and thereby kept relevant and sustainable into the future. >>



Above: Hidden heritage: one of a myriad complex Wolds cropmarks recorded from the air. © Historic England Archive, Emma Trevarthen, 34030_023 05-JUL-2018



Left: The Rudston Monolith, a very visible Wolds monument set amidst a sea of prehistoric cropmarks. © Dave Went

Food for Thought: a new strategy for the Wolds

In developing the Food for Thought project we are trying to understand where best to focus activity and resources to develop the rich heritage of this unique landscape. But we also want this work to go beyond a discussion amongst experts. We want it to be a much wider conversation about what we know and understand about the archaeology and heritage of the Wolds, and how this relates to the present-day population. We want to know how we might collectively shape future investigation and reveal the stories locked up in the landscape and the lives of those who shaped it.

Through an open conversation we are seeking to understand what it means to those who live, work and visit this fascinating landscape. We want as many people as possible to be part of this discussion. We want to explore what people want to know about this landscape and how communities and specialists can work together to unlock its potential.

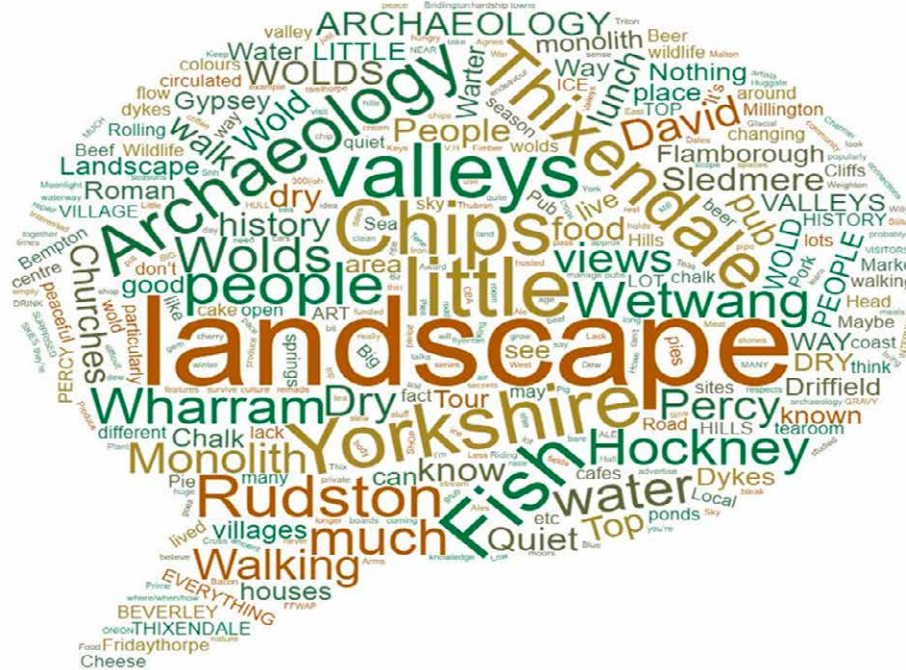
A common thread to the story of the Wolds is the production of food and its central role in shaping the appearance and identity of the Wolds. Hence the name 'Food for Thought': a link between populations past and present, between the lost arrowheads of early Neolithic hunters, the medieval sheep walks, the immense fields created since the 1970s, the resurgence of farmers' markets and the artisan food fairs of the present day.

We want to explore what people want to know about this landscape and how communities and specialists can work together to unlock its potential

Left top: Community action: a 'Food for Thought' conversation with the people of Driffield. © York Archaeological Trust, Jennifer Jackson



Left bottom: Word-cloud from an early 'Food for Thought' workshop at Driffield in 2018, dominated by 'chips' and 'landscape'.



Right top: A treasure trove of Grimston finds, and of stories woven around them. High Wolds Heritage Group and Thixendale Art Group. © Neil Redfern



Right bottom: Aerial view of an excavation undertaken by volunteer groups at Hanging Grimston in 2019. © Historic England, Dave Went



What I saw... inspired me and underpinned how I now talk about role and impact of archaeology, heritage and art, locally and nationally

Inspirational archaeology and heritage

As part of this conversation the project held its first public meeting in June 2018. This is when I first came into contact with the work of the Thixendale Art Group and their work with the High Wolds Heritage Group at Hanging Grimston. One group had followed in the footsteps of the other. The High Wolds Group was busy partnering the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society in excavating a deserted medieval settlement on the western side of the Wolds overlooking the Vale of York. The Art Group, from an adjacent valley (many of whose members also participated in the dig), took inspiration from their discoveries to fuel their own visions of what the dig had revealed about the Wolds landscape and the lives lived within it.

What I saw and the conversations I subsequently had both inspired me and underpinned how I now talk about role and impact of archaeology, heritage and art, locally and nationally. To me archaeology is a process and not a thing or a product. The stuff in the ground is just stuff in the ground until we dig it up, give it a different value and call it 'archaeology'. But who gives it that value, and how, is not be limited to archaeologists or heritage professionals. >>

anyone can participate in illuminating the past, help to define it, shape it and make it more meaningful and brilliant



Above: Drawing on the past: a display of artworks created by the High Wolds Heritage Group and Thixendale Art Group. © Neil Redfern

In the children's cartoon movie *'Ratatouille'* award winning Chef Gusteau maintains that 'anyone can cook', but food critic Anton Ego pours scorn on this view. Until, that is, he is cooked a meal by Chef Remy – a rat! – leading him to the realisation that what Gusteau said was true, and furthermore that 'whilst not everyone can become a great artist, a great artist might come from anywhere'. To me this is a good analogy for archaeology and heritage. I would add my own perspective and interpretation: whilst not everyone might become a professional or expert archaeologist, anyone can participate in illuminating the past, help to define it, shape it and make it more meaningful and brilliant.

This is what the work of the art and heritage groups have done. Indeed carrying the analogy of the movie further, not only was the chef different but the food was too. Who did the cooking changed and so did the content of what was cooked.

Heritage and archaeology are about inquisitiveness and curiosity, but also, crucially, about creativity

At Hanging Grimston the artists became the archaeologists and the archaeological product changed into something far more meaningful, creative and inspirational, in the process changing the perspectives of the professional archaeologists involved (including me). There also seems to be a more fundamental shift in how we as heritage or archaeological experts operate. For me, heritage is a collaborative process that needs different ways of knowing and doing. Formal research-based knowledge is an important part, but only one part of the recipe to return once again to the cooking metaphor.

More than that, doing it collaboratively with people means heritage is different, richer, more dynamic, more sustainable and more widely relevant. That is what the work at Hanging Grimston and the art produced from it illustrates to me, and what we are trying to capture with our work on the Yorkshire Wolds.

Heritage and archaeology are about inquisitiveness and curiosity, but also, crucially, about creativity – the passion to apply what we learn so that others might draw meaning and inspiration from it ■

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Further information

You can see more about the 'Food for Thought' project, including Neil's views on the Wolds landscape captured on video, at <https://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/case-studies-blog/food-for-thought>

